Chapter Synopsis

The first chapter opens with three students A, T and M coming together to discuss a lecture by Tony Lynch on the ecology movement and the burgeoning ecological crisis. This chapter is meant to provide a brief overview of the movement, a movement that draws upon disciplines across the board; the sciences, economics, sociology, anthropology, aesthetics, politics and more. In fact just about everything we humans do comes into the movement, for after all, apart from space travel, all our activities are undertaken right here, on this earth and most have an impact on the earth and affect our perspective on the relationship we have with Gaia.

This first chapter also introduces the characters who return for the subsequent chapters. T is initially inspired by the deep ecology movement and while she retains her loyalty to it, right up to the end, she concedes to a number of objections and emerges at the end of chapter 6 with a thoroughly informed position and one that contrasts with the slightly naïve enthusiasm she exhibits in this first chapter. T is clearly a sincere person, but she also has a sense of humour. Her irony, is usually good natured, but clearly at times she loses with patiences with some of A's objectionable outbursts. This is quite understandable. A's behaviour clearly is objectionable at times and he begins this chapter thoroughly ignorant as well. However A grows as a character throughout the dialogues, especially after his 'conversion' in chapter 5. What's more, some of his objections and insights have real value and after chapter 4 he has clearly been engaged with much further study, reflection and commitment to a degree unimaginable when compared to his initial stance. A represents the kind of student who initially finds academia overwhelming and even threatening. Not well practiced in study habits and perhaps embarrassed by his ignorance, A's initial response is obstinate denial, flashes of rudeness and occasional jokes. I have a confession to make. I very nearly killed A and I don't know whether he realizes or not how close he came from being erased. But in the end I overcame my destructive desires, guided by the teachings of many in the ecology movement against such tendencies and chose to keep him. I'm glad I did. After talking things over with Dr Lynch (who is an excellent teacher) A reemerges as a new man, ready to properly confront the eco-crisis, more eager to listen, to learn and to argue constructively. This is not to say that he has altogether undergone an eerie transformation which has changed his character altogether (right up to the end his dismissals, sarcasms and obstinacy is evident). He nonetheless earns his place as a genuine voice and actor in the *drama-logue*. Indeed I am tempted

to think that A's growth as a character has much to do with the kind of education he has received, both from Dr Lynch, but also from his friends who challenge him and encourage him into greater research and reflection. I have mentioned T, but M also guides A out of his self-protective ignorance into the light of absolute truth - well perhaps not that far … But much improvement in A is evident. M represents what is most admirable and enduring about the Enlightenment tradition. His patience, his reasoning, his knowledge and his ethical commitment testify to a tradition which strives for justice, truth and the wellbeing of individuals in society.

The Enlightenment tradition has come under attack in recent times, including from many in the deep ecology movement. T draws on some of these attacks in chapter 2, at the same time as defending ecofeminism. Not content with its earlier dismissal, T has devoted further study during the week and is convinced ecofeminism deserves greater and more sympathetic treatment. This is typical of the dialogue style where characters frequently return to earlier subject matter, convinced in the light of further study and reflection, that more needs to be discussed. In this chapter M & A draw out a number of objections against the ecofeminist authors. Nevertheless T remains convinced that some of the material deserves to be respected and she returns again to this theme in chapter 6.

In chapter 3 M defends our Enlightenment tradition against the criticism of many in the deep ecology movement. If there can be said to be an overall theme to this dissertation, it is to defend the Enlightenment tradition and draw out the seeds of its ecological sensibility, champion its vision of human justice and take note of its pragmatic success. It strikes me as dangerously misguided to reject *all* of this worthy tradition as anti-ecological, though we must, of course, be properly suspicious of *some* problems. The process of the *drama-logue* form allows T to see for herself the richness of the tradition, as well as giving her an opportunity to pick out and critique those issues which eco-feminists challenge. Thus there is a move towards consensus. Through the process of the dialogue, the characters are given an opportunity to voice their own objections, as well as where they agree. What comes out of this chapter is an overall agreement on the worthiness of the Enlightenment and Romantic traditions as providing the foundations for the development of an ecological sensibility, a platform for developing moral consideration for nonhuman nature and, especially, a tradition which celebrates the aesthetics of natures sublimity and beauty.

Our attitudes to the earth are important but the eco-crisis is also a deeply political issue, as well as an economic one and as such any attempt at addressing it will require major political and economic changes. However, the issue is so political and economic, that certain interests have influenced the public to an alarming degree, casting doubt about our climate science and misleading many into a position known as 'climate change scepticism' but which really means denial of anthropogenic climate change. Chapter 4 explores the *rationality* of such a position. A defends climate change 'scepticism'. What emerges through the course of the dialogue, however, is that there is nothing genuinely sceptical about A's position at all and that it is in fact an untenable and grossly irresponsible one. Climate change sceptics are really denialists who are fattened on a seemingly inexhaustible supply of fallacies and paranoid conspiracy theories, including the deep-green, neo-Marxist plot to devour civilization, though A is not convinced by this at the time. A likewise challenges the validity of other ecological claims. He is answered by M and T by appeals from the politics of the left, as well as from a number of economists with green credentials. I have included the ecological narrative of leftists here, for it reveals the ideology of the right wing and how it rides roughshod over the facts and the truth. Dramatically, I think it also works well - the message being that the right wing have much more to fear from the logic of the neo-Marxists than they do about any fantastically imagined conspiracies or plots. Nevertheless A remains fixated on the idea that leftism means a dictatorial central state with no respect for individual liberties. M agrees that we must be wary of such a possibility, though this hardly impacts on the logic of the left, especially when some of them are anarchists.

To A's credit, following the discussion he is propelled into deeper reflection and further study. It can take time for someone to change their mind and the validity of what they hear may take some time to sink in, especially if they be argumentative or obstinate types. After talking things over with Dr Lynch, A suggests another type of political approach which, he claims, avoids the problems of a totalitarian regime. Furthermore, A argues, Beck's theory of *Risk*, is much more compatible with what is best in the Enlightenment tradition. His defence of Beck shows much greater logic and commitment than he has so far displayed and both M and T, despite offering some objections, agree that some aspects of Beck's work are pertinent to the debate.

T, like A, has grown in awareness through these discussions on the need for serious political and economic reform. However the problem T continues to hold with these political suggestions, are that

they remain too human-centred and greater ethical commitment is owed to non-human nature. Furthermore, she insists that deeper values are desirable and even necessary, if we are to do more than merely survive the terrible events we are facing. Thus in chapter 6 we return once more to the deep ecology movement. This is a way of drawing out those teachings of the deep ecology movement which are compatible with a concern for human justice, as well as informing the need for political activism. M agrees with T's main claims but has reservations about deep ecology which he imparts to her. Instead of calling for a new *ethic*, he returns to Lynch and Wells interpretation of deep ecology as an *aesthetic* movement. T finds much in the argument convincing, however she maintains that some moral consideration is owed to all organisms based merely on their capacity to strive for life. T doesn't convince A but M is more or less in agreement with her and the chapter ends with both testifying to the need for a deep cultural change. Such a cultural revolution may be necessary to drive changes to our political and economic institutions.

In the final chapter T argues that the values of the deep ecology movement must be preserved as the drama of the eco-crisis heats up. This last chapter will not be to everyone's liking. Having promised pragmatic solutions, A in fact seems to have regressed in his intellectual capacities and now has gone full circle and insists we need a green *Leviathan* to address the eco-crisis. M, strangely, defends it as a possibility. T not only rejects the idea out of hand, but is, moreover, highly alarmed by the proposal. This last chapter probably owes more to the 'drama' side than to philosophical dialogue. Instead of ending with the sought for pragmatic solutions all can agree upon, the characters seem to be less consensual than ever, as well as more confused and uncertain. The chapter strives to encourage readers to think about the issues for themselves as well as showing up the potential drama of human beings forced to think under the pressure of this global threat. It also is meant to show some of the responses we might expect when panic-fear sets in, as well as exploring what I truly believe to be a major threat – the return of fascism, in one guise or another ...

Chapter 1: Introducing the Ecology Movement

(Three students meet to discuss environmental philosophy)

T: So what did you think of Tony's lecture?[1]

A: Lynch is a clever bastard but I don't subscribe to this end of civilization stuff. It's all overblown mumbo jumbo for superstitious religious people, or propaganda spread by Communists. My old man's researched the whole thing – he's read Ian Plimer and assures me there's nothing to this claim of human induced climate change whatsoever (Plimer: 2009).

T: So you think that the mass of evidence gathered from all over the globe on anthropogenic climate change, the repeated warnings of scientists on our rapidly depleting resources, the continual destruction of habitats, the poisonings of our air and water is fallacious? When you look around you what do you see, even in your own backyard? Does there not seem to be a plethora of violent storms, raging bushfires, extreme flooding? Do you truly believe this to be a case of mere religious superstition and/or neo-Marxist propaganda?

A: Yes.

T: Really?

A: Australia has always been a volatile country.

T: And the rest of the world?

A: It also. And if there is climate change going on, we haven't caused it. The truth is the earth has always been subject to change. It's all there in Plimer's book. As for limited resources, we have the technology ...

1 Tony Lynch is a lecturer at UNE. This conversation was said to take place after one of his papers which dealt with climate change, limited resources and community break down – the subject of his book he co-wrote with David Wells *The Political Ecologist* (Lynch & Wells 2000).

M: Assuming you are right about climate change, that we are not the cause of it …

T: How anyone in their right minds can believe that is beyond me!

M: Even if you are right, we face the risk that Australia, which has always been volatile, may *possibly* become even wilder. Do you think we are preparing ourselves for this in an intelligent and responsible manner?

A: I admit there are a lot of stupid people in the world.

T: Really?

A: But when it comes to preparing ourselves for storms, flooding, drought and bush fires, all we need is for our politicians to listen to our scientists and then all will be well.

T: Like heeding the warnings of just about every climate change scientist for example?

A: Well, what if there is climate change and we are the cause of it? Tell me this - what's the 'ecology' movement offer us in the way of practical solutions? What's the point of 'deep ecology' for instance? As far as I can see it's merely an opportunity for pretentious academics to sit about and congratulate themselves on how clever and pure they are, or for unclean hippies to get together and worship trees.

T: The ecology movement involves exploration and action on the complex issues which concern humans and the environment. Such issues being: How should we be living? What should we value? How should we treat each other and the rest of the nonhuman world? These are complex and difficult questions, though admittedly some of the work addressing these issues is thick with jargon and not always clear. However, these questions are important and Peter Hay has done a good job of bringing them together in his book *Main Currents in Western Environmental Thought* (2002).

A: Really?

T: The ecology movement concerns itself with more than just the human good, in fact it invites us to reconsider our notions of human good by extending our sympathy and consciousness beyond narrow human centred (anthropocentric) interests. This has resulted in the entire Western philosophical tradition being called into question (Hay 2002: 9).

M: Surely one of the defining characteristics of Western philosophy is that it has always come under review. The tradition has always put thought to the question, no matter how revered the philosophers in the canon. Furthermore, Western philosophy has been marked by rigorous questioning (or scepticism) *and* alternative answers - the process being driven by reason and argument. So when it comes to much that is associated with the deep ecology movement, it strikes me that there has been too much haste in rejecting the achievements of the past, as well as an inadequacy when it comes to solutions for the future. I do think that a lot has been written over the last thirty years under the banner of the ecology movement which has limited substance and fails to address, in a plausible way, the political, economic and social changes necessary if we are to have a chance at avoiding absolute collapse. Your thoughts?

T: I think the ecology movement is concerned with ending ecological devastation by placing a *moral* emphasis on our treatment of the earth and all of its organisms.

M: Do you think that the issues of *justice* and ecological responsibility are intrinsically related?

T: Yes. I believe we should be striving to live in ecological harmony and our failure to do this stems from human arrogance and contempt for the natural world. Ecofeminists argue that our culture, arising as it has from the Western philosophical tradition, is poisoned with patriarchal and androcentric values and assumptions. The result of this has led to a contempt for the natural, and along with it a vile exploitation of all that has been constructed as belonging to this category - women, children, tribal people and the welfare of the nonhuman. It is this that underpins our ecological crisis.

M: But the Western philosophical tradition has had a great influence on the ecology movement,

dating all the way back to Heraclitus who posited a theory of nature as an organic totality in a continual state of process towards a *becoming* – and to be revered as such.

T: Val Plumwood claims that Western philosophy, especially since the Enlightenment, has systematically sought to dominate and exclude that which it condemns as nature (including women, people of inferior class, and the nonhuman) (Plumwood 1993: 4-5).

M: But the Enlightenment was largely concerned with moral and ethical consideration for those previously ignored and/or exploited. Human rights, women's liberation, the abolition of slavery, even ethical concerns for the nonhuman [with philosophers like Schopenhauer and Bentham]. These are achievements that arose out of the Enlightenment promise. What's more, the Enlightenment sparked off the Romantic movement which was in effect, the beginning of the ecology movement in the West.

A: Like Henry David Thoreau. He wrote passionately about nature and he despised the overly-comfortable exploitive lives of those around him. What's more, he had the balls to go to prison over the decision of his government to wage war in Mexico.

T: Thoreau is important to the ecology movement, as was the Romantic movement more generally. However, they largely 'revered' what amounted to 'nature tamed, not nature wild' (Hay 2002: 12).

A: Who could have been wilder than heroic Thoreau? His *Walden* is filled with descriptions of the glorious activity of wildlife – something he complained, that the rest of the population failed to perceive. And he was wild himself, refusing to conform to the bullshit going on around him.

T: True. But like other Romantics he viewed 'nature' from a quasi-religious perspective – as God's unsullied temple. This is problematic. For just as there are men who 'revere' their wives but don't have a clue about who they really are, so too are there many who 'revere' what they regard as 'divine nature' and again know little about it but their own projectionist fantasies. The point Hay makes is that the ecology movement requires genuine respect for the natural environment *and* the 'hard edged science of ecology' (Hay 2002: 15).

M: But many of the Romantics also embraced natural realism and science. Coleridge is considered to be one of the finest observers of nature as it unfolds, and the German Romantic Novalis was a mining engineer. They attacked the atomistic and mechanistic science of Newtonianism - the very complaint many modern day ecologists continue to level.

A: Thoreau knew nature, he knew it in the raw and he made detailed studies of its glorious wildness.

T: From twelve miles outside of the town of Concord? The wildest elements he seemed to have encountered were a few ferocious bush turkeys. The deep ecology movement wants us to value and respect all nonhuman nature, including those organisms who may be a threat to us, or that we may regard with indifference.

A: Value and respect every natural thing, just because it is alive? Does that include viruses and cane toads?

M: 'For everything that lives is holy, life delights in life**',** to quote William Blake.

A: But that's just it. There's nothing holy or delightful about it. To quote Tennyson, what we find is 'nature red in tooth and claw'.

T: Both I find to be exaggerations. The problem with the Romantics is that they weren't prepared to squarely face nature's struggle in the manner modern deep ecologists encourage. Consequently they weren't truly ecological. Gary Snyder, who is regarded as a modern Thoreau, claims we need to not only face nature's unpleasant truths and its *wild* side, but moreover, to actively embrace it. He calls for us to 'stray back into the woods' *because* it is 'dangerous, threatening, and full of beasts and hostile aliens' (Snyder 1995: 48). We are animals like all others and need to see ourselves as food (Snyder 1995: 45).

A: I like that! So we can go back to our natural state as hunters. I'm a great believer in hunting. If I knew that deep ecology was about hunting I would have been more open to it. Instead I thought it

was made up of Gandhians, tree worshippers and raging vegetarians.

T: The ecology movement is made up of a wide variety of people and ideas – *unity in diversity*.

A: Nice slogan.

M: A Romantic catch cry in fact. And I disagree that the Romantics refused to face nature on its own terms. Coleridge lost his father through exposure while mountain climbing, a fate similarly nearly shared by Coleridge himself. Muir also came perilously close to losing his life while mountaineering.

A: And how do the hunters get along with the flower power people?

M: A reasonable question. As Bookchin points out, 'there are differences within the ecology movement that are utterly at odds with each other, and their divergences are more important than their so-called “common goal”' (Bookchin 1996: 100).

T: We are committed to one fundamental principle – to put an end to human chauvinism. As Robyn Eckersely points out, we humans are not the only beings on this planet and it is human racism to put all of our wants before the rest of the nonhuman world (Eckersley 1998: 174). We are committed to considering the 'vital needs' of all, humans included.

M: I'm not at all sure what 'vital needs' means. Does it mean merely food, shelter and sex? Are such things as friendship, education, aesthetic appreciation also vital needs? Take Snyder, if he was serious about the return to the wild, then why has he spent years in Zen monasteries, universities, written a heap of books, got married four times and so on.

T: He explains in 'The Etiquette of Freedom' the different meanings of nature, wild and wilderness (Snyder 1999: 167-182). Snyder advocates respect for the wild, human and nonhuman. He learned much from the Native Americans, whom he had known ever since he was a child. His eight years in a Zen monastery taught him awareness and compassion. His message is this – respect for the wild as it is, not for what we want to imagine it to be, for even with all of its horror and ugliness, it is

fundamentally good.

A: I like this Snyder. I bet he's hunted bears and everything. I'll have to read more about him.

M: Surely Snyder's claim that cultivating wildness ('wild mind') will make us both more moral and ecologically heedful is difficult to swallow.

A: In what way? We return to the wild as the hunters we are supposed to be.

M: To begin with, the idea of 'man the hunter' is pretty much a myth.

T: I agree.

M: And our 'vital needs' may be greater and more unique than other creatures. How would you like to live without health and education, or without venues for theatre and music, or without playing fields for cricket and …

A: Did you say cricket? Enough! A world without cricket fields is completely unthinkable. Snyder must be an idiot. We must protect our more important institutions ...

T: Perhaps sport and recreation may count as one of our 'vital needs' but other creatures also have vital needs unique to themselves.

M: Should uniqueness be something of value in itself? When Arne Naess promotes 'vital needs' is he not promoting those needs organisms have to live a flourishing life, rather than prizing something simply because it is unique?

T: I'm not sure.

M: I'm not altogether clear what Naess means by 'vital needs' either. Does this mean the needs of each individual organism to survive or procreate? Or the needs of the 'community', or the species, or

the entire ecosystem?

T: Eckersley explains by quoting Warwick Fox:

> … a thorough going ecocentric perspective is one that, "within obvious kinds of practical limits, allows all entities (including humans) the freedom to unfold in their own way unhindered by the various forms of human domination". Such a general perspective may be seen as seeking "emancipation writ large" (Eckersely 1992: 53).

A: Do we have an ethical obligation to uphold the freedom of the hookworm or other disgusting and harmful parasites?

T: She stresses both practical limits and that human interests should also be taken into account.

A: What does it mean to dominate a hookworm anyway? Or to emancipate parasites?

M: I don't know either. Liberation and flourishing strike me as belonging particularly to our own species.

T: That may be an anthropocentric prejudice.

M: Possibly but if we are to hold onto a realist picture of nature and not fall into the trap of anthropomorphic projections then surely we have to take into account self-consciousness and the capacity for moral reciprocity as unique to ourselves and our capacity for flourishing.

T: But just because a being, like a child, or a mentally challenged person, is not capable of moral reciprocity, does not mean we discount them from our moral lives.

M: No, but they belong to our community.

T: Why can't other beings be a part of our community?

M: Perhaps in some sense they already are, like pets for instance. But Lynch & Wells' point is that

we require some form of empathetic identification to be able to extend our ethical boundaries (Lynch & Wells 2000: 31). Otherwise the project becomes an absurd one.

T: Why?

M: Take Jane Goodall. She has launched a life long campaign for protection of chimpanzees and is quite vocal about her love and connection with them. But would it make sense if she went on a save the hookworm or the malaria virus campaign? She'd be considered mad.

A: She *is* mad.

T: Firstly, chimpanzees are not a part of our community and Goodall has consistently argued that chimpanzee communities have value in their own right, even if there were no humans around to take an interest. Secondly we can protect the interests of organisms, as best we can and so long as they don't conflict with our vital needs and to the best of our ability, enable them to flourish in their own way.

M: But why? The further we get from empathetic identification the more absurd it becomes. What's more, to turn ourselves away from the 'humanism' many deep ecologists warn us against, may mean the breakdown of the ethical. Take Snyder's work. To champion an ethic based on *wildness* is conceptually weird and surely opens up the potential for the 'new barbarism' many from the humanist tradition fear. I find something altogether *wrong* minded about basing an ethic on natural law when there is not anything recognizably moral about it. 'Cosmic harmony' does not make sense to me as a realist picture of nature, though it may make sense *aesthetically*.

A: Now you mention it, I fully agree. The great scientist and philosopher Richard Dawkins explains 'we are survival machines – robot vehicles blindly programmed to preserve the selfish molecules known as genes' (Dawkins 1976: ix). But he also says that if we were to abide by the selfish commands of our genes then this would pave the way for 'a very nasty society' (Dawkins 1976: 3).

T: Unlike the one we have now?

A: What makes humans morally superior is that 'among the animals, man is uniquely dominated by culture, by influences learned and handed down' (Dawkins 1976: 3). This makes us the only species capable of genuine altruism and therefore morality.

T: What about the love and kindness that goes on amongst other animals - especially the child-mother bond?

A: Dawkins is great on this. He explains that what looks like genuine care is really a case of selfishly trying to preserve one's genes. There are two ways of achieving this. Firstly through procreation, which ensures that around half of your genes will plough on into the next generation and secondly through 'gene preservation' – where survival machines protect those others which are more likely to contain their same genes (Dawkins 1976: 117-130).

T: What a ridiculous theory. Natural organisms aren't machines!

A: He's being metaphorical.

T: And what about those many recorded cases of animals selflessly saving and protecting others who don't share their genes, who may not even be of the same species? Mark Bekoff, in a book he co-wrote with Jane Goodall, relates many cases of altruism exhibited between species including two examples he personally witnessed of his own dog saving a bird and a bunny without there being the slightest chance of them reciprocating (Goodall and Bekoff 2003: 57-58). They explain:

> ... although two theories, kin selection and reciprocal altruism, have undoubtedly played a part in the evolution of altruistic behaviour, many animal theories, in addition to human beings, seemed to have moved far beyond. Think back to the guide dog in the World Trade Centre who, having been set free, returned to help, indeed save, his human companion. Do either of these theories explain such an act of compassion and caring? We need to see our animals in a larger light (Goodall and Bekoff 2003: 56).

A: Goodall anthropomorphizes nature. She writes fairy tales about chimps for the tender hearted.

T: I disagree. Dale Petersen and Goodall in their book *Visions of Caliban: On Chimpanzees and*

People (1993), examine, using a variety of evidence to back up their claims, the close affinity we have with these lovely creatures. And to return to Dawkins, please tell me this - what about all those recorded cases of altruism where there is no likelihood of gene similarity, or a likelihood of reciprocity? For example in those cases of dolphins saving humans?

A: Dawkins explains that this is really 'a misfiring of the rule' of gene selfishness (Dawkins 1976: 108).

T: But that's mind-numbingly circular. He comes up with a theory that all behaviour (at least all non-human behaviour) can be explained by gene selfishness, and then when he finds cases that don't match his silly theory, he changes the rules and claims that those animals which do show genuine care must be somehow defective!

M: I agree.

T: And there's a lot more that can be said about Dawkins' gene theory, including the fact that it is based on an outdated science. Mary Midgley explains how once upon a time genes were:

> … considered as operating separately and independently, but they are now known to form a most complex system of interdependent parts. Even the word 'gene' is not the name of a single bead on a string; it is used to cover at least three different lengths of the DNA molecule (Midgley 2002: 52).

M: Quite so. And Gould writes:

> I am disturbed by the erroneous idea that genes are discrete and divisible particles, using the traits that they build in organisms as weapons for their potential propagation. An individual is not decomposable into independent bits of genetic coding (Gould 1980: 269).

A: Gould has one theory, Dawkins another.

T: Dawkins is wrong. What's more his stupid theory has done great harm by distorting people's thinking:

> Simply as an image, this idea of independent, disconnected genes supplies a seductive picture of a totally individualistic society. The atomistic notion of freedom as total

> detachment is figured in it alluringly, and power fantasies linked to this dream of irresponsibility are equally celebrated (Midgley 2002: 53).

This false and derogatory view of the natural world lies at the heart of our crisis, for such views undermine our need to love, care and live in the organic biosphere.

M: I agree that Dawkins' theory is scientifically contentious. Richard Lewontin attacks this 'vulgarization' of Darwinism – the claim that entities engage in direct competition. Such a theory fails to account for the complex way they interact with, and in so doing, partially create their environment. Biology errs when it doesn't factor in the complexity of such activity and the many levels in which it goes on. An appeal to genes as discrete divisible elements responsible for particular effects has been shown to be a fallacy in spite of the optimism many hailed the science would deliver. The truth is the science was flawed from the beginning. Genetics sought to deliberately separate DNA from the environment by a dubious strategy that has since been shown to be mistaken. Studies have not accounted for 99% of DNA's functional significance, and the attempt to locate particular genes as discrete entities assigned to specific functions has been a failure (Lewontin 2011). However it is clearly an exaggeration to believe that Dawkins' work has brought about the ecological crisis.

T: Attitudes like his affect how we perceive and engage with the earth.

M: Perhaps. But while I'm not entirely sold on Dawkins' selfish gene theory, I would agree with Gould, that Darwin got the facts of nature basically right and in doing so has undermined the idea of ecological harmony and other sentimental claims about nature. Gould explains:

> First, evolution is non-purposive. Individuals struggle to survive and propagate their offspring, that is all. The world has not been designed for some great purpose and if it seems to display any harmony and order, this arises only as an incidental result of individuals seeking their own advantage. This is the economy of Adam Smith applied to nature itself.
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> Second, evolution is without direction. It is not the case that nature works to create greater and greater complexity of beings (like ourselves). Organisms simply become better adapted to their local environments. The “degeneracy” of a parasite is as perfect as the gait of a gazelle.
>
> Third, Darwin was a materialist. Matter is the ground of all existence; mind, spirit, and God as well, are just words that express the wondrous results of neuronal

complexity (Gould 1980: 12-13).

There was nothing teleological about Darwin's work, nor did 'natural selection' suggest anything we would find moral or harmonious about the natural order. Gould's own study of the paleontological record convinced him that there was no evidence suggesting a recognizable ethic to natural law.

T: Kropotkin offers an alternative to Darwin's story of individual struggle. Instead he claims that evolution is driven more by cooperation, rather than competition. He details his scientific study in *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (1972).

A: There is no such thing as mutual aid, there is only the survival of the fittest. Kropotkin is wrong. Like so many others he has projected his own views onto nature.

M: This is something we do have to be on our guard against. Gould writes of Kropotkin's generous, almost saintly character, as well as the influence of his peers, as being factors in his thesis (Gould 2007: 2-3).

T: The same can be said about Darwin, his elite status, his Victorian progressive political views, his reading of Adam Smith ...

M: Gould agrees. He has written about Darwin's personality and influences throughout his numerous works. His approach is to examine all the possible influences surrounding individuals and humans in general so as to conduct a thorough examination of theories.

T: Go on.

M: Because we are, after all, human beings, such factors impact on our work. So too does *what* we study. Gould stresses the harshness of the Russian environment as being an important factor in Kropotkin's study. Darwin wrote of natural selection as a struggle, but this struggle could be a struggle against the external environment. The harshness of the Russian landscape could mean that 'competition is likely to pit organism against environment (as in Darwin's metaphorical struggle of a plant at the desert's edge) than organism against organism in direct and bloody battle' (Gould 2007: para 24).

T: Only a fool could fail to notice cooperation in nature, human and nonhuman.

A: Organisms do cooperate. But they don't cooperate for their species' survival, or the good of the community or some kind of greater good at all - they cooperate purely out of selfish interests.

M: Without the anthropomorphic language, Gould claims that Kropotkin has fallen into the 'common conceptual error' of mistaking the idea that evolution is about 'entire populations' when it is really about 'individual organisms' (Gould 2007: para 45).

T: I'm not sold on Gould's position. The findings of quantum physics have changed things.

A: How? What has quantum physics got to do with biology?

T: Quantum physics has made us reconsider how *life* functions altogether. Alfred North Whitehead developed an organic philosophy to encompass these strange and fascinating new findings. He sparked a tradition, the philosophy of process, which has had a great impact on the ecology movement, influencing people like Mathew Fox (1989), Charles Birch (1990), Sally McFugue (1990), John Cobb Jnr (1984) and Murry Bookchin (1996). Whitehead criticizes materialist science and its accompanying 'doubtful' metaphysics, complaining that 'the course of nature is interpreted as the history of matter' (Whitehead 1953: 16). Instead he claims 'an actual entity is a process, and is not describable in terms of the morphology of a 'stuff'' (Whitehead 1978: 41). His philosophy of process unites aesthetics, morality and religion with natural science (Whitehead 1978: xii). In so doing he synthesizes *reason* with *feeling*, into a new philosophy of *being*, and a truly poetic vision:

> The oneness of the universe, and the oneness of each element in the universe, repeat themselves to the crack of doom in the creative advance from creature to creature, each creature including in itself the whole of history and exemplifying the self-identity of things and their mutual diversities (Whitehead 1978: 228).

M: But how does metaphysics impact on the eco-crisis?

T: Freya Mathews explains, 'How we understand the world (our metaphysical premise) determines,

to a large degree, how we treat it. How we treat our world constitutes our basic modality' (Mathews 2006: 85). Her project is to develop a metaphysics that changes our view of the earth and thus changes how we perceive and communicate with it. The advent of modernity has made our future a 'grim dilemma' (Wolf 1984: 186). Charles Hartshorne explains how Whitehead's concept of the self is of a wider being reaching out towards a future life involving the lives of 'other human beings, nonhuman animals, or plants' (Hartshorne 1984: 188). His cosmological view also recognizes the irreducible complexity of nature, putting a check on human arrogance. Such a worldview can be embraced 'to strive to counteract the nihilistic decadence which is now undermining civilization' (Gare 1995: 163).

M: How will embracing Whitehead's philosophy achieve this?

T: The metaphysics of materialism, and its accompanying science, resulted in a worldview wherein 'the creation became “nature” - raw materials that existed only to be given value through exploitation' (Granberg-Michaelson 1990: 29). Process theists call for a higher religious vision that invokes a greater appreciation of wondrous nature.

M: Changing our reductionist materialist account of nature, to a religious cosmological model, will bring real changes to our treatment of the earth?

T: Yes. But there's more. Whitehead's idea is that we are taking part in the divine adventure and thus we have a moral responsibility in the future of the creation. Mathew Fox narrates a spiritual dream that awoke in him an overpowering desire to protect mother earth. Fox champions mysticism as the means for 'true healing and a deep spiritual conversion' (Fox 1989: 2). He writes of the 'Cosmic Christ', a powerful panentheistic archetype:

> The Cosmic Christ assures us that nothing is trivial for nothing is unconnected to the whole. All is a source of awe, wonder, wisdom, and the presence of the divine (Fox 1989: 143).

M: But how much does mysticism really affect action? John Passmore writes of an old battle between rationality and mysticism, and is deeply critical of the amount of mysticism intruding into the ecological debate, disparaging its capacity to bring about necessary change (Passmore 1973: 173).

> … mystical contemplation will not clean our streets or feed our peoples, no invisible guiding hand, whether providence or history, guarantees our salvation (Passmore 1973: 194).

T: Passmore should be more open to the power of our spiritual connection to nature and the cultivation of ecological wisdom.

M: Even if mysticism does affect our behaviour, why assume it to be a positive influence?

T: What do you mean?

M: Bookchin has repeatedly warned that a nature mysticism could easily take the form of Hitler's Nazism and its 'blood and bone' mysticism of the soil. Our feelings are involved in our capacity to care, however unreasoned sentiments can easily lead to 'racism, sexism, and an abject subservience to charismatic leaders' (Bookchin 1996: 4).

T: But Whitehead's philosophy invokes both reason and feeling!

M: Yes, but others who have followed, including Fox, have considerable more feeling than they do reason. Furthermore there are problems with Whitehead's reason. R. G. Collingwood explains the critical flaws in Whitehead's metaphysics (Collingwood 1945: 171-176). While he praises Whitehead's insights on the problems of materialist metaphysics, there are problems with Whitehead's philosophy also. Most notably it relies on a 'certain relic of positivism' that fails to take account of the *historical* nature of science and metaphysics (Collingwood 1945: 176). Collingwood forcefully argues that it is nonsensical to write of a pure sense of *being,* for such an account leaves out the role we have as humans in formulating such a concept (Collingwood 1940). This element of positivism is a problem for the deep ecology movement more generally. The failure to properly acknowledge humanity and the role our historical tradition plays in the formulation of empirical knowledge, frequently means that the unique role humans have in formulating the concept of nature, and how this impacts on our treatment of it, has not properly been accounted for in the debate.

A: And as a scientific claim it's just nonsense!

M: Yes. To repeat, there is no teleology in Darwin's science. Process philosophy reintroduced the notion.

T: So what? Critics maintain Darwin's theory is flawed and exploitive in any event. Besides science can't answer all of our needs.

M: Gould agrees with your second assertion, but not with your first. To deal with the problems you mention he developed the doctrine of Non Overlapping Magisteria or NOMA - the claim that science and humanities occupy different domains but both are equally important for us as human beings. In *Rocks of Ages*, he explains how both also have their own rational inbuilt mechanisms for truth testing (Gould 1999: 52-53). The main divergence, he claims, is that the domain of the 'humanities' can broadly be said to concern itself with the 'ought' of ethical action, and the deeper meaning of life, while the sciences explain the 'is' of the factual world (Gould 1999: 55-56). However the attempt to unite both is highly problematic and can have serious ethical and empirical consequences. The scientific method is an excellent one when applied to the factual world, but cannot be used to explain everything.

T: Even if Whitehead's ideas are not deducible from the facts of nature, they have been very useful *metaphorically*. For too long, the brutal and the ignorant, have misused science to justify their disgusting rape and pillage of human and nonhuman. Today neo-liberal economic policies have been propped up by an oversimplified version of Darwinism – which they assume under the 'natural law' of 'survival of the fittest'. For too long, the myth of the 'animal kingdom', with man at the top, ruling over his manor, whether they be women, children, slaves, animals or entire ecosystems has reigned supreme. This has grown out of a religious tradition which has been interpreted as a licence for Adam (man) to lay waste to the world. Philosophers like McFugue challenge traditional theology which conjectures God as both 'father' and pure spirit, removed from the earth. Emulating such a deity would be to condemn nature. Thus she suggests an image of 'the world as the body of God' (McFugue 1990: 211). Deep ecologists like Snyder, Thomas Berry, and many others, have turned to indigenous people who hold nature as sacred and attend to it with reverence.

A: Why bring God or religion into this debate at all? Everyone knows that God is dead.

M: Really? There seems to me to be a mass resurgence of extreme religious fervour. If Whitehead, Fox, McFugue and others can make those who are religiously inclined think deeply about the deity they worship and consider what an ecologically mindful God would morally require of us, maybe such work has a place.

T: And those of us who aren't theologically minded, are still moved by metaphors; they are inherent in our language and our culture. To reconsider the land as 'a community', rather than a 'kingdom', is a major step in changing our attitudes to the earth and to each other.

M: What's more we can see communities, just as Darwin did, when he wrote of a community of bees or ants and so on. We can see for ourselves beautiful, flourishing ecosystems and experience awe in their presence. Finally we have to account for the fact that we exist and are conscious of our existence. All of this has huge importance for us as human beings.

T: Quite so.

M: But Gould's position is this: certainly there are 'communities', even a flourishing 'eco-community' metaphorically speaking. But such phenomena arise as a side consequence or 'sequelae' of individuals engaged in a struggle to survive and procreate (Gould 1996: 329). As for theological and poetic inspirations about nature, science is not the best place to look. Rather the best expressions of such are housed in religion and the humanities. I find his suggestion of NOMA makes a lot of sense to me.

A: It makes no sense to me whatsoever. Dawkins is right to smash it for the cowardly rot that it is (Dawkins 2006: 54-61). Religion has absolutely no role to play in our ethical lives. It is built on a superstitious terror that violently opposes the facts of the world. Science proves that we are the only ones capable of genuine morality and foresight. There is no loving God looking out for us and condemning our every action. Nor is there some 'creation' we should piously worship. All of this quasi-religious nature sentimentality only clouds the truth of reality and is ruinous to rational clear sighted morality.

T: How does that work? Because we are the only beings capable of genuine morality (so you claim), it is thus our moral imperative to show no moral or aesthetic consideration to the rest of nature altogether?

M: It is a rather strange attitude ...

T: Such vile *and* irrational attitudes are what the ecology movement continually shows up. Christopher Stone, for instance, writes of the double standards humans have when it comes to moral consideration for the nonhuman. We already give *moral* consideration, and *legal* protection to agents who aren't recognizably moral or capable of reciprocity, such as infants, those with moral disabilities, or senility, corporations, states and estates (Stone 1998: 152).

M: We're not doing much for our vulnerable now are we? Not unless we can find a means of cashing in.

T: I agree with that.

M: But when we did, it was because they were a part of our community (this is something Lynch & Wells emphasize in their book as an essential aspect of ecological politics). Our community includes more than just humans, but for us to genuinely care we must have 'empathic identification' (Lynch & Wells 2000: 31).

T: But why should we have to empathize? Why can't we show moral consideration for difference?

M: Because it would be like saying that we should protect the rights of a rotting tin can. Does it make sense to wish to protect everything simply because it exists?

T: If it be a part of nature, I believe we owe it some kind of moral consideration.

M: Why?

T I don't know exactly. But I do agree that empathy must at least form a part of our moral lives, as Plumwood argues. Such care must be grounded in something real, 'care and responsibility for particular animals, trees and rivers that are known well, loved, and appropriately connected to the self'. It is not conceivable to love and care wholly in the abstract, what's more, such attitudes actually corrupt morality, acting as a guise for discrimination (Plumwood 1998: 243).

A: I guess I love and care for my pit bull Brutus and consider him my best mate.

T: But this is still anthropocentric. Would you consider an ethic of care for other dogs?

A: Depends if they're good dogs or not.

T: But that's just it - it's all about your likes and dislikes. Let me put it another way; do you believe that wild dogs like dingos should be protected even if they aren't 'good' to you?

A: No, *particularly* not if they be are a danger to us.

T: There you go then. Non-anthropocentrists hold it morally wrong for human needs to count above all else.

M: But, as Lynch & Wells point out, we don't need to have direct moral claims upon us to protect the nonhuman and we can even protect it precisely because we experience *difference* from it. We can do so for aesthetic reasons (Lynch 1996), (Lynch & Wells 1998). Aldo Leopold championed closing off large portions of land:

> ... for the preservation of some tag-ends of wilderness, as museum pieces, for the edification of those who may one day wish to see, feel, or study the origins of their cultural inheritance (Leopold 1968: 188).

Rene Dubos likewise wrote extensively of our human need for both wise stewardship and wilderness protection, for:

> ... the wilderness in whatever form almost compels us to measure ourselves against the cosmos. It makes us realize how insignificant we are as biological creatures and

> invites us to escape from daily life into the realms of eternity and infinity (Dubos 1980: 7-8).

A: I can certainly see the point in that.

T: Why? You've just told us that there is no role for religion in this debate. Isn't such a response essentially *religious* in nature?

A: Not at all. Religion is about superstition, anthropomorphic projectionism and deluded otherworldly fantasizing, whereas Dubos and Leopold are writing of our psychological need to take time out of our busy lives to contemplate wild nature.

T: Surely contemplation of the 'realms of eternity and infinity' just does imply a quasi-religious outlook. Certainly many ecologists have promoted such a necessary spiritual awareness as essential to our own wellbeing and a force driving greater concern for the earth.

A: I find the wild is a good place to bring Brutus and to wander around with a couple of mates and shoot up the local wildlife.

T: I see.

M: Aesthetic appreciation, in the way Lynch & Wells promote, involves an altogether different, and I would argue, more ecologically mindful approach than the strange instrumental claims of Stone in extending *legal* protection to nonhuman nature. Is not legal protection of corporations, states, estates, and not real live human beings a major part of the problem? Whose interests are being protected by all this?

T: Good point.

A: You're worse than Lynch! What do you want to do, explode the very foundations of our society that has guaranteed our protection for so long?

M: Tell that to Julian Paul Assange.

T: Or the untold millions of women, children, native people, nonhuman animals, and entire ecosystems which have been raped and sabotaged by a greedy, largely white, male elite.

M: Stone's approach makes little sense to me.

T: What about Arne Naess and Warwick Fox's call for cosmic identification? If we could break out of our self enclosed lives and identify ourselves with *life* as a whole and follow the path of Gandhi, one of voluntary simplicity, then greater consideration for all of life's organisms may follow (Hay 2002: 47-48).

M: How much bloodshed followed Gandhi?

T: He has inspired millions in trying to live more respectfully, compassionately and decently.

M: He may well have. But Naess, Fox and a host of others in the deep ecology movement lack, in my opinion, coherency of thought, nor do they offer real solutions.

A: They're nutters.

T: Such ideas can change our conciousness. The animal rights' movement raised our consciousness by extending our ethics to the nonhuman (Hay 2002: 33). Ecofeminism is rightly championed for its contribution to the debate (Hay 2002: 9). Ecofeminists have exposed the patriarchal values and masculinist discourse that have exploited and debased human and nonhuman alike in an ever increasing devastation that threatens the fate of *homo sapiens* altogether.

M: But again the question must be asked – what is the solution?

T: By exposing the discourse of domination and providing a loving and reverential respect for natural processes, for the wellbeing of all organisms and for the earth as a whole, we can change

attitudes and practices harmful to the biosphere. Fox's idea of 'transpersonal psychology' is that we break out of our narrow egotistic human consciousness and develop a higher identity that includes all beings (Eckersley 1992: 61-62). Freya Mathews has a similar approach to developing an ecological self (Mathews 1991). She claims that:

> … when a person has been imprinted with the inner dynamics of nature, and has thereby become *creative*, i.e. capable of creating new syntheses of thought and experience via gestaltic intuition, they will in fact feel an affinity for creation itself. This is because they will be aware, subconsciously, that they themselves are animated, psychically, by the selfsame dynamics that animate Creation. A felt affinity for Creation is likely to express itself in a custodial attitude towards nature (Mathews 2008: 57).

M: It might be a start, but again it's not a solution. To begin with, some ecofeminists embrace dubious ideas about nature ...

T: Who says? Western patriarchal science? Science itself must be a part of our deep questioning. If it too is guided by the logic of domination, then maybe we should rid ourselves of its exploitive control.

M: But it has been science which has revealed to us the severity of the threat of climate change and rapidly depleting resources. Science has also been beneficial to many women. A lot of hard mind-numbing work has been eradicated by technology, and such breakthroughs as the pill have enabled more sexual freedom and enabled women's greater potential for self-determination. Science has also benefited animals - take veterinary science, for example. Finally science has enabled us to improve the diversity, flourishing and health of ecosystems through wise stewardship.

T: And where, may I ask, is the wise stewardship? The care of animals? The overall respect and decency science is supposed to offer humans, nonhuman animals and the biosphere as a whole?

M: I agree we are witnessing wide scale devastation. However, I can only repeat Gould's position:

> … science can supply information as input to a moral decision, but the realms of "oughts" cannot be logically specified by the factual "is" of the natural world – the only aspect of reality that science can adjudicate (Gould 1996: 318).

Perhaps we are witnessing a breakdown in our humanity (arising from social, economic and political causes) and a loss of focus on what is good and meaningful. Or perhaps it is because we have allowed scientific thinking to dominate our lives. What I think is more likely, however, is that the eco-crisis has largely been brought about by the capitalist means of production and a technology which hasn't been devised for proper ecological and humanitarian aims, or at the least, hasn't been properly tested for the effects it could produce on the biosphere. To simply blame science and reject it, is not, in my opinion, a reasonable or realistic solution.

T: Ecofeminists' like Plumwood and Merchant draw on postmodern thought to reveal the way the discourse of domination and control impacts on our lives.

M: I agree that discourse and science affects our attitudes and behaviour. I find Gould's project of revealing bad science and its dubious infiltration into an illegitimate domain important. But this problem extends to the deep ecology movement. Take J. Baird Callicott's land ethic for instance. This doctrine, which he claims to have taken from Leopold, holds that we need a new biocentric ethic to give moral protection to the land as a whole. He claims this ethic to be drawn from the hard science of ecology, but if this was really the case, then he would be committed to no ethic at all (as there is no recognizable moral law in ecology). Thus he smuggles in Humean 'feelings' to prevent his ethic from collapsing (Hay 2002: 54). We should *feel* that it is right to protect the organic whole.

T: And why shouldn't we?

M: We may have some feelings for this, but equally we may have other feelings and perhaps more importantly, good reasons for sometimes overriding such feelings – like the wellbeing of humanity. In any event, science cannot reveal to us an ecological ethic. I find it a most difficult proposition to claim that ecological mindfulness is a moral issue at all. Lynch & Wells draw out the problems associated with the call for a new land ethic and biocentrism in general. Imagine that a beast is about to attack a human being in what appears to be a fatal encounter. I can save the human by shooting the beast. Should I do it?

A: What kind of a question is that? Of course you shoot him. You shoot him anyway – that's why

you go hunting!

T: All of this killing is wrong!

M: Even if it means saving a human being from a devouring animal?

T: But what are they doing out there with a gun in the first place?

A: Saving human lives!

M: What the thought experiment asks you is whether or not you value human life over other animals (wild predators in particular). Their suggestion is that if you don't then far from being moral, you have placed yourself outside of the moral community altogether.

T: I want more details. What if the human has been torturing the animal?

M: Then do you think s/he deserves to die?

T: What if it's the last breeding animal of the species?

M: The same applies. Would you willingly let a human die to save it? Killing the beast may well cause regret but Lynch & Wells contend that a moral individual would feel it to be the right decision (Lynch & Wells 1998: 151). Our ethics must stem from our humanity and as soon as we put aside our 'anthropocentric prejudices' and begin to speculate about the claims of organisms and ecosystems as a whole, then we are in danger of eroding our morality altogether by 'one thought too many'.

T: Meaning what?

M: While you are speculating about the moral responsibility towards the beast, the human will probably die in the process. But there is meant something more by this: the idea that we are even speculating about such a response means that we are thinking more than we should as genuine moral

agents. It should be the case that we, as genuine moral individuals, should unhesitatingly act to save human life and not engage in such a speculation at all. Bernard Williams finds that a non-anthropocentric ethic is conceptually confused. If we don't base our ethics from our human perspective then from what position do we do so? Frequently we are asked to consider a model based on an Ideal Observer, but as Williams explains, such a position is dangerously nonsensical.

> The model has things entirely inside out. We indeed have reasons to listen to our sympathies and extend them, not only to wider groups of human beings, but into a concern for other animals, so far as they are in our power. This is already a human disposition (Williams 2006: 147).

Whatever arguments may be mounted by those who seek to blur the distinctions between humans and others, whether they be 'scientific' or mystical, we are and remain human beings (*homo sapien sapiens* if you like) and fellow human beings at that. Any movement which seeks to undermine our humanity must be met with scepticism – for to undermine humanity is to undermine ethics altogether.

T: I think you've overstated the case. Are you claiming that biocentrism or ecocentrism is necessarily misanthropic and unethical?

M: As an *ethic*, biocentrism is at the very best, deeply problematic. To return to the thought experiment:

> … for the adherent to biocentric equality one point is clear. It would not be right to unhesitatingly shoot the animal in order to save the human being. It may even be right to shoot the human being (Lynch & Wells 2000: 32).

If we appeal to flourishing, or capacity for rejuvenation, health, rarity, or any of these, and the human be old, frail, or imbecilic, and we even consider allowing nature to take its course - then this is a problem. A decent moral human being *would* save the human.

A: Absolutely!

T: I find this way of dealing with ecocentrism too simplistic and dismissive. I will have to think about it.

M: Maybe what we are after is an extensionist approach, which also takes into consideration aesthetic value and a genuine ecology that will allow us to live as best we can within natural limits – something based on the Aristotelean tradition. This is the approach Lynch & Wells take in *The Political Ecologist* (2000). Hay mentions some members of this school, especially John O'Neill, who claims that we should extend our concept of flourishing to include the rest of nonhuman nature (Hay 2002: 61). This is not dissimilar to the approach of Steven R. L. Clark who promotes a stewardship ethic. Different philosophers argue different degrees of extensionism but the idea that we should ideally be living in some kind of Aristotelian polis, or community, which includes the nonhuman, is a position I fully endorse.

T: Clark has written a great deal about extending our moral consideration to the nonhuman.

M: Although I don't agree with everything he writes, his moral vision is significantly superior to the approaches of utilitarianism and contract theory which he attacks (Clark 1997).

A: He's a Christian loony, isn't he?

M: While Clark is personally a Christian, he holds that it is not important what religion you have, or even if you belong to any particular one. His view is that a warm blooded mammalian humanity lends itself towards a *passion* for religious activity and inspires a loftier vision of life then cold contract theory and utilitarianism offers (Clark 1977: 19-20).

A: He's a religious loony then and as the great philosopher Richard Dawkins explains, religion is based on dangerous and immoral delusion, and is therefore the source of all evil (Dawkins 2006).

T: Dawkins loves controversy and goes way too far.

M: I agree and much prefer Gould's enlightened agnosticism. Gould spent a lifetime searching for truth everywhere including in religious teachings – an altogether more disciplined and heroic approach than that of Dawkins.

A: I'm with Dawkins. He is a genius and a great man. Still at least Clark agrees that those animal liberationists are idiots. How dare Singer call us steak lovers 'specieists' – a prejudice no different to racism, sexism or any other form of oppression (Singer 1991: iv-v) - and then claim I'm a Nazi (Singer 1991: ii)! He's the one who hates humanity and wants to destroy the world.

M: Clark is concerned with moral consideration for animals but is not a utilitarian. The problem with Singer's utilitarianism where pain is almost the sole consideration, is that the logic would lead to contempt for life itself, making it neither ecological nor moral either (Williams 2006). If we wanted to prevent all pain as our only real moral concern, then wouldn't it be best for us to come up with a way of ending all life in the most painless way possible so as to prevent further suffering? But how could such a position be considered ethical at all?

T: Clark's work is important – he shows just how morally wrong and sickening our treatment of the nonhuman is – including meat eating.

A: But you told me earlier that you believed that we should live more naturally. There's a lot of meat eating that goes on in nature. What's more we were meant to eat it, we need it.

T: You've been watching too many ads. There are plenty of alternative ways to get the nutrients meat provides.

M: But all food must come from somewhere.

T: As Singer points out – eating plants is not only more moral but also far less wasteful in terms of energy and productivity. It's all there in his chapter, 'Becoming a Vegetarian … or how to produce less suffering and more food at a reduced cost to the environment' (Singer 1991: 159-183).

M: But Singer isn't an ecologist and he's wrong to claim that vegetarianism is much more energy efficient and less destructive of the environment than keeping beasts.

T: What do you mean?

M: The anarchist Graham Purchase explains, 'approximately 70% of available land in developing countries is marginal or forested, and is useful solely as a source of animal forage' (Purchase 1994: 97). Much of our land cannot be simply transformed into whatever use we may wish for it including growing crops. Ecosystems require animals in order to flourish and beasts are an essential part of the health of such systems. Callicott also testifies that vegetarianism is 'probably ecologically catastrophic' (Callicott 1989: 35). He goes on to claim that it 'would have ruinous consequences on plants, soils, and waters, consequences which could not be directly reckoned according to humane moral theory' (Callicott 1989: 37).

T: What do you mean? Much of India is vegetarian!

M: But can this be maintained everywhere? Callicott holds that humans have a natural role as predators, furthermore, in many places meat eating is necessary for human survival.

T: So you say.

A: Callicott's right.

M: And even if Singer was ecologically mindful, this would be in sharp conflict with his moral mission to 'end oppression and exploitation wherever they occur' - that we should apply 'equal consideration' to every being capable of suffering (Singer 1991: ii).

T: Tom Regan solves this problem by appealing to the 'subject of a life' (Regan 1989).

M: But there are major problems with this as well. Conceptually only certain beings are deemed worthy of a subject of a life, so that it merely amounts to 'mammal rights' and only those of a certain age that Regan deems sufficient as 'subject for a life' (Callicott 1989: 39). Such consideration fails to account for endangered species along with the biosphere as a whole. It makes a strange moral claim upon us - for should we be saving other mature mammals, while rejecting moral claims upon human babies that haven't the consciousness Regan believes necessary to be accounted as a subject for life?

Finally it would also be both impossible and ecologically devastating if we were to protect all Regan deems worthy of a life from natural predators and circumstances that impinge upon it (Callicott 1989: 39-47).

A: And who decides what a subject of a life involves? What if your tender passion is for the lamb? Do you allow the sheep to breed themselves into devastating the land?

T: It is humans who have destroyed ecosystems by breeding animals in places they should never have been!

M: Yes, we have made some stupid mistakes, however this need not mean that we always have, or always will, act in such a manner.

T: No? A fine job our science has done for us! We've poisoned, polluted, spoiled and raped the land and brought our own species to the point of possible extinction.

M: While destructive technology depends on science, I don't think science itself should be blamed. I agree that we have not acted wisely or listened to those warnings which have been raised since the sixties including from our scientists. For example Dubos has written extensively of the need for wise ecological management, as well as consideration of genuine human needs that must be met (Dubos 1968, 1973, 1980), (Dubos & Ward 1972).

T: The problem with Dubos is that he is a firm anthropocentrist. It's all about saving the earth for our *human* needs.

A: So it should be.

M: Bookchin has likewise written extensively on this subject (Bookchin: 1980, 1982, 1986, 1996, 1998). It is his view that all this talk of anthropocentrism and nonanthropocentrism is foolish. To talk about 'us' as the cause of the world's problems, as if all humans had equal moral responsibility and duty to the nonhuman:

> … masks the fact that the social forces that are tearing down the planet are the same social forces which threaten to degrade women, people of color, workers, and ordinary citizens. It masks the fact that there is a historical connection between the way people deal with each other as social beings and the way they treat the rest of nature. It masks the fact that our ecological problems are fundamentally social problems requiring fundamental social change (Bookchin 1991: 31-32).

T: I can see his point. But it is possible to be politically minded and against anthropocentrism like Snyder, Eckersley and other ecofeminists. They want to find a way of putting an end to the systematic prejudice which has raped women, tortured children and laid waste to the land. This starts with making people aware of just how perverse our culture is, beginning with our very language. Karen Warren writes of how we are born into an 'oppressive conceptual framework' (Warren 1998: 258).

M: We may well have such systematic oppression. However, does ecofeminism offer anything more than something to think about? There are critics who find real problems in ecofeminism and in the deep ecology movement more generally, including attitudes that are anti-science and anti-human. Bookchin explains, 'the ecology movement is too important to allow itself to be taken over by airy mystics and reactionary misanthropes' (Bookchin 1998: 234).

A: That's right. Tree huggers are out of their minds.

T: The point is that such prejudices lie at the foundation of this crisis, 'the exploitation of nature and the exploitation of women are intimately linked' (Hay 2002: 75).

M: Aren't feminism and ecology altogether different issues?

T: As Warren says, 'failure to notice the connections between the twin oppressions of women and nature is male-gender bias' (Warren 1998: 267).

M: Well …

T: Some ecofeminists, like Warren and Plumwood, argue that such systematic prejudice begins with our language and a propensity towards dualism.

A: Dualism?

T: The idea is this: Western language and culture discriminates and dominates through binarisms valourising one constructed side over the other. For example, mind over body, spirit over matter, the abstract over the material, the sky over the earth and so on as a means of exclusion. Reason itself has been used as a tool of oppression. Plumwood explains:

> The concept of reason provides the unifying and defining contrast for the concept of nature, much as the concept of husband does for that of wife, as master for slave. Reason in the Western tradition has been constructed as the privileged domain of the master, who has conceived nature as a wife or subordinate other and the feminine which the master has split off and constructed as beneath him. The continual and cumulative overcoming of the domain of nature by reason engenders the Western concept of progress and development. But as in other patriarchal reproductive contexts, it is the father who takes credit for and possession of this misbegotten child, and who guides its subsequent development in ways which continue to deny and devalue the maternal role (Plumwood 1993: 3).

Plumwood argues that discrimination based on gender, race, class and species, stems from this systematic hierarchical process of 'radical exclusion'.

A: Interesting theory.

M: And one which shouldn't be easily dismissed. However there has been criticism of ecofeminism and the deep ecology movement more generally.

A: So there should be. But I'm too buggered to listen to any more of this nonsense.

M: It *has* been a long hot day. Perhaps we could talk again about this next week.

T: If the men think it a good idea that we should stop right at the moment feminism gets a mention …

A: I don't care what you people do but I'm off to the Club for a steak burger and a beer.

T: I believe this is important and that we should be discussing it. If anyone's interested I will be here next week.

M: I will be here.

A: I doubt if I will be. It's like my old man says - life's pretty simple - it's these academic types that know nothing about the real world and waste their time with pointless theorizing ...

END

Chapter 2: Ecofeminism

T: I'm glad you've both decided to return. After last week I've done a lot more reading and I'm convinced that ecofeminism deserves more consideration.

A: Why?

T: There is much insight here for the ecology movement in terms of the interrelationship between the treatment of women and the treatment of nature. Take Caroline Merchant's book *Reinventing Eden* (2003). Merchant argues that we are driven by mythology, not by reason. She challenges the claim that "mankind" is a 'rational being' and therefore uniquely superior to all other creatures. Our culture is largely driven by narratives that we adopt and participate in. Merchant focuses on the 'Edenic Myth' – the narrative originally found in Genesis. This story constructs woman as the temptress 'Eve', she being the embodiment of nature 'herself'. This misogynistic androgenic fairy tale has been told and retold, corrupting our culture and enslaving all that has been constructed as 'Other'. It has been used to exploit and dominate women, children, tribal people and nonhuman organisms and entities. Lynn White Jnr first pointed out how this Judeo-Christian belief system poisoned our attitudes towards the natural (White Jnr: 1998).

A: But surely only a few deluded Christians believe in the literal truth of this silly myth.

M: There does seem to be a resurgence …

A: That is why important activists like Richard Dawkins are out there doing their bit for atheism – to kill this fundamentalism so ruinous to science and humanity.

T: Merchant's point is that you don't have to be a fundamentalist and believe in the literal truth of this story. It is there in our culture and in our language. This 'grand narrative' shapes how we think and how we act – like the myth of Rambo for instance.

A: What's Rambo got to do with Christianity?

T: Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva explain how the story of Rambo, in all those blood soaked horrific films, shapes attitudes of violence and hate. While no one (or at least not many) literally believe there to be a real life entity called Rambo who singlehandedly takes out a police force or crushes military dictatorships - such tales infuse paranoid, gun-toting Americans into violence against all that is 'Other'. Rambo logic asserts the ghastly lies of 'the survival of the strongest' and 'victors are always right' (Mies & Shiva 1993: 124). Ecofeminist work is largely devoted to putting an end to those stories that encourage violence towards others, human and nonhuman (Merchant 2003: 37). Instead we should be telling stories about 'partnership with the non-human world' (Merchant 2003: 7) – by applying an ethic that 'posits nature and humanity as equal' in a 'proper reciprocal relationship' (Merchant 2003: 26).

M: But does this make sense? The idea of a 'reciprocal' relationship is conceptually problematic. If we are to hold to a realist picture of nature then we are committed to the law of individual struggle. Nature isn't recognizably reciprocal in the conscious manner humans can be. And while survival of the strongest is not the whole truth about nature, to deny the facts of violence and brute force would be erroneous. Perhaps the very reason for the popularity of movies like Rambo lies in tapping into this archetypal force. If this is the case we will always tell stories about violence, and to deny this aspect of our nature would amount to denying nature.

A: I agree.

T: I don't. Earlier you told us of humanity's unique capacity for genuine morality and now you claim it is in our nature to take delight in Rambo kill films!

M: I should explain myself better. I think we have the capacity for altruism and cooperation, as well as the capacity for exploitation and domination. I also think that we must be on our guard against anthropomorphizing nature and promoting natural law as morally praiseworthy. There is aggression in human nature and to deny this instinct can be problematic and amount to a denial of nature (something against the principles of ecofeminism and something that could make us psychologically unwell). Perhaps engaging in such narratives is 'cathartic'. Moreover, aggression could be an important part of

our moral lives. P. F. Strawson draws this out in 'Freedom and Resentment' (Strawson 1974). He paints a deliberately loose and unscientific picture of a moral community as something that depends on attitudes and intentions involving such factors as 'goodwill, affection, or esteem on the one hand or contempt, indifference, or malevolence on the other' (Strawson 1974: 5). We learn to internalize attitudes upon ourselves as moral demands for the sake of others (Strawson 1974: 15). Without such attitudes and intentions, Strawson argues, our sense of a moral community breaks down and we demand too little or too much of others as in the case of a moral idiot or a saint. When we find others not participating in our moral community, we are liable to terminate our personal relations with them, deeming them pathological or incompetent and no longer capable of understanding moral exhortation. Instead we find ourselves calling for necessary 'treatment, and control' (Strawson 1974: 17). While there is an obvious variety of moral attitudes, Strawson suggests that without something we humans agree upon as recognizably moral, 'it is doubtful whether we should have anything that we could find intelligible as a system of human relationships, as human society' (Strawson 1974: 24).

T: Strawson has one view of human nature and morality. He shouldn't be so ready to dismiss the power a saint can have over transforming society.

M: Strawson's point is that when we ask too little or too much of others our sense of a moral community breaks down. We need to hold onto our human attitudes and intentions, 'our practices do not merely exploit our natures, they express them' (Strawson 1974: 25). However this is not the same as championing 'natural law' outside of humanity, for this could effectively license survivalism or barbarism. But equally we must accept that not all stories are likely to catch on, especially if they ask too much of us and ignore our natures. For instance, tales about gentle reciprocal partnerships with nature …

A: None of my mates would want to watch such films.

T: M, you've just told us that disapproval is pertinent to moral society. Please let me express my disapproval of masculinist attitudes like Ramboism.

M: I'm merely saying that many humans indulge in simple stories involving sex and violence and

this too may reflect an aspect of our human nature.

T: Merchant rejects the claim that we are chained to our nature. We are not programmed by our genes for this and 'symbols are not immutable: they can be changed by exposing their presence and rethinking history' (Merchant 2003: 23).

M: How?

T: By exposing the immoral messages of all those stories that licence barbarism to other humans and to nonhuman nature, especially the constant theme that wild nature needs to be subdued by man (Merchant 2003: 62) (and I do mean man!). Instead we should be promoting those narratives that encourage decent attitudes like stories about the age of matriarchy (Merchant 2003: 32).

A: Will you be chaining people up and forcing them to watch these boring stories about tree huggers?

T: Contempt for nature is not natural, according to Merchant, but instead arose from *The Age of Reason*. Merchant rejects the traditional tale of the Enlightenment being a story of Reason overcoming superstition. Ecofeminists instead claim it to be a story of 'the domination of nature' (Merchant 2003: 66). 'The wild is tamed, wilderness subdued ... this story is one of converting wilderness into ordered civil society – creating a reinvented Eden – through science, technology and capitalism' (Merchant 2003: 68). She argues the seventeenth century saw a reinvention of nature as something to be controlled like women and even 'wild men like ...

A: Rambo?

T: I was going to say 'Indians' (Merchant 2003: 70). Men like Francis Bacon championed an ethic that aimed to 'control nature' and 'advocated a forceful entry into nature's womb through the song of science' (Merchant 2003: 75). This marked, 'a new narrative of dominion over nature' (Merchant 2003: 76). Women being linked with nature, 'it was men's role to keep unruly women, nature, and "uncivilized" peoples in check. It was civilization's role to keep wilderness in check' (Merchant 2003:

84). The growth of capitalism gave men 'the economic tools to change the earth' (Merchant 2003: 73).

M: Doesn't deconstruction hold that symbols are mutable, but does this apply to nature itself – is it a construct?

T: No, we need to deconstruct our language and our culture but 'the material world itself is real' (Merchant 2003: 201).

M: Does this make ourselves and our bodies 'real'?

T: Of course.

M: But our culture isn't? Isn't our culture rooted in nature and the earth?

T: Yes, but it is changeable. The *Enlightenment* poisoned our culture into contempt for nature, but fortunately there was a cultural revolt.

M: The *Romantic* movement?

T: Yes. It spread as an awareness generated from the mass extinctions, the destruction of beautiful landscapes and the knowledge of rapidly depleting resources. This new era called for wiser stewardship and an aesthetic appreciation for the earth (Merchant 2003: 85-86). However problems of exploitation and domination persisted as this new movement was still guided by Judeo-Christian religious myth. A dualism was conceived, 'the *negative* wild and the *positive* wild. The negative wild was exemplified by unruly passions aroused by the baseness of the body; the positive wild by the sublime passions of the soul' (Merchant 2003: 86). The problem was that the myth of Eden was retained. We still cling to it today and so the problem of exploitation and domination continues. Merchant explains, 'the Recovery Narrative in America is a story of two visions, one of existing Eden, the other of an Eden to be improved' (Merchant 2003: 94). The former is a story of decline, 'a damned Eden' (Merchant 2003: 105). The latter is a story of improving nature through culture and civilization to create paradise here on earth. Migrants in America subscribed to a discourse where they identified

themselves as heroes overcoming nature including 'wild' natives (Merchant 2003: 111). Merchant claims that as the nineteenth century advanced 'men became more desiring of 'the rape of nature' and so became assailed by 'images of sexual assault' (Merchant 2003: 112).

A: And all of these problems can be traced to one story in Genesis? Thank God for Richard Dawkins!

T: Merchant claims that this idea of Eden shapes the very way in which Western man sees himself, as well as how he perceives both women and nature. She writes, 'if Adam was the hero who transformed American lands, Eve was nature itself, gendered as female' (Merchant 2003: 117). 'She (Eve) is a fruitful womb to be harvested and enjoyed or conversely to be exploited and made to pay in sorrow for her sin' (Merchant 2003: 118). Importantly she notes, 'nature as Eve is also central to the environmentalist counter-narrative ... a powerful female to be revered, rather than a virgin land to be plowed and improved' (Merchant 2003: 118). Like other ecofeminists, Merchant explodes this binarism as something that has enslaved women and the rest of nature. But her project has a double edge. Not only does she wish to undermine and expose patriarchal practices, she also wants to promote those stories that are favourable to the partnership ethic. She calls for an 'inclusive' body of work especially those stories that never made the canon, such as the narratives of coloured people and natives. This is all part of developing 'an ethic of partnership among humans and between human and nonhuman communities, an ethic that explicitly includes minorities' (Merchant 2003: 162).

A: I can't follow this Eden talk. Who spends their time pondering the myth of Genesis?

T: According to Merchant, people in our culture are driven by this myth, even if they are not fully conscious of it. Most of us live in a fantasy world wherein 'the modern version of the garden of Eden is the enclosed shopping mall' (Merchant 2003: 167). She claims that, 'malls are places of light, hope, and promise-transitions to new worlds. People are reinvented and redeemed by the mall' and 'malls are designed to be morally uplifting places' (Merchant 2003: 168).

M: Her claim is that we don't live rationally at all, nor are we for the most part conscious of how much myth penetrates our ideas and activities.

A: The claims of Freud and Jung?

M: Yes. On this view we live by myth and our own Western mythology wishes to carry us above filth, squalor and indecencies – and so an important aspect of nature is ignored or somehow symbolically overcome.

T: 'Just as the mall keeps out the socially undesirable, it rejects the naturally undesirable – weeds, pests and garbage' (Merchant 2003: 165). But Merchant goes even further, claiming that science itself is riddled with Edenic ideology. Thus we desire labour saving technologies like 'biotechnology' as a means of returning to the garden of paradise (Merchant 2003: 174).

M: I agree we are not driven purely by reason but I have some major issues with Merchant's historical narrative. To begin with, I'm not convinced the story of Genesis is a story about domination. There has been a strong theological and philosophical movement that insists the story of Genesis is a tale promoting stewardship of the earth. As Stephen. R. L. Clark explains – it is our duty to, 'tend and keep' God's garden, as well as 'improving the lives of such creatures as we can' (Clark 1977: 35).

T: Maybe some people think like that but Christianity and Western philosophy is inherently anthropocentric.

M: I disagree with that likewise. In *The Great Chain of Being* (1964) A. O. Lovejoy writes of the great adventure of philosophy beginning with Plato - the exploration and explication of the paradox of *being*. With admirable scholarship, Lovejoy draws on evidence rejecting the claim that Christianity and Western philosophy have been historically 'anthropocentric'. He writes on the Medieval Christian world view that:

> … the centre of the world was not a position of honor; it was rather the place farthest removed from the Empyrean, the bottom of the creation, to which its dregs and baser elements sank. The actual centre, indeed, was Hell; in the spatial sense the Medieval world was literally diabolocentric. And the whole sublunary region was, of course, incomparably inferior to the resplendent and incorruptible heavens above the moon (Lovejoy 1964: 101-102).

Instead of exulting mankind, human beings held a humiliating place in the Great Chain of Being (Lovejoy 1964: 102). And:

> It was not in the thirteenth century but in the nineteenth that *homo sapiens* bustled about most self-importantly and self-complacently in his infinitesimal corner of the cosmic stage. The reasons for this paradox are, of course, to be found in the fact that, in the later period as in the earlier, certain associated ideas in large measure counteracted the characteristic tendency of the received cosmographical presuppositions (Lovejoy 1964: 143).

The claim, moreover, that the Romantics overthrew two centuries of *Enlightenment* philosophy is equally dubious. According to Lovejoy, 'they were but repeating what Plotinus and the schoolmen and the Renaissance Platonists and the theologians and metaphysicians of the seventeenth century had said before them' (Lovejoy 1964: 296). Coleridge is a perfect example of this, in his *Biographia Literaria* he writes against the claim that he was part of 'a new school of poetry' (Coleridge 2000: 194). As a poet and as a philosopher, Coleridge was openly a part of the Western tradition dating back to Plato and saw himself as continuous with the Enlightenment. Plato was a strong influence on Coleridge personally, as well as being so in Western philosophy more generally. Lovejoy asserts, 'there had always been present in the Platonic tradition a principle tending towards Romanticism' (Lovejoy 1964: 297). We find this same development in German Romanticism. Schleiermacher, one of the main early Romantics, was also a Plato scholar. Merchant's own historical scholarship must be seriously questioned. Not only does she locate the powerful effects of the Edenic myth at a period when the Church's authority is being undermined, but equally she offers no appraisal of structural, economic and technological change as major factors in ecological devastation.

T: This too may have been the product of mythology. Maybe Merchant isn't as scholarly as Lovejoy, but I'm in full agreement with her attacks on modern technology and the constructs of nature as something to be dominated and exploited. Furthermore I agree with her promotion of 'new multi-coloured narratives, new approaches to science and a new ethic of partnership between humanity and the earth' (Merchant 2003: 189). I also agree with the need to reject the simplistic, barbaric narratives we are constantly bombarded with.

M: Perhaps there is something in that.

A: Would that mean the end of Rambo?

M: Good question. What stories would Merchant allow to stand? Would she or someone else act as censors?

A: Like a Stalinist dictatorship?

M: Indeed. Or like Disney Productions. Besides how would she go about creating new stories other than the way they are currently created today? Does it amount to anything more than a plea for change? Can we keep Rambo if we deconstruct him? Or allow other myths to co-exist? Who decides what stories are fit and unfit to tell?

T: I'm not entirely sure, but I agree with Francoise d'Eaubonnes that 'the real cause of the environmental crisis is patriarchal power' (Merchant 2003: 195). If Rambo continues his violent ways perhaps we will have to find a quiet way of getting rid of him. For such narratives have been behind the rape and torture of women and the rest of nature.

A: How much harm does watching a little bit of Rambo do?

T: A lot!

M: But as much as Merchant and others claim? Surely ecological devastation and the plight of the oppressed will require solutions that go beyond what films we watch.

T: They call upon deconstruction as a means of transforming our culture into a more just and ecologically responsible one.

M: But surely we need more. And surely real solutions will require reason as Bookchin asserts, or risk 'a cloudy intuitionism and mysticism as an alternative' (Bookchin 1996: 3-4).

T: Reason and argument are the very tools of oppression. As Derrida explained:

> Logos is not really a well-reasoned argument captured by the written text. It is just myth, repeated work without knowing ... both myth and logos are endless plays of meaning; repetitions without knowing (Merchant 2003: 200).

M: Merchant's analysis of Derrida is simplistic.

A: And it makes no sense. What are you left with once you have exploded reason?

T: Better and more numerous stories. Getting rid of grand and simplistic narratives and instead promoting 'a multitude of stories' (Merchant 2003: 202). In these new narratives 'people will acknowledge their own location within nature'. Subjects will become 'active participants' who:

> … construct narratives for themselves rather than submitting to a "master narrative" that has constructed them as passive, controllable entities. In the new stories, people will recreate themselves through culture and act out their own roles (Merchant 2003: 202).

This project calls for:

> … many narratives stemming from many groups of people worldwide [that] may contend with each other or may at some point eventually come together. The new voices and stories that contribute to a sustainable world will have new visions of belonging to the earth (Merchant 2003: 203).

A: Merchant is wrong. She wants to destroy the whole fabric of democracy simply because Rambo is not her thing.

T: The principles of democracy should be called into question, if such principles are really a guise for great evil.

A: You can't be serious.

T: What has democracy done for women, children, the world's poor, native people, for nonhuman animals, for entire ecosystems?

M: I think that a great deal has been achieved, but equally our social and ecological problems are

undeniable. But getting rid of old stories and replacing them with new ones is problematic for the reasons already given.

A: I agree.

M: Take the question of culture and nature. Has she explained the relationship they have with one another? And to what degree culture is mutable?

T: Her point is that our symbols and stories change over time.

M: But herein lies a problem. Part of her project is to deconstruct gender identities but equally she desires to hold onto material realism.

T: What's the problem?

M: Would our nature also be real including our domination and exploitive activity?

T: We have such capacities, but equally we have the capacity to cooperate with each other and with nature more generally in a partnership ethic.

M: I find it conceptually weird when she proposes *'a partnership ethic holds that the greatest good for the human and non human communities is in their mutual living interdependence'* (Merchant 2003: 223). Merchant claims that Western science is based on exploitation and domination, but what then is a nonhuman community? If she really is a material realist then she must have some commitment to environmental realism without the risk of collapsing into mysticism. If this is the case then she can't reject the empirical findings of science. We do depend upon the earth, and have radically altered it (scientists now claiming we are living in the 'Anthropocene' era). Such interdependence is an environmental *fact* but to transfer this into an ethical *ought* is conceptually strange. To repeat, the interdependencies ecology finds in nature are not recognizably moral or reciprocal in the way humans mean when they promote a moral community. Nor does it make much sense to me to speak of a *partnership* with much of the nonhuman. Perhaps we can have a kind of partnership with our pets, like

A's dog, but what sense does it make to speak of a partnership, with say, a dingo who threatens your child?

A: Exactly and what if there's a little bit of Rambo in us all and this is a good thing? If we really care about the plight of the disadvantaged, then we need Rambo.

T: I really can't see a place for Rambo in a just and harmonious world.

A: You haven't given him a chance! Maybe you're prejudiced against the masculine.

T: Please!

M: Perhaps these instincts will always be with us, and the hero archetype *could* be a force for the good.

T: But the male hero myth does change and vary. For instance James Dean in *Rebel Without a Cause*. Here we have a new hero of the sixties, blue jeans, emotional, caring ...

A: When he wasn't getting into knife fights.

T: Today the Dalai Lama, or Nelson Mandela are peaceful heroes. Maybe Gandhi inspired a new take on an old theme of male heroism. Or maybe he was following in the footsteps of Socrates and Jesus. But surely we don't need Rambo. A horrible killer wantonly blowing up nature and his fellow men!

A: Have you seen a Rambo movie?

T: I've seen about as much as I could. That last one, how did they market it? By celebrating its non-stop violence! Surely that can't be good for your psyche, to say the least!

A: Your problem is that you don't understand Rambo. Rambo is a war-time hero who returns to a

society who no longer can make use of him. He ends up in a redneck town where he is set upon by a sheriff because he has long hair and wears a singlet. The town is the guilty party for they are the ones who discourage diversity! And it is Rambo who is the hero for he remains true to himself and his nature. After that Rambo tries to survive in the town *without* killing people. Furthermore, most of his skills are skills learned in the wild. He loves the wild and is a creature of it. Anyone who dismisses Rambo as a story of redneck American values should at least take the trouble to watch *First Blood.* Of course Merchant would probably reply that it is an extension of the American migrant hero myth, but if so, this is not a simplistic story of the male hero dominating nature and putting women, children and other races to the sword. It is she who is simplistic! It is just wrong to think of Rambo as a figure of American patriarchal values.

T: Rambo must be very special to you.

A: I am raising a very important point, namely, that people should get their facts right before they start slamming ideas.

T: A worthy suggestion! Maybe Rambo's story is more complicated than is sometimes supposed, but you have to admit he does blow up wilderness and slaughter a lot of people.

A: Only for the greater good.

T: That's just it! Rambo the utilitarian! What Merchant is saying is that blowing people up and exploding nature for the 'greater good' is not good enough!

A: Then I don't agree with her. It comes back to Lynch's example of the beast attacking the human – you shoot the beast. And that's what Rambo does.

T: Along with everything and everybody else.

A: Consider the last Rambo movie. At its start we find Rambo, the wild man, living in harmony with nature deep within the jungle. He may well have chosen to live the rest of his life there, hunting

game for dinner with his bow and arrow and skinning animals with his knife for clothing. However he finds out that a group of naïve, peace-loving pacifists have been captured by a cruel military dictatorship. They had been attempting to bring the innocent victims of the violent dictatorship medication, food and Jesus Christ. Unfortunately they have been captured by militants who thrive on rape, torture and slaughter. Rambo, being a virtuous hero (and one who cares about women, children and nature), explodes into action. It is a *moral* response, no different in kind to Lynch's example. And yes, he does blow up a bit of wilderness here and there. What does Merchant expect of him, to allow these people to be raped and tortured to death? Perhaps she could call for a partnership where trees and wild beasts could form an alliance with Rambo and help him with his mission, for which Rambo will agree to be more considerate with the use of his weaponry. Or perhaps they can negotiate a fair and equitable contract which specifies which humans are to be saved and which others should be sacrificed for the greater good of the biosphere.

M: What's more if she is genuine about minorities she has to allow these stories to be told even if they clash with her own beliefs. It is sentimental and simplistic to hold the view all primitive or 'wild' people live a peaceful utopian existence. Violence is a part of nature both human and nonhuman.

A: That's right.

M: Furthermore if she is committed to the idea that we are a part of nature she cannot reject the 'masculine', except when it has lost contact with the earth. For to devalue the 'masculine' in nature is just as biased as devaluing the 'feminine'.

T: Maybe.

M: Nor do I know what she could do about Rambo apart from deconstruct him and hold him up as a figure of ridicule, for she is committed to diversity. She couldn't have him banned because that would require a paternalistic censor, and, I presume, paternalism is a part of the patriarchal system she so vehemently attacks.

A: I agree.

M: And this problem of diversity may lead to problems she hasn't even considered.

T: Like what?

M: Like who says all these voices, all these 'webs', can fit together in any meaningful way? What she's trying to celebrate is a kind of chaos isn't it?

T: She is advocating respect!

M: But she wants to hold onto two contrary things, 'a discourse of co-operation' (Merchant 2003: 224) and 'the presence of the wild' (Merchant 2003: 230). Are they necessarily compatible? As a lover of diversity she has to allow wild nature (as well as wild people) to exist even when it, or they, act chaotically or in a disorderly fashion. The problem is that as an eco-feminist she is committed to an agenda of order - peaceful relations between men, women, natives and nature.

A: What does this mean for Rambo?

M: I don't know exactly. I suppose if he is a reflection of natural masculinity, there will always be men (and some women) who will identify with him. He may well be here to stay whether we wish it or not.

T: Oh bloody Rambo!

M: That's right. Rambo is bloody. He is the figure who remains faithful to the earth. The point of Jungian archetypes is that they are troubling, and according to Jung, we are stuck with them. He explains:

> Archetypes mean archaic elements because they are forms of psychic life which have an eternal existence. They have existed since time immemorial and will continue to exist in an indefinite future. And they will always retain the character which we call “archaic”. They date from the primeval state of things and are those forms of life which operate with the greatest frequency and regularity (Jung 1997: 239).

Jung claims that we will always have violence and wars for this very reason – they are a part of our nature. However much popular sentiment supports anti-war movements, bloody Rambo, bloody nature, will always be there. Importantly, he argues this is not always a bad thing. Archetypes have a useful aspect (Jung 1959: 268).

T: But what about what I said earlier about how the hero myth could evolve into a peaceful warrior like Gandhi, or Nelson Mandela or the Dalai Lama?

M: It's possible.

T: So we can hold onto the archetypes without being committed to violence, like Gandhi the peaceful hero.

M: Gandhi was shot dead!

T: He made such an impression on the world without resorting to violence and inspired many.

M: He didn't inspire the man who shot him and what has happened to India since his death? Even if there are 'peaceful heroes' about, they still live in a world populated by violence. Besides it's possible to mount a case that pacifism, like the Dalai Lama's, may not always work.

T: What do you mean?

M: For thirty years before being awarded the Nobel prize for peace and for seventeen years after, he has tirelessly worked for the Tibetan cause, and now? Has peaceful compassion made any impact on China's foreign policy in Tibet or anywhere else?

T: So what are you saying? Do you think its time to send Rambo into China?

M: I'm not saying that. I'm just suggesting that pacifism may not always work.

T: Perhaps instead of peaceful protests and forgiving sentiment, the Dalai Lama should retrain his monks for armed combat. Spend some of the money he has raised from peaceful meditation retreats, invest in a few tanks and ...

M: Alright, it sounds ridiculous but all I'm saying is that archetypes and violence have always been with us and aren't likely to disappear soon. Furthermore, at times they may be necessary.

T: So there's no point in even trying? Violence is bad, ok, war is bad!

M: But sometimes it may be necessary.

T: Like Rambo is necessary? I find this masculinist testosterone worship completely unconvincing. Take your simplistic arguments against pacifism. What if the Dalai Lama had instructed his people into fighting an unwinnable war? Do you think that sacrificing the lives of a great many more men, with all the anguish this pointless violence would involve and the savage spirit it would have generated, could have improved the situation? The Dalai Lama's pacifism has 'worked' by preserving the dignity and inner harmony of many of his people. You should spend less time talking rubbish with your angry mates at the pub and more time at the university with enlightened scholars like Bill McDonald[2].

M: Perhaps you're right. But there are many Tibetans who are unconvinced of the Dalai Lama's strategy. And there's a further problem with Merchant, namely, the problem with the popularity of such narratives.

A: That's right. Men love Rambo because they don't want complex boring stories that make them think. I know from personal experience, that after a hard day's work I want a beer and something to help me relax – not a preachy sentimental film about a partnership with a bed of daffodils.

M: You may well be right in suggesting that people can be attracted to stories that are simple, particularly if they wish to escape from their busy messy lives. Simple narratives may also appeal to

2 Bill McDonald is a senior lecturer in philosophy at UNE.

the lazy and deluded who aren't looking for truth or moral guidance. They may identify with Rambo in an explosion of self-inflation from the safety of their living room. I don't know what you can do about this kind of mindless escapism except maybe to investigate the consequences bad art has on our morality, along with promoting a higher form of aesthetics, showing its role in improving our moral character, as Iris Murdoch does (Murdoch 1992). Perhaps this is essentially what Merchant is after, to persuade us to abandon bad, violent art forms, in favour of a higher aesthetic.

A: What's wrong with Rambo? Some people have to work for a living and need time out to chill and relax.

T: By watching Rambo slaughter people?

A: Different strokes for different folks. You don't hear me bagging those who love boring emo films like *Rebel Without a Cause* do you?

M: The point I think A is making – is that people engage in this kind of mythic story telling for reasons that are not directly moral.

A: Exactly.

T: Still, such activity can be morally injurious.

M: True, but there is no guarantee all of Merchant's tales are directly moral or even likely to lead to a more ethical world.

T: What do you mean?

M: Take her example of the counter-narrative of African American slaves. She notes, 'many believed that their owners would receive due punishment after death, while they themselves would end up in paradise' (Merchant 2003: 157). This may have led to the moral injunction of turning the other cheek but the purpose of the story probably had more to do with assuaging rage at injustice than being

directly ethical. What's more, such a narrative may actually reaffirm the status quo, promoting resigned acceptance rather than necessary revolution.

A: Necessary revolution?

M: If that is what it takes if we are to deliver true justice and assure ecological sustainability. In any event, according to structuralists like Mary Douglas and Levi Strauss, stories are a means of imposing order onto chaos, they aren't merely moral guides to action (Douglas 1966).

A: Just because you like Rambo that doesn't make you bad.

M: I also find her partnership ethic conceptually unsound:

> What is called for is a new ethic that arises out of both the needs of nature and the needs of humanity. Both must be considered as active agents. A new ethic of human partnership with nature is needed, one in which nature is an active subject, not a passive object (Merchant 2003: 217).

T: What's unsound about that?

M: The idea of a partnership implies genuine reciprocity and conscious deliberation, as well as moral accountability. How is it possible to form a partnership with all of nature especially if it be something that is wild or non-sentient? Lynch & Wells explain, 'any ethic is a *human* construction, and even if it is formulated from the purest of motives, with no hint of self-interest, it cannot escape that heritage' (Lynch & Wells 2000: 29-30).

A: I agree.

M: As an ethic it is conceptually absurd for, 'we would not expect a wolverine, a shark or a swarm of soldier ants to follow such an ethic, and to do so would be futile' (Lynch & Wells 2000: 30).

A: Or a dingo!

T: Let me get this straight - 'reason' has led you to reject a partnership ethic concerned with loving and respecting nature, while it has led us to protect the rights of Rambo and the violent logic it is based upon. This is just what ecofeminism bitterly abhors!

M: I don't see it like that. Ramboism, to my mind, is not an ethic at all. Though I agree there is a case to be made that what he represents and how he affects our psyches is pathological and so may encourage immorality. However I'm not sure how you can get rid of such problems. Perhaps subversion, ridicule and championing a loftier and more ecologically mindful aesthetic has an important role to play.

A: I doubt it.

M: Perhaps it would. The problem I have with the partnership ethic and the notion of reciprocity is that we need Gaia, but it …

A: .... doesn't need us.

M: Exactly. As Edward Wilson explains:

> If human beings were to disappear tomorrow, the world would go on with little change. Gaia, the totality of life on earth, would set about healing itself and return to the rich environmental standing of a few thousand years ago (Wilson 1998: 130).

If Merchant is committed to environmental realism then she would have to accept this. Of course she might invoke sustainability on the 'stewardship ethic' but this, as we have seen, is an anthropocentric ideology which involves the human ideas of respecting 'nature tamed' over 'nature wild' and has grown out of the Judeo-Christian tradition which she has rejected.

T: Maybe you should reason less and feel more!

M: That may be what Merchant suggests, but I, with Bookchin, hold that rejecting reason is dangerously irresponsible. I cannot accept her claim that reason is mere myth and furthermore I think (feel?) that it works against Merchant's ideas.

T: In what way?

M: I agree that a disembodied logic which has lost touch with the earth and our common and shared humanity is something we should reject. But a healthy rational animal, in the way Aristotle conceived us and Nietzsche and Wittgenstein promoted, makes more sense to me than this postmodern indulgence. Can't we and don't we use reason as a weapon against irrational practices? While reason has its limitations, good women and men have used it to attack shortsighted ideas and wrong minded principles.

A: I agree.

M: Intuitive ideas and knowledge may be important, but they can't be the sole criterion, for otherwise we could be facing something akin to the dangerous mysticism of Nazism Bookchin warns against.

T: You might be right about reason, but you might be wrong for the reasons I just mentioned, namely, that it can lead to positions which are intuitively dubious.

M: But there you go – reasons. Reason is what philosophy is all about – we must reflect even when something *seems* to be right.

T: I don't know.

M: We can develop respect and love for the environment without talking the language of Kantians and businessmen. Nina Rosenstand explains:

> Within the American Indian holistic world view, there is no talk of inalienable rights not to be killed – not for animals, humans, or any other entities. But there is a strong message of *respect* to all elements of the environment (Rosenstand 1998: 66).

T: But see how Rosenstand concludes her paper:

> Might this outlook not be interpreted as a deep, ancient, practical commitment never to use one another – the entire moral community of human and nonhuman persons – merely as a means to an end? (Rosenstand 1998: 66).

Maybe we don't need a 'partnership ethic' exactly but I think we do need to unearth the ways in which patriarchal thinking has sidelined women and nature. Plumwood has investigated the role of reason in fueling masculine prejudice. She advocates an anti-rationalist platform because the rationalist philosophical platform is 'not only biased from a gender perspective, but has claimed a negative role for nature as well' (Plumwood 1998: 241). She attacks philosophy when it becomes 'dualistic' and separates reason from feeling, to the detriment of the latter. This is a male bias which understands

> "feminine" emotions as essentially unreliable, untrustworthy, and morally irrelevant, an inferior domain to be dominated by a superior, disinterested (and of course masculine) reason (Plumwood 1998: 242).

This is a part of 'dualistic contrasts' (Plumwood 1998: 243) and creates 'discontinuity between all humans and the non-human world, and the similar cleavage within the human self' (Plumwood 1998: 242).

M: Not all philosophy should be rejected on such grounds. Bookchin writes of the organic tradition in Western philosophy, a *dialectic*, which began with Heraclitus (Bookchin 1996: 6). What's more especially, since Hume, much of Western philosophy has insisted upon the importance of genuine *feeling* when it comes to the cultivation of moral sentiment.

T: I find it bizarre how *any* philosopher could down-play the role of feeling when it comes to moral sentiment and I wholeheartedly agree with Plumwood that our capacity to care 'is an index of our moral being' as well her attacks on the masculine-dominated Western philosophy and its contempt for the 'particular'. She writes of 'care and responsibility for *particular* animals, trees and rivers that are known well, loved, and appropriately connected to the self' (Plumwood 1998: 243). I agree with her attacks on utilitarianism and Kantian morality for being not only ethically incomplete but also for producing 'absurd consequences' like the right of a lamb not to be eaten by a wolf. Nor am I convinced of the absurdity of her promoting 'a reciprocal social community' (Plumwood 1998: 244). We should champion 'the ethic of care and responsibility' over 'impersonal concepts' and 'it also seems capable of providing an excellent basis for the non-instrumental treatment of nature many environmental

philosophies have now called for' (Plumwood 1998: 245). Ethics require a 'richer understanding' involving 'emotionality and particularity' and a rejection of 'dualistic and oppositional accounts of the reason/emotion and universal/particular contrasts as given in rationalist accounts of ethics' (Plumwood 1998: 245).

M: I can agree up to a point. Lynch & Wells also promote community as an essential aspect of our ethical, political and aesthetic wellbeing:

> We may strike up various kinds of bonds with non-human beings beside the instrumental. We may value such beings for aesthetic reasons, we may find that empathy opens up areas of shared living and sets moral limits, and even the fact of ownership may assume a deep significance, beyond consideration of price. These bonds matter to us, they are real connections, real ties of obligation and sympathy, and we do not abandon them, or their importance, when we come to moral education (Lynch & Wells 1998: 33).

T: What do they think of Plumwood's contention that human beings should not be defined 'as separate from and in opposition to' nature and her proposal for 'the obliteration of all distinction' (Plumwood 1998: 247)?

M: Lynch & Wells don't define humans as separate and opposed to nature. They merely argue that we should hold onto our humanity and, 'humans might not be the *only* valuable things, but they would certainly seem to be the *most* valuable' (Lynch & Wells 2000: 27). However:

> It is perfectly consistent with an anthropocentric outlook to recognize that human life is intimately connected with the life of all organisms in the biosphere, to appreciate the beauty and wonder of life, to empathize with it, and to value it for all its richness and diversity (Lynch & Wells 2000: 36).

T: But why must we draw distinctions between self and other in a way that separates and excludes them? There are other ways of perceiving and acting within the world – we can reject this patriarchal model.

M: Gould also welcomes what he calls postmodern analysis as raising our consciousness about our prejudices, as well as making us aware of our ignorance when it comes to understanding the complex workings of nature and ourselves. But this is not the same as rejecting knowledge as mere prejudice or

committing ourselves to relativism.

T: I don't believe this is what Plumwood is arguing. Her call is:

> ... for the recognition of *continuities* with the natural world. Thus reproductivity, sensuality, emotionality would be taken to be as fully and authentically human qualities as the capacity for abstract planning and calculation (Plumwood 1998: 250) (emphasis added).

And she promotes a form of particularism where our moral affinities are tied to particular places, an ethic she finds in many indigenous cultures and sorely lacking in our own oppressive creeds of reason.

M: Particularism is open to critique. Roger Crisp explains that if particularism is to be truly ethical and not collapse into relativism, then it must be concerned with moral virtue. He agrees with W. D. Ross that acting virtuously involves a 'plurality of principles' and sometimes they may come into conflict. But this conflict is surely part of living virtuously and a person committed to acting in this way must be committed to an overarching principle, 'one's strongest ultimate reason'. But if this is the case, then what sense does particularism make at all? (Crisp 1996: 47). Plumwood's version of particularism is open to further problems. Does she claim we should have greater moral consideration, for example, for a local oak over an unrelated human being? Her critique of reason is likewise problematic, for to reject reason as part of an oppressive framework makes her moral outlook even more open to the charge of relativism.

A: That's right!

T: I don't think Plumwood's rejecting reason at all. What is rational about the 'rationalist culture' and the binarisms it is built upon? There is nothing rational or moral about this at all (Plumwood 2002: 4). Plumwood attacks a 'reason-centred culture' which is destroying our planet and as such is not reasonable at all! (Plumwood 2002: 5). In fact Plumwood argues for a *more* reasonable approach to living (Plumwood 2002: 18).

M: Do you really believe that we are living in a 'rationalist' culture? Of course we have terms like 'economic rationalism' but I don't think such discourse is concerned with rationality at all. Rather I

think it is a case of rhetoric – making use of the concept of reason, in the manner of a sophist, to serve an agenda. I think it's possible Plumwood's attack on 'rationalist culture' follows the work of Herbert Marcuse and his attack on *instrumental* reason. Marcuse argues that society, including its science, has been organized in a purely instrumental manner so that its aims and product are dramatically at odds with the Enlightenment ideals of freedom and *genuine* wellbeing (Marcuse 1964). But arguing that human beings have become instruments to a technological apparatus, that is not only irrational but insane and holds its own through social repression (Marcuse 1964, 1972, 1955) is a far deeper analysis than Plumwoods' assertion that the problem is linguistic resulting from 'binarisms'.

T: I think it's more complicated than that!

M: I am also sceptical of some of the more outrageous claims, including Plumwood's and Warren's assertion that the entire *Enlightenment* project supported an 'oppressive framework' devoted to 'the subordination of women by men' (Warren 1998: 258). There is much in the *Enlightenment* tradition which strove for a greater moral concern for others that had previously been given little or no such consideration. Mary Wollstonecraft's work is an example of this. I find Plumwood's dismissal of Wollstonecraft's spirited fight to be one-sided, lacking in both empathy and historical context and seemingly devised to serve an agenda. Mies and Shiva wish to attack empirical science as 'a Western, male-oriented and patriarchal projection which necessarily entailed the subjugation of both nature and women' (Shiva 1993: 22). But again it is not difficult to think of some obvious ways Western science has improved the lives of women. Some traditional feminists have argued this point as well as articulating suspicion of ecofeminism as turning back the clock on the important achievements of *modernity*. It is surely short sighted to claim that Western philosophy and science are reducible to blind prejudice and unreflective beliefs and practices developed as a means of constraining and repressing both women and nature. Furthermore, ecofeminism itself has come under attack for its essentialism. Claims against patriarchal values frequently amount to attacks against men and their essential natures – portrayed as irredeemably aggressive and ruled by a hunger for mastery and domination.

A: My point exactly.

M: Whereas the care ethic is often explained as a natural womanly morality, feminists such as

Victoria Davion, Maxine Molyneux and Deborah Lynn Steinberg find the identification of woman with nature problematic. Davion claims that there is no such thing as a femininity divorced from patriarchy and that femininity actually 'may be a cluster of various traits emerging out of oppression' (Davion 1998: 284). An essentialist project potentially reinforces gender stereotyping and therefore oppression.

T: What do you mean?

M: Molyneux and Steinberg argue that Shiva's and Mies' attack on gender construction of women and nature as arising out of patriarchal values and their rejection of 'dualism and reductionism' actually reinforces it. Instead of ending the singular narrative that discriminates through a lack of inclusiveness, they end up spelling out what ecofeminism advocates in a 'prescriptive fashion' (Molyneux & Steinberg 1995: 90). And 'it is strikingly reductionist and totalizing to say that all current science is 'quite fundamentally military' (Molyneux & Steinberg 1995: 91). Furthermore, instead of attacking patriarchal values as an analysis of power, Shiva and Mies are 'asserting that it is *essentially* male and the production of a biological 'urge" (Molyneux & Steinberg 1995: 91). This is the very 'biological determinism' they claim to attack in patriarchy. Finally they fall into the same trap of 'romanticism' which they have attacked (Molyneux & Steinberg 1995: 91).

A: Hypocrites.

M: Molyneux and Steinberg record a number of 'profound contradictions'.

> Most disturbing perhaps is that it is exactly those elements they identify as the most damning indictments of modern science, i.e. dualism, reductionism, universalism and romanticism, which underpin Mies's and Shiva's own critique of science. Instead it is ironic that while both warn of the dangers of simply 'up-ending' the dualisms underpinning science (Mies and Shiva 1993: 5), this self-same inversion is what seems to inform their definition of the source and character of the ecofeminist alternative (Molyneux & Steinberg 1995: 92).

T: There may be some 'conceptual' problems with the work of Mies and Shiva, however they are real activists out there trying to make the world a better place. Ok, so their theory isn't perfect but tell me whose is? At least they're doing something about the environment and women's issues and not just sitting around making superior critiques.

M: Shiva and Mies may well be a force for good for women and for nature more generally. But the point Molyneux and Steinberg make is that such politics might themselves be discriminatory and reinforce the very patriarchal values they claim to reject. Not only towards men, but to other women as well, like lesbians or 'barren' women, or those who champion the pill as an essential break-through in their emancipation. 'This dualistic equation of men with sex and women with reproduction is a classical cliché of dominant discourses on heterosexuality' (Molyneux & Steinberg 1995: 98). They likewise reject the cliches of the essentially good nature of the feminine principle and the view of history which this is based on, complaining that 'the routes of transformation surely cannot come from a recovery of an imaginary past' (Molyneux & Steinberg 1995: 102). Politically, too, the call for 'voluntary simplicity' would be a major disadvantage for many women involving 'an intensification of their unpaid labour' (Molyneux & Steinberg 1995: 103). And this:

> … power to consumers is striking for its liberal and individualized vision of change and also seems at variance with their own analysis of how patriarchal capitalism works (Molyneux & Steinberg 1995: 103).

T: There may be some conceptual problems but I'm not ready to dismiss an important political ecological movement over it.

M: Ecofeminism has raised questions, and I agree with Gould when he champions postmodernist thought as a means of fueling our scepticism. But this is precisely the virtue of science – that it is built on scepticism and not on infallible doctrines and blind passion. Western philosophy, likewise, has the inbuilt mechanism allowing for scepticism – reason and argument.

T: But there's plenty of people who don't strike me as very sceptical at all. Take Dawkins, how open is he to challenge?

A: Dawkins is the ultimate sceptic! He is the most admired atheist on the planet.

M: Gould attacks Dawkins and scientific fundamentalists more generally (Gould 2002: 634). Any scientist who clings to fundamentalist notions is not a true scientist.

T: And don't you think that science seems to have taken over much of our lives and in doing so has destroyed many of our spiritual and aesthetic values including environmental ones?

M: Possibly, but again I take Gould's NOMA very seriously. Perhaps the problem is science illegitimately, attempting to infiltrate territory that is not its own. Or what is more likely - people making use of science for projects with ends that are ecologically unsound. Gould also recognizes that some use of science's limitations when it makes claims to representing the real world. Because of the limitations brought about by being human we must always observe life 'through a glass darkly' (Gould 1998: 5).

T: I agree with that.

M: As humans we are limited by cultural influences constantly subjecting us to 'prevailing social and political beliefs' (Gould 1980: 44). Science, far from being created in a vacuum, is necessarily dependent on our cultural ideas and as valuable and reliable as Darwin's work is, we shouldn't forget that he was influenced by his intellectual climate including his reading of Adam Smith and Thomas Malthus. Such reading may have impacted in some way on his work. Science 'is after all (although we sometimes forget it), practiced by human beings' (Gould 1980: 125). Human beings are products of both culture and nature. We are likewise limited by our biological perspective. Gould explains that, 'the human mind is both an amazing instrument and a fierce impediment' (Gould 1996: 214-215). We are necessarily limited by our consciousness, our 'inability to overcome our self-centered view' (Gould 1998: 380).

T: Go on.

M: Gould also takes seriously the postmodernist/ecofeminist complaint against the method of constructing knowledge in terms of hierarchies and dualism, holding that 'we may choose to parse the world in many other ways with radically different implications' (Gould 1998: 394).

T: Isn't Gould's NOMA a dualism?

M: It's more complicated than that. He explains that 'science and religion interdigitate in patterns of complex fingering, and at every fractal scale of self-similarity' (Gould 1999: 65). By this I think he suggests that there is a complex interrelationship between the two, but that we should attempt to respect them as being concerned largely with different territories and employing different yet equally rational and agreed-upon methods. He is making an attempt to respect different forms of understanding but accepts these criticisms and even explores them himself as a means of aiding our 'healthy skepticism' (Gould 1998: 394) and the recognition that we don't and can't fully understand the complex workings of nature (Gould 1998: 404). He also draws attention to how our thought patterns may be structured into binarisms as something which has arisen from our evolutionary past (Gould 1999: 50-51).

T: So you agree the ecofeminists have a point?

M: Insofar as they point out our prejudices in the way we frame nature. But Gould rejects extremist views. He explains that, 'nature ... is not merely an empty stage upon which scientists display their prior preferences: nature also speaks back' (Gould 1980: 192). It may face impediments but 'great thinkers' can shed much light on the world around us (Gould 1996: 440). Gould sums up:

> … science tends to be difficult, subtle, and biased by all manner of social and psychic prejudice – though surely directed in a general way toward increasingly better understanding of a real world “out there” (Gould 1998: 185).

A: Exactly.

M: I agree with much of Shiva's attacks in terms of capitalist destruction of ecosystems and the unjust effect this has on women, children and local communities. I agree with her attack on GDP calculations that 'sees all work that does not produce profits and capital as non or unproductive work' (Shiva 1998: 272). And there is something to the suggestion that this may have arisen out of a patriarchal attitude 'based on the introduction and accentuation of man over nature and woman' (Shiva 1998: 273). Capitalism has much power over our science. But this shouldn't undermine some of the significant advantages science has brought to the world. There have been and continue to be thinkers who have contempt for both women and nature and I applaud the way she attacks the blindness of economics. But ecofeminism is not alone in its abhorrence of the way the first world plunders third world resources and champions the profit-motive above all else. This is an important political issue

and one that needs to be addressed. Lynch & Wells tackle this in *The Political Ecologist* (Lynch & Wells 2000: 51-54). I also agree with Shiva when she attacks the way 'women's work' in third world nations is made harder and more 'time consuming' by Western consumerism (Shiva 1998: 274). She is right when she complains:

> Their new impoverishment lies in the fact that resources which supported their survival were absorbed into the market economy where they themselves were excluded and displaced by it (Shiva 1998: 277).

All of this is morally abominable and ecologically catastrophic.

T: But?

M: But as Lynch & Wells assert, when it comes to the deep ecology movement 'all too often their own visions and programs are not without serious problems' (Lynch & Wells 2000: 54). Some ecofeminists don't give a balanced consideration of these issues. Lynch & Wells provide many examples 'where economic development can go hand in hand with ecological concern' (Lynch & Wells 2000: 56). What's more, it is within our Western democracy that we can 'devote time and resources to environmentalism' and where 'the green movement has had its greatest success' (Lynch & Wells 2000: 61). Furthermore a responsible democracy joined to the free market is not something that will only benefit the rich. Mies complains:

> The myth of catching-up development … eventually leads to further destruction of the environment, further exploitation of the 'third world', further violence against women and further militarization of men (Mies 1993a: 64).

Instead Lynch & Wells maintain that even if the rest of the world will never end up with the rich, 'this does not mean that poor societies cannot aspire to a much higher material quality of life' (Lynch & Wells 2000: 61). They champion *both* local grass-roots action and global action. But many ecofeminists are suspicious of large scale political movements as being poisoned by patriarchal assumptions.

A: That's right, ecofeminism sucks.

M: Bookchin has written extensively against patriarchal values and the immoral devastating

madness of its latest incarnation – capitalism. But he is steeped in Western philosophy and, following Kropotkin, champions the possible liberation of human and nonhuman through technological development, while being wary of its destructive potential (Bookchin 1980: 33-54).

T: What good has science or 'reason' done for the earth or humans either?

M: Bookchin did become quite despairing of science the older he got and the more he saw it being used as a weapon of patriarchal capitalism. However he remained firmly committed to the view that the only way out of this madness would necessarily involve holding onto our reason (Bookchin 1991, 1996, 1998).

T: I find truth in Shiva's attack on capitalism:

> Patriarchal science and technology, in the service of patriarchal capitalism has torn apart cycles of regeneration, and forced them into linear flow of raw materials and commodities (Shiva 1993: 33).

Such patriarchal values which have poisoned science and technology have been particularly bad for women. Mies explains:

> It is the ideology of man's dominance over nature and women, combined with the scientific method of analysis and synthesis that has led to the destruction of the woman as a human person and to her vivisection into a mass of reproductive matter (Mies 1993c: 186).

M: Still many women, especially in the West, have known freedom and experienced great empowerment impossible for their predecessors. Imagine living in an age without birth control, where infant mortality rates were unbelievably high, where women spent long hard tiring days slaving over their chores. What's more, the levels of hatred and superstitious fear of women and nature in the past (consider the witchcraft trials) and also in some cultures today, has been or can be largely overcome through technology and an education based on Enlightenment and Romantic ideals of freedom and equality.

A: It is over the top to claim that science is purely driven by the need to dominate women's bodies. My uncle has to get his prostate checked out regularly. This is not something he looks forward to, and

let me tell you, from all reports it's a pretty damn invasive thing too. But he isn't forced into it, he chooses to because he doesn't want to risk a painful death from testicular cancer. Is sticking a finger up my uncle's back passage to prevent testicular cancer another example of patriarchal power?

T: Maybe it is a case of some men getting screwed too. Maybe there are alternatives, I don't know. But I can understand Shiva's position when she claims that:

> Pregnant women are viewed not so much as sources of human regeneration, as the 'raw material' from which the product – the baby – is extracted. In these circumstances, the physician rather than the mother comes to be seen as having produced the baby (Shiva 1993: 26).

M: I agree that we live in a society of denial and contempt for those aspects of nature, particularly of human nature, we cannot bear to face. What's more, we have become, as Rousseau feared, increasingly false and impersonal. But again we should not reject all our achievements when we raise genuine concerns about those serious problems.

T: Maybe, but the call for partnership and organic appreciation is something I subscribe to:

> Only if Nature is again recognized as a living being with whom we must co-operate in a *loving* manner, and not regarded as a source of raw material to be exploited for commodity production, can we hope to end the war against Nature and against ourselves (Mies 1993b: 156).

M: I agree we need to change both our attitudes and our ecological practices and all work which can potentially shake us out of our dangerous ignorance should be welcomed. There's no need for me to repeat my reservations and criticism.

T: I've listened to what you've said, however, can't you see that many of your fears may themselves be the product of a cultural heritage we have inherited that is skewed by masculinist discourse and patriarchal assumptions? Plumwood, in her book *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (1993), argues that domination and exploitation are built into our cultural lives. She considers this to be a flaw deep within the Western historical tradition itself which relies upon a dualistic construction which structures oppression. She also is wary of the essentialism of some ecofeminists in what she claims is merely a reversal of the binarism. Plumwood wishes to do away with the discriminatory means of classification

altogether (Plumwood 1993: 3). And she seeks to reject this form of oppression that links women and nature by the radical exclusion of both, holding them as a 'sharply separate, even alien lower realm' (Plumwood 1993: 4). Plumwood investigates the fundamental prejudice that runs through the Western philosophical tradition. This discourse has delivered to us 'a model of human identity as only minimally and accidentally connected to the earth'. The injustice that this has brought about now threatens our very survival as a species (Plumwood 1993: 6). Plumwood advocates an end to this 'master model' which naturalizes domination by distorting the freedom and truth of real beings, rejecting the *Other* as 'inert, passive and mechanistic' (Plumwood 1993: 36). She details a family of features of this radical exclusion in a way that resembles the method of classical logic (Plumwood 1993: 48-59). However, classical logic offers us a way out that triumphs over difference based on discrimination. It is right to draw distinctions but we should do so by developing a 'non-hierarchical concept of difference' (Plumwood 1993: 60). Plumwood investigates the history of Western philosophy, beginning with Plato, through the Enlightenment, and right up to our own day. This prejudiced dualistic discourse can be clearly recognized in the work of Dawkins and E.O. Wilson (Plumwood 1993: 80-122). She attacks the same problems as inherent in romanticism, rights-based theories and deep ecology, for all follow the same systematic prejudice (Plumwood 1993: 163-186). Freya Mathews likewise analyzes the systematic contempt for nature in the Western tradition, especially since the Enlightenment (Mathews 1991).

M: I agree with Plumwood's attack on deep ecology and essentialists as merely reversing a binarism. However ...

T: But there's more here. I remain unconvinced that there is nothing ethical outside of human consciousness. Why must we insist on the fact/value distinction? Freya Mathews' investigation into cosmology and metaphysics suggests that in fact we can derive value outside of ourselves. What's more, science, can in part reveal such value (Mathews 1991: 46). Mathews combines the metaphysical insights of Spinoza with those of modern physics, advancing the argument that there may be substance to the claim that 'all is one' and 'everything is interconnected' (Mathews 1991: 2). What's more, she examines how our western bias towards nature, which posits the cosmos as made up of discrete parts, is not only highly questionable in terms of its accuracy, but highly problematic also (Mathews 1991: 12). A cosmology can both serve and *dis*-serve humanity. Clearly the pessimistic and alienating cosmology

of modern western society provides a disservice (Mathews 1991: 12-13).

A: But what has cosmology to do with this at all. How many people do you honestly know who spend their days contemplating cosmology?

T: Good point. It may be that we are not fully conscious of the nihilistic cosmology that is ruining our lives. Mathews' point is that our dominant world-view was spawned from Newtonian atomism – Newtonian physics – the view that the universe takes the form akin to that of clockwork (Mathews 1991: 16). This mechanic claim, combined with the soul/body binarism of Descartes and the latters 'reductive analysis', has led to a contempt for nature. 'Matter', the opposite to spirit, is portrayed 'dead … inert, passive, homogenous stuff' (Mathews 1991: 17). Mathews attacks this reductive and 'degraded dualist conception of matter' (Mathews 1991: 19) and investigates how it leaked into the popular imagination, poisoning our culture (Mathews 1991: 20-29). 'Stripped to its logical and metaphysical bones, the Newtonian vision is one of a world of atoms whirling along predetermined trajectories in an absolute void' (Mathews 1991: 31). Think of the consequences of this vision! Nature becomes seen as the opposite to everything we valorize as belonging to the realm of the human. 'As such – as the insensate, brute & blind, the inert and formless, the nonself, the other, the External – matter of course ceased to be an object of moral concern or interest' (Mathews 1991: 32).

M: So Newtonian science has fed into our cultural world-view, making us contemptuous of nonhuman nature?

T: And our own bodies.

M: And this has brought about an eco-crisis?

T: It can't have helped.

M: Maybe not. But we might ask some questions here. Firstly – is this really the dominant western model at all?

T: What do you mean?

M: Firstly, as Mathews and Merchant admit, this is not the view of Newton himself. Newton didn't claim that everything is reducible to mere mechanism (Mathews 1991: 31).

T: Not Newton himself …

M: Then who exactly? Isn't this rather speculative? The world, including the Western world, is made of a great diversity and plurality of cosmological and metaphysical speculations. The West, especially since the sixties, has been influenced by many holistic Eastern ideas. Who's to say that this 'Newtonian' cosmology, which isn't even Newtonian at all, is the dominant one?

A: That's right.

M: The problem I think goes deeper. Even though we have had an influx of ideas from tribal and Eastern cultures, wide-scale devastation continues unabated. It would seem that our current political, social and economic institutions are able to swallow up the ideas of the counter-culture, including 'eco' culture and continue uninterrupted. Today you can spend a weekend at a yoga retreat contemplating a higher vision, purchase a Native American dream catcher, play with the I-Ching, paint a mandala – and yet remain firmly *within* the system – a system that is devastating the world and heading us towards environmental Armageddon. This is Bookchin's complaint (Bookchin 1996). Ideas themselves may play little role in the workings of society and this is something Mathews herself seems to recognize when she investigates the role of philosophy and its impact on the creation of the welfare state. Instead of the ideas of Hobbes, Locke and others driving the welfare state, Mathews suggests, its creation may have had more to do with its suitability to the evolving capitalist system (Mathews 1991: 41). With such an admission, it surprises me how emphatically she argues for the overriding necessity for a new cosmological model to drive ecological change. Furthermore, it may be true that 'we inhabit, a meaningless and arbitrary world' marked by 'alienation & angst' (Mathews 1991: 38) – though this too is a conjecture. Still, why would this depend upon our dominant cosmological model? - a model, Mathews herself allows, has been dismissed by social critics and analytical philosophers alike as being extinct as a cultural force (Mathews 1991: 11). Mathews herself suggests that we are potentially

slipping into an era of 'cosmological deprivation' (Mathews 1991: 14). Surely the alienation Mathews alludes to, could again be the result of the means of production and a society built upon extreme competition pitting human against human. As such, as Bookchin again argues, this alienation and ecological devastation is dependent upon our political, economic and social relations and not have much to do with cosmological speculations at all (Bookchin 1996). It may even be that we should be spending less time challenging our values and more time striving towards political and economic change, for such changes will transform our values also. The means of production may be behind what drives such values and until we overthrow capitalism, we will not be capable of driving genuine changes in values. Current neo-liberal 'values' are *produced* by the system itself, rather than the reverse.

T: But surely it is possible we can change our values *against* such a system and if enough of us do, we can drive necessary political and economic changes.

M: I agree we can strive to, that is, as if our dominant values are as corrupt and anti-ecological as those in the deep ecology movement claim them to be.

A: That's right. I can't follow this at all. What's wrong with our values? My old man joined the 'lock the gate alliance' against coal seam gas mining. Isn't this an ecological issue? And whatever you might think of the eco-values of Bob Katter and Alan Jones, they, being human beings, want clean air and clean water like the rest of us.

M: Quite so and such as an issue of coal seam gas mining must surely suggest that values are not what is at stake here. People across the political divide – from extreme leftists, greens, to right wing conservatives … everyone is calling for an immediate stop on coal seam gas mining until such time as an independent moratorium is conducted on the ecological cost of such activity. Yet our politicians are not heeding the screams of the people. Doesn't this suggest that it is our political and economic institutions which are at fault here and not those of our values, and especially not our cosmology?

A: Just because we don't like shooting humans doesn't mean we have no values. It is simply untrue that we regard nonhuman organisms, like animals, for instance, as 'brute and blind, inert and formless

…' and the rest of it. I myself am a pet owner and I can see Brutus is something more than mere inanimate matter. I can recognize that he has many traits that are akin to ours. He's friendly, playful, intelligent (especially when he's trying to con me out of a sausage) and so on. But the point is that I would put humans before him and that means that if he became rabid, I wouldn't hesitate to put him down. He's not human, but just because he's not human, doesn't mean that I don't give him any consideration at all.

M: No, nor do I subscribe to the select history of western philosophy Merchant, Mathews and others subscribe to. I don't believe that western philosophy, especially the Enlightenment, is inherently anti-nature. And I would like, if you don't mind, to pursue some of the authors which are compatible with ecological living, as well as concerned with the plight of the non-human. To begin with, Mathews herself praises Spinoza as the origin of her cosmological model. She also champions the Romantics. But there is much more here and I disagree with her that the Romantic movement was a mere reaction against utilitarian and mechanistic Newtoniasm (Mathews 1991: 42). In fact, I would argue that the Romantic movement grew out of the Enlightenment and it would be irresponsible and ignorant to dismiss the period in the manner Merchant and some others have done. Indeed I would suggest that the tradition of aesthetics, a feature of some key Enlightenment thinkers, offers great promise to the development of an ecological sensibility. Consider Merchant's claim that archetypes and and mythology hold a powerful and necessary sway over our lives, as well as Mathews championing of the 'poetic image' and how fundamentally important the 'mythopoetic' is for human wellbeing. When Mathews writes for instance of 'an ongoing, utterly poetic dialogue' (Mathews 2005: 55), I would suggest that she has entered into the domain of aesthetics, and we have a fine tradition in the West, when it comes to aesthetics. In fact I should like to examine such work ...

T: Go on

A: Not now, I'm damn hungry. I've got three minutes to get to the club for my steak burger before they close the kitchen. If I miss that I'll have to cook meself.

T: Sounds serious.

A: Is this one of those femo things? Because I'm a male and I like eating steak burgers then I must be directly responsible for all suffering everywhere?

M: Until next week then?

T: Next week it is.

A: I dunno. Depends on whether I'm going to be treated like the living being that I am and my vital need for lunch respected …

End

Chapter 3: The Enlightenment, Romanticism and Aesthetics

M: While contemporary environmental philosophers such as Plumwood and Snyder claim that Western philosophy is inherently anti-ecological, there is is a wealth of material that suggests otherwise. Dating from the Enlightenment, but most prominent during the Romantic movement, Western philosophy has embraced the natural world, especially celebrating its aesthetic splendour.

A: The original wilderness worshippers?

M: Contemplating nature aesthetically, as Lynch (1996) and Lynch & Wells (1998) explain, is deeply important for human beings and has played a significant role in the ecology movement. Consider these lines from Wordsworth's pen where he writes of:

> … that blessed mood,
> In which the burthen of the mystery,
> In which the heavy and weary weight
> Of all this intelligible world
> Is lighten'd: - that serene and blessed mood,
> In which the affections gently lead us on,
> Until, the breath of this corporeal frame,
> And even the motion of our human blood
> Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
> In body, and become a living soul:
> While with an eye made quiet by the power
> Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
> We see into the life of things (Wordsworth 1969: 113).

This intoxication of feeling and grandeur of vision Wordsworth experiences while contemplating the glory of the natural world is what Lynch & Wells are promoting as an *aesthetic* experience – and something to be deeply cherished. Wordsworth's contemplation brings out the key elements of the highest aesthetic moments. The burden of our heavy weary world is lifted from us – this is something all of us need from time to time, but unfortunately for many of us, we seek refuge in shallow and unhealthy escapism, like television, facebook, bad novels, gambling, junk food, or any other form of narcotic that is 'all too human' (Lynch 1996: 157). Such measures, at best, provide us with mere temporary relief from our busy emptiness. But Wordsworth reveals something altogether different – drawing us toward a profound quiet power, harmonious, joyful and inspiring us with wisdom. This is

an experience of the highest value in any age, but arguably none more so than our own which has become contaminated by a questionable human culture which often seems to offer us empty escapism, at best, from a world of devastation and turmoil.

T: Less television and junk food, more wilderness and Wordsworth?

M: Yes. What's more, not only is such an appreciation of the greatest well-being to us, but equally it erodes the grasping instrumental 'substantial anthropocentrism' that Eckersley attacks as ruinous to biocentric integrity (Lynch 1996: 152).

A: Where's the evidence for this 'power of harmony'? Science has thoroughly discredited such a notion.

T: Science can't discredit such an experience.

M: Though it may help us to understand what we are like that we have such experiences.

A: I've never experienced it. Unless I have a gun in my hands, nature for the most part bores me. It is only rare beasts like tigers that provide any real entertainment value. But as much as I enjoy watching tigers slaughter weaker animals, this doesn't seem to me to involve much harmony. Maybe the tiger might experience 'the deep power of joy' as he rips apart his helpless victim with his powerful claws and teeth but I reckon it would not be such a joyous occasion for his victim.

M: Probably not. Blake contemplated the idea of divine creation when he considered 'The Tyger':

> When the stars threw down their spears,
> And water'd heaven with their tears,
> Did he smile his work to see?
> Did he who made the Lamb make thee? (Blake 1953: 44).

A: That's right. If there is a God or some spirit in nature, it is mercilessly uncaring. I know something of Wordsworth because I was forced to study his sentimental poems in high school. He goes on to splutter:

> Of something far more deeply interfused,
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean, and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man,
> A motion and a spirit, that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
> And rolls through all things … (Wordsworth 1969: 115).

This pansyism ....

T: Pantheism?

A: Whatever. I can't experience a 'something' so 'deeply interfused' and have every reason to believe it to be nothing more than 'something' the poets fancifully dream up. And what happens to the the human world when we are stuck in a Wordsworthian stupor? Do we not become mystically transported into a pantheistic fantasy land where humans are no longer important, and indeed a burden?

T: Some humans maybe.

M: Coleridge agrees that there are dangers in what he described as 'irreligious pantheism' (Coleridge 2000: 232). He wrote strongly of the need for humans to develop what Rousseau termed *natural sentiment*. Rousseau was a great influence on the Romantic period and an inspiration to the ecology movement. *Reveries of the Solitary Walker* contains a powerful meditation on the glory of nature in a holistic state as well as an acute criticism of the human instrumental vivisection of nature's integrity (Rousseau 2009: 49). His greatest contribution to Romanticism can be found in his fifth book. It is a memoir of a period spent on the island of Saint Pierre. Here Rousseau took refuge from his troubles in a state so enchanting he felt he could write 'about every grass in the meadows, every moss in the woods, every lichen covering the rocks' (Rousseau 2004: 84). It would be difficult to find a writer more eloquent when it comes to the transports of solitude experienced in nature's womb. Rousseau was possibly the first to point out to us that nature provides us 'peace and contentment' and transports us beyond our narrow distractions and blind passions (Rousseau 2004: 89).

T: So he is calling for an appreciation of nature's charm - an appreciation of solitude outside of the pressured madness of society?

M: Yes. And again we find this higher contemplation unbeknown to those stuck in busy shortsightedness. Rousseau was also acutely conscious of the effect the external environment has upon our spirit. He perceived the depressing effect of barren wasteland and contrasted it with the inspiring joy of natural flourishing, a 'fascinating and enchanting spectacle, the only one of which his eyes and his heart can never grow weary' (Rousseau 2004: 108).

T: Yes!

M: Rousseau's reveries need not be 'mystical' or pantheistic, but rather interpreted as an aesthetic impression of the greatest power upon the human soul. Rousseau writes of how our sensitivity and imagination soar when released from the bounds of our self consciousness (Rousseau 2004: 108). Those who cannot take pleasure in such delights have failed to develop a 'natural sensibility' (Rousseau 2004: 109). Such a failure of sentiment was a complaint Rousseau levelled against the purely instrumental attitudes of the botanists of his day and their inability to perceive in vegetation anything more than drugs or 'curative viruses', claiming this to be a 'distasteful prejudice' (Rousseau 2004: 119). Rousseau spoke out against these 'medicinal associations' perverting our aesthetic appreciation for the beauty and grandeur of the landscape (Rousseau 2004: 110).

T: An attack on narrow anthropocentrism?

M: Yes, something profoundly ugly for Rousseau.

T: Brutal and ignorant!

M: Rousseau contrasts this narrow, selfish grasping with 'pure and disinterested contemplation' (Rousseau 2004: 111). The loss of the human capacity to take delight in a natural sentiment, 'the charms of the earth', presents the world as mere isolated resources for man's exploitation. For mankind:

> … gradually loses the taste as he grows more corrupt. Then he has to call on ingenuity, drudgery and toil to assist him in his need; he scours the entrails of the earth and descends into its depths, risking his life and health, in search of imaginary

> gains to replace the true blessings which it offered him spontaneously when he was capable of enjoying them (Rousseau 2004: 113).

T: Again yes! This is a theme the deep ecology movement has continually emphasized.

M: As did the Romantics. Coleridge developed his poetry as a combination of genuine attention to nature *and* a flair for 'novelty' to excite the reader's passion into appreciation for the natural world. He explains his task as:

> … awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us; an inexhaustible treasure, but for which in consequence of the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude we have eyes, yet see not, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand (Coleridge 2000: 314).

T: Quite an insight.

M: His poetry was designed for these ends. Take his well loved supernatural thriller *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. It can be read as a dire warning against thoughtless and merciless destruction of the natural world. After killing an albatross the Mariner narrates a series of frightening events symbolic of nature revolting against a corrupt humanity guilty of *hubris*. Because of his thoughtless, unprovoked killing, the mariner is doomed to repeat his tale for the rest of his natural (or unnatural?) life. The final words he imparts to a frightened wedding party are these:

> Farewell, farewell! but this I tell
> To thee, thou Wedding-Guest!
> He prayeth well, who loveth well
> Both man and bird and beast
>
> He prayeth best, who loveth best
> All things both great and small;
> For the dear God who loveth us,
> He made and loveth all (Coleridge 2000: 67-68).

T: Such a powerful and fearful piece may well go some way to shocking us out of our human arrogance and disrupting the logic of domination.

A: Why should it? I, for one, am not afraid of a non existent God nor about to drop to my knees

and pray for man and bird and beast.

T: Poetry can inspire us into developing an ecological sensibility. As Keats does, when he sings of the transports of joy while contemplating the 'places of nestling green for poets made' (Keats 1973: 76), finding in flowers 'a natural sermon o'er their pebbly beds' (Keats 1973: 77). The natural world inspires - 'For what has made the sage or poet write / But the fair paradise of Nature's light?' (Keats 1973: 79). A site for sustenance of the human soul:

> While at our feet, the voice of crystal bubbles
> Charms us at once away from all our troubles:
> So that we feel uplifted from the world
> Walking upon the white clouds wreathed and curled (Keats 1973: 79).

M: This aesthetic appreciation of natural beauty awakens in us an ecological sentiment and can help inspire us into activism.

A: Why should it? How is this any different to any other form of escapism? Sartre warned against this flight into the 'magical world' as deluded and morally blameworthy (Sartre 1971).

T: What has Sartre got to do with this?

A: Sartre was a great man.

T: Anti-nature cynic that he was.

M: Sartre was in part romantic, in that he continued the libertarian tradition. However he was critical of that mystical or 'magical' element that he argued was the source of moral irresponsibility.

A: And rightly so. Byron attacked the insipid sentimentality of such slop recognizing Keats to be 'a lilly livered bed wetter' and wisely smashed Wordsworth whenever he was given half an opportunity.

T: Byron wasn't known for his moral responsibility. Nor – let us be honest – was he half the poet of Keats and Wordsworth.

M: Are you suggesting, A, that all forms of aesthetics are merely ways of escape?

A: Yes I am.

M: Do you find no difference between the highest imaginative activity of the poet, and that of the lowest fantasy of the insensitive and crude?

A: None.

T: And this is the source of your cynicism?

A: I'm all about truth and reality, not about floating away into the fanciful heavens.

T: You can't see how developing one's sensitivity and imagination can improve one's moral vision?

A: No.

T: But you find value in Byron's poetry?

A: At least he was honest – like Thoreau.

T: You seem to be partial to Thoreau. Why is that?

A: He was a great man.

T: But didn't he also find in the natural world a site to be revered for its spiritual glory and its moral instruction?

A: He didn't write nauseating poems about crystal bubbles.

T: What exactly have you learned about life and nature from the great man?

A: How to be tough and resilient and to celebrate the 'savage' and 'primitive rank' of nature – the beast within (Thoreau 1960: 143). In *Walden* Thoreau champions real nature as well as decrying the false comfort of his increasingly materialistic culture. Thoreau's book explores the two years he spent in the wild, outside of 'civilized life' (Thoreau 1960: 7).

T: Doing it rough twelve miles out of the town of Concord?

A: That's right. Thoreau promoted the joy in life that comes from simpler and harder living. He recognized that 'the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation' (Thoreau 1960: 10). Thoreau was of the opinion that people get trapped into believing that there is but one way of living but really what is 'true today may turn out to be falsehood tomorrow, mere smoke of opinion' (Thoreau 1960: 10). He hailed natural simplicity and rejected worldly comfort, noting that 'most of the luxuries, and many of the so-called comforts of life, are not only indispensable, but positive hindrances to the elevation of mankind' (Thoreau 1960: 14). Most importantly he taught:

> To be a philosopher is not merely to have subtle thoughts, nor even to found a school, but to so love wisdom as to live according to its dictates, a life of simplicity, independence, magnanimity, and trust. It is to solve some of the problems of life, not only theoretically, but practically (Thoreau 1960: 15).

Unlike the escapists, Thoreau could see the hardcore truth of life and nature. A bit like Tyler Durden in the movie *Fight Club*.

T: And did Thoreau come up with lofty thoughts like, 'How much do you know about yourself if you've never been in a fight?' Did he adopt, perchance, a philosophical system based on the glory of punching up all your friends, a policy of terrorizing all and sundry and finally an ethic of exploding buildings as the most appropriate means of solving the problems of debt?

A: Durden and Thoreau recognized the wrongness of living in our false world of consumerist comfort. To quote Durden, 'the things that you own, will end up owning you'. Thoreau wrote, 'men have become the tools of their tools' (Thoreau 1960: 53). What's more, they both had the courage to

stand up against societies lies.

T: How manly of them.

A: I believe you are prejudiced against the masculine.

T: Really?

A: These great men recognized that living a life closer to the earth is both more authentic and more joyful. 'I am convinced, both by faith and experience, that to maintain one's self on this earth is not a hardship but a pastime, if we live it simply and wisely' (Thoreau 1960: 53).

M: This Utopian sentiment is something Bookchin also promotes.

A: Thoreau advises, 'as long as possible live free and uncommitted' (Thoreau 1960: 61)

T: He sounds like a lot of young men I know, many of whom are far from committed eco-anarchists.

A: Thoreau wrote with passion and insight, 'the morning wind forever blows, the poem of creation is uninterrupted; but few are the ears that hear it' (Thoreau 1960: 62).

T: I will have to keep my ears open because I thought you said something against the sentiment of 'religious experience' (Thoreau 1960: 64).

A: So Thoreau wasn't perfect. But his two years of living in the wild brought him much wisdom. He learned that:

> … when we are unhurried and wise, we perceive that only great and worthy things have any permanent and absolute existence, that petty fears and petty pleasures are but the shadow of the reality (Thoreau 1960: 69).

T: Wise advice. And did he, like Durden, found a nihilist network committed to blowing up and

destroying everything he didn't like (which was just about everything)?

M: No.

T: Just checking. Such ugly and violent aspirations have a home in the libertarian tradition and why ecofeminists are so critical of this kind of masculinist anti-social discourse.

A: Thoreau didn't ignite anything like Project Mayhem but he did share with Durden the recognition of living more naturally asserting, 'shall I not have intelligence with the earth? Am I not partly leaves and vegetable mould myself?' (Thoreau 1960: 97).

T: Weren't you earlier promoting existentialism?

A: We are partly matter and partly mind, I guess. What I do know is that living an authentic life involves rejecting all the lies and fantasies of our culture and facing the truth about nature.

T: Like Merchant argues?

M: So you are in agreement with us, in so far as you reject the false comforts sold to us on the market place as 'the good life'? We are pleased to hear it, for such a system is destructive of the nonhuman world, is no longer sustainable, and, like you say, is probably detrimental to genuine human wellbeing. To promote a life closer to the earth with greater respect for the natural world is something modern ecologists also champion. Thoreau conjectures:

> Ancient poetry and mythology suggest, at least, that husbandry was once a sacred art; but it is pursued with irreverent haste and heedlessly by us, our object being to have large farms and large crops merely. We have no festival, nor procession, nor ceremony, not excepting our cattle-shows and so-called Thanksgivings, by which the farmer expresses a sense of the sacredness of his calling, or is reminded of its sacred origin (Thoreau 1960: 114).

He contrasts this sacredness with the 'avarice' and 'selfishness' that accrue when the soil is regarded merely as property and a means of acquiring wealth. Then 'the landscape is deformed, husbandry is degraded with us, and the farmer leads the meanest of lives. He knows Nature but as a robber'

(Thoreau 1960: 114).

T: A typical Romantic sentiment. More Coleridge, Wordsworth & Keats than Sartre. However those ancient arts may have failed to reveal the bitter realities of this 'sacred art'. And the nature of husbandry is diverse depending as it does on the ecosystem which is its home. Such romantic assertions may really be counter productive to the ecology movement, as they fail to take account of the true complexity of ecosystems, and the effect of native practices upon them. As David Demeritt explains, the Western construction of 'nature' affected the way immigrants to the colonies perceived the New England environment, including their failure to recognize complex ecological practices of the native people – such ignorance led to ecological devastation. By framing the natives' homeland as 'nature' the colonizers ignored 'the intentional products of the way native people cultivated the forest' (Demeritt 2001: 24). Practices such as carefully regulated fires and hunting enabled sustainable living for many generations. Furthermore, 'as settlers advanced further and further into native territory, they disrupted the delicate ecological balance on which native life depended' (Demeritt 2001: 24). Thoreau revered the binarism of 'the wild', what previous settlers constructed as 'Satan's home', Thoreau now glorified as 'God's temple' (Demeritt 2001: 24). Such a construction is championed by those who had never had to work the land in reality (Demeritt 2001: 25).

A: But Thoreau did work the land! *Walden* is the story of Thoreau working the land.

T: The problem is that his farming practices and ignorance of the natives may have disrupted the ecosystem, so that Thoreau's vision was really formed by the activity of earlier generations of immigrants. His narrative may have inspired a construct of the 'wild' that ignored the enormous role humans had in the cultivation of the land, These colonialists, carried away with the glorification of God's native creation, are not properly ecologically mindful at all.

M: A problem, yes, but Thoreau nonetheless had a significant role in the ecology movement – especially his attack on the dominant exploitive culture and the attentive delight he took in the nonhuman world - both are essential to developing an ecological sensibility. There are others. John Muir is celebrated more than Thoreau as a pioneer of the ecology movement.

A: Muir might be alright if he wasn't so obsessed with God.

M: Natural theology is a theme of the Romantics, though Muir did write more *religiously* than most. Take a typical example:

> Every tree, every flower, every ripple and eddy of this lovely stream seemed solemnly to feel the presence of the great Creator. Lingered in this sanctuary a long time, thanking the Lord with all my heart for the goodness in allowing me to enter and enjoy it (Muir 2006: 25).

A: Why does he have to bring God into everything?

T: Listen to the description of natural grandeur and Muir's expression of humility and gratitude at bearing witness to such a scene. Just try, A.

M: Many have felt that Muir embodied what was best in the Romantic spirit devoting his life to a passionate quest for knowledge outside of institutions and a life of genuine adventure. This lifelong passion testified to a *flourishing* independent of material comforts or social recognition (Muir 2006: 21). Muir possessed an unassuming heroism. Some of the tales he tells of overcoming dangers in the wild are inspirational.

T: I find those sentiments rather masculinist. Why is it so important to measure yourself against the wild in such a pointless 'heroic' manner?

A: It's all about character.

M: And awareness and appreciation.

> How much do we know of ourselves, of our profoundest attractions and repulsions, of our spiritual affinities! How interesting does man become considered in his relations to the spirit of this rock and water! How significant does every atom of our world become amid the influences of those beings unseen, spiritual, angelic mountaineers that so throng these pure mansions of crystal foam and purple granite (Muir 2006: 66).

T: Here I agree with him. This sounds like the attitude of loving respect contemporary authors

such as Goodall promote, rather than the glorification of power and domination.

M: And Muir is rightly championed as having the greatest impact on the early ecology movement. Muir wrote as he lived, in true imaginative adventurous respect. He spent real time in 'wild' places, keenly observing nature's patterns. He could also see the devastating effects of the burgeoning destruction. He was politically active in wilderness protection and while he had some success in protecting some of nature's impressive species, like the '*Sequoia gigantea*, or big tree', he recognized the trend towards 'waste and pure destruction' (Muir 2006: 115-116).

He could also perceive that 'Man himself will as surely become extinct as sequoia or mastodon, and be at length known only as a fossil' (Muir 2006: 115).

T: A non-anthropocentrist?

M: If you mean did he recognize that we are subject to the same laws of the universe as every other species and that the earth was not created merely for ourselves – then yes. However the question of biocentric rights was was not a question for Muir. He held that we are bound up with the natural world and we have a need for the solace wilderness provides. He was also mindful that *homo sapien*, 'this most influential half animal, half angel is rapidly multiplying and spreading' to the point where the wilderness is disappearing (Muir 2006: 120).

T: I do appreciate Muir.

A: At least he was less guilty of the over the top projectionist fantasies of others, like Emerson's ironic delusions:

> ... to speak truly, few adult persons can see nature. Most persons do not see the sun. At least they have a very superficial seeing. The sun illuminates only the eye of the man, but shines into the heart of the child (Emerson 1963: 3).

It's Emerson who cannot see nature.

T: Really?

A: That's right – nature 'red in tooth and claw'.

T: Perhaps you need to get in touch with your inner child?

A: And become a deluded idiot? I think not.

M: There strikes me there is a poetic truth to Emerson's words. Some of the wisest people I have known have been keen nature observers and wilderness dwellers. People who could be said to have cultivated 'reverent attention', and exhibit an uncomplicated innocence about them.

T: I agree.

M: And the Western tradition, especially since the Earl of Shaftesbury and later Rousseau, has attested to this. Such writers and many others have promoted wilderness as a site for spiritual wonder, aesthetic splendor, quiet reflection, and opportunity to develop one's physical and moral character. Emerson spoke likewise of its profitability to humanity (Emerson 1963: 5-7). He also wrote of the need for our wise stewardship over it (Emerson 1963: 9-10). He promoted human values and reason, but like other Romantics felt that they must arise out of nature:

> Man is conscious of a universal soul within or behind *his* individual life, wherein, as in a firmament, the natures of Justice, Truth, Love, Freedom arise and shine. This universal soul, he calls Reason: it is not mine or thine, or his, but we are its; we are its property and men (Emerson 1963 12).

A: I disagree. Emerson knew nothing about nature. He was a spaced out idealist who claimed that the Supreme Being does not build up nature around us, but puts it forth through us' (Emerson 1963: 31). He advises to 'build.... your own world. As fast as you conform your life to the pure idea in your mind, that will unfold its great proportions' (Emerson 1963: 36). Such a claim would be laughable if it wasn't the creed of the millions of new agers who stake their lives upon the fantasies that all 'is in the mind'.

T: I've got problems with Emerson also. His 'reverence' is of a 'passive' nature (Emerson 1963: 19)

and he champions 'the kingdom of man over nature' (Emerson 1963: 38).

M: Well, it is true that Emerson, like all of us, as Gould says, are subject to the conditionings of our age. But let's be clear, Emerson was not a Berkleyian idealist. His 'idealism' is nothing more – or less – than an insistence that genuinely to experience nature is at the same time to find oneself in it - like the experience of a poem.

A: I just don't get poetry.

T: We gathered that. But the problem with Emerson and others like him, is that their view of nature is overladen with patriarchal attitudes. This is something ecofeminists find it imperative to acknowledge and banish from the ecology movement. Attitudes of domination and exploitation, as well as ecological ignorance, at best are ineffective as a guide to action, at worst, contribute further to the rape of the earth. Furthermore, there are grave risks in espousing the virtues of the wild without proper knowledge. Dubos points out that Thoreau, 'knew little of the real wilderness' and found himself rather unsettled on the rare occasions that he did experience it (Dubos 1980: 15). Emerson was even less comfortable, preferring the comfort of the hotel over that of the tent (Dubos 1980: 15). Dubos adds, 'the scenario that inspired Thoreau and nineteenth century Romantic poets was very different from the wilderness which has frightened people throughout the ages' (Dubos 1980: 15).

M: I think Dubos has overstated the case.

T: And such uninformed views can be especially harmful to deluded young men.

A: What do you mean?

T: Have you seen the movie *Into the Wild*?

A: That was a good movie.

T: As good as *Fight Club*?

A: Nothing is as good as *Fight Club*.

T: Except maybe the real thing?

A: Christopher McCandless was an inspiring guy, adventuring out into the wild like that – and to Alaska!

T: To throw away his life like a bloody fool! My 'reading' of this film was as a cautionary tale about how dangerously naive romantics can be. The protagonist, McCandless, fuelled by ideals (largely inspired by Thoreau), has one great desire – to measure himself in the Wild - Alaska in particular. Of course everything goes pear-shaped. Hunting was a far greater challenge than he had anticipated. His book on plant knowledge was not enough to save him from poisoning himself. There were other problems that eventually led to his demise, like the problem of nature's continual flux. A light creek in the winter, so easy to wade over, becomes, in the summer, a fierce river impossible to cross. We might consider him an ironic romantic hero, fuelled with heroic ideals, but lacking real knowledge of the complexity of the natural world or self awareness – and he suffered the tragic consequences.

A: But if he had been wiser, like Thoreau, he might have survived and come back a great man.

T: If you mean that he might have survived and prospered if he was given a proper education in ecology and human survival, then maybe. Why aren't our children from the moment they attend preschool being taught about ecosystems and educated about our dependence on the earth for our survival instead of being groomed to be deluded consumerists?

A: Would you instead have them enrolled in the school of deep ecology?

T: Why not?

A: Because then you will be teaching them to be unrestrained nihilists. Unless they hold to a false

natural theology then they are committed to nature 'red in tooth and claw'. Deep ecologists want to base their 'ethic' on nature and that can only mean, as the Marquise de Sade emphasizes, a championing of mass-murder, torture, incest, paedophilia, infanticide, parricide, 'nature prohibits nothing' (de Sade 1991: 51). And 'nature's single precept is *to enjoy oneself, at the expense of no matter whom*' (de Sade 1991: 52).

T: Which deep ecologists draw on the work of de Sade?

A: They would if they respected the history of their ideas. De Sade recognized nature for how completely uncaring it really is.

> … the total disappearance of mankind … would grieve her very little, she would no more pause in her career than if the whole species of rabbits or chickens were suddenly to be wiped off the face of the earth (de Sade 1991: 67).

T: So he rejects teleology?

A: Yes, he recognizes that there is no purpose to existence, including our own, and ridicules those deluded fools who think otherwise, for their 'preposterously overdrawn self-esteem' (de Sade 1991: 67). As for nature's goodness - 'is there any limit to the injustices we see her commit all the time?' (de Sade 1991: 606).

T: De Sade was a sick man with a perverted view of nature.

A: He may have been sick because he could see nature for what it truly is.

T: Including human nature? If you are to follow de Sade then humans likewise are every bit as evil as he claims the rest of nature to be. As an 'anthropologist' he attests to proving how rape, paedophilia, incest, murder and so forth, are universal activities and are only considered crimes by 'our prejudices and education' (de Sade 1991: 171). Do you think this true?

A: Sort of. As Dawkins points out, it is through education we are taught how to overcome our evil natures.

T: De Sade claims education to be merely a form of prejudice, or a hypocritical way of getting away with crime. Do you likewise agree with that?

A: I think he was just saying those things for dramatic and comic effect. But as a philosopher he courageously spoke the truth about nature and about human hypocrisy.

T: Neil Schaeffer, in his biography, generously suggests that the Marquis was a romantic who was driven pathological (Schaeffer 2001).

M: An excess of passion, little capacity for restraint and self reflection, and a dose of bitter disappointment doesn't make for a healthy moral individual.

T: And de Sade is certainly not that. The worst thing about him is that he is so depressingly modern. Take his views on property rights, for instance. Like Garret Hardin, de Sade argues that property rights were brought about by theft and deceit. And again like Hardin, he feels absolutely no desire to put this injustice right (de Sade 1991: 114).[3]

A: We cannot remake the past.

M: We can apologize and offer compensation – though these are not Sadian themes

T: We find an anticipation of the Freudian suspicion of nature in de Sade:

> … all men and women alike, are wicked because they have to be: if in any of that there is anything absurd or unjust, it is the law made by the man who dares have the idiotic and vain pretension of repressing or combating the law of nature (de Sade 1991: 991).

A: He did anticipate Freud.

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3 Hardin admits that white migrants stole the land from Native Americans but expressly denies this injustice should be addressed. He notes, 'however morally or logically sound this proposal may be, I for one, am unwilling to live by it and I know no one else who is', adding, 'we cannot remake the past' (Hardin 1998: 398), suggesting that he knew no Native Americans.

T: At times, de Sade fancies himself a utilitarian, justifying his perverted activities on the grounds that the pleasure it gives him is equivalent to the pain of his victims, and 'the character of a good law must be to promote the welfare of everybody' (de Sade 1991: 1120). While at other times he is a chilling relativist or subjectivist:

> … if Nature put the most irresistible taste for vice in me, and not so much as a hint of a bent for virtue … Don't you agree that I serve her quite as well as some other in whom she ingrained a fondness for doing good deeds? (de Sade 1991: 339).

A: That's right and he's also a keen biocentrist who proposes that in order to solve such problems as overpopulation, excess people should be 'killed as one kills a breed of noxious animals' (de Sade 1991: 726).

M: Biocentrism, like this has been championed by some deep ecologists including some from Earth First!

A: My point exactly.

T: De Sade is hardly a natural scientist!

A: Only because he lived before Darwin. He nonetheless remains an important figure in the Hobbesian tradition - speaking the truth about nature. 'Nature red in tooth and claw,' as Dawkins teaches, 'sums up our modern understanding of natural selection admirably' (Dawkins 1976: 2).

T: Tennyson coined that expression.

A: And he was right to. Tennyson missed his calling. He would have made a great scientist.

T: He may have been a great Dawkins.

A: De Sade, Tennyson, Darwin, Hobbes, Dawkins and so on, all of these great men could see the bitter truth of nature, unlike the sentimental rot poets lie about.

M: Tennyson was a great poet, but let's leave that for the moment. Are you saying that there has been too much emphasis on the beautiful in nature?

A: I am.

M: Western philosophy also has a tradition exploring the category of *the sublime*.

A: But it's still anthropomorphic.

T: Unlike de Sade's objective empirical method?

A: So he gets a bit carried away.

M: This is why Lynch's distinction between ethics and aesthetics is an important one. Whether they get carried away with the nightmarish elements, or the beautiful ones, such writers can make sense *aesthetically*, if not ethically or scientifically. This was not a distinction those before Darwin needed to make, because natural history had not called into doubt the teleological argument of natural theology. However, after Darwin, consideration of nature as a form of aesthetics avoids the trappings of attempting to derive an ethic from nature. For all your talk of de Sade's 'objective empirical method', he slides (illegitimately) from 'is' to 'ought' – from description to prescription.

A: Go on.

T: I'm still not ready to embrace the need for aesthetic appreciation because of problems in natural theology. De Sade was far from the only 'natural theologian'. His work is not proper philosophy at all. He is a perverse (though admittedly blackly humorous) sophist who makes out he's using relentless logic but who in point of fact relies on over the top rhetoric.

M: That is what I said. De Sade uses inconsistent and fallacious arguments to support a satanic view of nature every bit as anthropomorphic as those others A has attacked. The Earl of Shaftesbury holds an altogether different perspective:

T: He does?

M: In *The Moralists*, Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third earl of Shaftesbury, rejects Hobbes' account of the natural world. Theocles, the hero of the book, adores wild nature and bursts into poetic praises of it as a 'refuge from the toilsome world of business', a place of retreat for 'thoughtful solitude'. He also celebrates the 'divine' existence, the 'blessed tranquility' of those who live therein. 'O glorious nature! Supremely fair and sovereignly good. All-loving and all-lovely, all divine!' (Shaftesbury 2000: 298). He goes on to sing of its order, as well as its 'boundless, unsearchable, impenetrable' mystery. 'In thy immensity all thought is lost' (Shaftesbury 2000: 298).

A: No surprises there, these mad poets …

M: But may this not be a 'sensible kind of madness'? And something we can permit to our poets?

T: Like a kind of exaggerated, intuitive truth?

M: Yes.

T: Why not? Poetry has its own truth value and Western science has not and should not have absolute authority over knowledge and truth.

A: What truth? Natural theology is a lie. Hobbes rightly recognized the natural world to be a 'war of all against all'.

M: Shaftesbury argues instead that nature is ruled by goodness, that it doesn't err and that its beauty is founded upon 'universal concord' (Shaftesbury 2000: 244).

A: There you go! Darwin proved such sentiments mistaken. The natural world is a site of endless struggle – a site of perpetual suffering.

M: Natural selection isn't a theory about endless suffering. Though I agree there is a lot of suffering on the earth. Shaftesbury's claim is that such suffering is outweighed by the higher good, 'the superior nature of the world' (Shaftesbury 2000: 245). Like modern ecologists he holds a holistic picture - 'all things in this world are united' and he celebrates 'the mutual dependency of things' (Shaftesbury 2000: 275).

T: Then his view is a teleological one.

M: Yes. He writes of the 'one single, consistent and uniform design' (Shaftesbury 2000: 274).

A: The argument from design?

M: Yes.

A: Hume smashed that argument in *The Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (1955). Where's the order? And what if there is a kind of order - how does this prove a divine architect? 'There can be no grounds for such an inference' (Hume 1955: 380).

> Look round this universe. What an immense profusion of beings, animated and organized, sensible and active! You admire this prodigious variety and fecundity. But inspect a little more narrowly these living existences, the only beings worth regarding. How hostile and destructive to each other! How insufficient all of them for their own happiness! How contemptible or odious to the spectator! The whole presents nothing but the idea of a blind Nature, impregnated by a great vivifying principle, and pouring forth from her lap, without discernment or parental care, her maimed and abortive children! (Hume 1955: 380 – 381).

As de Sade recognized.

T: No he did not. He slid from 'is' to 'ought', description to prescription. This is not Hume at all. De Sade was a pathological criminal.

M: Shaftesbury warns us of those so 'confused of thought' that they project their own internal disorder onto nature at large (Shaftesbury 2000: 273).

A: What about Hume then?

M: Hume's scepticism is a far cry from de Sade's satanic fundamentalism. Hume's character Philo admits that there may be 'a *mind* or *intelligence*' as a first cause or the creation of the world (Hume 1955: 388). Hume's dialogues promote scepticism and warn against fundamentalism and the blind fervour of 'enthusiasm'. Theocles, in Shaftesbury's dialogue, likewise, promotes a scepticism against the hubris of believing we can know all of nature's secrets (Shaftesbury 2000: 234-235). He warns us against a bloated view of our own self importance 'in which we refer all things to ourselves, submitting the interest of the whole to the good and interest of so small a part' (Shaftesbury 2000: 276).

T: Deep ecologists agree.

M: Shaftesbury champions animals and their healthy instinct for the good (Shaftesbury 2000: 182-183).

A: More pantheism.

M: However, he holds that humans are unique owing to their 'sovereign mind' - their 'peculiar dignity' in being able to contemplate God and nature's delightful glory (Shaftesbury 2000: 299). Again we find here a philosophy which is not anthropocentric – such a view is mindful of human limitations, promotes the good of other creatures and does not justify destructive activities to satisfy every human desire. However Shaftesbury avoids the problems of biocentrism by insisting on humanity's specialness. What's more, he bases our uniqueness, not on our capacity to reason, but rather on biological grounds. More than any other animal we spend a protracted amount of time as children being 'most helpless, weak, infirm'. This vulnerability makes us depend on others and cements the social bonds of 'conjugal affection and natural affection' (Shaftesbury 2000: 283). He advances this argument against Hobbes' social contract theory:

> … if generation be natural, if natural affection and the care and nurture of the offspring be natural, things standing as they do with man and the creature being of that form and constitution he now is, it follows that society must be natural to him and that out of society and community he never did, nor ever can, subsist (Shaftesbury 2000: 287).

T: Human beings naturally belong to a community? Hints here of an ecofeminist sensibility?

M: Yes, and compatible with anarchist principles and Bookchin's social ecology. He champions liberty as the best and most natural way for people to live together, rejecting the 'unhappy dependency' of hierarchy (Shaftesbury 2000: 334). We need not 'power, riches or renown' to flourish:

> Unhappy restless men who first disdained these peaceful labours, gentle rural tasks, performed with such delight! What pride or what ambition bred this scorn. Hence all those fatal evils of your race, enormous luxury, despising homely fare, ranges through seas and lands, rifles the globe, and men, ingenious to their misery, work out for themselves the means of heavier labour, anxious cares, and sorrow. Not satisfied to turn and manure for their use the wholesome and beneficial mould of this their earth, they dig yet deeper and, seeking out imaginary wealth, they search its very entrails (Shaftesbury 2000: 311).

T: I agree! Just as Rousseau, Coleridge and others would later claim.

M: Shaftesbury goes on to attack those who despise the earth as being 'superstitious' and suffering from a 'spiritual plague' (Shaftesbury 2000: 315).

T: A fear of the sensual and a contempt for the spiritual?

A: Sentimentality! Your noble philosopher loves nature's appearance and invokes a fictitious creator. On the surface there may appear harmony and beauty, however this is not the case. Let me quote you Sartre's protagonist, Roquentin describing the truth about nature:

> ... existence had suddenly unveiled itself ... the diversity of things, their individuality, was only an appearance, a veneer. This veneer had melted, leaving soft, monstrous masses, in disorder – naked with a frightening, obscene nakedness (Sartre 1965: 183).

Note the words 'disorder' and 'frightening'. In fact:

> The *real* sea is cold and black, full of animals; it crawls underneath this thin green film which is designed to deceive people. The sylphs all around me have been taken in: they see nothing but the thin film, that is what proves the existence of God. I see underneath (Sartre 1965: 179).

Real nature is ugly and frightening and it is self-deception to advance an argument for its beauty or order.

M: Shaftesbury's argument is questionable in so far as it is teleological. But his appreciation for nature went beyond mere pretty superficiality. Theocles even champions the brute nature of reality precisely because it is *not* comfortable and so contrasts with the inferior work of humankind:

> The wildness pleases. We seem to live alone with nature. We view her in her inmost recesses, and contemplate her with more delight in these original wilds than in the artificial labyrinths and feigned wildernesses of the palace. The objects of the place, the scaly serpents, the savage beasts and poisonous insects, how terrible soever or how contrary to human nature, are beauteous in themselves and fit to raise our thoughts in admiration of that divine wisdom, so far superior to our short views. Unable to declare the use or service of all things in this universe, we are yet assured of the perfection of all and of the justice of that economy to which all things are subservient and in respect of which things seemingly deformed are amiable, disorder becomes regular, corruption wholesome and poisons, such as these we have seen, prove healing and beneficial (Shaftesbury 2000: 315)

T: A champion of wildness, as well as respect and appreciation for the integrity of the system?

M: Yes. Shaftesbury goes on to celebrate the elements of rudeness and even terror as holding 'a magnificence beyond the formal mockery of princely gardens' (Shaftesbury 2000: 317).

A: He is still a pantheist! There's nothing 'divine' about nature and if he'd lived long enough Darwin would have been able to point this out to him. There's no design to the universe, there's no plan, there's no greater good in the whole, there's no God, no higher purpose, no reason for existence.

T: How do you know that?

M: Yes, how do you? Darwin himself wrote in *The Origin of Species,* that he could 'see no good reason why the views given in this volume should shock the religious feelings of any one' (Darwin 1999: 452).

A: He was being polite. What he proved is that life is based on no other principle than blind selfish struggle.

M: Perhaps we should look closer at Darwin's theory. But I agree with you that there are problems in the argument from design.

A: That's right.

M: But we don't need to hold to it in order for us to appreciate nature's aesthetic value and potential to develop our moral character.

A: What do you mean?

M: Shaftesbury, along with a host of others, writes of the importance of time spent in the wild. Such solace gives us an opportunity to develop our moral *character* – developing 'temperance' and that of the 'good, generous or great'. This appeal to virtue makes it altogether different from utilitarian hedonism (Shaftesbury 2000: 250-254).

T: Does the development of one's character involve wild nature?

M: Yes. He championed the importance of solitude away from 'that tedious circle of noise and show' (Shaftesbury 2000: 249). Contemplation in the wilderness can be a source of moral renewal (Shaftesbury 2000: 316).

T: Something more than mere enjoyment of the pretty?

M: Yes, as Edmund Burke later points out, aesthetics involves an appreciation for both the *beautiful* and the *sublime*. Human needs and tastes, Burke explains in Humean vein, arise out of our desire for both 'self-preservation and society' (Burke 1987: 54). Sublime appreciation relates to self-preservation, while beauty relates to society. The passing of pain and danger brings with it delight, with beauty pleasure (Burke 1987: 54). Burke holds that our need for aesthetics is a universal need and that our aesthetic taste may be even more uniform than pure reason, for 'men are far better agreed on the excellence of a description in Virgil, than on the truth or falsehood of a theory of Aristotle' (Burke

1987: 24).

T: There are many who haven't read either dead while male.

M: But there are many who can take delight in something *aesthetically* meaningful, like a wilderness experience, which they are moved to protect without ever being motivated by complex ethical theory. Does it not strike you that beauty and sublimity affect our psyche's with much greater power than ethics can? Consider a glorious scene of a free flowing waterfall, the sun highlighting the glorious due glistening rainforest, the smell of fresh fruit on the trees … isn't such a scene likely to have a universal appeal, more so than an ethical argument which is more likely to be culturally specific. Think back to Goodall and her observation on the chimpanzee ritual undergone in the presence of the glorious waterfall. It may be that *natural aesthetics* transcend even human tastes. Admittedly though, ignorance, repression and cultural conditioning may impact on our ability to experience such wonderment and that we may need to be *awakened* to it. The western mindset that was horrified and disgusted by the wild (prior to the 18th century) probably has much to do with the religious ideas about nature at the time. Likewise, those today who are indifferent to nature's charms and sublime terrors, have, in all likelihood, been conditioned by a consumerist culture and need to be awakened from such conditionings – something I would argue is a pivotal aim of many in the deep ecologist movement. What's more 'aesthetic realism' is much more capable of being defended than 'moral realism'.

T: What do you mean?

M: J. L. Mackie explains how morality probably has its origin in subjective human attitudes rather than in objective reality. The fact that there is a diverse array of ethical beliefs suggests that ethics may 'reflect ways of life' rather than be universal (Mackie 1977: 37). But as Shaftesbury points out, our aesthetic sense is more generously universal, it is heartening just how much we can appreciate the art of other peoples, and how all of us can find value in natural beauty. It also trumps Mackie's observation that it is 'queer' that moral values should get a hold of us as if they exist out there in the world – how should something that *is*, inspire us into *ought*? (Mackie 1977: 38-42). Aesthetics triumphs here for we are protecting nature for the powerful feeling it inspires in us - not out of a sense of moral duty, but a concern to protect that which gives us such feelings of the beautiful and the sublime (Lynch 1996: 155-

156).

A: What exactly do you mean by sublime?

M: Burke explains:

> Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the *sublime*; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling (Burke 1987: 39).

Burke also writes of our need for quiet contemplation away from busy society (Burke 1987: 43).

A: Including contemplating nature's darker and more terrible aspects? The fearful symmetry of Blake's tyger?

M: Exactly. Burke writes of sublime 'astonishment', which carries with it 'some degree of horror'. The experience of awe involves 'admiration, reverence and respect' (Burke 1987: 57). The sublime conjures up images of 'vastness', 'greatness of design' (Burke 1987: 72), 'darkness, gloominess' (Burke 1987: 82), ideas about 'eternity and infinity' (Burke 1987: 61), the 'uncertain' and our religious need for 'salutary fear' (Burke 1987: 70). Our human need for aesthetic meaning involves a feeling for both the beautiful *and* the sublime.

> There is something so over-ruling in whatever inspires us with awe, in all things which belong ever so remotely to terror, that nothing else can stand in their presence. There lie the qualities of beauty either dead and unoperative; or at the most exerted to mollify the rigour and sternness of the terror, which is the natural concomitant of greatness (Burke 1987: 157)

A: I agree with that. But might not this end in the nihilism of wilderness worship?

M: No. Indeed Kant claimed that an appreciation for the beautiful and the sublime actually improves virtue. In *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime* he writes of our need to cultivate the 'finer feelings' as something categorically different to hedonistic pleasure (Kant 1960: 45-46). He lists three types of sublime experience including 'the splendid' which is the feeling of

'beauty completely pervading a sublime plan' (Kant 1960: 48). And think of the 'terror' Burke writes of – such terror we can experience in wild nature – a genuine terror that can truly enrich our lives by teaching us humility and shattering our false comfort, as Leopold testifies to (Leopold 1968: 71).

T: And many of the Romantics.

A: But what sublime plan? Science teaches …

M: Science, at best, may explain why we have feelings for the sublime and beautiful but it cannot explain away those feelings, just as optics can explain redness without explaining it away. The actual feelings remain unchanged.

T: I agree.

M: Kant argues that while feelings for the beautiful and the sublime don't amount to 'principles' they are nonetheless grounded in 'universal affection' and 'universal esteem' and are consequently 'supplements to virtue' or 'adoptive virtues' though not quite 'genuine virtue' (Kant 1960: 61). The latter is unchangeable, based on principles rather than mere sentiment (Kant 1960: 65).

A: How can nature's violent disorder possibly inform our virtue?

M: Kant explains in *The Critique of Judgement*:

> … in what we are want to call sublime in nature there is such an absence of anything leading to particular objective principles and corresponding forms of nature, that it is rather in its chaos, or in its wildest and most irregular disorder and desolation, provided it gives signs of magnitude and power, that nature chiefly excites the ideas of the sublime (Kant 1952: 92).

The fact of this violent disorder, however fearful it be and however much it threatens our *physical* selves, cannot conquer our natural – so, as Kant sees it - our moral integrity. Our delight consists in 'a pre-eminence above nature that is the foundation of a self-preservation of another kind'. No brute force can overcome our morality, 'our highest principles' (Kant 1952: 111). In this way we are superior to nature's forces (Kant 1952: 111-112).

T: And so we return to the problem of arrogance - our *human* superiority!

M: No Kant champions our *moral* superiority but holds great respect for the sublime's command on our attention (Kant 1952: 105). In fact, what he means is that experiencing the sublime infuses our character by threatening our physical selves and encouraging us to reflect on our moral being. Such an experience, Kant claims, is akin to a true religion which he contrasts with the moral cowardice and irrationality of superstitious ignorance.

A: Mother Gaia and goddess worship?

M: The belief that nature's forces can be subdued or invoked by personal magic. Or even that such forces are consciously directed at one self *personally,* 'from this nothing can arise but grace begging and vain adulation, instead of a religion consisting in a good life' (Kant 1952: 114).

A: He is right to slam this new age paganism.

T: And how far sighted of him to do so from the 18th century! Kant may be onto something, but his ideas about our moral superiority over nature paves the way for the patriarchal dualism which favours *culture* over *nature,* a prizing of the masculine which radically separates nature as other and encouraging hierarchical oppression.

M: Too much ruthless moralizing and not enough of the ethic of care?

T: Yes.

M: I think this is why Naess returned to Kant's earlier work *Observations.* Here Kant wrote much more favourably about our natural sublime and beautiful elements with greater appreciation of 'the feminine' and the goodness of 'beautiful acts'.

T: But he is misogynistic - claiming such things as women's incapacity for principles (Kant 1960:

81) and resorting to a host of other clichés. His commentary on gender roles is nauseatingly stereotyped and prescriptive (Kant 1960: 76-96).

M: True. And this is the problem with essentialism.

T: We could reject his patriarchal twist on it.

M: We would still be faced with the problems previously discussed.

A: That's right. But I do like Kant's insight into the absurdity of nature adulation and his championing of the need for reason and education to live an enlightened life - something ecofeminists and deep ecologists would do well to recognize.

T: There are different types of education and reason. Just as there are many different types of nature religions and spirituality.

M: Perhaps. But what do you think of 'intrinsic value'? That's a Kantian notion.

T: And a good one. We should respect nature's intrinsic value even if Kant didn't.

M: I find it strange that some deep ecologists can champion Kant's notion of our moral obligation to protect the 'intrinsic value' they claim to be inherent in nature and yet downplay his belief in humanity's superior moral capacity. This is to miss the whole point of Kant's Transcendental Idealism.

A: I agree. Nonhuman nature has no morality. We alone are capable of this.

T: I don't follow. Surely if we are capable of morality we are capable of adopting moral attitudes to non-human nature through appreciation of its intrinsic value?

M: The problem is this - morality involves action in the interests of another party, however, are not deep ecologists after a policy of non-interference? This is again why Lynch's argument for aesthetics

succeeds. We can appreciate wild nature like a work of art or a cathedral with our 'reverent attention' without making any direct moral demands on it or on ourselves that could interfere with its wondrous and complex workings. Instead we *preserve* & *conserve* & (if necessary) *restore*.

A: And why Lynch gets away from all this cold moralizing?

M: Yes. Not everything in our lives should be moralized. Burke showed how sublime *feelings* can be important to our wellbeing, and even that our aesthetics may even involve taking pleasure in 'the real misfortunes and pains of others' (Burke 1958: 45).

T: So nihilism is good? Let us return to de Sade!

M: I don't see it that way. Consider Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*. Nietzsche attacks the simplistic notion that virtue could be reduced to mere obligations and rules, or the simplicity of good and evil claims. He warns us about the dangers to our psychological well being when we adopt a life denying ethic.

A: An ethic like Singer's?

M: Yes. Nietzsche's main target throughout his life was Christianity and while Singer might be a militant atheist, Williams has a point when he suggests his philosophy invokes the self-loathing of Lutheranism (Williams 2006: 136). Nietzsche's project was to champion virtue and nobility as elements of *character* and to be in tune with our instincts. Instead of weak fantasizing …

A: Sentimentality?

M: We should face all that 'is hard, terrible, evil, dubious in existence' (Nietzsche 1956: 4). This means embracing the 'Dionysiac spirit' of the Ancient Greeks, something that infused them with 'superb somatic and psychological health' (Nietzsche 1956: 8).

T: By rejecting morality?

M: It's more complicated. Nietzsche asks the question, 'what kind of figure does ethics cut once we decide to view it in the biological perspective?' (Nietzsche 1956: 9). We need to champion an ethics which takes into account our psychological health and not one which turns us against life's vitality:

> A hatred of the "world", a curse on the affective urges, a fear of beauty and sensuality, a transcendence rigged up to slander mortal existence, a yearning for extinction, cessation of all effort (Nietzsche 1956: 11).

In short, 'a secret instinct of destruction' (Nietzsche 1956: 11).

T: I agree with that.

A: Me too.

M: If we are to truly face reality (including the empirical facts of nature) and live genuine and healthy lives, then we must be 'aware of the terrors and horrors of existence' (Nietzsche 1956: 29).

T: Merchant attacks the Edenic shopping mall fantasy because it is inauthentic, based as it is upon fear and exclusion of all potential threats and inconveniences.

M: Nietzsche also attacks such delusions. They amount to a denial of our nature and are consequently poisonous to our psychological health. He holds there to be two psychological poles to our being - the Apollonian and the Dionysian, neither being capable of functioning without the other (Nietzsche 1956: 34).

T: Like a Jungian reconciliation of opposites?

M: Yes, and through the aesthetics of tragedy, the Greeks were able to create 'an overwhelming sense of unity which led back to the heart of nature' and in doing so could affirm that 'life is at bottom indestructibly joyful and powerful' (Nietzsche 1956: 12). Nietzsche's point is that science alone cannot redeem humankind, for part of our 'primal being' depends on the power of Dionysian 'myth' (Nietzsche 1956: 102). This is at odds with scientific claims and also with that great claim of modernity that one

day we will be able to (re)create paradise by overcoming our natures.

> Myth, the prerequisite of all religion, has been paralyzed everywhere, and theology has been invaded by that optimistic spirit which I have just stigmatized as the baneful virus of our society (Nietzsche 1956: 110).

T: Doesn't it end in nihilism?

M: No I believe Nietzsche entertains a complicated dance between moral virtue and the deep psychological need we have for myth. Myth, as Merchant, Mathews, Snyder and others have pointed out, holds a profound power over our lives and can inform our morality. Nietzsche praises the 'pure and noble' *character* of the Greeks. In *Thus Spake Zarathustra* he attacks, as false and sick, morality based on fear, weakness, a conscious or unconscious desire for reward or revenge (Nietzsche 1976: 206). Virtue should stem from strength and not weakness, and he attacks what he calls 'virtue that makes small' – those who deceive themselves as to the motivations underpinning their morality.

> At bottom, these simpletons want a single thing most of all: that nobody should hurt them. Thus they try to please and gratify everybody. This, however, is cowardice, even if it be called virtue (Nietzsche 1976: 282).

A: I agree!

M: A genuine existence must be healthy and authentic and not founded upon avoidance of suffering at any cost (Nietzsche 1956: 146). Redemption depends on embracing the brutal truth of reality and symbolically or aesthetically engaging with it (Nietzsche 1956: 110).

T: To face nature (including our own) in both the sublime and beautiful aspects?

M: Yes he was passionately opposed to otherworldly philosophies. Zarathustra advises:

> Remain faithful to the earth, my brothers, with the power of your virtue. Let your gift-giving love and your knowledge serve the meaning of the earth (Nietzsche 1976: 188).

T: Pity there's no mention of his sisters.

A: Nietzsche was even more of a misogynist than Kant.

T: Quite a theme in the Western canon. And isn't it still all about us humans?

A: We humans are the only ones capable of contemplation.

T: So you say.

M: Nietzsche saw that we depend on the earth and he calls upon us to give it a 'human meaning' through the power of our art. This is also a Romantic ideal. Mark Kipperman writes of 'the practical goal' of the movement as 'the humanizing of the cosmos' (Kipperman 1986: 14). According to Kipperman the Romantic spirit is 'an evolving quest, a probing activity' – an *imaginative* and *active* exercise in the process of being. The aim is 'to become a moral actor on the stage it half creates, half perceives' (Kipperman 1986: xi). Aesthetics itself involves an imaginative contemplation that infuses our moral being by uniting it with a higher vision. However this is altogether different than positing a moral law as a set of ethical demands. Iris Murdoch explains the relationship of aesthetics to morals in *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (1992). She explains 'moral imagination is partly aesthetic, it is a place where the aesthetic is moralized' (Murdoch 1992: 329). Kipperman writes, 'the moral ideal is a world infinitely responsive to a renewed imagination' (Kipperman 1986: 15). This theme can be found amongst the German Romantics, as well as the British. Novalis paints a picture of *modernity* as marking the end of enchantment with the natural world, the consequences robbing humanity of its spirit and delight:

> The old world neared its end. The pleasure garden of the young tribe withered – out into freer, deserted space struggled the no longer child-like, maturing people. The gods disappeared with their retinue – Nature stood alone and lifeless. An iron chain held it in arid count and strict measure. Life's immeasurable bloom fell off in dark words like dust and breeze. Gone was the imploring faith, with its all-changing all-relating divine twin, imagination … (Novalis 1988: 27)

We cannot forget Goethe who was a keen observer of nature as it unfolds and like many Romantics wholeheartedly rejected mechanical Newtonian science. Nor can we leave out the Dutch philosopher Spinoza who was the originator of pantheism which posited the whole of nature to be unified and divine. Freya Mathews cites both Spinoza (Mathews 1991: 3) and Goethe (Mathews 2008: 59-61) as

great influences in her development of the ecological self. Goethe is singled out as a profound example of someone truly communing with nature at a deeper level. He is also, unsurprisingly, recognized as one of the greatest poets in world literature. Mathews explains the connection between artists and nature, 'the arts have often taken their inspiration from nature, and have offered a sanctuary of nature-values in an otherwise instrumental civilization' (Mathews 2008: 57).

T: And this is what Lynch suggests in his reconceptualization of deep ecology as an *aesthetic* movement?

M: Yes. The marvel of natural aesthetics can deliver us creative joy as well as improve our moral character by infusing it with awe, wonder and imaginative speculation. The German tradition offers more for the ecology movement. Hegel's *dialectic*, rejecting binarisms in favour of an organic philosophy of *process,* inspired Bookchin's social ecology and provides the theoretical framework behind Plumwood's analysis. J. G. Fichte's conjecture, that our identity depends upon the existence of a wider 'not I' implies our self identity is dependent on the outside environment and opens up the possibility of a transcendental ecological self like Fox and Mathews propose. Allen Wood explains Fichte's view that we depend on the 'not I' as something outside of ourselves in order to experience self awareness (Wood 2006: 68). This makes our identity continuous with the outside environment and inspired later German Romantic ideas (Wood 2006: 76). Wood explains:

> An I must be opposed to a not-I, or a material world, and it must therefore itself take the form of a material body. It must find itself as striving in opposition to this world. And then it must think of this striving as individualized through the concept of determinate possible activity and the corresponding normative concept of an end. The determinacy of self-positing in general requires the concept of something *external* to the I which is given in opposition to it – the not-I, the material world (Wood 2006: 77).

Following Fichte, Chad Wellman explains that Novalis developed the concept of 'sensibility' to account for, 'the distinctions and non-distinctions of man and nature' (Wellman 2008: 455). 'Sensibility' mixed soul with body as a means of accounting for the 'impossible experience of unity' (Wellman 2008: 459). Such a unitary state involves both 'outside' and 'inner' stimuli of outer world and mind respectively (Wellman 2008: 461). Novalis criticized modernity as an 'epoch' wherein the outer senses dominated the inner ones to the point of an imbalance,

resulting in an "“inadequately” observed and “spiritlessly” cared for “inside” of man' (Wellman 2008: 463).

T: Such a view runs parallel to deep ecology's claim that our modern culture has lost touch with our natural spirituality.

M: Quite so. 'Sensibility' is both continuous with the outer world but also it involves an active process creative of meaning. Modernity's division of the outer sensibility into five separate senses was 'another manifestation of modern man's estrangement from himself and nature' (Wellman 2008: 464). Such a division divides not only reason from the sensual but from sensibility itself (Wellman 2008: 464). Sensibility involves the union of reason and feeling resulting in 'dynamic ethics' (Wellman 2008: 475 – 476). Through 'attention' we gain awareness of our interconnectivity with outside nature, as well as grasping our inner sense (Wellman 2008: 471). Wellman argues that through his poetry Novalis strove for a “new mode of perception” to unify all senses 'simultaneously' as an active means of recuperating the whole of man 'sundered by modernity' (Wellman 2008: 471). The imagination presents us with a 'wonderful world to perceive' (Wellman 2008: 476).

T: I agree the Romantics promoted a *sensibility* conducive to the ecology movement but you haven't proven to me the value of the Enlightenment.

M: The point is that the Romantic movement grew out of the Enlightenment tradition. Fichte, Rousseau, Kant, Burke – such thinkers set in motion the movement to follow.

M: And we cannot forget William Godwin and his book *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice.* Its popularity at the time cannot be underestimated and it would inspire Romantics' like Coleridge, Southey, Wordsworth and of course, Shelley. We might well entertain doubts about Godwin's insistence that everything virtuous and good stems from the principle of reason, but it would be a major mistake to deduce that violent abhorrence to nature, women and non-privileged whites stems from such a principle or the period in which it was most celebrated. For it was Godwin who inspired Shelley's Utopian vision of humankind flourishing under the principles of liberty and equality in joyous harmony with the natural world. Indeed the popularity of Godwin's anarchism may have owed much more to the

intellectual climate at the time, and the tradition he drew upon, than with any genius of originality (Philp 1986). In Shelley's hands it would become inflamed with tremendous feeling and power. The vision of *Queen Mab* and the sexual equality of *The Revolt of Islam*, are not incompatible with the ecofeminist ideal of Mies and Shiva. Moreover poems such as *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*, *Mont Blanc*, *To a Skylark* and *Ode to the West Wind*, sing with tremendous passion of the glories of non-human nature, as well as insisting upon a spiritual immanence many in the ecology movement today attest to – a natural mysticism which contrasts with the patriarchal artificiality of religious institutions. *Queen Mab* overflows with sentiments dear to any modern ecologists heart. In addition to the themes already mentioned, it contains a passionate disparagement of unnatural hierarchy, the effect of corrupt power in turning a person into a 'mechanized automaton' (Shelley 1970: 773), a condemnation of a ruling elite poisoning the earth, a powerful denunciation of commerce – '… the venal interchange/Of all that human art or nature yield' (Shelley 1970: 779).

> Commerce has set the mark of selfishness,
> The signet of its all-enslaving power
> Upon a shining ore, and called it gold:
> Before whose image bow the vulgar great,
> The vainly rich, the miserable proud,
> The mob of peasants, nobles, priests and kings,
> And with blind feelings reverence the power
> That grinds them to the dust of misery.
> But in the temple of their hireling hearts
> Gold is a living god, and rules in scorn
> All earthly things but virtue (Shelley 1970: 779-780).

Moreover Shelley wrote a powerful essay defending vegetarianism. We are inclined to think of the Romantics as lonely and isolated, but as Mark Philp points out, the reason for this may have to do with the political oppression of radicalism which followed the French revolution (Philp 1986). These radical thoughts emerged out of the Enlightenment and I would argue that we should respect and even seek guidance from a tradition which has delivered us humanism and inspired the Romantic age which followed with a political and moral conscience, as well as an aesthetic appreciation for human and nonhuman nature. Where I think the Romantics differed most from the preceding era was with their prizing of feeling, sentiment and imaginative speculation over that of disembodied reason. Such a perspective, I maintain, is very much alive today in the deep ecology movement. The beautiful and sublime natural

world, drives our passions into protection and preservation, as well as inspiring our creative being into transports of loftier consciousness. Our imagination and passions inflamed, we can strive for a better existence for human and non-human alike, as well as preserving what is best in wonderful nature.

A: You might find it wonderful, but Darwin proved it to be vicious and uncaring, 'nature red in tooth and claw' as Dawkins insists.

T: Such a view belongs more to the perverted disgruntled imagination of a de Sade than to the modern understanding of ecology.

M: Gould holds Dawkins to be guilty of 'Darwinian fundamentalism' and of relying on a fallacious account of natural selection. Dawkins repetitively employs anthropomorphic expressions to account for 'gene selfishness', however Darwin clearly enunciated that he makes use of the 'struggle for existence':

> … in a large and metaphorical sense including dependence of one being on another, and including (which is more important) not only the life of the individual, but success in leaving progeny. Two canine animals, in a time of dearth, may be truly said to struggle with each other which shall get food and live. But a plant on the edge of a desert is said to struggle for life against the drought, though more properly it should be said to be dependent on the moisture (Darwin 1999: 76).

He specifically warned against taking his theory in a literal and fundamentalist manner explaining, 'every one knows what is meant and is implied by such metaphorical expressions; and they are almost necessary for brevity' (Darwin 1999:89).

T: Well, not everyone knows …

A: What did Darwin know about natural selection anyway? Dawkin's modernized account …

M: Dawkins' theory, as Gould points out, is mistaken both in its misguided use of metaphor in personifying genes as conscious self seeking agents and in the 'sloppy thinking' of reducing natural selection to gene activity. Darwin wrote of competition between individual biological organisms,

however 'genes do not interact with the natural environment' and thus can't be said to struggle for existence at all (Gould 2002: 620).

T: Such wrongful claims have devastating effects as Shiva explains:

> The mechanistic metaphors of reductionism have socially reconstituted nature and society. In contrast to the organic metaphors, in which concepts of order and power were based on interdependence and reciprocity, the metaphor of nature as a machine was based on the assumption of divisibility and manipulability (Shiva 1993: 23).

Such 'reductionist science is a source of violence against nature and women, in so far as it subjugates and dispossesses them of their full productivity, power and potential' (Shiva 1993: 24). Furthermore, this misuse of science as a political weapon is 'at the root of the growing ecological crisis, because it entails a transformation of nature that destroys its organic processes and rhythms and regenerative capacities' (Shiva 1993: 24-25). Shiva calls for a holistic science based on interconnections (Shiva 1993: 33-34). A modern understanding of natural selection draws on Kropotkin's claim of 'mutual aid' rather than wholesale competition.

M: Kropotkin was a respected naturalist. In Siberia he looked for, but failed to find, the competitive struggle amongst organisms Darwin had reported, instead he found cooperation amongst even the lowliest of organisms (Kropotkin 1972: 35), while amongst the higher he found a sociability amounting to the 'joy of life' (Kropotkin 1972: 66).

T: Quite so.

M: But there are problems with this view also.

T: Like what?

M: Firstly Kropotkin was a biologist following in the footsteps of Darwin and he studied cooperation within a group of organisms in their struggle against their environment, he did not write about holistic interconnections within an ecosystem. Secondly we have already examined the flaw in Kropotkin's natural science, in locating natural selection at the level of the species rather than the

individual organism. Gould's study of the paleontological record shows many examples of individual organisms flourishing at the expense of the species. He examines how it may *appear* that natural selection is driven by species survival but the real struggle goes on at the level of the individual (Gould 1980: 99-100). Cicadas, for instance, adhere to group patterns owing to safety in numbers for 'anyone out of step is quickly gobbled up' (Gould 1980: 101). And furthermore, don't you find that Shiva's call for a new ecological science is flawed in another way?

T: What do you mean?

M: Doesn't it really advocate an authoritarian scientism? Why should science be considered our only authority? Science is an invaluable tool necessary in dealing our ecological problems, however, it doesn't, and shouldn't, provide for all of our needs, nor provide the impetus for action. But the development of an aesthetic sensibility, in the way we have discussed, is surely what we are after – a 'moral vision' that truly appeals to the *Otherness* of the nonhuman natural world and takes us away from our increasingly congested, narrow human concerns. True imaginative activity, through an active embracing of natural aesthetics, surely has an important role in the development of our ecological sensibility.

T: Of course it does.

M: This is the point of Gould's NOMA. We should be championing what traditionally has fallen under the 'humanities' as of equal importance, but categorically different from, the sciences. Furthermore, by attempting as best we can to respect the fact/value distinction, we aim to prevent science from becoming politicized. Whichever political agendas one wishes to push, Gould maintains that such claims cannot be won by an appeal to natural selection.

T: But if we are continuous with the rest of nature then surely we are subject to the laws of nature.

A: I agree.

M: While we are a part of the process of evolution, this need not mean, as Bernard Williams points

out, that natural law dictate how we should act – what we *ought* to do. Nevertheless it is true that it might provide limits to our ethical capacities. It 'might be able to suggest that certain institutions or patterns of behaviour are not realistic options for human societies' (Williams 1985: 44).

A: Like the call for a non-anthropocentric ethic for example?

M: Williams thinks so. On the other hand, the development of an aesthetic appreciation that shakes us out of our ignorance and shallow all-too-human concerns – ones that have increasingly poisoned our inner wellbeing as well as the outer natural world – surely this is what we are after – a higher aesthetic vision which inspires a loftier appreciation of life and prompts us into action.

T: I can see your point.

M: We have discussed a variety of aesthetic responses, Lynch argues that this only adds to the attractiveness of aesthetics, unlike the confusion we feel when exposed to differences in ethics (Lynch 1996: 156). *Aesthetically*, deep ecology's call for 'unity in diversity' is a feasible claim and has an important role in combating the eco-crisis.

END

Ch 4: But are we really facing a major ecological crisis?

T: I can see now that it's simplistic to claim the Enlightenment sparked off an anti-ecological tradition when it paved the way for a more meaningful life for humanity and ignited concern for the wellbeing of nonhuman nature also, especially in the Romantic movement that followed. But somehow we've lost sight of all of this and need to change our attitudes towards nature if we are to show proper concern and to combat the ecological crisis.

M: Promoting a higher aesthetic value for nonhuman nature and championing loftier ideals is something we should strive for. But I fear changing our attitudes is not nearly enough. To combat the ecological challenges we face will, in all probability, require fundamental changes to our political and economic structures. The importance of this, is something that the deep ecology movement has been accused of not properly recognizing or addressing.

T: Go on.

M: The crux of the problem is contained in Garret Hardin's parable, 'the Tragedy of the Commons'. Imagine a situation where land is held as a 'commons' with unrestricted access to every member of the community. Hardin claims that individual agents will rationally attempt to maximize their interests by getting as much from the land as they possibly can. He provides the example of a herdsman who stands to gain more than he loses by adding an extra cow to the commons, for the effect of doing so will be borne by the entire community, while his profit will be all his own. However the effect of this will eventually bring ruin to the commons, which can only sustain a limited number of beasts.

T: This is what I mean! We must end these selfish and unsustainable attitudes!

M: The problem goes deeper. Even if the majority of us were ecologically aware and ready to make sacrifices for the future, we must find a means of placing restrictions on those who aren't, for a minority is enough to set in motion what Hardin regarded as the inevitability of the tragedy. When it becomes noticeable that some are profiting at the expense of the rest, others will follow suit. There are limits to our capacity for self sacrifice. To prevent this from occurring Hardin offered two main

solutions. Firstly – property rights. He conjectured that if individuals were given their own plot they would be made to be responsible for its viability, or else bear the consequences of its failure personally. However he recognized that some problems couldn't be solved by that alone and thus he proposed a command economy like that of communist nations. He had grave reservations about the effects of the latter as impinging on human rights ….

A: And he's right about that!

M: As a late thought he offered the idea of - 'mutual coercion, mutually agreed upon', though he didn't go into details (Hardin 1998b: 352-360).

T: But Hardin's analysis is plain wrong. That was not what happened to 'the commons' at all. On the contrary, they were destroyed by private enclosure.

M: Yes, and this is why it is a political issue. It was not the selfish and blind attitudes of the majority of the community that brought about an end to the commons, but the force of privatization and the workings of capital (something that continues virtually unabated today). Hardin's tragedy retains its value as a parable about the need to internalize and place limits upon the ecological costs of our activities.

T: Maybe instead he should have delivered a sermon about how the brutal and the ignorant are destroying everything!

M: Sermons don't offer genuine solutions.

T: And Hardin's parable does?

M: Not really. His preferred solution of property rights cannot solve the problem of sustainability for it is quite rational, as self maximizers, to kill the goose that lays the golden egg, that is, exploit the land to the point of collapse and invest the profits elsewhere (Daly & Cobb Jnr 1989: 156). Just as it is 'rational' for individuals to engage in unsound ecological practices when the effects will mainly be felt

elsewhere.

T: Like the way coal companies operate?

M: Exactly. What's more, there is no reason to expect people will respect boundaries, especially if their own property is ruined (something increasingly likely as scarcity increases).

T: And something we see going on with certain nations and their criminal invasions.

M: There is the additional problem that some resources cannot be controlled by property borders – like oceans for example. And this is why Hardin suggested an alternative – a command economy. Such pressing problems as depleted fish stocks, pollution, and more recently, the effects of climate change, cannot be solved by merely drawing boundaries. But equally, why should a centralized, planned system solve the problem? Not only is there a great danger here to our human rights, there is no guarantee that it would be effective either.

A: That's right! Look at the environmental record of communism – remember Chernobyl?

T: Yes and Three Mile Island, and Fukushima! So what's the answer then?

M: It's not easy to say, but at least Hardin raised the issue. A problem, I must stress, that has not yet been adequately answered.

T: Hardin's a nasty individual! I find his *Exploring New Ethics for Survival* (1972) to be lacking in ethics altogether and to be unapologetically barbaric.

A: Sort of like deep ecology?

M: I agree that Hardin's solutions are often on the inhumane end of the scale. However, he was right in pointing out a crucial problem. This has been more deeply analyzed by the first environmental economist, Herman Daly, who maintained that we need to factor 'in the limits of the ecosystem to

absorb wastes and replenish raw materials in order to sustain the economy' (Daly 2007: 19). He also wrote of the fundamental need to recognize the economy as part of 'the larger ecosystem, and the latter is finite, non-growing, and materially closed' (Daly 2007: 9-10).

T: And why isn't the historical fallacy of Hardin's claims important? George Monbiot and John O'Neill write of the commons as a success, not a failure. It was an unnatural and unjust force that brought it to an end. Monbiot argues that Hardin's thesis has a 'fatal flaw', he could not recognize that in 'real life cases of the commons, it is highly regulated by the community that live there' (Monbiot 1998: 361). John O'Neil asks the question 'why is it only in modern times people have overrun the land?' (O'Neil 1993: 39). He points to the destructive workings of capital and the breakdown of community as the source of the problem (O'Neil 1993: 39-42).

M: Lynch & Wells also.

T: So the solution, as far as humans are concerned, must surely come from a rebuilding of communities?

M: Yes. Lynch & Wells argue for this strongly in *The Political Ecologist* (2000). In so doing they emphasize that the ecological crisis is fundamentally a *political* problem and as such requires genuine political solutions, not just a change of attitudes towards the natural world. But this will require fundamental institutional changes. Daly & Cobb Jnr argue for a 'paradigm shift' away from an economy directed at an abstract individual to one that lives within a community (Daly & Cobb Jnr 1989: 7). Bookchin made it is his life's work to fight for fundamental political and economic change as essential to combating the ecological crisis and went further, maintaining that the capitalist system cannot be merely tinkered with. In order for a true and sustainable community to exist, capitalism must be abolished altogether.

A: The left always cry for a better life for all, but maybe it's just the case that things are what they are, for we also must exist under the same harsh law of 'the struggle for existence' – and our political and economic relations reflect this.

T: De Sade's claim? There's nothing fit about privileged fat cats ruling over the fate of humanity with their dictatorial dollars from their overly comfortable offices. And what happened to your claims of humankind's unique superior status as moral individuals?

A: I'm just saying that maybe capitalism accepts limits on our behavior and rewards our mostly selfish and competitive nature in a way beneficial to society as a whole, guided as it is, by the invisible hand.

M: The left disagree with this and have made a sustained critique against the claim that capitalism is natural and inevitable. Hilary and Steven Rose, for example, attack those who make politics from Darwin's legacy (Rose S & H: 2010). Even the phrase 'struggle for existence' has justified a cruel worldview misrepresenting natural selection as a Hobbesian/Spencerian gladiatorial battle. Some problems might have been averted if Kropotkin's 'struggle for existence', with its inclusion of mutual aid as a factor in evolution, had instead been adopted (Rose S & H 2010: 3).

T: And Kropotkin's work has been seized upon by many modern ecologists. His work detailed evidence of organisms living within communities and flourishing through co-operation – 'mutual aid'. He found humans to be continuous with the rest of nature, though our capacity for mutual aid is more pronounced than other species and forms the basis of our morality.

M: Kropotkin may have erred in finding natural selection to be group focused, rather than based on the struggle of individual organisms, however his *political* insights cannot be discredited by modern biology. Kropotkin developed a human history that explained the modern state as an aberration, while emphasizing the evolution of mutual aid in humans as extending beyond the tribe to concern for humankind in general (Kropotkin 1972: 250-251).

T: Leopold claims that we have evolved to the point that we are capable of extending our ethical concern to the land community in general (Leopold 1968: 203-204).

A: So what does this mean? Are you saying that Kroptkin's anarchist ideal can now be extended to the whole biotic community?

T: Why not?

A: To begin with, science does not show nature, human or otherwise, developing a greater capacity for morality. Secondly, as an historical claim, it has no grounding whatsoever. Finally as a claim about the potential for humanity, it overestimates our potential for goodwill. Take Russia for instance. What happened when Kropotkin got his revolution? The same thing that occurs every time the left take over, an inevitable dictatorship marked by gross tyranny and violent inhumanity.

T: Is that an historical claim?

A: Yes.

M: Then it's wrong. Kroptkin's revolutionary activity had nothing to do with Lenin's military dictatorship and he openly rebuked Lenin for following the same tradition as the Tsarist regime and thwarting the movement of genuine socialism in two open letters:

> One thing is indisputable. Even if the dictatorship of the party were an appropriate means to bring about a blow to the capitalist system (which I strongly doubt), it is nevertheless harmful to the creation of a new socialist system. What are necessary and needed are local institutions, local forces; but there are none, anywhere. Instead of this, wherever one turns there are people who have never known anything of real life, who are committing the greatest errors which have been paid for with thousands of lives and the ravaging of entire districts (Kropotkin 1995: 254-257).

Kropotkin fought all of his life to empower local communities with their natural wisdom, knowledge and good will. He saw nothing natural about existing power relations, in fact quite the opposite. He claims, as does Bookchin, that an unnatural and unjust, violent force created the modern state:

> Only wholesale massacres by the thousand could put a stop to this widely spread popular movement, and it was by the sword, the fire, and the rack that the young states secured their first and decisive victory over the masses of the people (Kropotkin 1972: 195-196).

The 'king's sword and the church's fire' (Kropotkin 1972: 152) slaughtered harmonious communal living and reshaped human beings into the mold of self-seeking agents with the accompanying false

consciousness that personal happiness is something separate from communal happiness. It is this that has fuelled modern ideas in law, science and religion (Kropotkin 1972: 197). Kropotkin's work inspired Bookchin who expanded upon it and developed a communal Utopian vision updated with an ecological sensibility. In *The Ecology of Freedom* (1982) Bookchin explores how hierarchy came into being, violently and unnaturally, devastating to human and nonhuman alike. He details the rise of domination from its vague beginnings in clan society with the rise of the shaman. The next phase was one of large scale warfare and the coercive measures this necessitated. Finally we reach the modern state which has internalized these measures for social control:

> By using guilt and self-blame, the inner State can control behavior long before fear of the coercive powers of the State have to be invoked. Self-blame, in effect, becomes self-*fear* – the introjection of social coercion in the form of insecurity, anxiety and guilt (Bookchin 1982: 117).

Bookchin's claim is that we are both predisposed to living justly and ecologically in smaller, more localized, communities. Today there is now an urgency in doing so, for our very survival as a species depends upon living in such a manner.

A: Nice theory. Pity it's completely at odds with the truth about human nature. Control, whether learned or forced upon through coercion, is necessary to avoid degeneration into anarchist chaos.

T: Why degeneration? Are you a covert teleologist like the great Dawkins? Bookchin's view is that true liberation for the *whole community* (as opposed to the false self-focused liberation of liberalism) is natural, harmonious and in accordance with the principles of reason. Such a life depends on smaller, non-hierarchical communities living in ecological balance. Both Bookchin and Kropotkin hold that 'a basic sense of decency, sympathy and mutual aid lies at the core of human behaviour' (Bookchin 1986: 160). He rejects Hobbesian scare claims of the need to master our evil nature.

A: But surely it's our capacity for control (personally and socially) over our amoral nature that grants us the capacity for disinterested justice?

T: Why? Surely our morality must arise from nature, where else could it stem from? That is, unless you wish to mount a theological argument (which I'm sure you don't!).

A: But there is nothing recognizably ethical to nature. And to try – even if mistakenly – to base our morality upon natural law is to licence nihilism.

M: Bookchin agrees and rejects the call to follow 'natural law' for that would justify 'survivalism'. His theory is that we evolved out of 'first nature' into 'second nature' or culture (Bookchin 1986: 6-7). He called for an ethic of complementarity with first nature:

> In such an ethics, human beings would complement nonhuman beings with their own capacities to produce a richer, creative, and development whole not as a "dominant" species but as a supportive one (Bookchin 1986: 2).

Our evolutionary leap has given us both greater creativity, but also the potential for greater destructiveness. Our second nature:

> … contains both the danger of tearing down the biosphere and, given a further development of humanity toward an ecological society, the capacity to provide an entirely new ecological dispensation (Bookchin 1986: 7).

Following Kropotkin, Bookchin claims that early society was 'initially quite egalitarian'. It was only, 'later it acquired an oppressive hierarchical and then an exploitive class form' (Bookchin 1986: 7). Furthermore we can't:

> … foretell how human history might have developed had certain feminine values associated with care and nurture not been overshadowed by masculine values associated with combative and aggressive behaviour (Bookchin 1986: 8)

Bookchin offers a deep critique of capitalism as an inherently anti-ecological system, as well as an unjust one. He holds it to be the latest manifestation of that hierarchy of exploitation that has ruined natural communal living and devastated the environment from the very beginning.

A: What rot. There was never an age of matriarchy where all lived in perfect harmony. And this ecofeminist matriarchal new age is not only fallacious as an historical claim, but it is also unapologetically discriminatory towards men.

T: You will be pleased to know Bookchin also rejects 'matriarchy' along with all hierarchy as

destructive of natural healthy human relations and the very source of the eco-crisis. 'The idea of dominating nature has its primary source in the domination of human by human and the structuring of the natural world into a hierarchical chain of Being' (Bookchin 1986: 11). This 'logic of domination' (Bookchin 1982: 111) is as unjust as it is unnatural. It arose from greed and exploitation and radically altered social relations into a new state of war. Young boys were prepared for battle, while the girls tutored in domestic duties. Under patriarchy, women increasingly became confined to the domestic sphere and were condemned as 'the archetypal Other of morality, ultimately the human embodiment of its warped image of evil' (Bookchin 1982: 120). 'In a civilization that devalues nature, she is the "image of nature", the "weaker and smaller"'. However because of the way she haunts male society 'every male-oriented society must persistently exercise her ancient powers, which abide in her ability to reproduce the species, to rear it, to provide it with a loving refuge from the 'unfriendly world'' (Bookchin 1982: 121). He explains that the:

> … idea of dominating nature can be overcome only through the creation of a society without those class and hierarchical structures that make for rule and obedience in private as well as public life (Bookchin 1986: 11).

A: Liberation for all beings human, beast and fig! Anarchy for nature!

M: Bookchin does base his theory on anarchist principles – though communitarian anarchist principles, not the libertarian anarchism which may appeal to some. He finds communitarian anarchism to be well suited to ecology, explaining the important role cultural factors play in the lives of humans and in shaping the biosphere as a whole. This is why we need to harmonize human social relations to bring about a lasting balance with the natural environment (Bookchin 1986: 80). Bookchin's social ecology *complements* the flourishing of nature's wondrous diversity:

> … just as the ecologist seeks to expand the range of an ecosystem and promote a free interplay between species, so the anarchist seeks to expand the range of social experience and remove all fetters to its development (Bookchin 1986: 100).

A modern anarchist utopia is necessarily ecological. He contrasts this genuine communal liberation with the unequal, immoral and false freedom espoused by the capitalist state (Bookchin 1986: 12).

T: I agree that capitalism is structurally amoral and offers no genuine consideration for the planet or genuine human wellbeing either. All that matters is profit and corporations are skilled at

manipulating an ecological image (Bookchin 1986: 13).

M: What makes capitalism inherently anti-ecological is that it has no genuine ecological mindfulness built into it whatsoever and is built on the principle of unlimited economic growth. Claiming population is the issue and seeking external coercion to place restrictions upon it, can only fail because this fundamental flaw has not been addressed:

> A society based on "grow or die" as its all pervasive imperative must necessarily have a devastating ecological impact. Given the growth imperative generated by market competition, it would mean little or nothing if the present-day population were reduced to a fraction of what it is today. Insofar as entrepreneurs must always expand if they are to survive, the media that have fostered mindless consumption would be mobilized to increase the purchase of goods, irrespective of the need for them (Bookchin 1986: 13).

To repeat, Bookchin demands an end not only to capitalism but hierarchy altogether (Bookchin 1980: 210). Such structural elitism is destructive of both human relations and our relations with the planet at large (Bookchin 1986: 18-19). Domination of human by human leads to domination of nature.

A: I'm confused. How is 'domination' of human over human in any way related to the domination of nature?

T: Good question. What if we could put an end to domination over other humans? Why should this affect our attitudes towards the natural world at large? Warwick Fox complains:

> For deep ecologists, it's just another variation on the same song – the song that reassures us that all will become ecologically well with the world if we just put this or that interhuman concern first (Fox 1995: 276).

M: Bookchin's theory is more complex. It is the logic of domination that is ruinous to human relations and such injustice changes our behaviour from one of *complementarity with*, to one of *domination over*, first nature. Capitalism, this logic's current manifestation, affects all our relationships, 'just as men are converted into commodities, so every aspect of nature is converted into a commodity, a resource to be manufactured and merchandised wantonly' (Bookchin 1986: 85). Such a mindset of individual power and ownership leads to the 'total disregard of the natural ecology of an area' (Bookchin 1986: 85).

A: So what is he proposing?

M: A revolution that would embrace genuine, human liberation based on reason, justice and ecological mindfulness.

A: How?

M: Through books and activism he promoted consciousness raising and grass roots action geared towards building local communities.

A: How much change does that really make in the scheme of things?

T: Have you become an historical materialist?

M: Bookchin promoted an alternative to our current society and even felt we were potentially on the 'threshold of a post-scarcity society' or Utopia (Bookchin 1986: 12). His vision combined ecologically wise management and harmonious living - where we would take advantage of technology and even improve upon natural ecosystems with our capacity for foresight and accumulated knowledge (Bookchin 1986: 64).

T: But that's just it – an anthropocentric attitude of *improving* upon nature! Why should our interference be an improvement? George Sessions attacks Bookchin on this:

> What is at issue is precisely the question of the *integrity* of nonhuman species and individuals in terms of their "otherness" and difference from humans, and a respect for the ongoing *integrity* of wild evolutionary processes (Sessions 1995: 304).

M: But does it make sense to speak of 'wild evolutionary processes' when the human species has, for better or worse, reshaped the earth altogether? Bookchin argues:

> There is no part of the world that has not been profoundly affected by human activity – neither the remote vastness of Antarctica nor the canyons of the ocean's depths (Bookchin 1996: 31).

As such, attacks against anthropocentrism are meaningless. According to Bookchin even tribal cultures didn't, and couldn't possibly, have existed by placing nonhuman claims above their own, but rather lived in a spirit of kinship with the earth. He calls for an ethic of *complementarity* with first nature, making us continuous with, but not reducible to, the rest of the natural world. But we can still protect, as best we can, large areas of wilderness relatively free from our direct interference. Bookchin described himself as a 'wilderness freak' and publicly defended Dave Foreman from Earth First! in his controversial wilderness activism (Bookchin & Foreman 1991: 29). But we cannot ignore the fact that what we are witnessing is a human problem that has been caused by political and social forces, not by holding 'anthropocentric attitudes'. Addressing it will require fundamental social and political change, not merely a change of values. What we should be striving for is a just society where humans can live with their non-human kin peacefully, respectfully and sustainably. This involves:

> … a respect for the biosphere, a conscious effort to function within its parameters, and an attempt to achieve harmony between society and the natural world (Bookchin 1980: 107)

An ecological utopia 'fashioned by human creativity, reason and ecological insight' (Bookchin 1980: 169).

A: Bookchin's a dreamer.

M: Yes, like Martin Luther King, he can see a better world, and our very survival depends on the creation of such a world. Without a positive view of the good life, we may degenerate into survivalism and/or a futile self-hatred incapable of effecting genuine ecological action. And this means abolishing capitalism by putting an end to 'business as usual'. We must face the nightmarish scenarios ecologists have warned against since the sixties. Bookchin took part in the movements of this era and held that they were awaiting 'a richer and more *conscious* development' (Bookchin 1980: 23).

T: And he was right. Grass roots movements are now better organized and guided by improved science. Bookchin's *social ecology* is now taught at universities, while a host of other organizations such as barter groups, sustainable development organizations, permaculture and so on, have emerged.

M: What Bookchin provides is an ecological vision continuing, in the Enlightenment tradition, the quest for a more just and harmonious life for human beings living in kinship with the rest of the natural world. He suggests that some, in their frustration, have abandoned humanist aspirations. Instead of falling into the trappings of deep ecology, he instead offered 'social ecology' as an updated version of Kropotkin's plea for a society focused on the real needs of humanity living cooperatively, not destroying themselves through competition.

A: It is healthy *competition* that has been the force behind our rising standard of living.

T: Exactly - and what is driving ecological collapse!

M: What's more, even if it were sustainable, the effects on human wellbeing are considerable. One has only to flick through Jules Henry's book, *Culture Against Man* (1963) to be struck by the moral baseness and sheer unhappiness of a society built on relentless competitive struggle and the obsessive quest for a rising standard of living. Henry claims that in order for such a society to function, a continual exploitation of human desires becomes necessary (Henry 1963: 25). Equally it requires the repression of genuine human needs and values.

> The average American has learned to put in place of his inner self a high and rising standard of living, because technological drivenness can survive as a cultural configuration only if the drive towards a higher standard of living becomes internalized; only if it becomes a moral law, a kind of conscience. The operator, truck driver, sales clerk or book keeper may never expect to rise much in 'the firm', but he can direct his achievement drive into a house of his own, a car and new furniture (Henry 1963: 31).

Pricing and selling manufactured desires:

> … waters down values, wears them out by slow attrition, makes them banal and, in the long run, helps Americans to become indifferent to them and even cynical. Thus the competitive struggle forces the corruption of values. The best example of this comes from the frantic competitive struggle among the mass women's magazines (Henry 1963: 64).

The culture Henry depicts, from the agony of alienated youth to the nightmarish indignity of the last years spent in hellish nursing homes, is a horrific vision. As for the 'stuff of dreams' which American capitalism sells at the market place, this necessarily requires a culture which has shaped humans into

being those fuzzy minded, impulsive consumers, needed to sustain continual spending.

> Insatiably desiring, infinitely plastic, totally passive, and always a little bit sleepy; unpredictably labile and disloyal (to products); basically woolly-minded and non-obsessive about traditional truth; relaxed and undemanding with respect to the canons of traditional philosophy, indifferent to its values, and easily moved to buy whatever at the moment seems to help his underlying personal inadequacies – this is pecuniary philosophy's conception of man and woman in our culture. Since it is a very contemptuous one, it appears that Madison Avenue is not so much the 'street of dreams,' as *McCall's* has called it, but rather the Alley of Contempt, housing thousands who, through the manufacture of advertising, pour their scorn upon the population (Henry 1963: 74-75).

Such a competitive society is ruled by an obsessive irrational fear brought about by the exploitation of largely created insecurities. A pathological culture is not only destructive of human wellbeing, but, as Bookchin points out, is inherently anti-ecological. It destroys human values, corrupting the cooperative fabric of human communities and fosters an insatiable array of false needs, as well as a suspicion, even hatred, of the natural. And now, such an artificial standard of living has become completely unsustainable.

T: But Henry admits that a return to an economic equilibrium and a regress in the standard of living would collapse our society (Henry 1963: 25-27).

M: This is why social ecologists call for a change of consciousness and a rethinking of what our deeper needs as human beings are - such as natural aesthetics and a liberation from false 'needs' fostered by the logic of domination. Ecologically-mindful political activists stress the necessity of abolishing capitalism and replacing it with an economic policy that is humane *and* ecologically sustainable

T: But how?

A: Yes, how does Bookchin suggest his enlightened ecological anarchy will come about?

M: He sought change and saw it coming from the people in their local communal movements.

A: Most unlikely. And how will that solve the problem Hardin recognized - how do you stop rational agents from pursuing their own interests at the expense of the commons?

M: It is a problem. And one not dissimilar to that of Hobbes. How do you prevent a war of all from occurring without a governing force?

T: What do you mean? Haven't you argued for strengthening community bonds, for we are naturally decent and communal? Shaftesbury, Kropotkin, Bookchin, Lynch & Wells …

M: Strengthening communal bonds is important and a decentralized anarchic ecological society is something to strive for in the long run …

T: But?

M: But will appealing to local communal movements be enough to address the pressing global problems we face? Ecologically minded Marxists argue that we need direct control over the means of production, for this is the real source of the eco-crisis. However noble our intentions and values may be, it is the means of production which is driving ecological devastation. They argue that we will require a strong centralized government, at least in the short term, to impose limits and forcibly shift to safer technologies to address overwhelming problems like climate change and resource depletion. However, both neo-Marxists and anarchists agree with the fundamental need to overthrow the capitalist economic system and strive for a just and worthwhile life for the whole of society. John Bellamy Foster explains the reason for this:

> Capital's endless pursuit of new outlets for class-based accumulation requires for its continuation the destruction of both pre-existing natural conditions and previous social relations. Class exploitation, imperialism, war, and ecological devastation are not mere unrelated accidents of history but interrelated, intrinsic features of capitalist development (Foster 2007: 2).

A: Sceptics, like Plimer, claim that neo-Marxists have raised this alarm to further their agenda.

T: You know A, there is a difference between scepticism and cynicism.

M: Foster's point is that because capitalism is driven by competition, profit and growth, it exploits both natural resources and humanity. What's more, the lack of public control over industries effectively licenses capital to function with little constraint. Serving the master of profit, all other considerations, including justice for ourselves and future generations, becomes subsumed under the one law. Hardin drew attention to the problems of ecological cost and chastised the economists for not taking it into account. Foster sees the problem as more pervasive. Capitalism is not only a 'juggernaut that knows no limits', it also involves a competitive struggle that results in domination of both people and planet.

> The planetary ecological crisis is increasingly all-encompassing, a product of the destructive uncontrollability of a rapidly globalizing capitalist economy, which knows no law other than its own drive to exponential expansion (Foster 2007: 7-8).

T: Which is why the deep ecology movement has sought to change this attitude of domination and has sought for an appreciation of the entire biotic community, changing our deluded exploitive anthropocentric arrogance to a recognition that we are but one species amongst many.

M: But it's not enough. We must address political and economic change at a national and global level if there is to be a genuine solution to the problems that engulf us, not merely change our attitudes. Indeed, unless we change our political and economic system, we may not really be able to change our attitudes – without that they remain merely aspirations. Hardin drew attention to the potential tragedy. Eco-anarchists and eco-socialists are united in their belief that we must act to change our economic and political arrangements to address this issue, but they insist that we should do so in a way that is conducive to the principles of justice and wellbeing for the whole of humanity, including future generations. Hardin was less concerned with holding to humanism, and as we have seen, his first solution, property rights, is not a solution for the reasons already given. It can make economic sense to exploit the land and invest the profits elsewhere and, furthermore, ecological problems transcend boundaries. Eco-Marxists favour Hardin's second solution. John. J. Simon calls for us to smash 'the treadmill of profit and production' that is exposing us to 'environmental Armageddon' (Simon 2008: 5). Our institutions support an economic system of infinite growth, this means that production necessarily outweighs demand, in a culture of competitive struggle which exploits fellow humans and ecosystems alike.

A: Environmental Armageddon? I agree with Hardin that there may be ecological consequences to

our actions, but this extremist propaganda is far from the whole story - what about sustainable development?

M: But is 'sustainable development' a realistic option at all?

A: Of course it is. The United Nation's World Commission on Economic Development says so:

> The message of the Brundtland Report was that it is *possible* to achieve a path of economic development for the global economy which meets the needs of the present generation *without* compromising the chances of future generations to meet their needs (Pearce *et al* 1989: xiii).

M: How is it possible?

A: By:

> … the systematic decoupling of rates of change in economic output and the environmental assets used up in that process. This green economy is therefore consistent with non-declining human welfare and with the sustainable use of natural resources (Pearce 1992: 4).

Pearce's solution is to nudge people into ecological responsibility through financial reward for those who are environmentally responsible and through financial penalties for those who are not (Pearce 1992: 5). This requires *some* political interference but all this is possible under our current political system.

M: But the problem is this: the capitalist economic system is committed to continual growth and unless another principle takes its place, then all else necessarily becomes subsumed to it. Von Neumann and Morgenstern explain in *The Theory of Games and Economic Behavior*:

> A guiding principle cannot be formulated by the requirement of maximizing two (or more) functions at once. Such a principle, taken literally, is self-contradictory. (In general one function will have no maximum where the other function has) (Von Neumann & Morgenstern 1953: 11).

With economic growth as the number one priority, all else becomes secondary, effectively licensing 'business as usual'. This is the problem that ecologically-mindful economists have been united against

and why they call for an economic system that properly addresses the issue. The left add that a genuine solution must be geared towards genuine human wellbeing for all – an economics that serves the genuine needs of the community.

A: Have you no faith in the power of technology? The purpose of *sustainable development* is to harness technology to a growth-based economic model.

M: And why should this be a plausible possibility and not a quasi-religious fantasy? Solutions cannot come from technology alone. The problem, to repeat, is that an economic system that promotes and thrives upon economic growth, is not in accordance with ecological reality. Foster explains what is known as the Jevons paradox. The neoclassical economist William Stanley Jevons recognized that there must be limits to growth - exploitation of coal must necessarily come to an end because it is a limited resource. And technology can't solve the problem, for the more efficient coal became, the greater consumption of it would be. Greater efficiency leads to greater demand and therefore increases the scale of production (Foster 2000a).

A: And what happened? He couldn't have been more wrong. Substitutes for coal were found.

M: 'Stunningly wrong' in fact, as Foster, Brett Clark & Richard York explain, owing, as you say, to his inability to have foreseen energy substitutes (Foster *et al* 2010: para 5). However those energy substitutes have now been exploited to such an extent that the Jevons paradox has returned with great force (Foster *et al* 2010: para 20). The paradox remains the same, efficiency results 'in an *increase* rather than decrease in the consumption of a given resource' (Foster *et al* 2010: para 21). Take motor vehicles, for example, we have improved the efficiency of miles per gallon, but this has only resulted in far greater numbers of them. The problem also occurs at the macro level, 'even though the United States has managed to double its energy efficiency since 1975, its energy consumption has risen dramatically' - roughly 40 percent (Foster *et al* 2010: para 22). Which is why, they maintain:

> The only real answer for humanity (including future generations) and the earth as a whole is to alter the social relations of production, to create a system in which efficiency is no longer a curse – a higher system in which equality, human development, community, and sustainability are the explicit goals (Foster *et al* 2010: para 28).

A: Our technology can enable us to make the necessary adaptations!

M: How? Take the pressing issue of climate change. Minqi Li explains we do not have the capacity to develop such technology quickly enough. There is the possibility of 'carbon capture', but such technology 'will take decades' to be at a level capable of sustaining a 'substantial portion of the world's power plants'. Next there is the option of nuclear energy, but as the recent episode in Japan attests, there are grave risks involved. Finally there is the option of renewables, however such are not only highly costly, but moreover, are unsuitable for much of the energy supply (Li 2008: 4). Even if we can imagine a time when our technology is capable of delivering the promises so many have put their naïve faith in, by then 'global ecological catastrophes would be all but inevitable' (Li 2008: 5). Li explains how the 2007 *United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (IPCC) has underestimated the rate of emissions necessary to avoid dangerous levels of global warming, but, even on these figures, stresses the need for 'dramatic changes necessary to stabilize CO2 levels'. This is incompatible with 'endless economic growth and capital accumulation' (Li 2008: 5). Li's revised figures of the emissions necessary to avoid dangerous levels of climate change indicate that the task is in fact much greater (Li 2008: 8). And the IPCC calculations that were utilized by Garnaut (2008) and Stern's analysis (2006) have since been shown to have vastly underestimated the rate of climate change, as Li maintained. The data is flawed in two ways. Firstly, the figure of 2°C the IPCC advocated is now recognized by many climate scientists as far too high to avoid dangerous levels of climate change. The glaciers are melting much quicker than anticipated owing to feedback mechanisms not factored into the equation. The IPCC figures did not consider complex general circulation models (GCMs). Furthermore instead of heading towards 2°C, in reality we are heading towards 4°C (New et al), (Betts *et al* 2011). Kevin Anderson and Alice Bows in 2008 also warned:

> The 2007 Bali conference heard repeated calls for reductions in global greenhouse gas emissions of 50 percent by 2050 to avoid exceeding the 2°C threshold. While such endpoint targets dominate the policy agenda, they do not in isolation have a scientific basis and are likely to lead to dangerously misguided policies. To be scientifically credible, policy must be informed by an understanding of cumulative emissions and associated emission pathways (Anderson and Bows 2008: 3863).

Garnaut acknowledges these revised figures in an updated paper (no. 5). He admits the figure of 2°C may be too high to avoid dangerous climate change (Garnaut 2011b: 38). He also acknowledges the

unlikelihood of such an aim being achieved (Garnaut 2011b: 39-40). In the event of a 4°C increase, 'we would be in unknown territory for humanity. The risks would be considerable' (Garnaut 2011b: 43). In a recent article, David Spratt claims the updated science makes it increasingly unlikely Garnaut's recommendations will go far enough in addressing the crisis (Spratt 2011). Spratt emphasizes the underestimation of the IPCCs figures and conjectures that 'if the up-to-date science was put at the centre of one's thinking, what needed to be done was far beyond what the masters wanted, or could bear, to hear' (Spratt 2011: 26). He explains:

> So while much discussion is nominally about 2 degrees of warming, the scientists are telling us it should be kept to under 1 degree, and the planet is heading actually towards 4 degrees due to chronic political failure. This is the world the Garnaut Update and the Great Carbon Price Debate will inhabit (Spratt 2011: 28).

It's highly questionable whether 'sustainable development' is at all feasible. Anderson and Bows question whether our 'current economic orthodoxies' are capable of addressing the extremity of the problem (Anderson and Bows 2008: 3879). It's most unlikely this issue can be combated by merely tinkering with our economic system, be it an emissions trading scheme or a carbon tax. 'Climate policy delusion. Cognitive dissonance. Denial. The terms are many, the madness stark' (Spratt 2011: 28).

A: Forgive me for being sceptical but on what grounds should we believe this?

T: On the grounds that experienced climate change scientists and reputable economists have thoroughly investigated and alerted us to this fact.

A: May it not instead be the case that there is a conspiracy here, as such scientists and economists seize this as a means of furthering their own agenda?

T: No.

A: And a communist conspiracy at that! John Passmore explains that Marx was the first to conceptualize nature as 'an object for mankind, purely a matter of utility'. And this, continues Passmore, has remained the typical Marxist position (Passmore 1974: 24). Hardly ecological, is it? And now you want to place your trust in a movement renowned for its love of devastating human and

nonhuman alike.

M: An ecological conspiracy by non-ecologists?

A: Exactly. They are crafty devils.

M: Anyway, as might be expected from Passmore, such Marxism is a caricature. Foster claims that Marx was in fact 'systematically ecological' (Foster 2000b: 3). He writes of how Marx foresaw the breakdown of human relations as linked to the breakdown of the environment via the capitalist system, by 'severing basic processes of natural reproduction' (Foster 2007: 10).

> Marx explicitly defined the labor process as the "metabolic interaction between man and nature." In terms of the ecological problem he spoke of "an irreparable rift in the interdependent process of social metabolism," whereby the conditions for the necessary reproduction of the soil were continually severed, breaking the metabolic cycle (Foster 2007: 11).

According to eco-Marxists, like Foster, capitalism is unjust for humanity and inherently anti-ecological.

A: I don't trust Marxists of any stripe.

T: Nor do I entirely. Though this hardly impacts on the severe warnings of just about every climate scientist and many reputable economists schooled in the danger! Still, I am reluctant to actively embrace a Marxist solution. The work of ecofeminists and deep ecologists have exposed a legacy of domination over nature.

M: Many from the new left, like Rudolph Bahro in *From Red to Green* (1984) agree. 'The relations of domination have to be done away with, but central regulatory mechanisms will obviously remain necessary' (Bahro 1984: 109-110).

A: No call for an instant anarchist Utopia?

M: No, this has been the biggest argument against anarchism - Bahro and others claim that we require major centralized planning in this state of emergency, at least in the short term (Bahro 1984:

101). Eco-anarchists and eco-Marxists are agreed on the fundamental need to overthrow capitalism and to embrace a decentralized communal existence in harmony with ecological principles. Their main point of difference is how best this can be achieved. One of the biggest changes the new left have acknowledged is the need to end the capitalist economic system everywhere, including so-called communist nations. Li attacks the economic policy of relentless growth in both India and China, their economies, since 1990, have almost doubled with no sign of slowing down:

> What hope is there for climate stabilization with this kind of fanatical drive for accumulation? What magical technology can make this kind of capitalism sustainable? (Li 2008: 11).

Li points out that the only significant reduction in emissions occurred in the USSR during a lengthy recession, that is, when economic growth not only declined, but reversed. Garnaut likewise acknowledges the reduction of emissions amongst the developed nations during the recent global recession. However, such reductions were swallowed up on a global level by developing nations such as China who increased their economic growth (Garnaut 2011a: 2). It may well be necessary for a controlled recession, on a global scale, to take place. But again, this is fundamentally incompatible with a capitalism economic system committed to growth. Bahro explains, 'there has to be a change in our whole system of production, for technology in the present-day world carries the capitalist mode of reproduction within itself' (Bahro 1984: 102). Bahro emphasizes that the challenges of the eco-crisis forces us to reconsider what we truly need to flourish as human beings (Bahro 1984: 112). Equally Bahro has questioned the Marxist narrative of class conflict and whether it is still an accurate description of humanity as it faces ecological disaster (Bahro 1984: 117). Moreover Bahro argues we need a cultural revolution that will change our very character. This means rejecting violence, creating a just economic order between North and South, living simpler and more spiritual lives like those lived by religious figures such as Buddha and Jesus and generally embracing a just and ecologically mindful existence (Bahro 1984: 120). Bahro conjectures that Western man's development since the Renaissance has been an 'aberration' (Bahro 1984: 142).

T: Deep ecologists agree.

M: Bahro moved away from much of Marx's thought, however, he maintains that the green movement is a continuation of the communist platform (Bahro 1984: 121). According to Bahro, the

green message is this:

> … we must get away from the logic of economic competition and reach a society where physical reproduction functions in the manner of a biological organism, where a basic level of real human needs is secured once and for all, and where politics and ideology can concern themselves with the development of the individual (Bahro 1984: 150-151).

Bahro's point is we require fundamental political and economic change, as well as a change in values – 'a psychological revolution' (Bahro 1984: 216). Indeed our political and economic change must be geared towards such an end. He praises exemplary figures like Christ, Buddha & Francis of Assisi and claims we need to promote their virtues as something the whole of society must learn to embrace (Bahro 1984: 216). Bahro takes on the concerns from the womens movement including an end to patriarchy and the logic of domination, as well as embracing sensuous appreciation for the earth (Bahro 1984: 217). Ophuls also spoke of the positive aspect a confrontation with ecological facts could mean - a reevaluation of our values towards a more spiritual, less materialistic way of life and something that involves *religious* passions, such as 'Aristotelian political and civic excellence, Christian virtue, Confucian rectitude, Buddhist compassion, American Indian love for the land, or something similar, old or new' (Ophuls 1977: 232). Thus we have an embracing of many of the concerns of the deep ecology movement but also an assertion that this won't be achieved without fundamental political and economic change.

A: Well, you've told one side of the story, please allow me to tell the other. What if there is no challenge? Other economists like the respected Julian Simon argue that we are in better shape than ever. He claims:

> Incredible as it may seem at first, the term “finite” is not only inappropriate but is downright misleading when applied to natural resources, from both the practical and philosophical points of view (Simon 1998a: 401).

T: Incredible it is! I'm not sure which planet Simon is from but the one I live on is finite and fast becoming inhospitable!

A: Simon explains that while some resources may be used up, our technology continually allows for us to substitute, and of course, eventually we will be able to exploit other planets (Simon 1998a:

408).

M: A religious – and, apparently, off the planet – technological optimism. It is true that technology has brought us great advantages in terms of accessing and harnessing natural resources, however it is unwise to believe that all our problems can be magically solved by technology alone. We cannot assume that new resources can be found and substituted as each resource comes to an end. Such optimism is akin to religious faith that the universe and technology will deliver us manna from heaven. A more realistic appraisal would be to take control over the means of production, reassess what our true needs are and harness our institutions into prudential and responsible ends, safeguarding our biosphere for future generations. Daly first recognized what strikes non-economists as a rather obvious flaw in the economic model. Natural capital cannot be replaced by human capital – once it is gone that's it – all we can do is wait around for hundreds of thousands of years until it is re-generated by natural processes. Once upon a time human capital was small and nature's reserves bounteous, but the situation has radically reversed.

A: Simon is not alone. Amory Lovins explains how corporations will be forced into developing ecologically sustainable technology for, 'their only real choice is between participation in the efficiency revolution and obsoleteness' (Lovins 2001: 106). Lovins recognizes how important the free market will be when it comes to resources 'the more we make them into commodities subject to market mechanisms, the greater the savings we are going to have' (Lovins 2001: 112). He continues, 'I think creatively used market forces are the most powerful tool for environmental protection' (Lovins 2001: 116).

M: Li is aghast at the 'magical thinking' of green capitalists like Amory Lovins (Li 2008: 8). For one thing, he simply fails to see that corporations do have a choice – they can and often do get around ecological responsibility by their power over the political sphere.

A: Simon relies on real facts. Take natural resources, they have become 'less scarce over the long run' (Simon 1998b: 2). What's more:

> … the signs of incipient catastrophe are absent. Length of life and health are increasing, supplies of food and other natural resources are becoming ever more

abundant, and pollutants in our environment are lessening (Simon 1998b: 5)

T: The signs of incipient collapse are everywhere! Climate change has vastly upset the ecological balance, while the depletion of natural resources, especially our problem of peak oil, is not a problem that is about to go away! They are not about to magically replenish themselves, are they?

A: Simon the doom-slayer has a message for people like you, 'every forecast of the doomsayers has turned out flat wrong' (Simon 1998b: 10). He attacks such ideologues for wanting to return to a past that never existed (Simon 1998b: 11). Simon provides an analysis for why there has always been pessimists and quotes some examples of misery prophets throughout the ages (Simon 1998b: 11-13). Today these lovers of hopelessness turn to neo-Marxists for their inspiration.

T: That's not a reply!

M: No it's not. Simon places an unreasonable faith in technological fixes, as well as exaggerating the standard of living he believes we are enjoying today. If you are committed to reason you must recognize the absurdity of this claim. Some of the natural resources our civilization has come to depend on, like oil, have reached dangerous levels of scarcity. As a result our standard of living is really going into decline. For example, real wages in the U.S. have decreased since 1973 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2004). As for food supply becoming more abundant, this is equally absurd. In 2008 food scarcity erupted into a humanitarian crisis, forcing the World Bank Organization into creating an emergency fund. And such a crisis is on the brink of erupting again (WBO 2011). Pollution, likewise, is more of a problem than ever. The chemicals we are thrusting into the biosphere affect green house gas emissions and have an inestimable hidden cost to our well being (eg pollutants that cause cancer, birth defects, etc). Furthermore the effects of 'indoor air pollution' through biomass fuel use, is now responsible for the deaths of 1.6 million people annually. According to the World Health Organization, this is a *growing* problem that has not received proper attention (WHO 2005).

A: A sceptic would question whether such facts as these have been spin doctored and the blessings of the modern era ignored.

T: By the World Health Organization and World Bank authorities? A *real* sceptic would question

the motivation behind Simon's faith in the free market!

M: If you are committed to reason and argument and wish to partake in an informed debate, then you would recognize the fallacies of Simon's argument. His data is at odds with the recognized facts and his attack on 'doomsters' is an *ad hominem* fallacy. Economists pointing out the very real threats to our way of life are not advocating a return to an imagined past. Furthermore, compiling an irrelevant list of mistaken predictions is not a reply to grave ecological risks. If you are genuine about your scepticism, then you should be questioning just how capable the capitalist economic structure is when it comes to ecological living. You should be questioning the viability of a system whose sole law is economic growth. A host of independent researchers, for example the authors of the report *Beyond Oil: The Threat to Food and Fuel in the Coming Decades* (1986) warn against such faith and it would be irrational to dismiss such independent research as the work of mere doomsters. Robert Kaufman, in the preface of the third edition, agrees that the 20th century has seen a marked improvement in the standard of living. However, such gains have been made possible by a rapidly depleting resources' base (Kaufman 1991: 1). The problem is that 'assumptions built into the neoclassical economic model systematically underestimated the strength of the relation between economic activity and energy use' (Kaufman 1991: 4).

A: And what happened when such doomsayers predicted the end of life as we know it all those years ago?

M: The report predicted a decline in the standard of living. Five years after the original publication of *Beyond Oil* Kaufmann wrote:

> The combination of resource depletion and a tight link between economic activity and energy use already has ended a century of rising per capita standards of living, population, and leisure time. The pinch is real, and many of the social changes that have swept through the United States over the past fifteen years are associated with the new "limits to growth." The slow growth in labor productivity and wages have "convinced" husbands that it is socially acceptable for women to abandon their traditional role as housewives and to return *en masse* to the workplace. Similarly, the new limits on growth strained the willingness of taxpayers to foot the bill for government services. Not willing to pay for them or do without them, voters elected Ronald Reagan and George Bush to maintain services, cut taxes, and balance the budget. Because such promises are impossible under the new limits to growth, the

> real U.S. government debt has skyrocketed. Yet, even these social changes have failed to alleviate the new limits to growth. After rising steadily in the 1950s and 1960s, real family income stagnated in the late 1970s and 1980s. In summary, the stagnation and eventual decline in the U.S. standard of living that is described in *Beyond Oil* is not pessimism, it is here (Kaufman 1991: 4-5).

T: And climate change will only make this drastically worse. In addition to the better publicized effects on the land, we also face the disastrous affects on the sea through ocean acidification 'now one of the most worrying threats to the planet' according to marine biologists (Mckie 2011: para 5). It is estimated that sea levels are now 30% more acidic than they were last century. The effect of this will play havoc with the safety and reproductive capacity of a large amount of sea creatures (Mckie 2011: para 8). Already we have witnessed massive commercial failures of oyster and other shell fish beds on the Pacific coast, as well as calamitous damage of many coral reefs (Mckie 2011: para 9). The Caribbean has lost 80% of its coral reefs and acidification threatens to do the same globally (Mckie 2011: para 13). Can't you get it? We are devastating Gaia to the point of making it increasingly inhospitable for vast amounts of creatures, ourselves included!

M: And the situation is only getting worse:

> … Greenhouse gas emissions increased by a record amount last year, to the highest carbon output in history, putting hopes of holding global warming to safe levels all but out of reach, according to unpublished estimates from the International Energy Agency (Harvey 2011: para 1).

This prompted the following grim analysis from the economist Stern:

> "Such warming would disrupt the lives and livelihoods of hundreds of millions of people across the planet, leading to widespread mass migration and conflict. That is a risk *any sane person* would seek to radically reduce" (Harvey 2011: para 6) (emphasis added).

Fatih Birol of the International Energy Agency calls for 'bold, decisive and urgent action' (Harvey 2011: para 7). This must involve 'legally binding international agreement or major moves on clean energy technologies, energy efficiency and other technologies' (Harvey 2011: para 18).

A: Human induced climate change is hotly contested.

T: Not by any genuine climate scientist or *any sane person* who respects the science!

A: What about the highly regarded geologist, Ian Plimer? He has written strongly of our need to uphold scepticism in the face of the great threat to democratic freedom our era is facing.

T: He's not a sceptic, he's a denier!

A: Who's being *ad hominem* now? The facts are, as Plimer explains, that the world's temperatures are 'consistent with what we measure from the past'. And:

> Natural changes have no respect for politics, treaties or emissions policies. If there are indeed human-induced climate changes, then we are unable to separate them from natural variability How many years must the planet cool before we acknowledge that the planet is not warming? (Plimer 2009: 435).

T: The climate is not cooling! Every genuine attendant to climate change science knows this. For example, John Randerson writes:

> Plimer does not appear to accept that the world is warming. But in fact, the hottest year on record is 1998 and eight of the 10 hottest years ever recorded have occurred this century (Randerson 2009: 2).

Randerson interviewed the fraudulent Plimer and found him to be one of the most difficult and evasive interviewees ever (Randerson 2009: 1). Such tactics are obviously evident in his pitiful display on the (in)famous Nightline debate with George Monbiot (2009).

A: Your personal attacks on Plimer are nothing new. As a *dissenter*, on the climate change issue, he has suffered immensely throughout his career. He writes of how he has been victimized in attacks akin to 'Nuremberg-type trials' and totalitarian communism (Plimer 2009: 435). Plimer warns against the extremist green movements who refuse to compromise and use blackmail to gain power (Plimer 2009: 436). Such neo-Marxists are 'anti-trade, anti-globalization and anti-civilization' (Plimer 2009: 437).

T: That's not an argument against climate change, that's a paranoid conspiracy theory! Besides

who are those receiving death threats and threats to their family – that's right – legitimate climate scientists!

A: How about this then, the IPCC, was really based on just '*five* independent scientists' (Plimer 2009: 437), and it has 'ignored the role of natural climate variability' because it is a 'political organization' (Plimer 2009: 440). Instead of its 'mathematical modelling', Plimer calls for real data (Plimer 2009: 440).

M: Like the real data showing the earth's temperature rising?

A: Not even our climate change minister knows what carbon is and how we depend on it for our survival (Plimer 2009: 441). As for Al Gore's fictional horror movie *An Inconvenient Truth*, why wasn't he forced to show his conflict of interest – with his own '"green" corporation'? (Plimer 2009: 442). Governments, they have seized on climate change as an opportunity to 'raise more taxes, to increase the bureaucracy and impose more regulations' (Plimer 2009: 442).

M: Hang on a moment. Let's take these one at a time. Firstly the IPCC is not merely a political organization made up of five independent scientists. It is an independent body that thoroughly investigates findings of experts published across the globe. For their success in gathering scientific information and attempts at addressing its influence, the IPCC was a joint winner with Al Gore in 2007 of the Nobel prize for peace.

A: Gore the green capitalist.

T: Which should, if you had a shred of consistency, make him your hero! Besides Gore puts his profits straight back into non-profit organizations addressing this crucial issue. He has been a tireless worker for raising awareness about climate change. The IPCC ...

A: That corrupt political institution has been exposed since Plimer's book for its willful, fraudulent covering up of evidence casting doubt on human induced climate change. As the courageous journalist Andrew Bolt explains:

> What they reveal is perhaps the greatest scientific scandal of our time - a conspiracy by warmist scientists to fudge statistics, sack sceptical scientists, block the release of data to prevent checking, illegally destroy data, deceive reporters, censor sceptical papers, and hide errors in their work.
>
> Most extraordinary are the emails in which these scientists admit to each other what they've never confessed to the world - that the world is not warming as their theories predicted.
>
> In fact, it's been cooling since 2001 (Bolt 2009: 1)

M: If I may stop you there. We are supposed to be having an informed discussion based on reason, arguments and facts and you're not using any of the three. The facts are that there were three separate investigations into the IPCC affair and they all concluded that there was absolutely no evidence of scientific malpractice or misconduct 'and nothing in the emails should give cause to doubt the facts which saw that global warming is occurring' (Garnaut 2011b: 51). Now do you honestly believe that these same investigations are a part of this same global neo-Marxist environmentalist conspiracy? Forgive me if *I* am sceptical. Gavin Schmidt, an expert climate change scientist for NASA has written extensively on the facts of climate change as well as refuting the claims of so-called climate change sceptics, including the fallacies behind 'Climategate' – the illegal hacking and beat-up of the IPCC. He explains how it relied on cherry-picked data, taking material out of context and choosing to misrepresent words that have an altogether different meaning in the literature:

> More interesting is what is *not* contained in the emails. There is no evidence of any worldwide conspiracy, no mention of George Soros nefariously funding climate research, no grand plan to 'get rid of the MWP', no admission that global warming is a hoax, no evidence of the falsifying of data, and no 'marching orders' from our socialist/communist/vegetarian overlords. The truly paranoid will put this down to the hackers also being in on the plot though (Schmidt 2009b: para 4)

Schmidt explains what true scepticism, according to Bertrand Russell, involves. He suggests four elements of scepticism - elements completely lacking in the arguments of climate change deniers like Plimer. Firstly, if a point has not been made clearly this is not evidence for the converse. Secondly, the science has been going for many years and 'sceptics' should familiarize themselves with the literature, for possible doubts have probably been raised before. Thirdly, the science should be studied across the board. Making use of cherry-picked phrases from those articles that conveniently suit one's position, and may not be considered reputable by others in the profession, is *not* an exercise in scepticism. And

finally, while scepticism is an important aspect of science in ensuring its integrity, science requires more than this to progress. Schmidt explains that the views offered by the 'sceptics' haven't an ounce of scepticism about them and are more accurately described as 'contrarianism', or 'la – la – la – I - can't hear – you - ism' (Schmidt 2005a: para 6). In another article Schmidt discusses the top ten sceptical arguments as compiled by Richard Black. It transpires that they are all at odds with each other. He analyzes the top ten in order as follows; 'false, a cherry-pick, a red herring, false, false, false, a red herring, a red herring, false and a strawman'. All rely on 'old, tired and discredited arguments' (Schmidt 2007: para 4). It is completely false to claim that the planet is cooling. As Schmidt explains, this fallacious claim has its origins in data collected by the Hadley centre (in fact the report didn't suggest the planet was cooling at all, but merely that there was a reduced 10 year warming trend). This data has since been found to be flawed for it failed to factor in the Arctic region and was therefore incomplete (*RealClimate* 2009: para 5). To return to Plimer, one of the inbuilt sceptical measures in science is peer review of which Schmidt has carried out his own analysis of Plimer (Schmidt 2009a). In fact there are a host of such reviews on Plimer's *Heaven and Earth* including Professor Ian Enting's 46 page analysis. He writes:

> Overall:
>
> - it has numerous internal inconsistencies
> - in spite the extensive referencing, key data are unattributed and the content of references is often mis-quoted.
>
> Most importantly, Ian Plimer fails to establish his claim that the human influence on climate can be ignored, relative to natural variations (Enting 2009: 1)

The fact is that no credible argument or evidence has been offered to cast doubt on anthropogenic climate change and Plimer's 'arguments' could be studied by first year philosophy students as an exercise in detecting fallacies. For instance what sense does he make when he attacks the IPCC's 'mathematical modelling'? Schmidt explains how models work:

> The model results are compared to data, and if there is a mismatch, both the data and the models are re-examined. Sometimes the models can be improved, sometimes the data was mis-interpreted. Every time this happens and we get improved matches between them, we have a little more confidence in their projections for the future, and we go out and look for better tests. That is in fact pretty close to the textbook definition of science (Schmidt 2005b: para 11).

Or take his attack on Penny Wong where he suggests that she doesn't know that carbon is essential to life. This is an obvious *ad hominem* fallacy. I'm sure Wong is quite aware that carbon is essential to life but she is probably equally aware of the dangers an excess of carbon emissions pose for our livelihood:

> … we are burning fuels where the carbon dioxide has been trapped under the earth's surface for millions of years, and we're doing it so quickly that plants and trees that are alive now have no chance of soaking it up (and it doesn't help that we're cutting down rainforests as well) (Carbon Account 2010: 1).

Then there is his outlandish claim that governments have seized upon climate change so as to increase taxes. The reality is that taking action on climate change is not a vote winner because it will involve making unpopular decisions *like* raising taxes and putting in changes to infrastructure, completely altering our present practices.

T: Something the Federal opposition here in Australia is using to manipulate the public!

M: The reason why governments have tackled it at all is because the international community has recognized it as a pressing issue revealed by an overwhelming majority of independent research. Now surely one should be sceptical about the possibility that governments are in league with climate change scientists on a global scale as part of a giant conspiracy to raise taxes to end civilization!

T: It's like the farcical fellow who at a recent UNE talk by Professor Garnaut announced the importance of free speech even when it came to the fraudulent claims of climate change and handed out newspapers claiming that the carbon tax forms part of a British conspiracy:

> The purpose of "environmentalism" is to brainwash populations into accepting their own mass murder, the "mass culling", in the words of Prince Phillip, of the world's population (The Carbon Tax is British! 2011: 1)!

Now do you believe this?

A: No.

M: But that pretty much follows the same logic as Plimer's when he makes outrageous statements

about an environmentalist neo-Marxist global conspiracy.

T: Plimer is a liar, a bully and a sophist! His rants have nothing to do with science but with smudging the issue by misusing statements, obscuring the complex science, distracting us with irrelevant stories, and resorting to absurdly provocative language and analogies, like calling himself a dissenter, and comparing himself with those who suffered most severely under the worst dictatorships! Plimer's right about this at least, there are people who think he is a criminal. If his crime was only that of idiotic bullshit, this wouldn't be so bad, but men like him are putting the fate of humanity on the line! And for what? So he can make big bucks from his mining ties! How is that not criminal?

A: So you think that Plimer and others who question the validity of climate science should be hung?

T: You're being ridiculous.

M: I agree. And there doesn't seem any point in continuing a discussion with someone who is incapable of having a rational and informed debate.

A: What are you saying? That I am to be shut up? Or better still, killed off?

M: I am saying that paranoid prattle is not argument and that there is no point in arguing with anyone who refuses to accept facts. Plimer not only refuses to acknowledge the vast amount of evidence in support of anthropogenic climate change, but has been absolutely incapable of supporting his own claims.

T: We have already wasted far too much time on this phony. You can download his embarrassing defence against George Monbiot here:

http://www.abc.net.au/lateline/content/2009/s2772906.htm

Or better still, read their email correspondence, where Monbiot continually calls for Plimer to justify

the evidence he used in his book and is continually repelled with evasive tactics until Plimer finally breaks off communication retorting that he has already answered everything in his book. Monbiot's last message to Plimer reads:

> You say that the answers to your questions lie in this book. But your book answers nothing. It is incoherent, contradictory and, most importantly, plain wrong on page after page. Moreover, your questions are pure pseudoscientific gobbledegook, and designed not to be answered … (Monbiot 2009: 16-17).

And he never has, not even when he finally faced Monbiot under the limited conditions of a public debate on a complicated science, answered any of his questions or cast any doubt on the findings of reputable climate change scientists. Can you not see the absurdity of these claims? Gore puts it like this: there is a battle going on between science and reason on one side, polluters and ideologues on the other and judging the proceedings - a biased and unjust mass media acting as 'referee':

> … the referee appears not to notice that the Polluters and Ideologues are trampling all over the "rules" of democratic discourse. They are financing pseudoscientists whose job is to manufacture doubt about what is true and what is false; buying elected officials wholesale with bribes that the politicians themselves have made "legal" and can now be made in secret; spending hundreds of millions of dollars each year on misleading advertisements in the mass media; hiring four anti-climate lobbyists for every member of the U. S. Senate and House of Representatives (Gore 2011: para 7).

Can you not see the deep irony here - that of 'extremist ideologues – many financed or employed by carbon polluters – accusing scientists of being greedy extremist ideologues' (Gore 2011: para 13)?

A: Tony Abbott, leader of the Federal opposition and Rhodes scholar, was convinced by Plimer's arguments into climate change scepticism. And before Prime Minister Gillard signed a political deal with the Greens as the only means of hanging onto power, she too downplayed the need for action promising there would be no tax on carbon. Now, if climate change is really so pressing then why have both major parties not gone bipartisan in support of it, as they do with other matters of national importance?

T: Like jailing persecuted refugees? Or killing people in Afghanistan? Just because a political party refuses to act because it knows it will be unpopular does not make the entire discipline of climate change wrong! Or make the need for action any less pressing!

M: And hard line economists like Garnaut and Stern can hardly be thought of as being anti-civilization, as Plimer maintains. Garnaut is an economist who – like Plimer in fact – has great financial interests in several mining companies and yet he maintains in his original report:

> There is no doubt about the position of most reputed specialists in climate science, in Australia and abroad, on the risks of climate change. There is no doubt about the position of the leaders of the relevant science academies in all of the major countries. The outsider to climate science has *no rational choice* but to accept that, on a balance of probabilities, the mainstream science is right in pointing to high risks from unmitigated climate change (Garnaut 2008: xvii) (emphasis added).

Since then Garnaut has become even more convinced. I should mention that Garnaut, like all who testify to the claims of science, respects scepticism. He writes of how he began his task by examining the question of how a lay person could approach the question of climate change:

> I did not know how strongly the main propositions of climate change science were held in the mainstream science community. I was aware of sceptical views and set out to understand them. By "sceptics" I mean those with genuine scientific credentials (Garnaut 2011b: 6).

He admits that some in the scientific community felt he gave undue credence to the sceptics. However he is now firmly of the opinion that anthropogenic climate change is a reality that we must urgently address. I find little that is admirable about Plimer's stance. To the contrary, I find such behaviour outrageously irresponsible and self-serving. To return to Garnaut's findings:

> On a balance of probabilities, the failure of our generation on climate change mitigation would lead to consequences that would haunt humanity until the end of time (Garnaut 2008: xlv).

Stern's earlier report, like Garnaut's, was conducted as an independent investigation into economic costs. He emphasized that 'climate change presents a unique challenge for economics: it is the greatest and widest-ranging market failure ever seen' (Stern 2006: i). These are men who are hardly likely candidates for being a part of an anti-civilization, radical environmentalist neo-Marxist conspiracy.

T: Can you grasp how serious this is?

M: The reality is that our current economic policy is completely unsustainable. Hardin first pointed

this out in 'The Tragedy of the Commons'. Others soon followed, including Ophuls, who warned against the fallacy of 'apparently endless abundance' and how the emerging pattern of scarcity is irreconcilable to our modern way of life (Ophuls 1977: 9). He claims we need a 'new paradigm of politics' to deal with the situation (Ophuls 1977: 167). At least in the short term, he argues, we require a 'more authoritarian and less democratic' form of government (Ophuls 1977: 163). Daly, the first environmental economist (also writing during the 1970s), emphasized the need to factor in the limits of the ecosystem into economic calculations and calls for a new paradigm of economics to encompass ecological limitations 'the challenge of limits to growth is to express these limits in economic terms, and institutionalize them' (Daly 2007: 10). It was he who first pointed out that natural resources are not equivalent to man made capital. Economists of today, such as Joseph Stiglitz, call for a 'green net national product' (Stiglitz 2006: 1) as a means of achieving this. Tim Jackson has recently reiterated the problems of unlimited growth, especially the dangers of climate change and peak oil, while likewise attacking the injustice of our current economic policy.

> In these circumstances, a return to *business as usual is not an option*. Prosperity for the few founded on ecological destruction and persistent social injustice is no foundation for a civilized society (Jackson 2011: 5) (emphasis added).

T: Do you really think that all of these respected economists and reputable climate change scientists are mistaken? That what we have here is a deliberately fabricated radical environmentalist conspiracy to take control over the world out of a contempt for civilization?

A: It's possible.

M: If you are committed to reason, argument and empirical science, you would be forced into recognizing the overwhelming probability that we are facing serious threats. Climate change should be our number one priority but resource depletion runs a very close second. Chris Clugston explains how the 21st century witnessed for the first time scarcity of a wide range of non-renewable resources (NNRs).

> It will certainly become evident that an increasing number of NNRs are becoming increasingly scarce, as ever-tightening global NNR supplies fail increasingly to keep pace with relentlessly increasing global NNR demand. And while we may recover fully from the Great Recession, permanent global NNR supply shortfalls will preclude our full recovery from a subsequent global economic contraction at some

> point in the not-too-distant future (Clugston 2011: para 28)

The scarcity of one *critical* NNR, like oil, 'would be sufficient to cause significant local, national, and/or global lifestyle disruptions, or outright global societal collapse' (Clugston 2011: para 50).

A: That would be to ignore Simon's argument that scarcity actually improves things. As resources become scarce, as long as we encourage healthy competition, innovative practices and technology will give us greater efficiency and/or substitutes, allowing for greater prosperity for all.

M: Simon's wrong. Steven King writes of the immensity of the problem we face and explains the absurdity of such a position:

> It is often forgotten that we live in a world of ultimately scarce resources. Productivity gains can overcome these scarcities from time to time – advances in technology can produce more outputs for given inputs – but the increase in global demand for the basics of human life is likely to outpace any increase in supply (King 2010: para 11).

A: Steven King? He writes horror stories doesn't he? As long as Simon, Plimer, Tony Abbot, Nick Minchin and Allan Jones tell us there's nothing to worry about, then why should I?

T: Ah, it must feel good to be a sceptic and hold onto your faith in such great men! There's a name for this kind of psychological response, it's called denial:

> Maybe it's just easier, psychologically, to swallow the lie that these scientists who devote their lives to their work are actually greedy deceivers and left-wing extremists – and that we should instead put our faith in the pseudoscientists financed by large carbon polluters whose business plans depend on their continued use of the atmospheric commons as a place to dump their gaseous, heat-trapping waste, without limit or constraint, free of charge (Gore 2011: para 27).

M: Let's leave it there.

T: Yes.

A: Always a pleasure to debate against maniacs and doomsters. We'll continue the fun next week then, hey? Unless I'm to be killed off for voicing my democratic right to freedom of speech.

M: We'll see ...

END

Chapter 5: Under Threat

T: Where's A?

M: Don't know.

T: Oh dear, I can't but feel that something terrible has happened to him.

M: Do you think we should carry on our discussion without him?

T: Yes we should. It's what A would have wanted.

M: Very well. Both of us are agreed that our current economic system is unsustainable and requires fundamental change if we are to avoid absolute collapse. This may well require fundamental political change.

T: And if A has gone beyond to see the truth he would have to agree with us. What is so frustrating is that ecologists have been writing of this since the sixties. The recognition of limits to growth and the cost of ecological externalities have been a subject of analysis since Hardin, while Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) brought home the terrible consequences of our ecological irresponsibility.

M: Yes, and in *The Closing Circle* (1972) Barry Commoner wrote of the enormous social and economic cost of our blind, short-term, anti-ecological practices (Commoner 1972: 297-299). Commoner recognized the ecological limits to economic growth (Commoner 1972: 120-121), the devastating threat from 'the technology of production' (Commoner 1972: 144) and the disastrous consequences of our obsession with 'progress' (Commoner 1972: 146). Commoner recognized that the short-term economic success of the new technology was not only an ecological failure (Commoner 1972: 151), but comes at a higher economic cost in the long term (Commoner 1972: 172). Do you agree with him that genuine open democratic debate would go a long way to solving our problems? (Commoner 1972: 198).

T: Maybe once upon a time but what chance is there today? Even if we could avoid imminent collapse, where do we have anything approaching sensible debate on the matter? Our 'democracy' would be laughable if it wasn't so tragic. Look at our Federal parliamentary 'debate' on the minimal proposal for a carbon tax and the Opposition's sabotaging of the issue and dismissing it simply as 'Labor's great new tax'!

M: And they have all been thoroughly informed of the enormous economic and humanitarian cost climate change will have for us if we don't properly act.

T: Yes. Our democratic liberal institutions are a failure for us and the natural world at large.

M: At times I feel the same way.

[A rushes into the conversation]

A: So you have turned against democracy and open debate?

T: We thought …

A: That I had been silenced? The *author* can't get rid of me that easily.

T: Where have you been? You smell like a brewery!

A: With Lynch. Admittedly our discussion last week caused me to question some of my ideas and Lynch was kind enough to have me over to help me out. Not only has he given me clarity on the issue but he's even suggested a future career for me.

T: In what?

A: Designing websites for philosophers.

T: Interesting idea.

A: I'm working on his right now, he reckons it will be great work experience.

T: Very thoughtful.

A: He agrees with me that the market has brought us great advantages, is weary of authoritarian command economies and with his best mate, the political economist, David Wells, has come up with an ingenious plan to address our ecological risks.

T: Yes?

A: But before I get to that, I must say that I think you are quite wrong to lose faith in democracy and the importance of open debate. As Passmore, and more recently Ulrick Beck recognized, democracy has served humanity well here; it has alerted us to the seriousness of environmental threats and offers us the best chance for the future.

M: *If the* people really are empowered to make decisions and debates are carried out in a proper spirit of rational inquiry, with the real interests of society for their aim.

T: And not driven by irresponsible bullshit!

A: Yes.

T: You agree?

A: Yes.

T: So you agree with Commoner and others on the need for implementing radical change?

A: I agree with Commoner that we are facing significant ecological and environmental challenges,

but that's about all.

T: What do you mean?

A: Like many other modern 'ecologists' his stance is extremist. I prefer the insights of Passmore and Beck in considering the environment in *human* terms with the aim of preserving as many of the advantages we moderns enjoy and even possibly improving upon the ideals the Enlightenment strove for. Passmore wrote of problems associated with our running out of room and resources (Passmore 1973: 139), as well as difficulties in addressing certain issues in modern institutions (Passmore 1973: 155). He agreed we require change and this 'will mean ending some of what we take for granted' with the potential of draconian measures being thrust upon us (Passmore 1973: 160).

T: Yes.

A: But this only strengthens our need to debate issues as *human* beings in a rationally enlightened manner. After all, what guarantees have we that an authoritarian regime could or would solve our ecological problems any better than our current institutions can?

M: None.

T: Ok then, but what rationally enlightened criticism do you offer on Commoner?

A: That he is a neo-Marxist nutter.

T: You're joking!

A: I am.

T: Well?

A: I find significant problems with his work, especially his pantheistic tendencies. While there

may exist complex interrelationships and so forth in a complex whole, Darwin's insight was to recognize the struggle for existence of *individual* creatures in the environment they find themselves. We should reject Commoner's mumbo-jumbo claim of cosmic wisdom that, 'we can learn a basic lesson from nature: that nothing can survive on the planet unless it is a cooperative part of a larger, global whole' (Commoner 1972: 299). Such an appeal to nature's goodness and harmony is a pantheistic claim not a scientific one and as already discussed, licenses misanthropy. I believe, along with Dubos, Passmore, Beck and other enlightened anthropocentrists, of the need to empower our science for our humanity.

M: Go on.

A: Take Commoner's appeal to 'the vital ecological balance' (Commoner 1972: 226) and his thesis that humans have 'broken out of the closed cyclical network in which all other living things are held' (Commoner 1972: 126). These are dubious claims.

T: How so?

A: Because there is no 'closed cyclical network' in the way he maintains, and humans have probably never lived properly in ecological balance – as Dubos points out. Now take his apparent scientific claim that 'everything is connected to everything else' (Commoner 1972: 33).

M: Yes.

A: This is a mystical fallacy. As Passmore observes, 'it is just not true that everything I do has effects on *everything* else' (Passmore 1973: 194). When I swat a mozzie the entire system isn't likely to break down. What does he mean by 'nature knows best' (Commoner 1972: 41) anyway?

T He means that the biosphere is a complex system of interrelationships our science cannot and probably never will be capable of understanding.

A: That does not prove that nature knows best. Commoner has merely transferred the

characteristics of God the Father onto Gaia the Earth Mother! Every action of ours should not be condemned as a dangerous blight on nature's 'intrinsic goodness'. Humans can improve diversity and flourishing. Passmore writes of times when our intervention is even necessary to 'save a countryside from destruction or restore its fertility' (Passmore 1973: 120).

M: Bookchin also argues we should champion our capacity for creativity.

T: Our 'creativity' is anthropocentric arrogance, as well as being ecologically disastrous. Consider the cane toad, the red fox, the European rabbits, blackberries, lantana – the list goes on. Commoner is right to protest against the devastation we risk through ignorant activity.

M: Are you invoking the precautionary principle?

T: Yes, we should forgo any activity that threatens ecological stability.

A: Then we'd never do anything at all. It 'is useless as a guide to action' (Passmore 1973: 194).

M: That is a problem.

A: However, from an enlightened humanistic perspective, the principle makes sense and Lynch & Wells have found a solution to the problem of making it operable.

T: How?

A: By empowering the subpolitical realm of the insurance industry to *internalize* external costs and risks, thus *Insuring the Future* (2001). Beck claims we need a *social pact* to address the ecological risks we are facing. Lynch & Wells combine Beck's work with Hardin's insight on the 'Tragedy of the Commons'. Their solution is to promote *rational* decision making and cooperation among citizens – 'politics for the real world' (Lynch & Wells 2001: 508). This avoids the wacky changes in consciousness and unworkable unworldly ideas of pantheistic ecologists - like Commoner's plea for passive quietism, or Callicott's 'land ethic' or the 'self actualization' of Naess.

T: Some might hold it 'wacky' to wish to change our attitudes so that we can avoid mass extinctions, collapse of ecosystems, megahazards resulting in homelessness, famine, massive loss of life and a probable end to our own species existence. Others might find it 'wacky' to continue on with a 'business as usual' policy until nature is devastated and ourselves along with it.

A: There's a third way. Lynch & Wells promote practical action from within the system that has served us so well. Sudden universal conversion resulting in a radical change of ways across the globe is a most unlikely scenario. We are facing extreme ecological risks, and our present course is an irrational one. However, instead of abandoning our humanity and embracing irrationality, we need to find a means of reinstating rationality and cooperation into the system.

M: A reasonable suggestion.

A: And this means getting away from the moral/ethical agenda of environmentalism. Such a perspective clouds the issue and prevents real solutions.

T: How?

A: Take the climate change debate in Australia. Frank Gomez explains how former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and opposition leader Tony Abbott spoiled the chances of having a rational debate by framing it in terms of faith and belief (Gomez 2010: paras 1-2). This irrational moral/religious discourse missed the whole point of action. Climate change is a *risk*. And

> Taking action on climate change is like the insurance policy you take to ensure the worst that can happen if your home burns down, assuming no loss of life, is that you lose some prized personal possessions but you rebuild and life goes on. Not doing anything could mean becoming homeless and financial ruin (Gomez 2010: para 13).

This is why we should be debating 'risk management'. However, political action on risks such as climate change are difficult to sell. It will cost us in the short term and anyway, people are not likely to appreciate the risks that have been averted. But if we do nothing we may be facing 'a science fiction nightmare scenario' (Gomez 2010: para 12).

T: So you agree climate change is a serious threat?

A: After my independent investigation into the science and my chat with Lynch, I agree that it would be *rational* to consider the *risk* and to insure against it. Lynch & Wells claim we should empower the insurance industry to assess risks like climate change. There has always been a need 'to counter capitalism's perennial tendency to encourage cost-externalizing strategies' (Lynch & Wells 2001: 509). Beck argues that today it has become increasingly difficult to assess risks, owing to difficulties of predicting where and when they occur and who ultimately is responsible for them. This has led to market irresponsibility and the risk of hastening the 'Tragedy of the Commons':

> For unlike the situation with traditional resource communities, in which one can hope that stakeholders enlightened self-interest provides sufficient motive for constituting and sustaining effective schemes for risk internalization, the effective management of modern resource-using communities typically presupposes that stakeholders be held accountable by 'outsiders' for failures to internalize risk (Lynch & Wells 2001: 509).

Hardin recognized the potential for collapse when rational self-maximizers are not made accountable for the external problems they cause. The problem of managing the commons is this: unless *all* participate, the tragedy will unfold (Lynch & Wells 2001: 510).

T: Yes we've been over this. Hardin thought the problem answerable by property rights, or as a last resort, a command economy. And we have seen that his first solution is no solution at all. Dividing lots cannot solve problems like climate change and pollution because the problem extends beyond property boundaries and will require action on a global scale. Furthermore, this will not solve exploitation of resources either, for our economic system rewards those who exploit a local area and invest the profits elsewhere.

A: Lynch & Wells recognize these problems, however, they are wisely cautious of the risks of authoritarianism. What Hardin failed to consider were the benefits gained by risk spreading and risk pooling (Lynch & Wells 2001: 511). Lynch & Wells give a retelling of the commons as it really existed in traditional agricultural communities, claiming that it formed part of a more complicated agricultural system that functioned as a form of collective risk management. The agriculturalists were able to insure against the irregularities of the weather and by dispersing their land in different areas, 'risks from

such things as flooding, fire, drought and disease, were spread across the community of landholders' (Lynch & Wells 2001: 513). We too need a systematic and agreed-upon approach to risk management.

T: They have a plan for this?

A: Yes. A solution to Hardin's problem – a means of internalizing externalities.

T: How?

A: The basic idea is this – it is rational for us to hedge our bets and to internalize externalities at least if we are personally at risk of being affected.

T: But problems like pollution and climate change cost too much for those most responsible to address and what they stand to lose is outweighed by the cost of being responsible. The greatest burden will fall on those with little if any responsibility at all, other countries and future generations, making it economically *irrational* to do anything about. What reason do they have to take action?

A: It is for this reason Lynch & Wells distinguish between 'endogenous' externalities which affect the local community and can be addressed purely by an appeal to rational self-interest and 'exogenous' externalities that do not and require something more (Lynch & Wells 2001: 514).

T: A command economy?

A: Hardin suggested so, though of this he was 'properly suspicious' (Lynch & Wells 2001: 515).

T: What other way is there?

A: As a last thought Hardin suggested 'mutual coercion, mutually agreed upon'. He didn't explain exactly what he meant by this, however, there is a way this can be achieved and something that is a feature of the last two hundred years – *risk* avoidance.

M: Beck's thesis?

A: Exactly.

T: Go on.

M: Beck wrote of the difference between *threats* and *risks*. He suggests that prior to modernity humans suffered catastrophes as an external act attributable to some 'other' force 'gods, demons, or nature' – such occurrences experienced as *threats*. However during the last two hundred years we have been enabled to internalize disasters through calculation, assessment and applying precaution, including those directly produced by industrial society itself, making them assessable as *risks* (Beck 1995: 20). This brought great advantages including avoiding the pitfalls of ascribing moral blame to individuals and having to prove direct cause (except in cases of noncompliance and negligence) (Beck 1995: 21). 'The decisive advantage, however, is that the calculus of risk enables the industrial system to deal with its own unforeseeable future' (Beck 1995: 22). This was achieved through regulation by the political sphere and was largely successful. Unfortunately our own era is marked by an absence of such risk management. Beck claims this has arisen out of technological challenges that cannot be addressed by the same means. According to Beck it is marked by 'scandalous failure of institutions in the face of destruction' (Beck 1995: 85).

T: I agree with that.

M: And those agents responsible for the disaster and the institutions traditionally responsible for their risk management act as though we live in the now past era of industrial society (Beck 1995: 86).

T: This is exactly the case right here in Australia – with the Federal opposition's campaign against action on climate change, along with its tender ties with mining companies largely responsible for green house emissions. Their whole campaign is based on an out-dated ideal of prosperity that is no longer possible. And the incumbents hold to the same mindset!

M: Yes and a society that fosters such ideals in our society has gone beyond the limits of effective

risk management. What industrial society addressed as *risks*, have become contemporary *threats* and no longer capable of being dealt with in the successful manner we have been accustomed to. When, or where, or how much damage will result can no longer be predicted, nor can such disasters be compensated for. Beck cites Chernobyl – explaining that some of the victims wouldn't even be born until years after the event (Beck 1995: 140). Beck claims that the means of distinguishing between risks and contemporary threats is that the former were *insurable*, while the latter cannot be.

A: This is where Lynch & Wells suggestion of *Insuring the Future* comes in. They turn to the insurance industry - this sector profits from analyzing risk and does so in a competitive environment thus avoiding the problems of political bias and centralized control (which can be both authoritarian and incompetent). The insurance industry has been warning against the catastrophic risks of climate change for some time.

T: You don't think they could be a part of the extremist green anti-civilization neo-Marxist conspiracy Plimer warns against?

A: I can't think of any reason why. They don't seem to have any motive other than saving their own skins.

M: And the threats to their business are considerable. So grave are the potential costs that in some areas insurance companies have stopped offering cover. The costs of insurance remain astronomical five years after Hurricane Katrina (Mowbray 2010) and:

> In Florida, the wave of hurricanes in 2004 prompted substantial rate increases, despite which seven private insurers stopped writing homeowners policies in the state or withdrew from the market altogether (Mills *et al* 2005: 3).

T: Suggesting that climate change is a severe threat?

A: Enough for me to avoid investing my dollars in Florida's property market.

M: And enough for insurance agencies to be taking note. Munich Re, one of the world's largest reinsurance companies, has compiled an historical database of natural disasters. They have found

significant increases in climate disasters (Carey 2011: para 6). The evidence points more and more towards greenhouse gas emissions as the cause of this (Carey 2011: para 15). In addition to Munich Re, other large insurance companies, including Swiss Re America Corp and Ernst & Young, have unequivocally stated the case for anthropogenic climate change and created 'Climate Wise' an organization designed to reduce the economic risk associated with climate change (Boykoff 2011: para 7). They are acting, as you say, purely from a business perspective. More disasters mean less profits. And while we should welcome their action:

> The insurance industry can only take us so far. We need political leadership – and a vibrant, fully mobilized social movement pushing that leadership – to make it the rest of the way. With climate change perilously approaching irreversibility, our time is running out (Boykoff 2011: para 16).

We face a situation of extreme concern. Evan Mills writes:

> As warned by the U.S. Government Accountability Office, private insurers encounter increasing difficulty in handling extreme weather events. As commercial insurability declines, demands emerge to expand existing government-provided insurance for flood and crop, and to assume new risks (e.g. wildfire and windstorm). Cash-strapped governments, however, find that claims interfere with balancing their budgets and, in turn, limit their coverage, with the result that more ultimate losses are shifted back to the individuals and businesses affected by climate change. Compounding the problem, international aid for natural disasters continues its current decline as a percentage of donor-country GDP (Mills 2005: para 24).

A: A situation Lynch & Wells warn as hastening the 'Tragedy of the Commons' and why their 'claim is that *risky activities should be permitted only if they are amenable to full liability insurance, and if not, they should be prohibited*' (Lynch & Wells 2001: 516). By empowering insurance agencies to assess risks, the government can internalize possible costs to the economy, or in those cases insurance companies hold to be uninsurable, invoke the cautionary principle. They list five recommendations of Beck and one of their own, ridding us of such problems as causal proof and unaccountability. The possibility of directly *proving* the effects of ecological devastation suffer the same difficulties the tobacco industry made use of for so a long period. Today, the vast majority of us believe they should be made to internalize the costs of tobacco's secondary effects. So too should we expect the same for polluters. Producers should be made accountable to those who are affected by their activity, including future generations and we can do this by avoiding authoritarian measures (Lynch &

Wells 2001: 517).

> While it is, as Hardin points out, entirely rational for any individual herder to place an extra beast on the (open) commons, *it is equally rational for the herder to try and prevent others from so doing*, and it is this *quid pro* rationality of mutual coercion we seek to exploit (Lynch & Wells 2001: 517).

T: But wouldn't this still involve coercive control? More regulation?

A: Well:

> … it involves regulation, yes, but only of the kind that all markets presuppose: it must deal in legally recognized commodities, and along legally recognized lines. We do not have a command economy and the authoritarianism Hardin fears, but a system in which individual agents make their own choices against a background which, through the demand for liability insurance, effectively regulates outcomes – something true of production in any mature market system (Lynch & Wells 2001: 518).

This makes it compatible with our freedom as well as providing a genuinely workable solution. All of this can be achieved without destroying the market.

T: Forgive me if I don't share in your joy.

A: But you must be impressed with making Commoner's cautionary principle operable?

T: How does that work?

A: By empowering insurance companies to carry out independent assessments we are provided with an analysis of the risks we run and can prevent activity when deemed uninsurable (Lynch & Wells 2001: 519).

M: Good idea - but that would require major regulatory changes.

T: And such changes are unlikely under our current 'democratic' system, where political decisions are in the hands of major parties at the mercy of big business, and locked into a short term economic

agenda calculated by the misleading concept of GDP.

M: Yes, and in spite of the increasing threat of the crisis, Lynch & Wells were writing at a time when Australians and the rest of the world were probably debating the issue much more intelligently than today. Though even then they feared a political lack of vision and a case of governments serving the interests of big business and not the people, citing the case of the European parliament, under pressure from the powerful biotechnology industry, passing legislation excusing them from liability for potential hazards in the future (Lynch & Wells 2001: 519).

T: Such blatant contempt for the wellbeing of the people, including future generations, is a feature of our corrupt political system.

M: Lynch & Wells are wary of moral hazards where powerful interests exert so much influence on the government. They are exempt from responsibility for their actions and so taxpayers end up assuming the cost, thus hastening the 'Tragedy of the Commons' (Lynch & Wells 2001: 519). Lynch & Wells also admit there are serious obstacles to implementation, and some mega hazards may be 'irredeemably difficult' to assess. They end their paper with the pessimistic admission, 'it may be too late to do anything much except bear the consequences – assuming we can' (Lynch & Wells 2001: 519).

T: Like the devastating effects of climate change?

A: But all is not hopeless. Mills writes of the potential for insurance companies to 'become more proactive' (Mills 2005: para 36).

T: It is always nice to hear stories of big business profiting at the expense of humanity.

A: Business thrives best when it serves the interests of humanity.

M: But Mills claims insurance companies, 'may retreat from oncoming risks, thereby shifting a greater burden to governments and individuals' (Mills 2005: para 36). Again this hastens the Tragedy of the Commons.

A: You're focusing on the negative. Take Zurich Insurance's 2008 white paper which highlighted the tremendous opportunities for the industry. David Smith, Zurich Australia's CEO, comments:

> Zurich Australia believes the insurance industry, with its risk management skills and expertise, should see itself as a key player in strengthening community resilience. This not only stands to benefit the broader society but will provide the insurance industry with many growth opportunities, as well as reputational benefits (Zurich 2008: para 5).

The free market rewards those who provide advantages for society and Zurich has found potential in capitalizing on the largely untapped market of preparing us for climate change risks. They are developing plans for making us more adaptable in disaster scenarios and in *internalizing* the external carbon print by measuring its effect, rewarding those who minimalize their carbon activity (Zurich 2008: para 13).

M: There may be opportunities and Patricia Blazey and Paul Govind agree to the considerable role insurance companies have played in risk management in the past, but climate change has affected the constancy of the environment, posing major difficulties in assessment (Blazey & Govind 2007: para 13). They testify to the need for 'financial and regulatory encouragement' (Blazey & Govind 2007: para 16).

T: Something which has not been forthcoming.

A: No. But Lynch & Wells aren't responsible for such apathy.

M: Beck explains that the difference between *risks* and *threats* can be distinguished by the refusal of private insurance to cover the latter (Beck 1995: 25). The unpredictability and severity of megahazards, like those caused by climate change, have been met with by institutional failure.

> The institutions of developed industrial society – politics, law, engineering sciences, industrial concerns – command a broad arsenal for “normalizing” noncalculable hazards. They can underestimate them, compare them out of existence, or excise their causal and legal identity (Beck 1995: 26)

Beck likewise makes us aware of symbolic posturing towards ecological action (Beck 1995: 26).

Something familiar to us, in the half way measures our current government cannot even get bi-partisan agreement on.

A: But Beck didn't consider the option of empowering insurance companies, literally. By empowering insurance agencies to assess risk, we can calculate the cost of externalities and in those cases cover is refused, we have grounds for banning such activity.

T: So what if an insurance company can come up with a cost-benefit analysis? Isn't this what ecologists are disgusted with – putting a price-value on ecological devastation? And our anthropocentric science, no doubt, will aid us here. Can't you see that such institutions and science itself has decimated Gaia and as such is harming us as well? This is why some are calling for the abolition of industrial society altogether, in favour of wholesome tribal living.

A: Which is both impossible as well as completely undesirable. Such views reflect a cultural neurosis incapable of facing society under threat (Beck 1995: 9).

M: I agree. We cannot return to the past and if we could, our humanist achievements will have been in vain, for few moderns would desire to live in such abominable conditions with such disregard for equality and a meaningful life for all. Modernity has brought us great breakthroughs in human wellbeing, even though it unleashed technological side-effects which are hazardous. How we will confront such mega-hazards, are, as Beck admits, a matter of conjecture. We may well, under this new *threat* society, act in ways resembling the pre-modern era, behaving with similar irrational desperation. But equally we may empower ourselves, with the spirit of modernity's promise, and organize ourselves into a movement that embraces the promise of modernity – a genuine pact humanity can engage in to face a common threat. Yes, there is much today that is ugly and unjust. But not all of this can be blamed on modernity. Equally, the doors have been blown wide open by the adventure of modernity into a consideration of rights, and an exploration of prejudice, that had never before been matched. Beck claims that such has arisen out of a second phase in modernity, 'reflexive modernity' (Beck 1992: 10).

T: Not postmodernity?

A: No, such a term is 'used by blind people' (Jeffries 2006: para. 6). The problems we currently face have been brought about by the *success* of modernity, not its failure (Beck 1992: 14).

T: How?

M: Beck's claim is that *modernity* achieved significant breakthroughs from *threat* to *risk society* for human wellbeing. By encouraging rationality and self interest, the Enlightenment enabled us to begin *internalizing* major risks such as fire, disease and flooding. Science, education and political debate empowered us to assess and implement changes beneficial to the welfare of society at large. But these changes have come at an unseen cost. They have produced unintentional side effects that can no longer be managed by the methods which worked so effectively for the management of risks in Industrial Society. And so we return to a new *threat* society where mega-hazards threaten us in ways akin to pre-modernity. But solutions, Beck argues, will not come from returning to this primitivist mindset. Instead we require changes to our institutions which hold to the values of the Enlightenment. 'Reflexive modernization means not less but more modernity, a modernity radicalized against the paths and categories of the classical industrial setting' (Beck 1992: 14). We need new ways of thinking about a new world with new risks – and this means a politics that 'allow us to live and act within it' (Beck 1992: 12).

A: Like the changes to our regulatory framework Lynch & Wells argue for.

M: Yes. Only Beck is sceptical of whether our existing institutions, including our parliamentary ones, are capable of making the transition to our changed circumstances. But real solutions will not come from ignoring the problem, nor by reacting to our situation by blaming and rejecting science, or any of the other achievements of modernity. What we truly require is to hold onto the Enlightenment ideals of rationality, empirical knowledge and democratic processes, to confront the threats we face in a responsible manner that takes account of all of us.

A: Unlike postmodern nihilists.

M: Beck suggests that ecological problems are human political problems and our best means of addressing them is through continuing the process of the Enlightenment project - *Ecological Enlightenment* (1995). We need to hang onto our humanity, including our capacity for reason and science. We also need to make changes to our institutions; making them more equitable and more capable of addressing the pressing issues of our changed circumstances.

A: Industrial Enlightenment solved problems of risk by ridding us of authoritarian measures and superstitious thinking. And we need to hang onto our reason if we are to have any chance of dealing with any of our ecological problems.

T: Reason means masculinist reason – the policy of exploiting nature. Empirical knowledge is a tool of mastery and democracy is a smoke screen – real power being held by the wealthy, mainly white male elite (Plumwood 1993: 12).

M: Beck analyzes these concerns. His claim is that true *modernity*, meaning the promise of a decent life for all members of society, has never properly come about. It is nonetheless a worthy aspiration and is finding some realization in *Reflexive modernity* – where inherent contradictions are worked through (Szerszynski 1999: 241-242). Reason, science and democracy are not the source of the crisis, nor will attacking them achieve what we are after. However, we should be directing a sustained criticism and plea for accountability, against false reason, bad and authoritarian science, and a political process that lays claim to being democratic, but is not properly democratic at all, failing as it has to encompass the interests of society as a whole, as well as failing to listen to the voices of the other.

A: Such values are essential to human flourishing and Beck is right to champion them. The reason they have not been overly successful in contemporary risk management is because people are still stuck in the old ways of thinking about the problems of industrial society. This includes the neo-Marxists. Marxist theory is based on antiquated notions of antagonism between the bourgeoisie and the working class – the period of industrial capitalism. However, today 'we increasingly confront the phenomenon of a capitalism *without* classes, but with individualized social inequality and all the related social and political problems' (Beck 1992: 88).

T: You don't think we still have class inequality?

A: Inequality is no longer a class issue in the way it was in industrial society. It is now organized along different lines (Beck 1992: 88). The traditional class system is over – there are no classes for themselves. For example those earning the same income now 'can or even must choose between different lifestyles, subcultures, social ties and identities' (Beck 1992: 131).

T: Brent. K. Marshall claims this remains a class issue. He examines the effects of globalization and neo-liberal politics which have devastated ecosystems and the poorer classes alike (Marshall 1999: 259).

A: Marxist analysis fails to account for the end of the class system separating bourgeoisie from workers. Today we witness a rise of subpolitical interest groups, like the biochemical industry, or pharmaceutical companies, or …

T: Mining companies?

A: Yes. It's now about multiple players and multiple identities.

T: Maybe this masks the real culprits. Marshall examines the humanitarian and ecological effects of Reganism and Thatcherism as a class issue (Marshall 1999: 268). Today class inequality has merely been disguised. Take America for example. Since 1973 real wages have steadily decreased (US Bureau of Labor statistics 2006), while wealth concentration amongst the top percentile has increased dramatically. Chris Hartman drawing on data from *The Economic Policy Institute of Working America 2006-2007* writes:

> In 1962, the wealth of the richest one percent of U.S. households was roughly 125 times greater than that of the typical household. By 2004, it was 190 times. The richest one percent of U.S. households now owns 34.3 percent of the nation's private wealth, more than the combined wealth of the bottom 90 percent. The top one percent also owns 36.9 percent of all corporate stock (Hartman 2007: 2).

Thomas Palley records that the 'economic boom' of 2005 was really disadvantageous to the majority of Americans (Palley 2007: 2). Don't tell me there's no class war!

A: Beck's point is that society is being reconstructed on vastly more complex lines than the era of industrial society.

T: But is it? Maybe Beck's analysis merely reflects his own German/Scandinavian experiences and does not apply to the rest of the developed world (Marshall 1999: 268) (Cohen 1999: 153).

A: Not true. Americans dismissed analysis on the same grounds until 9/11, 'then the terrorist attacks happened and there was a complete conversion. Suddenly terrorism was the central risk' (Jeffries 2006: 2).

T: What has terrorism got to do with environmental collapse?

A: Terrorism, like climate change and other contemporary threats, follow the same pattern. They were not foreseen by modernity, but accidentally created through the process of modernization and now can no longer be assessed or controlled in the same manner as risks of the past. We must reassess our priorities in the light of changed circumstances and focus on the hidden negatives brought about by modernization (Beck 1992: 40). Now 'the commonality of anxiety takes the place of the commonality of need' (Beck 1992: 49). And what's more, the nature of changed risks means we are *all* affected.

> For the first time in history, every population, every culture, every ethnic group and every religion in the world is living with a common future that is a threat to us all. In other words, if we want to survive, we have to incorporate those who have been excluded thus far.
>
> The politics of climate change is necessarily inclusive and global – it is, as I would like to call it, cosmopolitan *realpolitik* (Beck 2008: paras. 4-5).

T: Beck is right in claiming that the whole of society will suffer from the effects of climate change, resource depletion, and other ecological disasters, however the effects won't be evenly felt and nor are we equally culpable (Marshall 1999: 268-269).

A: We are all in this together.

T: Forgive me if I am sceptical but I can't see oppressors suddenly leaping to the cause of those they have oppressed for generations because they now recognize the fate of humanity is on the line!

A: Take Copenhagen for example:

> … thanks to the process of reflexivity, in Copenhagen, for the first time, those "underdevelopment" countries themselves realized the situation: they do have an element of power, because everybody knows that if they are not included then all idea of consensus on future strategy would collapse …. (Battiston 2010: para 2).

T: And what happened in Copenhagen? It was a disaster. The wealthy nations completely refused the financial support poorer nations desperately need to implement the proposed treaty and the event ended in a shambles!

A: There was meaningful debate.

T: About what not to agree on when it comes to not doing anything about environmental Armageddon?

A: What do the Marxists offer instead? They haven't even worked out the changing nature of politics where autonomous subgroups compete for power. Marxism relies on the simplistic claim that governments are merely the 'management committee of the ruling class' (Beck 1992: 188).

T: Yes? And what happened in 2008 when Obama and other politicians across the globe bailed out the banks? Isn't this a clear case of government being the servant of big business interests?

A: There's more going on here. We've moved beyond the age of large organizations and hierarchy (Beck 1992: 215). Instead we have entered 'an *experimental phase of organizational planning*' (Beck 1992: 216).

T: Meaning our traditional institutions are no longer capable of dealing with the situation?

A: Exactly. The new paradigm of politics will be planned upon vastly different lines.

T: Harriet Bulkeley disagrees. Beck's claim that modernity is undergoing an 'unseen self confrontation' is not fully intelligible (Bulkeley 2001: 434). For instance, what sense does it make to claim that our epoch is marked by what modernity previously ignored, while at the same time maintaining that such new found threats couldn't have possibly been foreseen? And isn't it the case that environmental risks have always created institutional crises (Bulkeley 2001: 434)?

A: Like mega-hazards?

T: Why should all risks, from terrorism to climate change, be lumped together?

M: Good question.

T: And why should issues like climate change not be addressed by our government? Is this not the reason we have it for?

A: What has the government been doing on the issue?

T: Not nearly enough. But not because it has ceased to be relevant. Investigating the period between 1996 to 1997 Bulkeley found that there was too much emphasis on 'economic modelling' and government inaction was owing largely to the privileging of 'certain places, economic sectors, & people', especially the resource and energy sector (Bulkeley 2001: 439). Not much different from today!

A: You agree? It's the subpolitical that now have power?

T: No, Bulkeley contends that the subpolitical have always had power and woven interdependent relations with traditional politics (Bulkeley 2001: 438). Today we need the state more than ever. The majority of Australians agree that climate change should be addressed by the federal government. The fact that so little has been done to address the issue and this latest carbon tax has been so idiotically opposed by the opposition that it too may fail, suggests to some that we may need a radical upheaval to

create a government that acts for the people in a responsible manner.

M: But Federal parliament, as Bulkeley points out, is not the only level of state action. There has been activity in other levels of regional and state government (Bulkeley 2001: 441-442). Other tiers act as a force for change, as can and do the state and regional levels of government. Furthermore the state is not a static entity. It is capable of changing and engaging with subpolitical concerns as well as new forms of hazards (Bulkeley 2001: 443).

A: Can it? Climate change is just one example of risks that traditional institutions can no longer deal with. Take global terrorism - has increasing invasion of our privacy, from security measures and two exorbitant wars the Australian population had no say over, made us any safer to such a threat?

T: (aside to M) What has Lynch done to A? He's beginning to sound like a left wing radical!

M: (to T) I'm sure Lynch has merely helped him to develop his reason.

A: Or the effects of genetic engineering. We are facing absolute changes to the way we think about life, death, families – major changes the public will have to deal with financially and socially, yet this upheaval is being conducted 'unconsciously and unplanned' by a tiny group of human geneticists (Beck 1992: 212). How has the state been able to deal with this?

T: These are all serious issues, but again, should they all be lumped together? And why should it be that we are witnessing a radical political shift?

M: Bulkeley contends that other groups, including state sectors, are united in a shared vision in addressing climate change. They retain power and function within the politics of industrial society (Bulkeley 2001: 443). Instead of the demise of traditional politics Beck boldly proposes, she finds his 'alternative vision' more likely, 'where the formal political system retains power and influence but is thrown into coalitions with subpolitical institutions and actors' (Bulkeley 2001: 442). This is the kind of alliance Lynch & Wells are calling for – making those subpolitical interests responsible for externalities accountable.

A: A brilliant proposal! To my mind Beck has skillfully analyzed the predicament we are in and the fact that not every suggestion he has made has come true in every case doesn't take away from his enormous contribution to understanding ecological threats including climate change. His theory of 'risk society' provides an analysis of how the problems we now face have risen, as well as pointing towards how they can be resolved.

T: You've given up on unregulated *laissez-faire* economics as solving our ecological problems?

A: If that means an economics that refuses even its own insurance based strategies of internalizing negative externalities, then yes. I've researched the issue, reflected on it and changed my mind. If you are going to judge my current position on what I once believed then there's no point in having a debate.

M: I agree.

T: Is Beck's model better? He still depends on an egoistic, democratic ideal, devastating to the natural world, and one that holds to a democratic-centred, self-interested model. This is something even Ophuls, Commoner and other 'enlightened anthropocentrists' hold as no longer viable for our own species.

M: Would a political revolution or even a revolution in values fare any better? At the very least Beck lets us in on the failure of our institutions to protect us from, or even prepare us for, the environmental risks we face. When it comes to climate change Bulkeley praises Beck for his analysis of the lack of accountability in contemporary risk management (Bulkeley 2001: 431), the unseen side-effects of modernization, the difficulties associated with climate change risks owing to their unpredictable consequences in time and space, the problem of how to make those most responsible for the effects of their actions accountable to those least responsible - the undeveloped nations and future generations and finally the political consequences of having our knowledge of environmental threats within the domain of science (Bulkeley 2001: 432).

T: Like Ian Plimer serving the interests of mining companies?

A: Or Commoner politicizing ecology? Or Bookchin for that matter?

M: Yes, there is a great danger if science becomes politicized, especially if it be corrupted by subpolitical sectors intent on clouding the true danger of mega-hazards to protect their own interests. But there is an important sense as to why science can't and shouldn't avoid 'the political', for if it is to follow Enlightenment ideals, it should be there to serve the interests of humanity as a whole and as such, should be publicly accountable (Beck 1995: 92).

T: But really, how much has changed politically?

M: Bulkeley may be right in finding this claim of Beck's exaggerated (though I, myself, am not sure about this). Even so, this in no way takes away from Beck's insights and suggestions: the growth of megahazards, the need for a developmental science transparent to the public, the dangers of power being wrested by subpolitical commercial interests, the inadequacy of the laboratory method that depends on measuring cause and effect rather than probability. Finally Beck's reaffirmation of the 'social pact' is of great significance if we are to strive for a humane solution to the crisis engulfing us, as are his practical propositions to achieve such an aim.

A: I agree. Beck offers us real solutions and genuine analysis. He is right when he argues:

> … if you look at the environment as environment, you are not only missing the point of the environmental movement, but you are threatening your own political capacity to find any answer. Only if you see there is a combination between nature and society, you can have a political answer to it; that's why I believe that even environment as a concept is misleading sociology and politics … (Battiston 2009: para 6)

T: Are you now claiming the environment is a social construct?

A: To the extent that I believe our environmental problems are political problems for human beings. It is up to us to deal with them, and we should champion our humanity and our democratic principles as being both good and as having the best chance at dealing with the eco-crisis. Beck is rightly sceptical of authoritarian measures including 'technocratic visions' and rightly holds that

'democracy is the condition for finding solutions even to climate change'. For:

> … without democracy there would be no consciousness about the environmental problem; this did not come up because of scientists or governments; it came up because civil society movements had the chance to raise their voice in the public. It came up under democratic conditions. There are no solutions without a consensus, and the consensus will only be constructed by democratic institutions (Battiston 2009: para 6).

M: I agree. Democracy and the Enlightenment project have an important role in the ecological debate and shouldn't be caricatured and summarily dismissed in the manner of some from the ecology movement. The project of Locke, Rousseau, Kant and others in championing rational agents, empowering individuals to make decisions, encouraging objective analysis of nature and society outside of religious teachings and superstitious beliefs, have served us well here. It would be unwise to pass over the achievements of the past or to dismiss Enlightenment ideals as offering no guidance for the immense challenges we face.

A: True.

T: Why? It is the project of *modernity* that has brought about our current ecological crisis.

M: To repeat, Beck's point is that such devastation and risks are an effect of *modernization*, rather than *modernity*. Enlightenment ideals have served humanity well and opened up consideration for the nonhuman. The problem is that *modernizing* society involved two problematic factors: latent side effects and antiquated institutions incapable of fulfilling *modernity's* demands, including the democratic promise of enabling the voices of dissent to be heard. According to Beck this is being worked through in the process of '*reflexive* modernization' (Beck 1992: 10).

T: Like hearing the voices of the women and children in the third world, the wisdom of the East, the anti-materialist back to nature poets, the many indigenous cultures who always respected the natural world, even the cries of helpless non-human creatures?

M: Yes. These voices are now being heard. And we can understand this as arising in the West out of Enlightenment values. Beck argues that our blindness and prejudice belongs to antiquated dogmas

that do not properly belong to *modernity* at all. Today the dogmas and superstitions of industrial society *are* being questioned, including that of 'progress', as well as blind faith in scientific institutions. We should be condemning *institutional* failure. It is not the Enlightenment values of reason, democracy and science that are the problem.

A: It makes perfect sense. This is where the postmodernists have lost the plot. They claim all forms of knowledge and ways of knowing are relative because of some problems and contradictions within our institutions where knowledge has been used illegitimately. But this is reactive superficiality playing into the hands of special interest groups who can make use of such irrational doubts to further their agendas.

T: Like climate change sceptics who are putting the fate of humanity on the line?

A: Yes, and there you have it! We need science, for climate *scientists* have disclosed the truth of climate change and science can and should be used as a means of averting humanitarian disaster. It is when science becomes politicized and misused that we encounter problems like that of Chernobyl (Beck 1995: 71). But we depend on science and it is this dependency that Beck brilliantly suggests is the reason for the backlash against it.

T: Not because it has brilliantly devastated Gaia?

A: Science has brought us great benefits, but it has also drawn criticism. To begin with, specialization has opened up the possibility of rival claims and this has undermined public faith. Furthermore, subpolitical interests have manipulated science to further commercial interests. Another problem is that while science has been successful in predicting results of risks in the past, new risks elude old methods. Frustration builds because of our reliance on scientific methods that once proved useful now sometimes produce *further* risk. What's more, the scepticism which properly belongs to science has been publicly hidden owing to claims about the necessity for quick decision making and science's politicization (Beck 1992: 163). Science has not come under attack because the postmodernists have made convincing arguments about the relativization of knowledge, or the failure to improve our wellbeing. The reverse is true. Science's success has made society dependent on it and

'it is precisely the awareness of its dependence on the object of its protests that produces so much bitterness and irrationality in the anti-science attitude' (Beck 1992: 163) – like that of primordial fantasizing for example. The failure of science to protect us from new risks like megahazards, Beck explains, is owing to the problem that we are now facing threats that 'can no longer be tested in the laboratory' (Beck 1995: 84). In fact, '*society is made into a laboratory*' (Beck 1995: 106). He writes on the nature of nuclear risk:

> … those who until now have pretended to know don't know it either. None of us – not even the experts – are experts when it comes to the atomic danger. Here not only individual shortcomings, but also systematic reasons, come to the fore (Beck 1995: 67).

T: Like Chernobyl & Fukushima?

M: Yes, they are prime examples, 'in matters of risk, and this is important, no one is an expert' (Beck 1995: 108-109). What's more, in the cases of those tests which can be conducted, the process is often compromised by subpolitical interests. 'How can research be kept capable of learning when to admit mistakes not only destroys billion–dollar investments, but is tantamount to the self-annihilation of an entire specialized discipline?' (Beck 1995: 106).

T: A very good reason to be outraged at science!

A: And a very good reason why we should be attempting Gould's NOMA. While there are difficulties in completely separating science from values (Ashby 1978: 33-38), we should strive to debate our values and our needs in the political sphere and direct our science to address what we deem important. The problem today, Beck contends, is that 'the sciences are *entirely incapable* of reacting adequately to civilizational risks, since they are prominently involved in the origin and growth of those very risks' (Beck 1992: 59).

T: And why many are calling for the abolition of science altogether.

A: Even if that be possible – how will that solve anything?

M: No. Such a solution is no solution at all as a means of dealing with what we face. Beck argues what we need is a change in how science is conducted, to limit the power institutions exert over it and harness it toward the social good. Because of the nature of our changing risks, he argues for a *developmental* science which is more democratic, transparent and involves methodological changes necessary for risk assessment. He calls for regulatory changes that make scepticism and dissenting views more open to the public, debates over *what* gets studied more publicly accountable, the agendas driving experimentation more open and for changes in the way science conducts investigations. For example, he wishes to replace correlation with direct proof to end the use of institutional science to excuse polluters from their harmful activities. Such a process commonly fails because:

> There is usually not *one* polluter, but just pollutants in the air from many smokestacks, and in addition these are correlated with unspecific illnesses, for which one can always consider a number of 'causes' (Beck 1992: 63).

A: Lynch & Wells' point.

M: Yes, and we should be treating ecological risks as a 'breach of human rights' (Beck 1995: 8).

A: Making environmental issues ones of social justice.

T: You don't think this emphasis on *human* interests has not only desecrated non-human nature but has even worsened the biosphere for humanity?

A: No.

M: Beck insists that the failure to take human interests seriously is a large part of the problem. Too much power is held by subpolitical interests against the greater good. Science has likewise failed the promise of modernity by adopting a God's eye view of the world, something inherited from the Medieval church and thus not arising out of modernity at all.

A: Which is why we should be championing 'tremendous subjectivity' (Beck 1995: 33) against the 'technocracy of threat' (Beck 1995: 16).

M: Beck promotes Goethe's injunction “to read in the book of nature” (Beck 1995: 14). This is not something institutional science can do for us and yet we have empowered it to do so with fraught ecological consequences. Goethe found great wisdom in nature and profoundly influenced both the Enlightenment and the Romantic movement. He recognized the need for our subjective connection to the land as constitutive of our wellbeing.

A: I strongly agree. We need to hang onto our greater human interests including our need for nature's aesthetics. Beck is right to champion Enlightenment values and the enormous contribution to human wellbeing they have made. Kant's answer to the question 'What is Enlightenment' remains as valid then as now. He rightly saw the triumph which comes from 'man's emergence from his self-imposed immaturity' by 'the freedom to use reason publicly in all matters' (Kant 2009: 1) and celebrated its capacity to further 'man's progress toward improvement' (Kant 2009: 3).

T: Man, maybe. Especially white privileged ones.

A: Women, too, everyone in fact.

T: Plumwood argues that Kant followed the systematic prejudice inherent in the Western tradition (Plumwood 1993: 151). The point is that Kant's championing of reason and his idea of improvement is a particularly Western conception which devalourizes *others* including women, native peoples and the nonhuman serving the interests of a powerful elite, corrupting our culture into contempt for everything relegated as *other*.

A: I thought you had agreed that was bullshit.

T: I didn't say that!

M: The Enlightenment, to my mind, sparked an ecological consciousness and extended our moral compass to *others* that had historically never been given such consideration. Beck considers *reflexive* modernity as the next phase in this consciousness.

T: But this Western bias ignores tribal environmental respect and wisdom – something ethnocentrists refuse to acknowledge.

M: I agree we should be open to other ways of life but this is exactly what Beck claims is emerging in reflexive modernity. Such a movement holds to the Enlightenment promise of a worthwhile life for all. By championing our needs to live a worthwhile life and marrying it to an ecological sensibility, it offers us a proper focus for our environmental values. For example, Barbara Adam explains how our human rights have been violated by our loss of knowledge and sensual appreciation of the earth:

> Residues of pesticides, fertilizers, herbicides and growth hormones … do not show themselves in any way. Sight, touch, smell, even taste are of no help in establishing whether or not any of the above contaminants are present (Adam 1999: 220).

Her call is to frame the debate in terms of the 'keys to our well-being … rather than shareholders profits' (Adam 1999: 220). The point she and Beck are making is that we need to re-empower ourselves to debate about human needs and the social good when it comes to our environmental problems. Our human needs include delight in natural processes like 'the joy that comes with the expectancy and arrival of new seasonal foods; the first peas, carrots, cucumbers, strawberries, apples' (Adam 1999: 227). Modern farming practices both inhibit our joy and come at great ecological cost – and we should be empowered to stop it.

T: The social contract?

M: Quite so.

T: Is his thinking along the lines of John Rawls' project?

A: Beck claims Rawls is too tied to the outdated era of the nation state (Papoulias 2010: para. 32). Instead Beck champions 'cosmopolitanism' and 'the dignity of difference' over classical liberal models (Jeffries 2006: para 13).

T: And does such 'dignity of difference' extend to nonhuman others?

M: It could well do so. In developing our our capacity for self criticism, as the unique beings that we are (Beck 1995: 76), I see no reason why developing this capacity cannot be extended to nonhuman others.

T: I'm not convinced that this is enough. I think we should be taking seriously a more ecocentric approach.

M: Perhaps we could examine this next week.

T: Next week it is.

END

Chapter 6 – Deep Ecology and Cultural Revolution

T: We *do* live under threat, but so too does the rest of the natural world. Take wild vertebrate species – they fell by nearly a third (31%) globally between 1970 and 2006 (UN 2010: 24). Between 12% and 55% of all species, vertebrate, invertebrate and plant groups, are currently threatened with extinction (UN 2010: 26). Deforestation 'continues at an alarming rate' (UN 2010: 32), while less known 'savannas and grasslands … have also suffered severe declines' (UN 2010: 34). In spite of a 2002 commitment to address this massive biodiversity loss, our 'ecological footprint' is worse than was even predicted (UN 2010: 9). All of this devastation has to stop!

A: What's the solution?

T: I don't know exactly, but what I do know is that this unprecedented disaster affects more than just human beings. What's more, the deep ecology movement teaches that obsessive preoccupation with ourselves, to the detriment of the rest of the natural world, has led to this crisis in the first place and anthropocentrism is something that must be overcome!

M: Go on.

T: Firstly we should consider life's 'intrinsic worth'. This is both a *moral* claim and one pragmatically necessary to our own survival. We must shed the human prejudice that this world is ours to do with as we please. Such a view may lie at the heart of this crisis and drive our anti-ecological way of life.

A: Beck's point is that our ecological problems are institutional ones and are far more complex than mere 'human prejudice'.

M: Yes and according to Beck the promise of modernity opened up a great break-through in equality and wellbeing for humanity and, I would also argue, concern for nonhuman life. For example Singer bases his 'animal liberation' on the principles of Bentham's utilitarianism, while Regan is a Kantian. The concept of 'intrinsic value' likewise is Kantian. Schopenhauer advocated a moral concern

based on the principles of compassion for nonhuman animals and so on.

T: But why should we Westerners be credited with developing such concern when it has been a worldview of many indigenous communities. This is ethno-centrism!

M: There is no reason to discount our own achievements – they are ours, after all. Our liberal tradition has encouraged the voices of other cultures to be heard and liberalism is a conscious commitment for a meaningful life for all individuals. It is the Enlightenment promise.

A: What does deep ecology really offer?

T: 'An ongoing, comprehensive, deep inquiry into values, the nature of the world and the self' (Drengson 1999: para 1). It emphasizes 'deeper and more harmonious relationships between place, self, community and the natural world' (Drengson 1999: para 2). We first need a fundamental shift in our attitudes to bring about change to our institutions:

> [Deep ecologists] recognize that we cannot go on with industrial culture's business as usual. We must make fundamental changes in basic values and practices or we will destroy the diversity and beauty of the world, and its ability to support diverse human cultures (Drengson 1999: para 10).

We live in a pathological culture deluded into exploitive consumption and this *attitude* drives our political and economic system. We must reevaluate our values if we are to live in proper harmony with the earth and we need to promote a moral imperative to respect and care for other organisms that are not of our own species.

M: As a part of an ecological sensibility?

A: This is a waste of time! Listen, my hometown of Ipswich has just been flooded to buggery, people have lost their lives, my mate's lost his house and our local pub has been washed away. I am now convinced this wasn't just a freak of nature and that we are headed for scenarios like this more and more frequently. This is just the beginning of a crisis that in all likelihood could end in a devastating

collapse for the whole of civilization. Yet you want to waste time discussing 'anthropocentric' attitudes![4]

T: I'm sorry for your loss and understand your passion but all of this arises out of the anthropocentric attitude of putting ourselves above the rest of life. We need to change our attitude to the earth so that we can all live in harmony with the biosphere.

M: Well ...

T: The idea of treating the earth as a collection of resources to be plundered as 'raw material' disrupts the ecological balance and causes untold harm to an immense number of organisms. This is why deep ecologists promote the cultivation of ecological awareness and respect for the nonhuman, like some tribal communities have done (Drengson 1999: para 27).

A: How will that solve the devastation climate change is likely to cause? No one is safe including tribal people! This is the point of Beck's mega-hazards.

T: We can learn from others who have lived for countless generations in a responsible, respectful, and sustainable manner.

M: I agree but we should be on our guard against primitivist fantasies and deep ecologists are not the only ones calling for us to change our consciousness. The social ecologist Bookchin and the anarchist George Bradford, likewise, call for a change of values and an end to domination. In *The Ecology of Freedom* (1982) Bookchin contrasts ecology with shallow environmentalism - attacking the latter's treatment of the nonhuman as a 'passive habitat' of 'raw materials' for 'human use' (Bookchin 1982: 21). However, as we have said, he was wary of the mystical tendencies in deep ecology and the *adoration* of nature, and for reasons already given, rejected biocentrism and charged deep ecology as failing to properly investigate the 'social origins of ecological problems' (Bookchin 1996: 117). Bradford agrees, and consequently finds that deep ecology is not deep enough. In not offering a thorough analysis of the devastating role of *capital* in disrupting sustainable living for human and

4 This discussion took place shortly after the dramatic floods that swept through Queensland and Victoria (January 2011).

nonhuman alike, oppressed people become targeted as the enemy. The problem gets reduced to overpopulation and the solution becomes a question of eliminating excess human beings in one way or another. Racist and genocidal proposals of EarthFirst! and others logically follow (Bradford 1989).

> The rejection of biotic hierarchy, and of "man" as the pinnacle and lord of creation (the model for all hierarchies), is crucial to a reconciliation with the natural world, but the deep-ecology critique of anthropocentrism is itself mired in ideology (Bradford 1989: para 16).

Rather than finding in the work of Foreman and others a new ethic, Bradford instead rediscovers the false and inhumane logic of Malthus (Bradford 1989: para 40). While we must put an end to the destruction of nature, the anti-ecological activity wreaked by transnational capital we witness cannot be reduced to mere species activity; 'that would be to take at face value the corporate and state rationalizations for exploitation' (Bradford 1989: para 20). Bradford finds that deep ecologists have simplistically reversed the nature/culture binarism condemning humanity as an 'aberration' and to be rejected as an opposing 'other' to virtuous nature. Brian Morris explains:

> Such 'anti-humanism' Bookchin and Bradford feel is perverse, unecological, and at extremes leads to misanthropy. The idea that humans should 'obey' the 'laws of nature' is an idea that they both seriously challenge. And they go on to suggest that by focusing entirely on the category 'humanity' the deep ecologists ignore, or completely obscure, the social origins of ecological problems (Morris 1997: 37).

T: The debate between social ecologists and deep ecologists has been fruitful to all who are concerned with human and nonhuman alike and I count Bookchin and Bradford as part of the deep ecology movement.

A: They don't!

T: Today many Earth First!ers protest against both racial and ecological injustice. Robyn Eckersley explains that an ecocentric approach:

> ... seeks the mutual flourishing of all life forms. Such a perspective does not seek to downgrade human creativity nor deny the extent to which humans influence ecological and evolutionary processes. Rather, it asks that we employ our creativity to develop technologies and lifestyles that allow for the continuation of a rich and diverse human *and* nonhuman world (Eckersley 1992: 128).

And she rejects Bookchin's charge of 'mysticism' (Eckersley 1992: 50-51). She examines three approaches to ecocentrism; autopoesis (which ascribes intrinsic value to organisms capable of self production), transpersonal ecology & ecofeminism. None of these approaches are properly 'mystical' at all (Eckersley 1992: 60-71). Some deep ecologists *embrace* modern science, drawing attention to the crude outdated Darwinism built on anthropocentric assumptions. Science shows that humans are not superior 'to the rest of the evolutionary process' (Eckersley 1992: 50-51). And we don't have to sentimentalize nature 'to respect it and regard it as worthy' (Eckersley 1992: 59).

M: Yet it is undeniable many deep ecologists and ecofeminists do exactly this – something we find much evidence for in the Earth First! Journal. Rachel Smolker, for example, vents her rage at science, rejecting technology as having any role in fixing the mess we find ourselves in:

> The planet is our collective responsibility. The world views held by many Earth inhabitants, including most, if not all indigenous peoples is that we are not Mother Earth's 'mechanics,' but rather integral parts of her. This view is part of the consciousness of Pachamama (the spirit of mother nature), visibly present at the "negotiating tables" at the World Peoples Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth, held in Bolivia in April. I, for one, will feel far more hopeful about my children's future if decisions about climate engineering come not from … the "profitable techno-fix" mindset, but rather out of Bolivia, with the Rights of Mother Earth as their basis (Smolker 2011: para 11).

This failure to separate capitalism from genuine science and condemning the latter in favour of matriarchal primitivist ideals does not, as Bookchin emphasizes, amount to a solution. What's more, while it is true that many deep ecologists have taken on more leftist concerns, we can't ignore the misanthropic element, like that of the novelist who inspired monkey wrenching, Edward Abbey. His work 'suggests he wasn't comfortable with environmental activists or activism as a whole' and his passion for the wild left little room for human political concerns (Wilderness.net 2011: para 1). Neither should we neglect the fact that Theodore. J. Kaczynski (a.k.a the Unabomber) is in full agreement with those biocentrists who seek to explode industrial society. His gripe is that the green left anarchists emasculate this noble aim:

> … you can't build an effective revolutionary movement out of soft-headed dreamers, lazies, and charlatans. You have to have tough-minded, realistic, practical people, and people of that kind don't need the anarcho-primitivists' mushy utopian myth (Tsolkas 2011: para 19).

A: He's right about that.

T: So we should instead champion competent murderers who excel at utilizing the most violent form of industrial technology?

A: I'm just saying ...

M: Kaczynski retains sympathizers amongst the deep ecology movement including Panagiotis Evangelos Nasios Tsolkas who considers him an eccentric uncle in the Earth First! family (Tsolkas 2011). From these two examples alone, it is clear that the divergences within the movement, are, as Bookchin charges, far greater than any common goal (Bookchin 1996: 100).

T: The common goal is to develop an ecocentric approach to the world. Referring to two extremists, whose connection to deep ecology consists merely in their contempt for industrial culture hardly amounts to a reasonable justification for not giving moral consideration to the nonhuman! And far be it for me to defend misanthropy, but even some of the more extremist statements of Earthfirst!ers shouldn't be taken as sincere wishes for the end of humanity. I interpret much of it as a form of 'shock treatment', devised to shock us out of our ignorant belief that somehow we transcend the natural world and live independently of the biosphere. Foreman argues that some of his own controversial statements were made precisely with this goal in mind – he wants people to 'wake up' from their ignorance (Foreman & Bookchin 1991: 41).

A: To what? Are you prescribing that we go out and blow up or shoot dead human beings for the greater wellbeing of nonhuman nature?

T: You're not listening.

A: It all gets back to Lynch & Wells' thought experiment.

T: Something Eckersley complains of as grossly simplistic (Eckersley 1998: 165-182). We can both save humans and take into consideration the life of the beast. Bookchin has done some important

work but he's too focused on *human* wellbeing.

> … for deep ecologists, it's just another variation on the same song – the song that reassures us that all will become ecologically well with the world if we just put this or that interhuman concern first (Fox 1995: 276).

M: I disagree. Bookchin's work is far richer than this, invoking both the importance of political action *and* a deeply ecological sensibility, united in a vision of a worthwhile and meaningful life for humanity living in kinship with the rest of the natural world. His attack on deep ecologists for not assigning a meaningful place for human beings in the natural order is penetrating:

> We need to understand that the human species has evolved as a remarkably creative and social life-form that is organized to create a place for itself in the natural world, not only to adapt to the rest of nature. The human species, its different societies, and its enormous powers to alter the environment were not invented by a group of ideologues called "humanists" who decided that nature was "made" to serve humanity and its needs. Humanity's distinct powers have emerged out of eons of evolutionary development and out of centuries of cultural development. These remarkable powers present us, however, with an enormous moral responsibility. We can contribute to the diversity, fecundity, and richness of the natural world – what I call "first nature" - more consciously, perhaps, than any other animal. Or, our societies - "second nature" - can exploit the whole web of life and tear down the planet in a rapacious, cancerous manner (Bookchin & Foreman 1991: 33).

He has developed this theme as a Hegelian dialectic.

T: And its anthropocentric rubbish! The teleological claim that humans are somehow the end point of nature's attempt at consciousness is false science and moreover 'arrogant and self-serving' (Eckersley 1998: 156). George Sessions also attacks Bookchin's teleology as coming very close to advocating a secular version of the New Age spirituality he professes to condemn (Sessions 1995: 303).

M: Sessions has missed the point of Bookchin's work. Bookchin has made a conscious effort to avoid overt teleology rejecting both the 'Aristotelean God' and the 'Hegelian Spirit' (Bookchin 1996: 65). His teleology is non-theistic, arguing merely that life tends towards greater complexity and we are, to date (with our advanced consciousness), its greatest achievement. What's more, Sessions has not understood Bookchin's attack on the New Age. Bookchin attacks a hotchpotch of ideas disembodied from our cultural tradition, a tradition he regards as worthy and necessary for genuine political and ecological action. He likewise attacks incoherent and irrational ideas as being of no use in

living ecologically, or in overcoming necessary social and political institutions. His *dialectic* is offered as an alternative. It embraces a *deeper* philosophy like that Alan Drengson claims the deep ecology movement is concerned with. It is a rational and coherent attempt to develop an ecological philosophy following in the Western tradition. While Bookchin rejects the claim (as we have) that the entire Western tradition is inherently anti-ecological, he agrees that it has tendencies which are, and consequently rejects what he terms the 'analytic tradition'. Instead he champions the 'organic tradition' he finds that began with Heraclitus and his philosophy of *process*, life as 'an ever-unfolding *Becoming*' (Bookchin 1996: 6). On the other hand, the analytic tradition began with Kant who 'denatured nature' with his concept of the noumenal, or thing-in-itself (Bookchin 1996: 47). Others followed, relying on an 'instrumental reason' exploitive of natural processes and affecting our science (Bookchin 1996: 47). Yet ironically, Bookchin argues Kant is the philosopher who has most influenced deep ecology.

A: Bookchin has spin doctored the science of evolution to serve his agenda.

T: I agree he's not scientific.

M: Bookchin's claim is that analytic science cannot show nature's *history* as process or uncover the entelechial development of evolution (Bookchin 1996: 62-63). Moreover, 'Darwin did not fully organicize evolutionary theory' (Bookchin 1996: 79).

A: It's teleological.

M: Mildly so. The fact remains we humans have a developed capacity for self consciousness.

A: A pure accident.

M: Bookchin disagrees. He sees us as part of the natural process of evolution from the more simple to the more complex and cites the fecundity of nature as a riddle modern evolutionists such as Gould cannot properly account for (Bookchin 1996: 77-78).

A: Then he hasn't understood natural science at all! You rightly said at the beginning of this

discussion that evolution is without direction and therefore non-teleological. Gould cites parasites as proof of this – such organisms have become *less* sophisticated as a survival mechanism (Gould 1980: 12-13).

> In a famous epigram, Darwin reminded himself never to say "higher" or "lower" in describing the structure of organisms – for if an amoeba is as well adapted to its environment as we are to ours, who is to say that we are higher creatures? (Gould 1980: 36).

T: I agree.

A: So you have embraced science?

T: After reading Eckersley I find that science need not be the enemy of the nonhuman, for as Sessions explains, science has taught us many things we didn't want to know and shattered our anthropocentric assumptions (Eckersley 1992: 157).

M: Bookchin's account is not strictly scientific, however he has a valid point, science itself is 'anthropocentric', as is ecocentrism:

> Only human beings can even *formulate* the concept of "intrinsic worth" and endow it with ethical responsibility. The "intrinsic worth" of human beings is thus patently exceptional, indeed extraordinary (Bookchin 1996: 33).

We should be *championing our humanity* whenever we consider nature, not promote sentiments that potentially undermine it. And do you not take seriously his claim that deep ecologists rely on the same mechanistic, instrumental metaphysics ecologists should be rejecting (as did the Romantics)? Bookchin argues that because such a science as 'systems theory' is crudely mechanistic, it cannot provide any guidance to ecological living and thus it is frequently married to philosophies completely unrelated, like Heideggerian metaphysics or Eastern thought (which aren't ecological either) (Bookchin 1996: 98). I repeat, Bookchin has attempted a genuine deeper philosophy that embraces an ecological sensibility, both of which, he claims 'deep ecology' has failed to achieve (Bookchin 1996: 90).

A: It is a fallacy to imbue nature with a deeper meaning and it is entirely unnecessary. Such a false science is value laden and you convinced me, in your earlier argument, of the need to separate science

from our values so that we can properly analyze scientific facts without the risk of political agendas taking them over and delivering us false information.

M: I'm glad we agree about science. However Bookchin's point is that an ecological philosophy need not be entirely scientific. As human beings we require a richer narrative to guide our ecological actions.

A: Bookchin's full of it.

M: You think Gould's NOMA a more sensible approach?

A: I do.

M: So do I. But my point concerns ecological *philosophy.* Bookchin's is the best attempt I have found in developing a deeper philosophy that draws both traditions into a coherent ecologically mindful whole. Even if you reject his dialectic, he is penetrating in his sustained attack on deep ecology, as well as his insistence on the need for social and political change as essential to combating the ecological crisis.

T: But he doesn't go far enough. We need to attack the domination of the *nonhuman,* not focus merely on the human, especially in the ethnocentric manner he proposes. Such domination includes contempt for other types of knowledge, like those tribal people who lived for countless generations with greater harmony with the land and with each other. As Richard and Val Routley say:

> It is certainly no coincidence that cultures holding to the intrinsic view have normally been far less destructive of nature than the dominant Western human chauvinistic culture (Routley R & V 1980: 131).

Callicott writes of tribal culture as compatible with his land ethic (Callicott 1989: 194). Other deep ecologists champion similar sentiments. Thomas Berry writes of the 'primordial harmony' which existed prior to the period of 'alienation from the natural world' (Berry 1995: 9). Chellis Glendenning explains how the life of the hunter gatherer involved 'a sense of connectedness and security that we can only imagine' (Glendenning 1995: 38). Many write of a deeper spiritual intuitiveness native people

hold. Dolores la Chappelle asserts our 'need to rediscover the wisdom of those other cultures who knew their relationship to the natural world required the whole of their being' (La Chapelle 1995: 58).

A: What sentimental rot.

T: How did societies survive harmoniously for aeons, while our own spiritually sick one is devastating the globe?

A: What do you mean by 'spiritually sick'? Why talk this way when our problems could be as simple as greater numbers of people and the unintended consequences produced by advanced technology?

T: And why can't you see how anthropocentric blindness may be responsible for this? (White Jnr 1998).

M: But why should 'anthropocentrism' be the issue at all? Isn't it really human-centric to obsessively bring everything back to this? Even in those cultures who may appear to hold to something akin to biocentrism, involving cultural notions like 'reciprocity' – it would be a mistake to assume, like Callicott does, that this is evidence of an ecological ethic. Such 'respect' may really arise out of fear and superstition – a kind of bribe for self-preservation, or to assuage guilt (Tuan 1989: 19-20), making it neither recognizably ethical, nor genuinely ecologically mindful.

A: Robin Horton's work also suggests that tribal respect for nature is expressed through sacrificial rites which amount to, 'a bribe … a human centred fear rather than a selfless love of nature' (Lynch & Wells 2000: 22).

M: Furthermore, even if cultures hold to nature's *sacred value,* this does not necessarily translate into genuine ecological *action*. Tuan examines ecological devastation by cultures who celebrate such sacredness (Tuan 1989: 23-24). Passmore also notes, 'societies for whom nature is sacred have nonetheless destroyed their natural habitation' (Passmore 1974: 75) He goes on to explain how such spiritual appraisal can even be detrimental to the environmental cause because such a view may involve

a religious faith that the natural world can look after itself against the onslaught of human destructiveness (Passmore 1974: 76).

T: Freya Mathews agrees that sometimes traditional cultures are guilty of practices 'patently self serving' (Mathews 2006: 87). However at least they had not lost the deeper spiritual meaning to life that we have. Mathews looks forward to a 'post-materialist' society where we will retain spirituality but reject those religious trappings that invoke entities outside of nature, like gods or spirits (Mathews 2006: 93), as well as ridding us of instrumental reason (Mathews 2006: 88). We truly require a shift in consciousness to stun us out of practices that are anti-life. This is why Berry, Fox, Mathews and others call for a spiritual conversion.

A: How can this mystical rubbish be of any value?

T: Spirituality is important to our wellbeing and could drive ecologically sensitive changes to our institutions.

M: Which is why Bookchin championed our need for 'natural spirituality' but a spiritually tied to the earth and which could exist alongside necessary political activism.

A: I do not believe in the need for any spirituality, but deep spirituality is especially nonsensical, and immoral. Lynch rightly attacks Fox's pathological proposal (after all, how stable is one's psychological health likely to be after identifying with the predator and the prey?) (Lynch 1996: 154-155). Naess' call for cosmic identification is equally loopy and provides no suggestions for genuine action. Nor does Mathews panenpsychotic ontopoetics (Mathews 2009) make any sense. As for Fritjof Capra's claim that, 'nature and the self are one' and that such realization is 'the very core of spiritual awareness' (Capra 1995: 20-21).. . well, if the self is nature then all I need to do is eat well, exercise and sleep properly (and doubtless take care of certain other needs in a quiet solitary manner amongst the foliage) and then all shall be well with the world.

T: Some deep ecologists, like Gary Snyder, combine spiritual and ethical commitment to the land, as well as humanitarian political activism.

M: As a political and social analyst, I'm not at all convinced by Snyder.

A: That beatnik pseudo-Eastern guru tribal New Age romanticizer who praises Jeffers, the father of inhumanism, as his holy mentor?

M: But aesthetically and as a poet, I think his work does make a significant contribution to the ecology movement.

T: I find his work far greater than this. Snyder married spiritual ideas of the East with ecological living and he drew upon anthropological knowledge of tribal people, especially the Native Americans, who inspired his 'wild mind' (Snyder 1999: 165-213).

A: What bullshit! How can Snyder claim that 'tribal people' all lived harmoniously with each other and the rest of the natural world? Mortality rates amongst some tribal people are estimated at 15% of the population - far greater than the civilized world (Dyer 2004: 93). Are you recommending a life in which nearly a sixth of us are violently slaughtered? One in which warfare results in up to 60% casualties compared with the 1% of modern warfare? One which you are twenty times more likely to die in warfare than in the 20th century? (Keeley 1996). Look at the evidence, 'nothing points in the direction that war in so-called primitive societies should be less bloody than in so-called civilized societies'. All evidence suggests otherwise, just as it explodes the ecofeminist myth that women in tribal societies are more peaceful than men (Vandkilde 2003: 137).

T: You should be careful about generalizations. Great diversity exists among different tribal people.

A: Tell Snyder that!

M: And how does Snyder's 'wild mind' relate to Buddhism?

T: He explains, 'the world is nature, and in the long run inevitably wild, because the wild, as the

process and essence of nature, is also an ordering of impermanence' (Snyder 1999: 168). Snyder details the significance of the wilderness to Buddhists in 'The Great Clod Project' (Snyder 1999: 285-318). 'Nature and its landscapes were seen as realms of purity and selfless beauty and order' compared with the brutal corruption of political life (Snyder 1999: 168).

M: I agree many, Buddhists included, may have cultivated wisdom in the wilderness. But wasn't Buddha concerned with transcending suffering by detachment from desire including the sensual? And isn't Snyder really advocating the opposite – the wholesale embracing of wild flux.

A: Which amounts to romantic sentimentalism or misanthropic nihilism, like his hero Jeffers sings about. In fact both essentially amount to the same thing.

T: You've certainly changed your tune. Snyder's claim is that by living without a fear of wildness and by embracing those aspects of wildness which are frightening and unpleasant we move towards greater happiness, freedom and greater meaningfulness. He explains:

> When an ecosystem is fully functioning, all the members are present at the assembly. To speak of wilderness is to speak of wholeness. Human beings came out of that wholeness, and to consider the possibility of reactivating membership in the Assembly of All Beings is in no way regressive (Snyder 1999: 173).

A: What do you mean? How can we both live without a fear of wildness and embrace our fear of it at the same time? And to say again - there is no cosmic democracy!

M: No, Snyder has failed to analyze human culture. For example, he writes:

> Social order is found throughout nature – long before the age of books and legal codes. It is inherently part of what we are, and its patterns follow the same foldings, checks and balances, as flesh or stone. What we call social organization and order in government is a set of forms that have been appropriated by the calculating mind from the operating principles in nature (Snyder 1999: 177).

But does this make sense? Isn't there something importantly different to our social order other than the laws of 'flesh or stone'? And something derogatory about adding that our calculating mind has merely appropriated this – is not this merely the reversal of the nature/culture binarism – something Plumwood attacks? Snyder has activated a 'Romantic reversal' (Plumwood 1993: 162-163). He goes on to note:

> In their practice of killing and eating with gentleness and thanks, the primary peoples are our teachers: the attitude towards animals, and their treatment, in twentieth-century American industrial meat production is literally sickening, unethical, and a source of boundless bad luck for this society
> (Snyder 1999: 179).

A: Which is a fallacy!

T: What if it can't be proven that all tribal activity is equivalent to a modern land ethic? At least many tribal people probably killed in a more humane way than our our own cruel and wasteful practices. Snyder's claim need not be essentialist anyway. It may merely amount to the plausible claim that we become less mindful of nonhuman others the more we remove ourselves from the wild.

M: It might, but on the other hand we might become immersed in blood lust. Technology need not be the enemy of the beast, for it can enhance our capacity to reduce suffering and grazing beasts probably live longer and happier lives then their wild counterparts. We also are likely to live happier, healthier and more enabling lives by holding to our culture's Enlightenment values. Snyder's suggestions are strange. He claims that 'for the non-native American to become at home on this continent, he or she must be *born again* in this hemisphere, on this continent, properly called Turtle Island' (Snyder 1999: 194). Surely this *is* sentimental and potentially disrespectful to those natives weary of further cultural exploitation.

A: Exactly! Snyder's 'tribal people' clichés are a first rate exercise in anthropological irresponsibility and blind ignorance. Take his analysis of 'Australia' (Snyder 1999: 349-352). He writes of Australian aborigines from his 'intuitive knowledge' of wild people without attempting to learn anything from the aboriginals at all. Instead he belts out his Shiva chants to the 'wild' children because:

> Shiva really is the lord of the Old ways. The lord of Wild people. Wild hair. So it was right to chant the Shiva mantra in the kindergarten and first-grade classes today
> (Snyder 1999: 350).

To claim that all 'wild people' instinctively worship Shiva and that he, the beat master, can teach his wild wisdom is idiotic and offensive.

M: Snyder continues by claiming that 'he can see why they are right' in their every activity including burning down houses, for it is faithful to their wild natures. He explores no history of colonialism and subsequent political and economic policies behind the situation, instead he relies on the shallow myth of wildness as an explanation for everything. He concludes his essay thus:

> Australia: a poor biomass, arid landscape, no real rivers, so people take it easy. No way to change the world. No way to hurt the world. No world to lose. No world to save (Snyder 1999: 352).

Such observation is superficial, stereotyped, and discounts meaningful political and social analysis.

T: I take your point. Still I think Snyder is right to question Euro-centric ideology and for us to be open to 'other' forms of knowledge.

A: But he's not open at all! He taught those aborigines about their culture by quoting from an altogether alien one that he in turn appropriated!

T: That was not a good piece. However we should be mindful of the arrogance of Western science and ...

A: … and the arrogance of Western beat master charlatans?

T: … and respect intuitive knowledge along with tribal insight. We should be sceptical of Horton's claims that native people merely 'bribe' nature and the assumption that other cultures do not intrinsically value the land simply because our culture doesn't. Again, Snyder overcomes romanticism by insisting on a 'realist' picture. He calls for a land ethic as a contract with real place, the reality of which exists outside of human exploitation and our claims on it. And there is something to intuitive awareness:

> The sum of a field's forces becomes what we call very loosely the “spirit of the place”. To know the spirit of a place is to realize that you are a part of a part and that the whole is made of parts, each of which is whole. You start with the part you are whole in (Snyder 1999: 193).

M: It may hold a poetic truth.

T: And why not more? I find his ideas on place important and of practical value. Snyder explains in an interview, 'One of the key problems in American society now, it seems to me, is people's lack of commitment to any given place – which, again, is totally unnatural and outside of history' (Snyder 1999: 110). I find this significant for the following reasons, firstly the rootless of modern people has a massive affect on greenhouse emissions through both extensive travel and also through international markets. Commitment to a sense of place will reduce the need for both of these. And Snyder points to a deeper situation here - without a sense of place, communities break down, and individuals disintegrate spiritually. Fostering a sense of home and place may go some way to reactivating our harmony with the land and with humans more generally.

> If what the Hindus, the Buddhists, the Shoeshone, the Hopi, the Christians are suggesting is true, then all of industrial technological civilization is really on the wrong track, because its drive and energy are purely mechanical and self-serving – *real* values are someplace else. The real values are within nature, family, mind, and into liberation. Implicit are the possibilities of a way of living and being which is dialectically harmonious and complexly simple, because that's the Way. Right Practice, then, is doing the details (Snyder 1999: 104).

M: Fostering those values in a fragmented neo-liberal society might rather create an even deeper sense of loss.

A: Snyder's got nothing. His New Age habit of ecumenicalism is as wrong headed as his intuitive understanding of wild people. Are we to believe that all religions are essentially arguing the same values and the same 'Way'? The truth is religious values frequently clash and some, including general Christian ones, are openly hostile to the wild.

T: But if people were committed to a place ...

A: Religious people often are, and the more sacred they hold a place to be, the more they piously slaughter each other over it.

M: At the very least, many religious people are not likely to embrace Snyder's 'Way'. His ideas on

nature, family, mind and liberation aren't exactly compatible with many traditional religious ideas. But there is an additional problem here that Stewart Davidson locates in deep ecology's 'troubled' marriage with bioregionalism. If we truly acknowledge no difference between our ecological self and the rest of the natural world then this would really amount to a form of idealism and thus not be concerned with the reality of particular places at all. Or to put it another way, if it's supposed to be promoting an attachment to a *real* place, then what is it for us to prefer one place over another? Why should a clean, beautiful and quiet country lifestyle be prized over a filthy violent ghetto? There we require something more than mere wider identity, we need a prizing of what we feel as humans to be valuable and of what is necessary to our survival - like the call for greater decentralization and aesthetic and healthy living, free from poisons, pollution and unsustainable living practices. But these are genuine human concerns and need not belong to deep ecology at all (Davidson 2007).

T: Snyder, like others in the deep ecology movement, strives to smash anthropocentric assumptions for they are both ignorant and immoral. He calls for the Leopold's land ethic to be enacted, just as Callicott does.

A: Leopold wasn't advocating a revolutionary non-anthropocentric ethic in the way Callicott and others maintain. He was attempting to awaken us from our ecological ignorance. The 'ethic' is merely prudential.

T: Surely he was calling for an end to anthropocentric thinking when he writes;

> Conservation is getting nowhere because it is incompatible with our Abrahamic concept of life. We abuse land because we regard it as a community belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect. There is no other way for land to survive the impact of mechanized man, nor for us to reap from it the esthetic harvest it is capable under science, of contributing to culture (Leopold 1968: viii).

M: May not his attack on 'Abrahamic thinking' be a rejection of an unworldly religious mindset and not a call for a new non-anthropocentric ethic as Callicott and Snyder claim?

A: Leopold was really after an enlightened anthropocentrism - the land should be 'loved and cherished, because it gives definition and meaning to *his* life' (Leopold 1968: 188) (emphasis added) –

meaning us and not the bloody mountain!

T: He also called for an '*ethical* obligation' towards the land (Leopold 1968: 214) (emphasis added). And for us to extend 'the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land' (Leopold 1968: 203-204).

A: If Leopold's land ethic really does entail the radical, new ethic Snyder, Callicott & others claim it does, then it's ridiculous. By breaking with humanity they undermine the sense of moral community altogether, as Lynch & Wells point out. As for the rights of soil, water and plants - such a position is absurd.

M: I agree.

T: Why so? Leopold isn't claiming that dirt has interests or that a beast's life be considered on a par with a humans - what he is saying is that we require a holistic humanistic approach that condemns as morally objectionable the destruction of entire ecosystems. That 'a thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise' (Leopold 1968: 224-225).

M: You agree with Callicott that Leopold meant something beyond prudential, ecological responsibility?

T: Yes! Leopold writes:

> That land is a community is the basic concept of ecology, but that land is to be loved and respected is an extension of ethics. That land yields a cultural harvest is a fact long known, but latterly often forgotten (Leopold 1968: viii-ix).

A: Land isn't a community! It is a struggle for survival amongst individual organisms with competing interests – on what grounds should we extend our ethics? Do we protect viruses for instance?

> The yellow-fever organism cannot love, or exhibit courage, or create ideas or works

> of art. It does not suffer as human beings, or live in fear of death. Humanistic and compassionate considerations lead us to the same conclusion (Passmore 1974: 124).

T: We can perceive that a hungry rat has an interest in eating and not being poisoned. We can accept that an earthworm has its own life to lead and fulfils an important ecological function. Admittedly a virus is more difficult to make a case for but may hold its own important function in the overall scheme of things.

A: *Deep* down in our guts …

T: The fact that it is is harder to defend is probably why anthropocentrists love to seize upon it. Eckersley claims that we can respect difference (Eckersley 1998: 167) and Plumwood argues that all nature's organisms exhibit some form of intentionality and that should be grounds enough for moral consideration (Plumwood 2002: 180).

A: An intention to kill us, or at the very least, give us the shits?

T: We can be practical and appreciate that 'humans are just as entitled to live and blossom as any other species' (Eckersley 1992: 57). Paul Taylor explains:

> What is good for an entity is what "does it good" in the sense of enhancing or preserving its life and well-being. What is bad for an entity is something that is detrimental to its life and well-being (Taylor 1998: 161).

An ethical individual can respect such good without arrogantly dismissing organisms simply because they don't share our moral world, or are capable of destroying the earth through their technology, or can produce Jackson Pollocks.

A: We've been over this already.

M: Yes and I contend that this rights based approach of Taylor, Callicott, Regan, Kenneth Goodpaster (Goodpaster 1998) and other rights based theorists are really transferring human values onto the nonhuman. What's more, they are engaging in the kind of libertarian discourse I thought you,

as an ecofeminist, have been arguing against.

T: Point taken.

A: Are we supposed to interfere with predators eating prey? Are we morally obliged to protect the interests of the filthy blowfly or the devastating killer virus? I feel no guilt whatsoever before any human, God, or Kantian when I unceremoniously splatter the blood-sucking mosquito. I know that Queenslanders even hold it to be a solemn moral duty to destroy every cane toad they come across.

T: Such cruelty.

A: Tough love. Queenslanders protect the interests of dogs, frogs and the wellbeing of the biosphere.

T: So you believe in defending the rights of other organisms and the overall health of ecosystems?

A: I believe in defending the rights of *wild* people like Queenslanders.

T: It's not the fault of toads that some stupid person introduced them as a short sighted measure to protect their sugar cane interests!

M: The point is that it is not a moral issue at all. We don't blame the cane toads for the devastation they cause ...

A: Queenslanders do!

M: Eradicating harmful cane toads or mosquitoes is not a question of morality but is about prudential, and at times, aesthetic management.

A: It's good for women and kiddies too. The ritual of the dancing golf club encourages equality and allows for great community participation for the greater good of the wider biotic community. It

also encourages deep reflection on the transience of life and the gory reality of death.

T: You are a sick man.

M: Callicott also calls for culling when organisms are harming the health and flourishing of the biosphere.

A: Ecofascist.

T: He denies that.

A: What happens when human beings have become so numerous that they are harming the biosphere? Then, as a good eco-fascist, Callicott must call for *our* necessary culling.

T: He later qualified his position explaining, 'our recognition of the biotic community and our immersion in it does not imply that we do not also remain members of the human community' (Callicott 1998: 194)

> .... humanitarian obligations in general come before environmental duties. The land ethic, therefore, is not draconian or fascist. It does not cancel human morality. Nor is the land ethic inhumane. Nonhuman fellow members of the biotic community have no “human rights” because they are not, by definition, members of the human community. As fellow members of the biotic community, however, they deserve respect (Callicott 1998: 194).

M: But that claim is confusing. Either humans and human rights have priority over the health of the biosphere, which would override biocentrism, or they don't, in which case the charge of ecofascism sticks.

T: We can uphold our obligations to humans first and then to what Midgley calls the 'mixed community' (Callicott 1998: 46). Our wider ethical consideration can be gained by exploring our instinctive Humean feelings of sympathy (Callicott 1998: 53).

A: But THERE IS NO SUCH COMMUNITY! Pets, even domesticated animals in general, might

form part of our community in a strange sort of way but wild predators do not. While I can pity poor Brutus every time Roger tries to bite or rape him, and take measures to prevent this from occurring, it is nonsensical for me to attempt to do this everywhere for all organisms, even all canines, especially if they be wild ones, whose wellbeing depends on harming humans or even poor Brutus. How much less sense does it make to apply moral consideration to rivers, dirt, or plants?

T: No one is asking you to go out and save the worm from the bird, but this hardly amounts to justifying an absence of moral consideration for anything that isn't human or that isn't part of your immediate community! Consider the Routley's 'last person on earth' thought experiment. If it were possible that the last person, or last people on earth, could destroy the earth, such an action would be a *moral* offence - they have destroyed 'much of value; for they have simplified and largely destroyed all the natural ecosystems' (Routley R & V 1980: 122). This is something which is going on before our very eyes though with a lot more suffering!

M: I agree there is something intuitively wrong about such devastation, but am persuaded by Lynch & Wells that such an offence is best understood as *aesthetic* rather than *moral* (Lynch & Wells 1998).

T: But it's still all about *us* – and *our* aesthetic needs.

M: It's about truly respecting the majesty, beauty and integrity of the nonhuman natural world as something that holds an aesthetic value in its own right (Lynch 1996: 147).

T: The idea has some merit. It is quite possible that Lynch is right to think moral realism a failure for the reasons Mackie gives, but that his arguments do not touch aesthetic realism. As mystical or irrational as it may sound, I believe it possible we are not the only ones capable of appreciating these objective aesthetic values. Goodall narrates an episode where she was tracking a group of chimpanzees. After finding themselves in the presence of a waterfall, they proceeded to leap about in such a way that she likened it to a kind ritual of spiritual awe, not altogether different from human religious activity (Goodall 1990: 202).

M: It's possible.

A: It's anthropomorphism.

T: But it's not enough. Eckersley admits there are problems with calling for an end of anthropocentrism and reformulates the problem as 'human racism' – something which 'manifests [itself] when a reconciliation of human and nonhuman needs is possible but is nonetheless concealed and/or denied' (Eckersley 1998: 165).

M: Don't you think racism is an altogether different issue and claiming them to be the same is really an elite privileged position – the very charge she levels at Lynch? Isn't that the height of prejudice to put on par the rights of …

A: Cane toads and viruses?

M: … or any other creature with oppressed human beings?

T: You've missed the point. She isn't picking sides. Remember what she says, 'human racism manifests [itself] when a reconciliation of human and nonhuman needs is possible but is nonetheless concealed and/or denied' (Eckersley 1998: 165). Her advocacy is for both human and nonhuman and finds - as does Plumwood and other ecofeminists - a violent discrimination that stems from the same source.

A: The thing isn't about 'reconciling' human and non-human needs. It's about conflict. As it is with Lynch & Wells - either you put human life first and shoot the nonhuman, regardless of what capacities, rarity or advantages it has – or else you are an ecofascist and an unscrupulous misanthrope, like Jeffers, who cheerfully admitted 'I'd sooner, except the penalties, kill a man than a hawk' (Jeffers 1965: 45).

T: You're oversimplifying. Lynch and Wells have entertained a 'misleading construction' (Eckersley 1998: 166). Rather than it be a singular one off decision, she points to the social issues involved in protection of the nonhuman (Eckersley 1998: 167). Her attack on human racism, rather than a bare appeal to nonanthropocentrism, is a plea to respect 'the *needs* of different beings' (Eckersley

1998: 167). This may involve curbing our activities for 'vital needs' only (Eckersley 1998: 167).

M: But what *are* our vital needs? I think I know what Marcuse meant by the term but I'm quite sure his ideas on the vital needs of humans are categorically different from the vital needs of other organisms. Marcuse recognized our *cultural* needs, including our aesthetic needs, as 'vital'. But such needs are, to a strong degree, unique to our species and I think there is a real danger in using the term 'vital needs' as a blanket description applicable to all species. Most beasts 'vital needs' are merely those of shelter, food and reproductive activity. However if Naess wants to claim that these, too, are our only vital needs then he is effectively licensing a potentially dehumanized existence for our species.

T: I don't think this is what Naess means at all, but I do think he and other deep ecologists wish to make us reconsider what our vital needs really are.

M: As did Marcuse.

T: For many the humanists 'good life' is a false and destructive aspiration, murderous to the wider biotic community, and rapidly making our own species survival increasingly unlikely (in addition many deep ecologists claim it ruinous to our spiritual health as well).

M: Again this is exactly what Marcuse argued.

T: But deep ecologists go further and argue we should have moral consideration for the vital needs of other organisms also.

M: And why I find Lynch & Wells argument for aesthetics succeeds. Genuine appreciation of the beauty and the sublimity of the natural world both demands our greater respect and protection, as well as tearing us away from the manufactured, ecologically devastating wants capitalism sells to us. But as an ethic, deep ecology is deeply problematic.

T: Yes, yes, Lynch & Wells' famous thought experiment. But we can give ethical consideration to 'moral subjects' even if they are not like us and recognizably 'moral agents' (Eckersley 1998: 168).

Furthermore, rather than solving such a problem with their Rambo logic, we could explore other options like trapping an animal, or alerting the person of the danger (Eckersley 1998: 168).

A: She's missed the point. There is no alternative but to shoot the bloody thing! Lynch & Wells are clear about this.

T: A greater consciousness of nonhuman *others* might avoid this situation from arising.

A: And when it can't?

T: Then it is reasonable to shoot the beast. But such a complex issue demands more than the logic of a double barrel shot gun.

M: The point Lynch & Wells are making is that a decent human being would unhesitatingly shoot the beast and if they were to pause and consider an ecocentric alternative, they have at least one thought too many for a decent human being to entertain.

T: And the point Eckersley is making is that to frame the issue as a simple issue of 'kill or let a human die' disguises the issue of 'systematic discrimination or prejudice' (Eckersley 1998: 169). To shoot the beast in a desperate situation need not be a prejudice, but rather 'an expression of our strongest attachments' (Eckersley 1998: 169).

M: What if I'm more attached to my pet wolf, like Mark Rowlands claimed to be, admitting he'd save his wolf over his students?

T: Not sure.

A: I am. Then I am a dangerous misanthrope and both myself and my wolf should be removed from society.

T: But what about poor Brutus, your best friend? Would you unhesitatingly save a human stranger,

or perhaps someone you despised, over your closest companion, just because they happen to be the same species as you?

A: You might call him 'poor' but Brutus is the finest pig hunter I know. He is a great dog. It would be hard to part with him, but yes I would. Human beings are human beings and I would hope that Brutus would understand.

T: You must have a very understanding friend.

A: Well, he is man's best friend, after all.

T: Listen to Naess - 'My intuition is that the right to live is one and the same for all individuals, whatever the species, but the vital interests of our nearest, nevertheless, have priority' (Naess 1995a: 222). We may shoot the beast to protect our nearest and dearest.

M: But this too fails. What if we feel, through transpersonal encounters, or the development of Plumwood's particularist ethic, closer to this beast that we have been admiring on our daily walk than the human who is a stranger, or someone we know but do not like? Lynch and Wells point is that we should unhesitatingly shoot the beast as part of our moral bedrock without weighing up options or thinking too much. Thoughts, feelings, intuitions about the right to life of the nonhuman should not impact on this *humanist* principle, for when it does, our moral compass has been thrown out altogether. As an *ethic*, this is deeply problematic. However Lynch and Wells suggest that many deep ecologists are not really interested in ethics at all, though some may think they are. Consider Naess' praising of 'beautiful actions' over moral actions, as well as his claim that you need no moral exhortation to take care of yourself and the same applies to the natural environment at large (Naess 1995b: 234). Now I think there is room for an ethic based on extensionism and we can even imagine, even if we don't approve, how love for a dog or wolf might conflict with humanitarian ethics. But does this not suggest a deep empathetic connection, in some ways a partnership (something which it makes no sense to apply to wild beasts), rather than a cold dutifulness toward the nonhuman as a whole, especially when they directly conflict? Like a wild beast that endangers the life of a human.

A: Or a cane toad.

T: Eckersley's claim is that ethics consists in *more* than love. We don't need to love slaves to give them rights, in fact the idea is offensive (Eckersley 1998: 180). As for Lynch & Wells' thought experiment, while it may be right in this case to shoot the beast, this does not mean it is always right to put all human concerns before the nonhuman. Furthermore by understanding the issue of protecting the nonhuman as one which involves a variety of strategies, humans can work together for collective action (Eckersley 1998: 169). The problem with the strategy of Lynch & Wells is, '… to transform what might be a legitimate expression of human survival needs into an illegitimate endorsement of narrow-mindedness, short-sightedness and prejudice' (Eckersley 1998: 169). This justifies always putting human interests first (Eckersley 1998: 169-170). While we are necessarily anthropocentric in the 'formal' sense, we need not be 'substantially so'. That is, this human limitation is different to a blanket justification to treat nonhumans however we please.

A But listen to her words 'what might be' legitimate. It is damn legitimate and would be so to any decent moral being without the 'might' ever coming into it. Just to consider the alternative is *one thought too many*!

T: Following Plumwood, she explains how such ethical consideration for the nonhuman is a part of the same quest as *human* liberation. For it involves 'a rejection of the view that the 'other' must in some way be like us before we accord him/her/them/it any recognition or respect' (Eckersley 1998: 170) - the domination of the 'other' (Eckersley 1998: 171). Lynch & Wells, in framing the debate in terms of the human/nonhuman (perhaps unintentionally), encourage dualistic prejudice. 'Thus destructive development is justified as 'natural' and inescapable since there are no 'viable' alternatives' – rather than genuine exploration of other options' (Eckersley 1998: 172).

A: There aren't any! Shoot and save the human, refuse or hesitate and a fellow human being cops it!

T: The problem lies in extending this one situation as a complete argument against ethical consideration for the nonhuman and a wholesale embracing of anthropocentric prejudice (Eckersley

1998: 172).

A: A prejudice any decent human would wholeheartedly embrace!

T: Ecocentrism need not be opposed to humanism (Eckersley 1998: 173-174). In fact, the tiny elite responsible for exploitation of humans are in large part responsible for the wholesale devastation of the nonhuman. By focusing on 'human racism', ecocentrists can 'expose these power relations while also exposing the limited moral horizons, or lack of moral inclusiveness, which informs the exercise (or to follow Foucault, the 'production') of power' (Eckersley 1998: 174). Discrimination based on such dualistic domination affects human and nonhuman alike.

A: They are altogether different issues. Discrimination is an ethical issue when applied to humans, when applied to beasts, it is a measure of sanity.

T: It is discriminatory to claim that human needs should always be put first 'over the needs or interests of human nature, no matter how critical or essential the latter needs may be. This is human racism writ large' (Eckersley 1998: 174). While Lynch & Wells may not have meant it, their position means than protection of the nonhuman will always be trumped by '*any* kind of unmet human need' (Eckersley 1998: 174).

M: I think she has misunderstood Lynch & Wells' argument. By devoting 'reverent attention' to the extraordinary workings of the biosphere, by truly experiencing the beautiful and the sublime in the nonhuman, we develop a sensibility that both strives to protect such life and shakes us out of our shallow, cultural perspective. This higher engagement reveals a deeper meaning to life and invites us to question the dangerous and harmful activity of materialistic, capitalist culture for ourselves, and for the earth also. Surely it is the experience of natural beauty, sublimity, harmony, complexity, flourishing and integrity that Naess, Berry, Fox, Snyder and others wish to both promote and protect. We might think of architecture – nature as a temple in which we require both the practical demands of livable functionality, but which, if we are to live with any meaningfulness and joy, must likewise be aesthetically appealing. We can also fence off large areas of the wilderness for the very reason that it has a natural authenticity, which contrasts with *human* culture.

> What deep ecologists are after is a form of 'moral' vision, a vision of wild nature, which is non-anthropocentric. The deep ecologist wishes to articulate a way of viewing the world that does not follow Protagoras in using mankind as the ultimate measure of all things, but which is, somehow, directly receptive to the independently valuable nature of natural objects (Lynch 1996: 151)

A: Lynch's brilliant insight is that 'while the will is silent *in* aesthetic experience, it most assuredly is not silent *about* such experiences' (Lynch 1996: 154). Just as we protect great art works like *Blue Poles*, so too should we protect the wilderness in the same manner. Our motto becomes: protect, preserve and (if necessary) restore. What more could a deep ecologist want?

T: But is there not something importantly different to nature and Pollock's dribble work?

M: Lynch promotes *natural* aesthetics as inspiring us with its *otherness* - a *deep* spring that inspires meaningful living and which transcends even our subjective morality with its universal appeal. Let us recall the profound and moving descriptions we encountered earlier – the 'meaningful nonsense' Shaftesbury claims we should permit to our poets. Is this not where Snyder's appeal lies – his *poetic* vision of the land? Is this not why some find themselves carried away with his words, though, when put under a cold analysis, as an exercise in ethics or politics, or sociology, or anthropology, they become implausible and unworkable? Consider the following verse:

> North America, Turtle Island, taken by invaders
> who wage war around the world.
> May ants, may abalone, otters, wolves and elk
> Rise! And pull away their giving
> from the robot nations (Snyder 1999: 479).

Aesthetically this poem against whale hunting has power. We, the reader, are being challenged to conceive our actions as akin to to an oppressive invading army of cold artificial intelligence against the forces of natural goodness. It is a poem of protest and fulfils an important role in making us think more deeply about cultural blindness – a quality Lynch and Wells promote as essential to aesthetic movements. Think back to the Romantics, 'an expression of imaginative alterity, and so a force of opposition set against social activity' and a movement that encouraged 'an alternative to the excesses of industrialization' (Head 2002: 26). But if we take Snyder beyond aesthetics what do we have here? A

war between humans whose culture is dismissed as robotic and therefore artificial, against an exploited underclass of nonhuman organisms, including ants, who are urged to rise up and war against their human oppressers. Literally it is nonsense and thematically it is misanthropic. But as a poem it works because it cleverly plays with notions like war, oppression, justice and mechanical artificiality in such a way that our mind is sharpened into an awareness of the blindness of our activities and the devastation we are inflicting on the earth and the consequences this will have even for ourselves.

A: That's a nice way of saying he is an idiot.

M: Not at all. What Lynch & Wells claim is that we have lost a sense of nature's aesthetic value and in doing so, have lost something of the greatest importance to humanity that affects not only our psychological health but has repercussions for our treatment of the natural world – the same basic theme as the Romantic movement. Coleridge wished to shock us out of our shallow and blind self-centredness into an appreciation of that which is awesome and wondrous. Novalis wrote movingly of the disappearance of the mystical and the mysterious in a world demolished by 'unholy busyness' (Novalis 1988: 15). Wordsworth …

A: Yeh, we get it. Some humans dig nature poetry.

M: What they expressed was a deep and meaningful way of relating to the world, transcending a narrow human-centred focus. Is not this why Naess gave up on the land ethic and instead came to praise 'beautiful actions' (Naess 1993)?

T: Naess was writing about natural inclinations to act, rather than being exhorted into doing some out of a sense of duty (Naess 1993: 67-68). My impression is Naess merely thinks it a more pragmatic approach to speak of beautiful actions rather than delivering sermons from the pulpit (Naess 1993: 71).

M: But remember Kant wrote of beautiful actions as related to the beauty we find in aesthetics. Plato likewise prized the beautiful and raised it to the highest level on par with the true and the good. Beautiful actions may not be directly ethical, but they have an importance of their own, a *deep* importance. Aesthetics drives meaning in the world and even infuses the drive for the true and the

good. Too many people run down aesthetics instead of recognizing its extraordinary importance. Much of the language deep ecologists use is straightforwardly aesthetic – words like beauty, majesty, power, elegance, these are aesthetic qualities. So too are condemnations like sacrilege, vandalism, destruction, philistinism direct aesthetic judgements against those barbarians who wantonly destroy that which should inspire our deepest respect and affections.

T: But not everything in nature is beautiful or straightforwardly aesthetic. Consider the creatures of the marsh.

M: Yes consider the fascinating complexity of the world in which they dwell – the elegance of all ecosystems and the functioning within species communities. My grandmother narrates a story in which herself and her grandson were absorbed by the beauty and immensity of the ocean, while her husband and granddaughter stood gazing at their feet, lost in fascination at the workings of an ant community. All of this was nature, she explained to me and worthy of reverence. I have no doubt that all four would have been shocked and outraged if either the ocean or the ant community were to be wantonly destroyed without justification. Aesthetics, I repeat, relates and infuses the moral. Recall Kant and his notion of sublime respect inspiring our moral virtue. Recall Shaftesbury and the delightful goodness of Theocles whose 'peculiar dignity' lay in his ability as an enlightened human being to contemplate and consciously adore the creation. Consider Keats who maintained that the highest form of morality consisted in the development of a 'humble standard of disinterestedness', that is, an ability to rise above self interest and take seriously the plight of the other (Gittings 1968: 434). Iris Murdoch likewise argues that we develop our attachment to 'the good' through non-possessive love. Furthermore, aesthetics is deeply important in developing an unselfish eros (Murdoch 1992). Isn't this really what deep ecologists are arguing for? But I personally think that there is something importantly different when it comes to the poisoning of the oceans, or the motiveless destruction of an ant community, then, say, the murder of a human being.

T: Even if that be true, I disagree that nature is necessarily aesthetic. Consider Snyder again and his insight into the gory, ugly, wasteful, pointless, decaying side of nature.

M: A site of the sublime?

T: I doubt it. Firstly the sublime is something vast and tremendous, the festering wounds of a diseased rabbit hardly makes the grade. What's more, most people seem to get their sublime fix from watching movies like Rambo.

A: Can't we leave Rambo out of this?

M: And why we should be educating against such cheap fixes. Murdoch complains that such bad art encourages what is worse in our psyche's, whereas great art encourages what is best, what Plato called the good (Murdoch 1992). Again I feel this is the real goal of many in the deep ecology movement, to educate us into an awareness of the superior beauty and sublimity of nature's aesthetics. Consider Wordsworth who taught that 'a certain responsiveness to nature is acquired over time … it is, as we say today, culturally formed. This accords with the Kantian view that 'a high degree of culture is requisite" to the experience of the sublime (Ryle 2002: 15). Our task, then, is to awaken this faculty for deep love, awe and respect for nonhuman nature.

T: Maybe so.

M: A world governed by the coldness of Kant's later morality is devoid of that magic, mystery and glorious splendour that natural aesthetics invokes.

A: Are you a closet poet?

M: It is surely this majesty of feeling, this intoxication of beauty and reverence for the sublime that is lacking in our world today. Is not this the pathological condition Berry, Mathew Fox and others complain about – a deep cultural lacking?

T: I'm following.

M: And is this not what Leopold bitterly protested against when he wrote of the devastation to our cultural harvest he was witnessing from the ruin of the land?

T: Quite possibly.

M: If this is the case then the moral vision deep ecologists are after, and wish to protect, is the importance of natural aesthetics. Janna Thompson explains why nature appreciation makes more sense aesthetically than ethically in 'Aesthetics and the Value of Nature' (1995). She begins by aligning herself with those philosophers who claim that beauty 'has value in its own right' (Thompson 1995: 291), explaining that this is enough to motivate us into protection of it. Furthermore aesthetic contemplation is more in keeping with the deep ecologists emphasis on 'non instrumental ways of valuing nature' (Thompson 1995: 291-292).

T: But what if I prefer to watch television or go shopping in the mall?

M: Then you are engaging in low pleasure and existing beneath your potential (or so Murdoch would argue). Thompson writes of the development of an aesthetic sensibility as something which takes time and discipline and is thus not a case of instant gratification (Thompson 1995: 293). Learning to appreciate and value natural environments involves a gradual opening up of ourselves as we learn to perceive the beauty of a world that might at first sight appear 'ugly or uninteresting' (Thompson 1995: 299). Furthermore:

> Wild nature, above all, puts things in perspective. We live in a human world surrounded by human-made products, and however beautiful or terrible, predictable or unpredictable, these products are, they belong to us and reflect us back to ourselves. Wild nature is an environment that is not of our making; it is indifferent to our interests and cuts us down to size (Thompson 1995: 303).

What sense does it then make to further stultify us into a shallow human-centred way of being in the world by calling for a land *ethic* as Callicott does?

T: I see your point.

M: Lynch explains:

> … deep ecology as I have reconstructed it is both a protest against the condition of the human world – against the terrifying boredom and meaninglessness of a world in which everything is to be used, or in which we are continually subject to impossible moral demands on our time and kindness – and an affirmation of the importance of the aesthetic in human lives (Lynch 1996: 157).

T: I'm following.

M: Genuine aesthetic experiences can alter our consciousness altogether (Thompson 1995: 293). Snyder writes of a transformation experienced on the icy mountain tops (Snyder 1999: 214). Such experiences can drive ecological activism. Leopold wrote movingly of the shock of the real he experienced when he shot a she-wolf unthinkingly, so too did Muir express great indignation at the wasted lives of the walruses and the whales killed by natives to acquire white man's goods, eulogizing 'they probably were better off before they were possessed of a single civilized blessing – so many are the evils accompanying them!' (Muir 2006: 88). His call for us to look 'long and lovingly' (Muir 2006: 50) is what Lynch & Wells are promoting by aesthetic appreciation. Consider Mathews' Ontopoetics. This, she explains, is an exercise in creative engagement and story telling (Mathews 2009). Is this not, then, an aesthetic project, rather than a moral one? When Mathews attempts to derive an ethic from nature, like her suggestions of Daoism, she runs into the same problems we have already encountered. Mathews admits, herself, that Daoism is not recognizably ethical at all (Mathews 2006: 99) and what she is really after is a creative 'engagement' with the world (Mathews 2006: 102). Direct moral claims are significantly different. Instrumental, ethical actions are necessary for maintaining a moral community for human beings, but this kind of activity is not what we are after in appreciating and respecting the otherness of the nonhuman. If we are to begin a rights-based program, then this would not only distract us from aesthetic appreciation, it would also mean we would be continually and directly interfering with it – which would be the height of human arrogance. As for empathetic identification with particular creatures … such extensionism is quite plausible and indeed goes on all the time.

T: Resting on what we love?

M: Yes but a high and non-possessive love. For instance we can have affections for creatures precisely because they reject our attempts to tame them into our human community (Pite 2002: 144-

155). As you said earlier, the fact that I don't love a slave is no reason for me not to act for her freedom. But the fact I can empathize with her must surely play a role. It becomes increasingly more difficult to make a case for the nonhuman the less empathetic a connection we can plausibly hold. Morally, it is absurd to put the interests of nonhumans before our own and practically, it is impossible. I must disagree with Eckersley when she claims that aesthetics does not provide impetus for action (Eckersley 1998: 178). In important ways it drives us more than a land ethic could ever muster.

T: But aesthetics is limited. The Western tradition has little appreciation for the areas like wetlands and moreover aesthetics is 'primarily a visual value' – as well as selective and particular (Eckersley 1998: 178).

M: No. That tradition promotes a *holistic* aesthetic sensibility of profound appreciation which transcends the merely visual. Novalis, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shaftesbury, Thoreau, Muir, Leopold, even Kant! – all took great pleasure, respect and awareness from the complex working of nature and some extolled the marvels of organisms lacking in popular charm. For instance, Thoreau marvelled at a species of bird ignored by everyone except himself and while not proposing ecocentrism, wrote passionately about communion with the earth as improving our moral character for, 'if they should *feel* the influence of the springs arousing them, they would of necessity rise to a higher and more ethereal life' (Thoreau 1960: 33) (emphasis added).

T: The springs maybe. But what of the ugly marshes? (Eckersley 1998: 179).

M: There is grandeur to be found there too. Darwin began a remarkable tradition which includes Leopold in detailing the extraordinary workings of nature in the most neglected of places, inspiring countless others since to discover such wonderment.

T: You don't think protecting the wild for aesthetics could be criticized as 'middle class elitism or green colonialism'? (Eckersley 1998: 179).

M: No. Aesthetics are more recognizably universal than ethics are, and thus transcend a mere middle class fetish. By developing an ecological sensibility, we become both aware of our dependence

on, and our aesthetic connection to, the flourishing biosphere in a higher moral vision. Thoreau wrote that he would be 'glad if all the meadows on the earth were left in a wild state, if that were the consequence of men's beginning to redeem themselves' (Thoreau 1960: 140). And this was the essential message of the Romantics, something Lynch & Wells celebrate as an important movement going far beyond a mere tickling of superficial fancy but rather something truly deep and meaningful for humanity *universally* – though we may need to be *awakened* to this.

T: But such a position means that 'nonhuman nature has no moral value at all' (Eckersley 1998: 179).

M: No Lynch & Wells' point is that ethics proper is something between humans, but ethical concern can be shown to the nonhuman, especially to those we can empathize with. Also aesthetics can inspire us into protection and consideration for what is not like us.

T: Even 'native vegetation wetlands' for instance (Eckersley 1998: 178).

M: There is grandeur to be found there too.

A: 'Affirmative action' for the swamp things!

T: Why not?

A: Because no person in their right mind would or should actively set out on a moral crusade to save the lives of swamp things.

M: Admittedly, it is not the fate of the swamp creatures that is keeping me awake at night …

A: Of course it isn't. Have we finished with this pointless argument? Can we now broach the question of what strategies we can consider to save humanity from absolute and utter disaster?

T: I do agree there is something to what you are saying, but I really do think that many in the deep

ecology movement are calling for explicit ethical consideration for nonhuman nature, what's more, I find, with Plumwood, danger in this human/other dualism (Plumwood 2002: 4).

M: A dualism she levels at deep ecology also.

T: Yes. There is as much danger to our ethical lives in prizing nature over culture, just as the reverse. Her point is that this is a false dichotomy. We should instead be insisting upon a means of considering different classes 'in much more equal, continuous and overlapping ways' (Plumwood 2002: 17). Lynch and Wells have fallen into the same trap of buying into a false dualism, one that has oppressed natives, women and other excluded minorities (Plumwood 2002: 32).

A: Not all this again!

T: We share both differences and similarities with other creatures and organisms, a proper ethics should encourage us to be fluid in considering the claims of all others. And it *really* is a question of ethics when we become guilty of anthropocentric blindness (Plumwood 2002: 118).

A: We are, to repeat, necessarily anthropocentric!

T: To the extent that, obviously, we cannot 'avoid a certain kind of moral epistemic locatedness' (Plumwood 2002: 132) in being human. But this hardly means we can't grant moral consideration to the nonhuman at all. Just because I exist in my own body and not yours, doesn't mean I can't consider you at all. We have a charge for those who don't - we call them selfish, or egocentric (Plumwood 2002: 128). This is what anthropocentrism really means – it is human chauvinism or human racism:

> In fact, it is no more necessary for humans to be human-centred than it is for males to be male-centred, or for whites to be eurocentric or racist in their outlook. Human-centredness is no more escapable than any other form of centrism (Plumwood 2002: 134).

M: I think Plumwood has changed the meaning of the word 'anthropocentrism' from how William Grey and others have used the word. What I think she means is 'human racism' as formulated by Eckersley. But I agree we should not be selfishly abusing the earth for every single material product

we greedily desire. I think even A would agree with this.

A: I agree with Passmore and our need of the wilderness for 'the pursuit of science, for recreation and retreat, as sources of moral renewal and aesthetic delight' (Passmore 1974: 101-102). That is sensible anthropocentrism! But I also agree that we can show some ethical consideration, based on kinship, to those we form empathetic bonds with, like Brutus.

T: Then you are persisting in selfishly claiming the earth for your human concerns and your moral extensionism merely extends this instrumental attitude. You treat Brutus with some consideration owing to what he does for you and you have turned him into a nominal person. But the dualism remains – distinguishing between 'persons' and 'things' means that all that which you exclude in the latter class becomes mere resource for you to do what you like with, without any moral consideration at all.

A: So what?

T: Then you are a selfish bastard.

A: And immoral too?

T: And immoral too.

A: How tearfully hurtful. I'd be reaching out for a kleenex right now if I wasn't aware of the poor suffering tree that had to give up a flake of its soul to feed my sensitive nature.

M: I don't think you'll ever convince A, but I am convinced, in so far that proper respect, consideration and care should extend to nonhuman nature. I also think Plumwood and many others are calling for significant *cultural* change. This is what I think Naess and Drengson mean by the 'deep questioning' aspect of deep ecology.

T: I agree completely:

> Among our objectives should be the development of a culture that can create alternative strategies and concepts to the oppressive rationalist and dualistic structures that make oppression pervasive in everyday life under globalization. At the level of economy, an integrative struggle against the systematic excision of ethics and ecology from our economic lives would aim beyond the dualisms of the rationalist imaginary for 'a cultural reconnection of home, workplace and polity that recognises the reproductive, productive and political aspects of most human activities' (Plumwood 2002: 36).

M: Yes and I think such a cultural revolution transcends mere ecology and involves a real commitment for social justice, greater inclusiveness, respect for difference, more sustainable and healthier living for all, perhaps even a more 'spiritual' existence.

T: Quite so. This is exactly what I think much of the deep ecology movement, especially the ecofeminists, are championing.

M: And such a project of cultural revolution was originally announced by Marcuse. In *One Dimensional Man*, Marcuse calls for a revolution against the repressive culture and its manufactured dependence of false needs. When it comes to our society:

> Its supreme promise is an ever-more-comfortable life for an ever-growing number of people who, in a strict sense, cannot imagine a qualitatively different universe of discourse and action, for the capacity to contain and manipulate subversive imagination and effort is an integral part of the given society. Those whose life is the hell of the Affluent society are kept in line by a brutality which revives medieval and early modern practices. For the other, less underprivileged people, society takes care of the need for liberation by satisfying the needs which make servitude palatable and perhaps even unnoticeable, and it accomplishes this fact in the process of production itself (Marcuse 1964: 24).

T: There are problems with Marcuse (Eckersley 1992: 214-217).

M: In so far as he may have retained a tinge of anthropocentrism (in the way Plumwood understands the word). But everything is there in his critical theory: a championing of 'vital needs'; attacks on instrumental science; a thorough commitment to sustainable, peaceful and healthy living; a new relationship with nature, internal and external, based on the principle of eros; an attack on the techno-rationalist culture whose ends far from being rational, are in fact, utterly insane …

T: In short, so much of what ecofeminism champions.

M: Yes and backed up with a thorough commitment to socialist political change:

> … the facts are all there which validate the critical theory of this society and of its fatal development: the increasing irrationality of the whole; waste and restriction of productivity; the need for aggressive expansion; the constant threat of war; intensified exploitation; dehumanization. And they all point to the historical alternative: the planned utilization of resources for the satisfaction of vital needs with a minimum of toil, the transformation of leisure into free time, the pacification of the struggle for existence (Marcuse 1964: 252-253).

This is entirely consistent with Bahro's hope that:

> … a cultural revolution would revolutionize the social-psychic model through which human development has come to mean material expansion and military conflict over fewer and fewer resources (Bahro 1984: 204).

T: And I think equally consistent with Plumwoods call for a politically active eco-socialist deep ecology (Plumwood 2002: 214-217). However there is much more than human concerns here. We truly need to consider the life of non-human nature also, otherwise we fall into the trap of anthropocentrism. This project, I repeat, is a *moral* one and therefore transcends aesthetics. It also transcends extensionist ethics.

M: This is the claim.

T: Mathews explores a number of factors that we should consider when it comes to environmental *ethics*, including systems theory. 'On this account the nature of the parts is not independent of the nature of the whole: parts and whole logically co-determine each other' (Mathews 1991: 94). I agree with her that we should be considering the wider relations involved rather than focus on single organisms. Our relations involve inter-dependence and as such moral consideration should be alive to this fact. Her version of non-anthropocentric morality invokes the notion of 'identity as belonging' – we should give moral consideration to the wider environment that we are a part of.

M: Go on.

T: Mathews also draws on the idea of 'maintenance' – organisms who maintain and reproduce themselves can be said to self-realize (Mathews 1991: 98). As such they have a moral claim on us. Mathews further argues that we can speak of value as something revealed through maintenance. The fact of self-maintenance 'is constitutive of its valuing itself' (Mathews 1991: 104).

> Since the very existence or continued existence of such beings is made testimony to the value that they possess for themselves, I propose that such beings be described as intrinsically valuable (Mathews 1991: 105).

M: But is this what we really mean by self-realization? For humans self-realization is related to flourishing or Aristotle's concept of *eudomonia*. The Enlightenment tradition sought to extend this concept to the whole of humanity, for notoriously, Aristotle himself reserved it for the elite. It is meant to encompass our full potential as cultural beings and invoke such ideas as wholeness, flourishing, success, the realization of our highest potential, peak-experiences and so on. But what sense does it make to apply it to the nonhuman when it suggests the highest realization of our human potentiality? We can imagine a content pet, we can imagine a wild animal given the opportunity to survive and pursue reproduction but the notion of 'self-realization' surely transcends this, otherwise we would be maintaining that mere survival and reproduction is enough for human beings to flourish. But this is not at all what we mean by self-realization, for this would justify slavery and human oppression of all forms.

T: Mathews explains Spinoza's adoption of the term *conatus* which 'is the impulse for self-preservation or self-maintenance, and also for existential increase, or self-realization' (Mathews 1991: 109).

M: But most of us draw a distinction between mere survival, on the one hand, and self-realization, on the other.

T: Why 'mere survival'? It's the capacity to maintain and reproduce to the best of its *complexity* which Mathews claims as self-realization. Humans are highly complex and as such we require much more for our self-realization, than say, a gnat. I don't understand why you find this concept so difficult to follow.

M: I think this is what Mathews means but I think it important to distinguish between surviving and reproducing and proper human self-realization. Not to insist on this distinction undermines the advances we humans have made towards a eudomonia for all human-beings. What I think Mathews is attempting as a deep ecologist is to attack the anthropocentric claims that human beings are necessarily the highest source of value. But as a 'shallow' individual, I would argue the differences are quite distinct and to insist that they aren't could potentially shatter our championing of self-realization for human beings altogether, by suggesting that they are no different in kind to the rest of non-human nature. I believe we are right to insist on the difference between flourishing on the one hand, as the highest realization of human potential and mere survival and reproduction on the other.

T: I disagree. What I think Mathews opens up is the potential for us to really take seriously the needs of everybody and everything. Take chimps, for example, Goodall has shown their capacity for culture and their need of love and community. Their complexity means that their self-realization, while perhaps not as complicated as our own, still involves something more than mere survival and reproduction and a chimps capacity for self-realization, in turn, involves higher needs, than say an ants.

M: Possibly. But do you think that some human beings, the more complicated amongst us, perhaps, deserve greater moral consideration and attention to their needs, than say a simple slave or house-wife?

T: You're being ridiculous.

M: Am I? Surely this idea of conatus raises as many problems as it answers. Unless we insist on the fundamental dignity of human-beings, than we open up a hierarchy of moral considerability potentially misanthropic. Do we show less moral concern for a retarded human than a talented ape? The latter is possibly capable of greater self-realization, than the former?

T: Mathews answers this later – our *flourishing* depends upon showing greater concern for the great family of humanity than other species (Mathews 1991: 128).

A: Then she is a closet humanist!

T: No. Elsewhere she argues that humanism leads to solipsism. The mode of perception of humanism leads one to perceive one's personal egotism as the only genuine form of reality (Mathews 2005: 17).

M: I can't follow that. There has been many great humanists and when we celebrate the work of these great people we are celebrating their lives precisely because of their selflessness. I repeat, I am concerned that undermining humanism undermines our humanity altogether.

T: Mathews is not undermining humanism, she's claiming that we need greater awareness and consideration for what is not ourselves.

A: If she is claiming that humanism really leads to solipsism, then she is undermining humanism.

T: This is beside the point. To return to environmental ethics. Mathews has a complex view of moral considerability which involves three levels of value. The first level, is that we should show some consideration to every part of nature, for every part is related to the whole (Mathews 1991: 117-118).

A: I would dispute that!

T: The second level insists on the intrinsic value of everything capable of self-maintainence.

A: Like a virus? It maintains itself and even expands, like the universe itself!

T: Finally Mathews writes of the 'utility' value, or that value for the environment which enhances 'the self's interest-in-self-realization' (Mathews 1991: 120). What's more, there is a need to weigh up moral claims in a complex manner. This requires proper moral consideration, which far transcends the simplistic ethics of Singer or Regan. For instance, this hierarchy of values itself must be weighed against ecological considerations (Mathews 1991: 123).

A: I just can't see why we need a complex ethics at all. Ecological considerations are one thing,

ethics another. There's no reason why we can't extend our ethics out of kinship (as we already do) but why insist on a hierarchy of values based on three different levels of moral consideration? It's confusing as well as unnecessary.

T: Morality is not a simple affair.

M: I agree with A. Ecological consciousness plus an extensionist ethics satisfies me. To overthrow anthropocentrism is impossible and unnecessary. In fact, when Naess writes about identification with nature, what he seems to be really implying is a form of kinship and as such is really a form of moral extensionism anyway (Diehm 2007: 15). What's more, I find some of the deep ecologist's ideas Mathews pursues really quite baffling.

T: Like what?

M: Like 'biocentric egalitarianism' which she defends on the grounds of interrelationships - the whale and the krill depend upon each other for their existence and this makes them 'equal'?

T: Why not?

M: Again I believe she is making use of this term 'egaliterianism' in a rather strange way. Is Mathews saying that the species whale and krill are 'equal' because if one disappears, so too will the other? If so, firstly, can we be sure of this inevitability? Perhaps the whale might find another species to feed upon, or the crill find another entity to gobble enough of them up that they survive as a species. But even if it could be proven that the end of one species, results in the termination of another, surely this is not what we mean by 'egalitarianism'. If I am fighting for equality and a future based on egalitarianism, then surely I am not fighting for a world where the rich will depend on the poor and vice-versa, so that both classes survive. What I am fighting for is to tear down oppression – to insist on creating a world where, politically and socially, all humans are equal. Think back to Aristotle who argued that master and slave depended on each other – this hardly implies egalitarianism! No, again I claim it is highly problematic to derive an ethic from nature and I am convinced that this form of interdependence has nothing to do with what we mean by equality at all. Nor do I find her speculations

on the human child and the red-back spider convincing either. No, I can't say we should be overthrowing our human prejudices and insist, that in theory at least, the red-back spider has just as much a claim to life as that of a human child.

T: But Mathews agrees that we should save the child over the red-back spider!

M: But her reasons for this suggests too much analysis – Lynch's complaint. Firstly she argues our primary metaphysical duty is to ourselves. Secondly our 'vital needs' depend upon a 'non-egoistic' concept of self which extends to our family, and finally to our own species – 'the family of humankind' (Mathews 1991:128). However why should our flourishing depend on the 'family of humankind' and not on the lone beast in the wilderness, or the talented ape? There is no direct *biological* reason for this, if we be no different to the rest of nature which operates at the level of the *individual* in terms of the struggle and not the species. The family of humankind is a metaphorical concept and thus a humanist (therefore anthropocentric) notion, or to put it another way, need not belong to deep ecology at all. In any event, it strikes me as really quite strange that any person could argue, even theoretically, that the life of a human child is equal to that of a red-back spider. Perhaps the cosmos, or God, or Gaia may have a different perspective, but I know nothing about this. It is pleasing to learn that we are allowed to squash a poisonous arachnid if it poses a threat to a human baby, but surely such analysis as to why this be allowable is a bit over the top. I know of very few, fortunately, who would be weighing up such considerations prior to reaching for the swatter, just as I know very few who would seriously theorize that a red-back spider is equal to a human, or even a nonhuman, like a dog, or an animal that exists completely outside 'the family of humankind' altogether - like a whale. To preach to these ordinary decent human beings 'biocentric egalitarianism', would, at best, be ridiculous.

T: I've already told you, Mathews consideration for the non-human is far more complicated than that!

M: Not when she's defending 'biocentric egalitarianism'. I would also question her claim that morality is necessarily depended upon our flourishing. May it not, in fact, work against our happiness and impose itself upon us as a duty in the way Kant maintained? Imagine if you had specifically warned somebody about trailing off into a particular wilderness area owing to the presence therein of

an endangered, yet dangerous beast, which you and humanity in general should truly respect. Now imagine if this idiot went ahead anyway and you were forced to shoot what could be one of the last remaining in a species to save his life. Wouldn't you be shitty! Yet haven't you done the moral thing even if you feel terribly upset about it and want nothing to do with the idiot who forced you into this situation? Hasn't your *eudomonia* been seriously compromised by saving the life of a bloody idiot human-being (of which there are billions – humans I mean), while slaughtering a magnificent and potentially now extinct beast? But such an action comes upon as a duty – something one feels compelled to do, even though it cause severe regret and potentially ruins any opportunity for greater self-realization.

T: I'm not buying that! The reason Lynch and Wells give for shooting the beast to save the human is the same one that Mathews gives – namely the preservation of our human community. This is what she means by flourishing. Our human flourishing depends upon the existence of a community and it is our responsibility to take care of our nearest and dearest first. Mathews gives a considerable and thoughtful analysis of concern for the nonhuman which takes into account a number of factors which aren't directly related to ourselves, along with ecological considerations which we may be forced to use as trumps. Mathews' environmental ethics are far more convincing to me than an 'extensionist ethic' which at best gives moral consideration to those nonhuman others who are most like us, or which best serve our interests. For instance what if you feel no affinity to your dog who is a mere means to an end – hunting pigs for instance? Or why are you hunting pigs in the first place? Does the fact that they don't form a part of your community, or are distinct enough from you that you feel no kinship for, give you permission to hunt them down? The poor beast you slaughter, for no other reason that it satisfies your will to dominate, has a life of its own. It may even be more complicated than your dog and as such capable of greater self-actualization. What right have you got to torment it and even take its life?

A: What about my self-realization? Shooting pigs contributes to my eudomonia.

T: I feel sorry for you.

M: And may well you might. I feel sorry for people who would rather watch *Walker Texas Ranger*, than *The Wire*, or read *New Idea*, over Tolstoy, or listen to rap 'music' while turning their noses at

Schubert. People lacking an aesthetic sensibility are impoverished and moreover may well be more likely to be morally questionable as they fill up their psyche's with poisonous and simplistic material.

T: I feel sorry for the pig also.

M: Yes and for this reason Steve Mathews proposes we combine Lynch's aesthetic argument with extensionism as a hybrid theory. This agrees with his two intuitions 'that the planet deserves protection in order not to disrespect its beauty, and in order to continue to provide the conditions for an appropriate standard of habitation' (Matthews 2002: 14).

T: I still think we should be striving for something more, some moral considerability which transcends our own species nature, for instance – an entity that cannot be defended out of 'kinship', but which can be defended as being part of an ecosystem. 'To the extent that an ecosystem is adapting, or has adapted, a region to satisfy its own requirements, we can say that is is a self-realizing system' (Mathews 1991: 130).

M: Or could be defended because it is beautiful.

T: What if it isn't?

A: We've been over all this!

M: Yes. But nonetheless I agree with much of what Mathews says about culture.

T: Yes Mathews attempts to undermine the culture/nature divide by claiming that culture isn't opposed to nature (or at least shouldn't be) but really emerges out out of the instinctive and biological nature of human beings.

M: *Culture against Man?*

T: Yes. Mathews argues that our culture has stepped outside of nature to the extent that we find

ourselves extinct. She advances the argument that we need to find a cosmology which will drive an ecological consciousness, as well as contribute to a genuine flourishing, one that integrates 'with the global ecosystem' (Mathews 1991: 141).

M: I don't know whether we need a new cosmology but I do appreciate her view that we should strive towards a culture which is driven towards the 'vital needs' of humanity (in the way Marcuse used the term) and is consistent with a proper ecological consciousness.

T: Mathews ecological self explores the idea that our individual selves depend on a wider system and genuine self-realization must necessarily depend upon the existence of natural presences transcending humanity and as such we are a microcosm of something larger than us (Mathews 1991: 144). We literally depend upon the wider natural environment for our survival, as we do for the 'meaning of life' (Mathews 1991: 147). This 'identity as belonging' is a moral claim, as well as an aesthetic one.

M: But why should everything we be a part of require moral consideration? Mathews expects us to develop moral consideration for created products, including our own waste, but why should we 'care' for everything simply because it is a part of our lives? Doesn't it strike you that there is too much moralizing going on here?

T: No.

M: Well there's no point in prolonging our disagreement. What I believe we both agree on, however, is the need to promote *cultural* change.

T: Yes. We agree in principle:

> The kind of culture that enables us to fulfil our conatus and hence to flourish as human beings is precisely the culture that understands and respects our interconnections with nature (Mathews 1991: 156).

M: This is the vision of Marcuse. Your thoughts A.

A: (yawning) I don't agree. Or really, I don't care whether I agree 'in principle', or not. I'm bored with all this abstract theory. I want real solutions.

T: Mathews' vision is not entirely along the same line as that of Marcuse. But I agree that both search for ways for humans to inhabit the world in a loving, responsible and sustainable manner. Mathews vision is one where humans encourage the flourishing of nonhuman nature and even love and respect our cultural products. She has analyzed some really interesting alternative lifestyles in her book *Reinhabiting Reality* (2005).

A: Charming we have time to consider all this when we are staring down the barrel of environmental Armageddon.

M: Tell me T are you saying that we need *both* a change of values, a cultural revolution, as well as a strong need for political and institutional change?

T: I am. I would go further and maintain that a revolution in our cultural values will be necessary in driving change to our institutions.

M: Quite possibly.

A: So pleased for you both. Now are we going to get on with something that really matters, namely, preventing humanity from complete and utter disaster?

M: Next week …

A: I don't think we should wait 'til next week.

T: Lead the way, pragmatic one ….

END

Ch 7 – Final Solutions?

"The best lack all conviction, while the worst are filled with passionate intensity"
From *The Second Coming* by W. B. Yeats

T: What is your solution then?

A: Less rights for all! We need, as Ophuls maintained, a green Leviathan to fix this madness.

T: What? You've got to be joking – after all your fiery statements about defending individual liberty!

A: Desperate times call for desperate solutions! You have witnessed for yourself the recent spate of unusual and devastating natural disasters, including right here in Australia. There's been little analysis in the mainstream media and as for our current politicians – they've been an absolute outrage! *Real* leadership requires more than pissing away money on thoughtless rebuilding, or making bullshit speeches at sausage sizzles, or even crying in front of a camera to show you care while licensing more of the same, 'for the good of the economy'![5]

T: Or dogmatic rejection of scientific facts owing to blind religious fervour![6]

A: I agree. If we are responsible for climate change, and there is overwhelming evidence suggesting that we are (and it would be dangerously irrational not to confront the threat) – we need

5 It is not clear entirely who A is directing his attack against here, however there has been some vocal criticism against economic policies related to Queensland and the coal industry. In an article on the lack of action on climate change, Graham Readfearn explores the gross inaction our political leaders are subjecting us to in the name of economic growth in spite of having detailed knowledge of the risks they are running. He contrasts Bob Brown's genuine leadership on calling for the requirement to make the coal industry financially responsible for the devastation it is inflicting and compares it to a number of other politicians from the two major parties and their irresponsible actions. He continues:
'Premier Bligh has not mentioned climate change either and her public inquiry hasn't been asked to consider it. On Thursday, January 13 as flood waters were just receding in Brisbane, Premier Bligh — or her advisors — did decide it was appropriate to thank the backers of a $16 billion coal gas project for their decision to go ahead' (Readfearn 2011: para 16). Her defence, predictably enough, is to claim that Queensland's emissions are minimal by world standards … we are all responsible therefore no one is responsible (Readfearn, however, is not as harsh as A is, claiming Bligh acted quite well during the disaster, like a leader of the state, not of a party …).

6 Not entirely clear who T is alluding to either. We may speculate, however, that she may have in mind several high profile politicians who murdered the climate change debate during the last Federal election campaign and who happen to be devout Catholics.

radical action to prevent further change as well as a strong adaptation strategy.

M: But hasn't Australia always been a country subject to these types of disasters. In 1974, for instance …

A: This is happening everywhere! They said the Victorian bushfires a bare 18 months ago was a freak occurrence, now they are witnessing unprecedented flooding! Explain that! Or explain the extreme tornadoes across the U.S., or the wildfires burning across Texas, or the fact that large parts of America are suffering a drought worse than a Dust Bowl! The Amazon also! And politicians across the world deny such a connection to climate change and instead actively encourage activities that will only bring more mayhem! (McKibben 2011).

M: But the sceptics claim that …

A: Then they should be proper sceptics, read the bloody science and use their god-damned brains and put two and two together – unless we take direct action right now we will be totally fucked! Those who claim otherwise aren't proper sceptics, they're climate change deniers!

T: I agree with you there. But now you think green Leviathan will save us? You now recognize that Hardin's preferred option of strengthening property rights is not plausible, but why should his faith in a command economy be any different?

A: A dictatorship, at least in the short term, is our only option. It alone can make the necessary decisions to combat a war like we've never seen before. As R. L. Heilbroner noted as far back as 1974, to put in place the essential changes will in all likelihood:

> ... require a revolutionary government, not only because they will incur the opposition of those who benefit from the existing organization of society but also because only a revolutionary government is apt to have the determination to ram many needed changes, including birth control itself, down the throats of an uncomprehending and perhaps resistive peasantry (Heilbroner 1974: 39).

T: Such totalitarianism ends everything we've been working towards - proper decent ethical consideration for human and nonhuman alike! Can't you realize that the 'peasantry' Heilbroner wishes

to forcefully sterilize, have less children when they have greater opportunities for a worthwhile life? This is something that would occur if we could end the unjust system that condemns the third world to such a pitiful existence.

M: Yet perhaps we will require a temporary dictatorship of some description to avert unprecedented disaster.

T: *Et tu*?

M: A temporary dictatorship, with set limits upon it, need not end in Nazism or Stalinism. Rousseau wrote of the need to include a provision for a dictatorship in times of crisis.

A: Which is exactly what we're facing!

M: He writes:

> The very fact that the laws are inflexible, and are not, therefore, adaptable to the movements of events, may, in certain cases, render them pernicious, and the cause, in times of crisis, of the State's destruction. The existence of an established order, and the slowness which is the inevitable accompaniment of things done by due procedures, necessitates, if the law is to function properly, a margin of time which in certain circumstances, it is impossible to guarantee (Rousseau 1947: 415).

At critical times we may require a temporary dictatorship. The trick is to ensure that we choose a 'supreme ruler' to *preserve* our authority, not overthrow it. Someone in this position would experience such power as a 'burden' and not something to be coveted (Rousseau 1947: 417). Rousseau claims for this to be achieved, it is imperative the dictatorship be fixed for a brief period without the chance of it being prolonged (Rousseau 1947: 419).

T: And how would you propose to do this when you have admitted that *threat society*, involves threats that we cannot accurately predict or effectively manage?

A: Ophuls' solution is that we place control in a technocracy of able minded scientists who are most capable of predicting the risks and of providing the best solutions (Ophuls 1977: 160).

M: This would be open to exactly the same criticism Bakunin levelled at the trained elite of scientists he recognized in Marx's vision as inevitably ending in deceitful priestcraft and despotism (Bakunin 1970: 29-31). Science is necessarily imperfect; secondly, treating our problems as something to be solved by scientific methods undermines our humanity; and finally, government institutions end up corrupting those in its service. 'He undoubtedly gains in politeness, in utilitarian and practical wisdom, what he loses in power of thought. In a word, he becomes corrupted' (Bakunin 1970: 31).

A: The legacy of Stalinism.

M: Quite so.

A: But it's a risk we have to take. Band aid solutions won't work. We need a comprehensive policy – huge reductions on green house emissions, population control …

T: You've been warning us the whole time that this could lead to barbarism.

A: Ophuls wasn't a deep ecologist.

T: Nor was Hardin. And here I speak *intuitively*, but it seems that we are being saturated with misanthropy. You don't need to talk about genocide to express contempt for other humans, such expressions such as 'she is a waste of space', or 'we are a species like any other and so why care so much' are used regularly. The potential to tap into this disgust and moral laxness is terrifying, especially under a desperate situation ...

A: Deep …

T: Those who align themselves with the deep ecology movement are usually more humane than most people. Eckersley's point, with many of the ecofeminists, is that human and nonhuman wellbeing are interrelated. The cruelty and devastation directed at self and others has the same basis and a genuine call for greater humanity is a cry for inclusiveness – Gandhi's compassion for all.

M: And echoed in the Utopian ideals of Bahro and others in their call for a deep cultural improvement to our humanity. The philosophy of existentialism testifies to our capacity for freedom in overcoming our essential natures. Still we should be mindful, as Heilbroner argues, that we seem to have something that is a 'human nature' and it is unwise not to factor this in. This means facing up to the prospect that in a state of desperation we will revert to the barbarism many have warned against. Instead of improving our humanity, why may we not instead, 'shed the frail moral teachings of the past and finish … life in an orgy of self-indulgence that knows no bounds?' (Heilbroner 1974: 119).

T: God I hope not! This is why we should be championing an ecocentric approach respectful of life's natural processes and moral consideration for all life on the planet. Not to do so will license a deep pathology ruinous to all!

M: The aim would be, then, to promote what is *best* in our human potential but also what is *realistic*.

T: But how?

M: I think it will involve *religious* sentiments – such as a championing of Gandhi/Christlike figures, but ones endowed with a modern ecological sensibility. However it must also involve fundamental institutional changes that will enable our individual actions to be effective. According to Lynch & Wells, this will involve a reinvigorated liberalism - the Enlightenment promise. 'What we require, for reasons of security and justice, is a regulatory regime which embodies our common commitment to common restraint in the service of common ends' (Lynch & Wells 1997: 6).

T: What do you mean?

M: Our ecological problems are social problems and consequently require a political solution. But instead of this requiring something new, Lynch & Wells claim we should reignite the tradition of the past – the social contract.

A: Just as Beck does.

M: What we are after is a social pact in the same vein Locke argued for – something that will protect both our personal security and overall justice – the reason liberal democratic governments were created in the first place. But government elites have lost touch with these principles. This failure leaves us facing 'The Tragedy of the Commons'.

A: And that's why we need Leviathan to save us!

M: But even assuming we did empower such a government, why would Leviathan be willing or even capable of this?

A: Because it must. It's our only chance!

M: But merely by focusing power into a tiny elite is hardly enough to guarantee our salvation. There is a paradox here, as Locke recognized - we have striven to get away from injustice and personal vulnerability by empowering a higher governing body, but it too will be made up of individuals, just like ourselves, and by granting them power, why should this not make our situation even more precarious? (Lynch & Wells 1997: 7).

T: So what's the answer?

M: The answer lies in uniting the *foreground* of individual choice with a regulatory *background* that makes such actions meaningful and effective (Lynch & Wells 1997: 9). Our politics has come undone by emphasizing the foreground of individual choice (owing to largely historical factors). However without a secure regulatory environment enabling and defending such choices, they become increasingly desperate and ineffective. What we require is a reinvigorated, liberal, environmental politics that:

> … insists we overcome our political amnesia concerning the background conditions of a worthwhile life. We must face up to problems concerning the breatheability of the air, the fertility of the soil and the sea, the vulnerability of human life in conditions of rapidly decreasing bio-diversity, the livability of major cities, the

> nutritional and climatic carrying capacity of the earth, and so on down a long and dismal list which at every entry confronts us with an insistent background which we once have thought subdued and forgotten (Lynch & Wells 1997: 10).

And for this we need the right regulatory framework. We require a regulatory body, accountable to the public, charged with preventing or mitigating such threats, as well as developing an effective adaptation plan for our changed circumstances. For example, in rebuilding Brisbane with the foresight that it may soon flood again.

A: Exactly. And this will require a necessary dictatorship, a position Lynch has come around to in his old age. He writes of this in 'What Plato can teach us about politics and freedom' (2011).

T: We are not talking about a dictatorship.

A: I am, as now does Lynch.

T: Are you sure?

A: Yes. He continues the recommendation of Ophuls, promoting a necessary dictatorship ruled over by wise and competent philosopher kings.

M: I don't think this is the message of Lynch's article at all. What he claims is that that those who have power should be held to a higher moral accountability than ordinary individuals.

A: A Platonic dictatorship – a benevolent dictatorship - that's what we need here.

M: Lynch writes with urgency over our worsening situation, where our power elites have become increasingly incompetent and predatory. He insists, like Plato did, that we must find a means of making them able to see and pursue the public interest. A society governed purely by the free market, with self interest limited only by restrictions on force and fraud, inevitably undermines the very fabric of society, eroding trust and concern for the greater good altogether (Lynch 2011: 7-8). A society geared towards *negative freedom*:

> … either tears a community apart in an ever more debasing war of all against all, or produces, to like ends, an unprincipled tyranny in which the ruler or rulers become predators on the rest (Lynch 2011: 5).

Lynch finds Plato correct in stressing the need for rulers to have demonstrated that they are capable of putting the concerns of the common good before their personal desires. When it comes to this challenge of Plato's:

> If we do not meet it, if we ignore Plato for whatever institutional magic we can think up to save us from the consequences of negative liberty unleashed – then I fear an authoritarianism and a tyranny far beyond anything of the moralistic and utopian kind that so worried Popper.
>
> I fear the desperate and and fatal tyranny of predator and prey in an increasingly bleak environment (Lynch 2011: 14).

A: I agree. We are facing grave risks and our current political and economic institutions have grown untenable for the reasons Ophuls describes (Ophuls 1977: 189-195). However:

> … the problem is not simply to overcome inertia and vested interest, but rather to arrest the institutional momentum in favor of growth created by two centuries of pro-development laws, policies, and practices; this will require across-the-board institutional reform, not merely new policies (Ophuls 1977: 195).

T: You think that selecting men (and maybe some women) of virtue and technical competence will achieve this?

A: Yes. We need 'inspiring leadership', a 'comprehensive theory' (Ophuls 1977: 225) as well as Aristotelean 'temperance & virtue' (Ophuls 1977: 227). But we need action right now!

T: And how would you set up your necessary short term dictatorship?

A: I don't know exactly. I can feel it coming … we just have to open up our minds to the idea that a dictatorship is not altogether bad and in fact may be necessary.

M: And you can't see how 'opening up our minds' could be interpreted as akin to the same religious faith you attacked in some deep ecologists?

A: No.

T: Would this regime be a world force?

A: It would have to be. This is a global issue. Maybe we need a captain of each country and a world captain or captains, or something.

T: And how would these captains be chosen?

A: Not sure.

M: Would they impose international laws binding on all countries regardless of who is most responsible, or how drastically such changes would affect different societies?

A: Well …

T: How would it work? Will the scientific elite also be the virtuous decision makers?

A: I know they won't be chosen on the current idiotic 'equal opportunity' platform (Ophuls 1977: 189).

T: And what kind of world is your green Leviathan to protect? Whose interests? What values?

A: Humanity's survival!

T: The whole of humanity? Every person, every society? Will those already oppressed, human and nonhuman alike, be given consideration, or will they be the first to be sacrificed for the greater good of 'humanity' in the way Hardin recommends in his 'lifeboat ethics'? (Hardin 1998a: 393-399). Why should we not expect the oppressive destructive powers that are responsible for the crisis in the first place to continue their merciless activity under the guise of this new banner?

M: Exactly.

A: I haven't figured this out completely yet. But what do you propose? That some kind of anarchist utopia for the greater good of human and nonhuman alike will suddenly arise by a change of consciousness?

T: You haven't listened at all. You are ready to put your faith in a dangerous hope, yet you can't even consider how a Gandhi-like ecological figure can bring about change in the world, nor the immense achievements that can be gained through local activity. At the very least such enlightened beings might put a check to the bloody, and ultimately pointless battle that might arise from the potential of neo-barbarism - something that is very possible under your plans for a dictatorship!

M: Still, it's possible we could develop a reasonable approach …

T: How? Why would a 'reasonable' approach not really be the same license for the wholesale devastation of the biotic community (with the majority of humans included)? Once it's been decided we are in an 'emergency crisis', I guess this means an end to empowering the oppressed, women, indigenous people, animals and the rest of nonhuman nature?

M: A proper humanistic answer would involve …

T: And even if that be possible, what about nonhumans? Do they get trampled underfoot? Surely *aesthetic* appreciation for nature will become insignificant in a 'state of emergency' – and why ecocentrists have argued this is a moral issue!

A: What's your solution then?

T: We need some way of moving towards, 'smaller scaled, decentralized, and ecologically benign technology, and energy sources, and greater local democracy and social cooperation' (Eckersley 1992: 153) – something both ecosocialists and ecoanarchists agree on.

M: Ideally this is what we need, a system resembling an Aristotelean *polis*. This is the view of Bookchin, Clark & John O'Neill. This rebuilding of community has been repeatedly argued for by Lynch & Wells (1996) (2000) as well as others. Stephen. R. L. Clark …

A: The wacky Catholic philosopher? If he was to be true to his faith he would deny climate change like his Christian brothers Abbot, Minchin, Cardinal Pell and the rest of these loonies putting the fate of humanity on the line because of their dangerous superstition.

M: Clark doesn't deny climate change. His claim is that climate change and the entire ecological crisis has been been brought about because we have acted irresponsibly and immorally and would have done better to pay attention to God's laws on how we should live.

A: Then let us all get down on our knees and pray for forgiveness! That will fix it. Of course we might have to cut back on homosexuality, sex outside of marriage and intoxicants - such sins can be directly correlated with rising temperatures.

M: Clark's argument is developed in a number of his books and it need not depend on theism (Clark 1982, 1977, 1997). Still, Clark argues, the right way to live morally and ecologically can be found in the Bible, 'the rules, in fact, of Deuteronomy and Jubilee'. They being, 'to rebuke *hubris*, emphasize limits, remind us not to take too much nor to demand too much protection against other kinds' (Clark 1984: 173). Clark has written passionately about moral concern for the nonhuman, and he too thinks the wellbeing of both humans and nonhuman organisms would be best realized under an Aristotelean polis (Clark 1982: 115).

A: Meaning what exactly?

M: Aristotle explained that it involved a partnership of families and clans joined together in a 'final state' of 'self sufficiency' wherein 'the good life' can be realized (Aristotle 1992: I ii I 252 b27).

A: Including women and slaves?

M: Aristotle's Polis can survive his ancient discriminatory prejudices.

A: I disagree. Nietzsche explains, 'Alexandrian culture requires a slave class for its continued existence' and he attacks the false optimism which maintains the good life can be extended to all (Nietzsche 1956: 110).

M: Kropotkin details, in *The Conquest of Bread* how through natural cooperation and the responsible use of technology, the good life is realizable for all (1995).

A: Kropotkin was an optimist and he didn't live in a world of seven billion people facing extreme resource depletion and dangerous levels of climate change. Even a decentralized polis would require international coercion to establish, to protect it, and to guarantee it didn't act against the ecological interests of the rest of the globe.

M: Admittedly, yes. This is why Lynch & Wells call for a just regulatory body ...

A: We need a great man to lead it all – a Churchill or someone.

T: A great man?

A: I meant a great person.

T: No you didn't.

M: A Hitler?

A: No. We can avoid that by following a process which selects those of the highest moral caliber. And we should have to be able to place limits on them, and only allow them to rule for a short period until we have passed our greatest threats and reorganized the world under the new conditions of sustainability.

T: This is insane.

M: It's a possibility we have to consider, provided we have a strenuous process which prevents those with tyrannical character traits from gaining positions of power, and that we impose enforceable limits to their powers.

T: I don't like this at all. Again, I ask you to consider whose interests are being pursued here and to consider the history of violence and devastation of such movements of the past ….

A: Ancient Rome had a dictatorship process which worked efficiently for most of its history.

T: Ancient Rome *was* a vicious, wicked, exploitive military state!

M: But as a suggestion …

T: No. I could not consider such a possibility, even hypothetically. The West has systematically exploited the world and its inhabitants under this patriarchal guise for too long. Your Churchill was a ruthless monster obsessed with his own glory. Remember the massacre he orchestrated at Gallipoli to protect British colonial interests? That is what happens when you license 'great men' with such power. The feminist movement has made a sustained effort to rid us of this masculinist tyranny and you want to smuggle it all back under an 'emergency situation' clause. As for the claims of nonhuman nature and the threat to our entire biosphere from such a masculinist ideal … I don't like this at all!

M: A temporary dictatorship, with the right checks and balances, should at least be thought about as a possibility.

T: It's not something I'm willing to consider.

A: Then your lack of imagination and purist ideals amount to embracing absolute collapse.

T: And who's going to be your benevolent dictator? Will they be chosen from parliament? Julia

Gillard? Tony Abbot? Everyone in those two parties have behaved in the most irresponsible and abominable manner with regards to genuine action on climate change.

M: What about Bob Brown?

T: Yes, he is an exception. He has consistently called the government to account over their environmental devastation and upheld genuine socialist principles. He is now loudly calling to make those evil oil companies financially culpable for the damage they inflict, just as asbestos miners have finally been made culpable.

M: Something Lynch & Wells have been arguing for some time.

T: So tell me how Bob Brown could be made chief dictator?

A: There are others. Malcolm Turnbull, for instance, lost his leadership courageously fighting for action on climate change and has openly attacked Abbott's lack of integrity and bullshit climate change policy (Turnbull 2009).

M: Kevin Rudd?

T: He *was* a dictator, fortunately at least *some people* can stop dictators right now, even if they come from an unrepresentative party and not the people. No one from either major party has proposed the radical changes that are necessary, while the Greens just don't have the numbers. And why would they, when the public has been misled over the seriousness of the issue?

M: Nor do they have an adequate proposal for a system in crisis either.

A: What about trying to enlist someone who hasn't been tarred with political filth? Someone heroic like Dick Smith?

T: Who has probably done more than any other individual in terms of carbon emissions with his

hobby plane and helicopter flying, moreover who has refused to even get on board the public push for a price on carbon.

M: You raise an important point. The captains of this ship cannot afford to engage in this kind of hypocrisy. I believe Dick Smith to be a great Australian and praise his heroic attempts at trying to save the world, nonetheless, when questioned about his own contribution to emissions:

> He insists that for him to scale back, get rid of some aircraft, and say, catch the train, would "make no measurable difference." Real change will only come with legislative change, he says (Bearup 2010: 18).

T: More of the same. We are all responsible, therefore no one is. We need to be coerced into responsibility and my personal actions make no difference.

A: And he's right. Russel Hardin proves how collective agreement without coercion operates in the same way as a prisoner's dilemma – it is inherently irrational for individuals to make sacrifices when no one else will (Hardin 1971).

T: This is just more patriarchal male bullshit – the very logic ecofeminists have sought to eradicate.

M: Quite possibly, 'Smith later insists that if we stabilize the population and our use of resources, then every few years, "some adventurer can fly a helicopter around the world like I did"' (Bearup 2010: 18).

T: There you go! One rule for the great man and another for everyone else!

M: Another problem Lynch takes very seriously. In 'Hypocrisy Period' he distinguishes between the ordinary hypocrite - someone who hasn't the capacity to recognize their own hypocrisy - and a 'second kind of hypocrite [who] brusquely, even contemptuously, rejects the very possibility of wrong-doing, seeing no reason whatsoever for any kind of apology, however oblique or deflective' (Lynch forthcoming: 6)

A: Dick Smith isn't a hypocrite.

T: Of course not. He is a great man and as such, the rules do not apply.

M: Lynch points out that those who adopt this attitude generally do so, insisting that they are a '*force* for good' (Lynch forthcoming: 7).

> Where others, with their superficial or hostile gaze, see hypocrisy* our man sees a devotion to duty that goes above and beyond the call of ordinary everyday duty into realms inhabited only by the moral hero. In this kind of hypocrisy* the reward is not the negative one of a desperately maintained commitment to moral virtue, but the positive reward of crusading action (Lynch forthcoming: 8).

Lynch's paper has a lighthearted humour to it, but the message is a serious one - we must be vigilant against hypocritical crusaders - though I am not saying Dick Smith is one. It is not surprising that Lynch's examples of this type of hypocrite are drawn from those with great power.

T: Dick Smith enjoys enormous popular appeal. If he was to come out and make a strong public stance and give up his planes and helicopters in a public gesture of self-sacrifice, he might make a real difference. And this would amount to true heroism for the greater good of all and not pointless masculinist fantasies of flying solo.

M: He may well. But we must also take seriously the need for political changes to our government – including the possibility of a short term dictatorship. I don't believe our present political system can cope with what lies ahead and if we are to go the way Ophuls proposes, we need to consider carefully the type of captains we require and do our best to avoid another Hitler. The point of Lynch & Wells' governing body is that it will be held accountable for its success or failure in relation to how well it manages its task. This is not the case in politics today where there is little accountability based on performance at all.

T: Or even admission of the the immensity of the threats we face.

A: Like climate change.

M: Quite so. And we must find a means of ensuring accountability. Politicians who are proven to act against our interests, like not taking proper action on climate change, should be immediately expelled from office, if not jailed for criminal negligence, that is what their inaction amounts to. When we have conducted independent commissions like that of Garnaut's *Review*, and such inquiry unequivocally emphasizes the need for action on climate change, then those politicians who publicly dismiss such recommendations must be capable of defending their dissent by genuine reason, facts and argument – or otherwise be held accountable for their negligence. Such denial should be accounted no differently to those who deny political corruption after having independent, detailed proof attesting to its existence. The campaign against a carbon tax by Tony Abbott should be recognized for what it is – a deceitful, criminally irresponsible, populist measure against our real interests designed purely as an attempt for the Coalition to get elected. There should be no place for these corrupt tactics in a society facing greater threats than any war we've ever witnessed. More than this, I would suggest that independent reviews should be granted greater power to have their recommendations enacted by law without having to first go through the parliamentary process, allowing for non-expert professional politicians to be given the chance to irresponsibly joust over the issue, for the purposes of political mileage, as puppets of the party machine.

We need changes …

A: And change is coming – right or wrong, something is brewing ...

T: I, too, feel that. There is activism on the streets and a real push for a decent future for all. But at the same time are we being listened to? And how many have opted for apathy, or worse, embraced inhumane and ugly policies and attitudes? This disgusting attitude to persecuted refugees, the war on terror, the invasion of Iraq – all of this involving a reinvigorated nationalism. What is all this maddening flag waving? What or who is driving it? We never celebrated Australia day in such a vile and preposterous manner? We aren't America!

M: I, too, fear the threat of a desperate and poisonous nationalism erupting, as well as a situation not unlike a break up of the state Rousseau warned against:

> As soon as the public service ceases to be the main concern of the citizens, and they

> find it easier to serve the State with their purses than with their persons, ruin draws near. If they are called upon to march to war, they pay for troops to take their place while they remain at home. If they are summoned to the Council Table, they nominate deputies in their stead, and similarly, remain at home. As a result of laziness and money they end by having an army to enslave their country and representatives to sell it (Rousseau 1947: 370-371)

He goes on to describe a situation disturbingly like our own, especially the corruption money brings, 'once give money instead of service and you will soon be in chains' and 'In a genuinely free country, the citizens do all with their strong right arms, nothing with their money' (Rousseau 1947: 371).

T: But that's only half the story. People are mobilizing, grass roots action is taking place. People are out there fighting for a common future and sometimes cooperating with those they once regarded with suspicion or even contempt.

M: But there are many who stay at home and count their coins, fearfully aware that genuine action will means less dollars. As Heilbroner noted, the need to move from a transitory to a stationary system goes against capitalism's logic of economic growth and is likely to place great strain on our democratic institutions (Heilbroner 1974: 86-91). The potential for a desperate militarism is likely for, *'one cannot have political power without political obedience; one cannot have strong government without a sense of national identification'* (Heilbroner 1974: 102).

T: But what is to be done?

M: I think we must take seriously a social pact as Rousseau first proposed. He astutely perceived that there is no valid reason to submit to an authority which has no obligation to our wellbeing. Why should we trust slave owners to act in the best interests of their slaves? (Rousseau 1947: 246-247).

T: I agree. How could we trust in such an authority? As Julian Assange and Wikileaks have shown, our Government is lying to us. And for what greater good? What plan is being run? We still pretend we are free, yet as soon as Assange submits factual reports that certain powers that be don't want us to see - what happens? They try to stitch him up. Our own Prime Minister brands him a criminal for daring to reveal the truth about some of the shady dealings these crooks have wallowed in.

M: If we can't trust our own government to inform us or to act in a way that is ecologically responsible or in accordance with human rights, then we should ask ourselves on what grounds it is functioning, even whether it is legitimate.

A: We need protection – *some* kind of pact. And a great man to lead us, one who truly respects a worthwhile life for all and who can make the tough decisions.

M: We will have to consider a binding agreement which will offer us protection. After refuting the argument against divine rights over others and the illegitimacy of force as a measure of justice, Rousseau explains, 'the only foundation left for legitimate authority in human societies is Agreement' (Rousseau 1947: 246).

T: I agree and cooperation is rising from the grass level. For example Bill McKibben is well known for political activism in this direction.

A: Bill who?

T: McKibben has written ten books on the subject, received awards for his personal action on climate change and has co-founded 350.org as a desperate attempt to spark a movement 'big enough to make a difference'. He explains:

> It is something we should have done 20 years ago, instead of figuring that we were going to fight climate change by convincing political elites that they should do something about this problem. It is a tactic that has not worked (Hedges 2011: para 10).

His protests are organized so as to be 'carried out in a spirit of hope and not rancor' (Berry & McKibben 2009: para 5). He has made use of modern technology to aid the movement, like the internet, promoting it as a tool capable of changing 'the balance of power between politician and citizen' (McKibben 2007a: para 1). It has enabled superior access to information and mobilization of people. He claims environmentalism follows the same path as the civil rights movement for, after all, our human rights are being violated. By mobilizing people in peaceful activism, he hopes to apply pressure to government bodies for legislative changes committing nations 'to early cuts, close[ing] all coal-fired

power plants and auction[ing] the right to pollute so that we can raise the revenue to fund the transformation of our energy system' (McKibben 2007b: para 8).

A: But how much does this non-violent activism actually achieve?

T: A great deal. Many organizations including Greenpeace, Getup, The Wilderness Society (in America), Friends of the Earth (here in Australia), McKibben's 'Common Dreams', Gore's 'Alliance for Climate Protection', plus a host of other organizations list their considerable achievements including protecting large areas of wilderness, clawing back endangered species, and outlawing harmful toxins over the internet (GetUp 2011), (Greenpeace 2011), (Friends of the Earth 2011), (Wilderness Society 2011). The internet has truly become a political force and empowered people to be active without even leaving the computer. Just consider the huge success of Greenpeace's recent campaign against Nestle, which has seen the company put an end to purchasing palm oil from sources which destroy Indonesian rain forests.

M: Yet the fact remains, the failure of the UN to successfully negotiate on climate change cannot be ignored. 'Optimism that social media technologies would would enable grassroots activism to transform public opinion has not been fulfilled' (*OneWorld* 2010: para 1).

T: We must keep fighting and getting out there on the streets, like in the rally GetUp! recently helped organize and publicize - 8 000 strong Sydneysiders demonstrated on April 2 earlier this year so as to make everyone aware that Australians shouldn't be dictated to by a vocal minority (it easily eclipsed the 2 000 weak rally organized against the introduction of a proposed carbon tax).

M: It may have. But a mere 8 000 people hardly suggests massive support for the tax (more than four and a half million Sydneysiders choosing to stay at home). What's more, the proposed carbon tax, even if it gets through, is hardly likely to have the kind of effect we desperately need to avoid dangerous levels of climate change even if it could be enacted globally. We have already examined the IPCC figures they are working on have since been shown to have vastly underestimated the danger.

A: That's right. We need to up the ante. Civil acts of disobedience aren't enough

T: Would you agree that:

> Most CD [civil acts of disobedience] campaigns require enormous amounts of time and resources but achieve very little. In the absence of effective methods of nonviolent resistance, we need to consider more militant strategies (Snap Dragon 1998: para 7).

A: Yes I would.

T: And the situation is one of self defence, 'a situation in which violence is almost universally accepted' (Snap Dragon 1998: para 7).

A: Exactly.

T: 'We don't have the luxury of civility. We must do whatever is necessary to defend our home and protect our ecological family. Once it is gone, we can only wish we had done more' (Snap Dragon 1998: para 9).

A: I agree.

T: Congratulations, you now qualify as a member of Earth First!

> The most sensible response [to what we are facing] is to fight like hell. Passive resistance, civil disobedience and related strategies don't work, not as a long-term strategy for transforming society nor as short-term stopgap measures (Snap Dragon 1998: para 1).

A: Hang on, I said I was ready to consider violence not biocentrism! But maybe I was too hasty to reject Earth First!

M: I think we were right to. While it may be possible to mobilize such diverse people for one off demonstrations against a common enemy, this does not guarantee any kind of genuine long term solution for the massive problems that engulf us. McKibben, Gore and other humanitarian environmentalists have proposed genuine strategies against societal collapse, such as the movement

towards green energy. However, for many Earth First!ers it seems that such a collapse is really what they are after, 'in the name of the Green Revolution' (Sasha 2011: para 1).

T: Earth First!ers like Sasha are advocating an end to unjust, devastating imperialism which will continue unabated under green capitalism, and will continue to exploit the poorest and most vulnerable people on earth and organisms who are least responsible for the crisis in the first place!

> From Mozambique to Ethiopia, green imperialists are preparing to sink their teeth into “renewable resources” of biomass, wind, water and solar, and are given cover by many nation's suppression of information (Sasha 2011: para 5).

Sasha reveals just some of the injustice this has wreaked so far! (Sasha 2011).

M: She is right to critique such injustice but is she right to claim that genuine justice can only 'occur from the outside' (Sasha 2011: para 9)? Biocentric anarchism is open to the same charges we have already levelled at anarchism, namely a need to make binding decisions on a global scale (at least in the short term) as well as being vulnerable to the same critique we levelled at biocentrism more generally. The anti-technological sentiment offers no tangible solution, and, if brought about, amounts to a Primordial fantasy that would in all likelihood end in brutal survivalism.

A: But still, as a political weapon, violence may be necessary.

T: Violence doesn't solve anything! We *do* need civil acts of disobedience like many environmental activists have engaged in and hopefully the courageous acts of the exemplary amongst us will make a difference, like Tim DeChristopher who inspires in his readiness to go to jail after disrupting an auction posing as a bidder. After 'winning' $1.7 million lease parcels, he was charged for deliberately committing a felony (having no capacity to pay for the property he had 'purchased'). When asked about how he felt about jail he answered:

> Jail is certainly a scary thing, but I've been scared for my future for a long time. I think that the scariest thing for my generation is that we stay on the path that we're on now. Jail is not nearly as scary as dealing with the real consequences of climate change that we're expected to see in my lifetime (Severson 2011: para 2).

DeChristopher's only previous brush with the law involved two speeding tickets. His actions have been

seen by some as the same principled and courageous stances taken by Thoreau, Martin Luther King and Gandhi (Severson 2011: para 21). There are many other examples of such heroism. And I do believe that the truly virtuous can make a significant impact on social attitudes. If there is to be hope, hope will come from a moral elite who need to win over the majority. Enough virtuous people like DeChristopher engaging in such activity could spark a genuine change of consciousness and ignite a real push for political change. However we should contrast this kind of activist with that of someone like Jeff "Free" Luers who is currently spending twenty two years behind bars after a more violent form of activism (arson). He explains that his first form of 'protest' involved smashing a police car window with a slingshot at age 15, 'I think I've always known that power cedes nothing without demand. That the only way to bring change is to fight for it' (Georgette & Turtle 2001: para 5).

> I think many critics see using fire as morally wrong. But what I take into consideration on the issue is whether there are other alternatives? Are they effective? When the answer is no, then you have to up the ante. The use of fire does two things. 1. It destroys the target – which not only stops whatever destructive practice it was engaged in, it also causes severe economic damage to those responsible. 2. It receives the most media attention. And regardless of how you look at that, the one thing you have to acknowledge is nothing has shown to be more effective at drawing attention to the issue (Georgette & Turtle 2001: para 8).

A: He's got a point.

T: He's got two and they're both wrong. Firstly, the most his action could have caused was a temporary delay upon proceedings and the sabotage which resulted would have quickly been claimed back in insurance. As for media attention? Is this the kind of attention we are after – attention that equates environmental activism with terrorism and lands the activist in jail for twenty two years to boot?

M: Luers claims the long jail term will be beneficial to the cause as it has received a lot of sympathetic media attention (Georgette & Turtle 2001: para 15).

T: I can't speak for that particular act but I know that overall it plays right into the hands of those who wish to paint us as anti-civilization radicals. Eco-terrorists have done the rest of the ecology movement a great disservice by tainting it with terrorism, giving greater power to governments to paint us all as violent and anti-civilization. This has been a problem for our public image, and it has enabled

governments to shut us down under anti-terror legislation.

> What makes the possibility of such a legislative crackdown possible is the existence of groups – including Earth First! and the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society – that have condoned or undertaken damage to property but have stated their opposition to violence against individuals. Vandalism has also been widely attributed to other more shadowy 'groups' such as the Earth Liberation Front and Animal Liberation Front (*Sourcewatch* 2011: para 6).

M: Mikal Jakubal likewise questions the effectiveness of such action. He was an original old guard militant Earth First!er who claims that the rest of the crew pretty much reached the same conclusion, 'that what we were doing wasn't working' and 'Martyrdom gets old very quickly' (Jukabal 2002: para 4). Jakubal claims the movement has to abandon what he claims is a culture of defeat and a rethinking of the way they protest by learning from past mistakes (Jakubal 2002).

T: Most of the old guard are either in jail, or went 'status quo'. Yet there remains something to Earth First! They have, as they boast on their web page, been successful on campaigns where other environmental groups had given up. And there is something altogether right about the principle of unity in diversity:

> While there is broad diversity within Earth First! from animal rights vegans to wilderness hunting guides, from monkeywrenchers to careful followers of Gandhi, from whiskey-drinking backwoods riffraff to thoughtful philosophers, from misanthropes to humanists there is agreement on one thing, the need for action! (EF 2011: para 5).

M: But action on what? Wilderness is now under the grave threat of climate change, something that cannot be solved by merely protecting wilderness boundaries.

T: Earth First!ers are aware of this and mobilized for action on climate change, 'calling for an end to petty in-bickering for the greater good' (de Diciembre 2008). We see evidence of this right here in Climate Camp Australia (Woods 2008). Because of the little time left we have to deal with the issue:

> … we can't afford to please ourselves or alienate each other any longer. At the climate camp, we had socialists (of various factions), anarchists, capitalists, Christians, atheists, Buddhists, stay-at-home mums, unionists, grandparents and babies. Each has a different take on human organization; each cooperated with the others (Woods 2008: para 9).

M: I agree we need cooperation but we also need meaningful discussion. The problem, I think, gets back to what you said earlier about the importance of values. Firstly, we need to discuss methods for activism to avoid our cause being misrepresented by the media and playing into the hands of government agencies bent on discrediting us. But equally, we need to consider the aims of such demonstrations. Are activists there to sound off in rage, or be martyrs or indulge in mayhem projects? If so then they are not the kind of activists that will be of much use to meaningful action at all, and would probably be detrimental to our cause. We must also be clear on a consensus for genuine solutions to the crisis and the kind of world we are striving for. What values and what kind of world are activists fighting for? Is it for a future built on ecological sustainability and a better life for human and nonhuman organisms? Or is the aim something like the violent anti-civilization destabilization someone like the Unabomber would kill for? Would I be correct in thinking that in addition to preserving the diversity of the non-human world, you would wish to preserve more than just *homo sapiens* as a biological species, but rather an enlightened humanity with higher values - in fact the very values you have defended, which you have found in the deep ecology movement – an end to patriarchy and the logic of domination, a freer, more open, just and harmonious vision for humans and nonhuman nature?

T: You would.

M: Then let us be on our guard against those who wish to license survivalism while recognizing the need for cooperation *and* meaningful debate.

T: I agree. But how? All of this is making me increasingly nervous …

M: We have found a consensus of economists and ecologists calling for necessary changes - some like Daly & Ophuls since the late sixties. Today there are Wells', Tim Jackson, Joseph Stiglitz, and a variety of economists promoting sustainability. Lynch & Wells' own book *The Political Ecologist* (2000) is full of ideas that haven't received a proper airing. Ideas are out there. But we need a system that will encourage proper debate, be able to reach agreement, and make such decisions binding. What's more, especially in the short term, we need to make sure that those who make and enforce the

decisions are the most competent *and* the most virtuous we have - otherwise the consequences could be disastrous to humanity and the biosphere. We need a regulatory body that is truly capable of addressing the political background of our lives and empowered to do so, so that as individuals we can operate effectively in the foreground of our local communities. This is more important than ever now we face a serious threat of collapse.

T: And so we must get out there on the streets and fight for it! What will you do, A? Will you go to jail for civil disobedience, as did Thoreau? Or even go so far as eco-terrorism as Earth First!ers maintain as necessary?

A: I don't know. What will you do?

T: I will fight on in marches, demonstrations, internet activism and will not rest until I am satisfied I have given everything to promote an ecocentric alternative – a future life that is just for human and nonhuman alike!

A: And you M?

M: I don't know either. I will keep on fighting in my own quiet way, keeping up conversation on the issue and striving to appeal to reason and people's better nature. But the future indeed looks bleak and perhaps Jeffers' prophecy will prove more accurate than the dreams of the humanists:

> Reason will not decide at last; the sword will decide.
> The sword: an obsolete instrument of bronze or steel,
> formerly used to kill men, but here
> In the sense of a symbol. The sword: that is; the storms
> and counter-storms of general destruction; killing of men,
> Destruction poured down from wings, the air made
> accomplice, the innocent air
> Perverted into assassin and poisoner (Jeffers 1963: 64)

T: More lies, more deception, more hatred, more wars and unjust invasions, more violent devastation culminating in a final tragedy. God I hope not ...

END

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