

Social Ecology (Bookchin)

- Bookchin often spends pages talking about what social ecology is not rather than what social ecology is
- social ecology is based on rationalism, based on natural selection but its antecedents include criticisms of logical positivism (contradiction here)
- basically: idealistic and communitarian
- tends to be left-wing, extra-parliamentary and populist; interesting since “right-wing” politics is similar in outlook
- humanistic & non-centered but note that thinking woman’s “domestic domain” facilitated “caring society, love, human empathy, idealistic commitment”

Social Ecology (Bookchin)

And I Don't Like Anybody Very Much

- critiques Earth Day (Commoner) as a patchwork engineering approach
- ecology is seen as a way to "transform our domineering market society into a nonhierarchical cooperative one that will live in harmony with nature..."
- critiques mistakes of population control (a popular part of Deep Ecology): anti-feminism, elitism, arrogance, authoritarian
- Deep Ecology separates nature (1st culture) and human society (2nd culture) based on bio-centric views
 - idealistic view of Feudal society and pessimistic worldview based on Malthusian philosophy that tends to fascism

Deep Ecology (Naess)

- like Bookchin, Naess can have an inflexible worldview, e.g. people like Mysterud [should] "keep to his science and not meddle in philosophical and political matters", i.e. sacrifice the public face of the philosophy to achieve the greater goal
- believes it is a waste of time working on problems of increased consumption rather than decreasing consumption
- Deep Ecology can be a bit two-faced:
 - believes tactical ethics should be abandoned in favour of fundamental ethics
 - yet advocates public education, based on pragmatic approaches, with the same educators espousing concurrent ideas on the "real" ethics?

Deep Ecology (Naess)

AN 8 POINT PLATFORM

- intrinsic value
- richness/diversity support/are values
- humans: no right to reduce these except to serve vital needs
- flourishing of non-human life needs smaller population
- excessive & worsening interference
- change all policies and underpinnings
- ideology of life quality
- translate will into action

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Deep Ecology (Naess): Let Slip the Dogs of Jargon

- deep ecology has been “clarified” with a derivational system to show multiple roots and inclusions into a general "ecosophy" – rather like biological taxonomy
- crux of rationale for derivation is reflected by statement "I hope to get others to announce their philosophy" ... "but perhaps [they] don't know their own views" (i.e. haven't mapped it out)
- "Ecosophy T" is a process/label/product – seems too mechanistic for a supposedly holistic philosophy
- "Self-realization": humans are conflicted and have a private core set of undeclared beliefs (Self) & public persona of socially accepted beliefs (self, lower case “s”)

Social vs. Deep Ecology (Bookchin's View)

- argued that environmentalism is moving beyond occasionally vapid 1970s perspective towards core of ecosystem beliefs
- the ideal is that we are cooperative and live in harmony with nature (yeah, right...)
- reality is one of conflicting tendencies:
 - communitarians vs. individualists
 - social vs. deep ecologists
 - sophisticated philosophy (ecological problems rooted in society) vs. reactionary self-loathing
- environmentalism as a means to reform society vs. evade society

Social vs. Deep Ecology (Bookchin's View)

- Bookchin accuses deep ecology of simply ripping off Kropotkin's de-centralist manifesto and adding jargon to make it seem more sophisticated
- Bookchin also accuses Deep Ecologists of idealizing past societies and also worshipping Malthus
- excoriates biocentrism and attacks Ehrenfeld and other promoters of the "3rd wave of environmentalism" for good measure (see also Dowie's article)
- lauds social ecology for anti-positivist, coomunitarian, radical, humanistic and metaphor free approach

A Potpourri of Ideas & A Mess of Jargon

- the basic debate in environmental philosophy is really one of how literally you view holism & “interconnections”
- Social Ecologists: interconnections are ecologically based and main issue is about rational analysis of the relationship of human society and nature
- Deep Ecologists: interconnections are psychologically based and main issue is rational analysis of how human society interferes with intrinsic value of nature
- Holistic Ecofeminism: emotions are the basis of nature (literally, akin to some special “energy” that can be experienced), hence there is no fundamental duality of human society and nature so issue is how to get humans to recognize this “energy”

Ecofeminism & Anti-Rationalism (Plumwood)

- based on belief that environmental philosophy is usually gender biased and ironically anti-nature
- critiques rationalist inspired notions of the Self (the individual and his/her thoughts)
- part I (rationalism and ethics) says that bio-centric ideas based on rational basis for morality/ethics is too instrumental
- personally, I agree with the rational basis, based on studies on the selective advantage of morality/social rules
- Plumwood may react because she doesn't like the idea of genes influencing emotions (of course, I am a scientist so the bias is there, however justified)

Ecofeminism & Anti-Rationalism

- part II (rationalism, rights, ethics) critiques the idea that rights are something that others [humans] may intervene to secure
- also examines ideas of non-humans as moral agents; says this produces absurd lines of reasoning
- wants to substitute emotive concepts (compassion) for legalistic ones (rights)
- postulates that rights dominate because this is a masculine idea and emotive ones are female (and thus dismissed)
- criticizes ethics as being too ethnocentric (Plumwood likes cultural relativism) and says definition of ethics should be changed to emotive concepts – this is the opposite tact that Deep Ecology takes

Ecofeminism & Anti-Rationalism

- part III (discontinuity problem) talks about the familiar separation of humans from nature
- argues that duality [probably should be defined as "dichotomy"], including masculine/feminine, are artifacts of culture
- further argues that a key problem is that ideal human characters became defined as ones that are not based in nature (I suspect she'd argue rationalism is not based in nature; I'd disagree)
- by extension, she usually critiques technologically-centered societies

Ecofeminism & Anti-Rationalism

- part IV (rationalism and deep ecology) explores how Deep Ecology attempts to deconstruct ethics, its relationship to Ecofeminism, and the role of “indistinguishability” (basically holism)
- critiques Deep Ecology for its "failure" to examine rationalism in role of idea of self
- Plumwood thinks the Deep Ecologists bludgeon the duality problem (e.g. reductionism/holism) rather than analyzing the origin of the problem
- should examine what defines a human, not just react to reductionism & never project oneself on others
 - if emotions are to be embraced and rationalism is not, I fail to see how this will be avoided

Ecofeminism & Anti-Rationalism

Let Slip the Dogs of Jargon Again

- the “expanded self”: how individuals are part of a collective society - critiques Deep Ecology’s “Self” as the embodiment of egotism & self-interest
 - “expanded self” still collapses everything into one big anthropocentric stew
- “transcended/transpersonal Self”:
 - critique of goal of “transcending humanity” as even this depends on a rationalism that blinds humans to most the natural world
 - quotes Blacktooth’s “love of land” statement - this was originally metaphorical, until it began to be used literally during land claim cases

Ecofeminism & Anti-Rationalism

- in part V, the problem is reiterated: avoid rationalism, resurrect the philosophy of the oppressed, reject all duality (dichotomy), reject definitions of humanity that discuss what excludes us from nature
- part VI (instrumentalism) discusses relationship of duality and classifying nature's instrumental value (a defense often used by environmentalists)
- essentially, rejects (again) idea that humans are inherently self-interested
- interdependency is essential to humanity ("self/others") and in nature
- also need to respect views of others - but how do we compare all these views and are they all equally valid (relativism)?

