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Deep Ecology: What is Said and (to be) Done?

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WHAT IS SAID AND DONE[1]

Two years before her death in 2009, environmentalist, feminist, and town planner, Sue Hendler, presented me with me a pile of *Trumpeter* journals she had kept, preserved in her university office. They ran from the very first issue, just a single double-sided piece of photostatted paper, through to the end of volume four in the fall of 1987, published just as I began my own PhD in environmental philosophy. Alan Drengson's (1983, 1) opening suggestion that the time was ripe to initiate a Canadian "econetwork" seems borne out by the fact that this newsletter has since become the premier journal for deep ecology/ecosophy. Fittingly, it opened with a very brief discussion of a few "basic concepts" that might serve to differentiate deep ecology from shallow anthropocentric environmentalism and from scientific ecology:

> Ecology in the narrow sense refers to the biological science of ecology. However, ecological paradigms and principles are being developed and applied in almost all disciplines, and these paradigms have to do with the way we approach understanding the relationships and inter-connections *within* and *between* living beings which give to each its special place and identity. Human ecology, e.g., must certainly take account of the role of our subjective lives and spiritual needs, as well as our biological ones, in terms of their ecological effects. Ecology in this sense is not a reductionist undertaking, but a movement toward a more whole (or holistic) vision and understanding of world processes. Deep ecology seeks to look into all levels of existence (ibid., 2, emphasis in original)

The subsequent influence of deep ecology can be gauged by its frequent association with environmental activism but also by the extent to which it became a target of ill-considered and often ill-tempered critiques from all shades of the traditional political spectrum.

Deep ecology, it has been said, is mystical, misanthropic, politically misguided, utopian, irrational, and impractical. Its subjectivism and holism constitute "mindless dogmas" born from the "intellectual poverty" of its "father", Arne Naess (Bookchin 1993, 47). Despite pointing to its naïve naturalism many, somewhat ironically, also consider deep ecology insufficiently *materialistic*, even a contemporary form of "idealism" (the ultimate Marxist putdown). Its explicit intellectual diversity is reinterpreted as the *lack* of a coherent theoretical paradigm

[1] Although the title plays on/with Lenin's *What is to be Done?* (1989 [1902]), it does so critically. I have no intention of offering a political program concerning deep ecology's future.

and/or political program with any revolutionary potential (see, for example Martin 2011, 112). In Timothy Luke's (1997, 24) terms, deep ecology "fail[s] to ask or answer Lenin's question of advanced industrialism" (presumably the question of his most famous work "What is to be done?") and therefore "lacks a theory of the transition" (26).[2]

The diversity of deep ecology's intellectual sources, which Luke (2002, 183) refers to as an "ecological omelette," purportedly leaves deep ecologists lost in a "theoretical fog", such that, as van Wyck (1997, 40) argues, Devall and Sessions' key text *Deep Ecology for the Twenty-First Century* contains a "litany of quotes and excerpts spanning Lao Tsu to Gregory Bateson [...that] reads rather like a New-Age Bartlett's Quotations." Strangely, this ideological eclecticism also, apparently, lends itself to promoting an unthinking totalitarianism via a "völkisch" and reactionary modernism such as that which "preceded the rise of National Socialism" (73). Such views find their apogee in the (il)liberal diatribes of Luc Ferry who regards those influenced by deep ecology as part Nietzschean vitalists, part communist fellow travellers, witless stooges in the revival of the core values of "Nazi ecologism" [sic]; they are antidemocratic, technology fearing, pacifistic, anti-enlightenment misanthropes "propelled … by a hatred of humanism and Western civilization." (Ferry 1992, 78 and passim).

It is not my intention to tackle these claims here (although anyone interested should certainly read Cary Wolfe's (1998) critique of Ferry). My point is merely that deep ecology, it seems, is taken to exemplify everything wrong with environmentalism. That authors as politically divergent as, for example, Ferry and Bookchin should have found agreement in their analyses of deep ecology is both striking and almost as bizarre as the fact that they regarded their own polemical excesses as epitomizing rational and enlightened discourse. Something else is obviously going on here. Part of the issue may just be that, insofar as it is a recognizably different approach, deep ecology has indeed provided a relatively popular, and sometimes inspirational, frame for thinking about contemporary environmental relations. For many environmentalists it has offered a radical alternative that competes with, and resists attempts to squeeze its insights into, more traditional theoretical, political, and economic straightjackets, whether (neo)liberal, Marxist, or – to Bookchin's chagrin – even coeval ecological variants like his social ecology.[3] And insofar as it *is* a competitor for the hearts and minds of those segments

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[2] Luke is actually much more positive about many aspects of deep ecology in his later work. For example, reassessing Devall and Sessions' *Living as if Nature Mattered*, he recognizes its wide-ranging and broadly positive political influence: "Living as if nature mattered is a vitally important goal, and the guidance that Deep Ecology gives on this account could be followed, on an individual and collective level, to make changes that are not insignificant." (Luke 2002, 184-5).

[3] Bookchin actually contributed a chapter to Michael Tobias' early collection, *Deep Ecology*, a year after *The Trumpeter* began.

of the populace concerned with environmental issues it becomes embroiled in a series of staged confrontations with these perspectives.

To some degree this is inevitable, but the problem is that those critiquing deep ecology are, of course, staging these confrontations according to the own predetermined interests and logics. This can make deep ecology an easy target precisely because, while Drengson is right that deep ecology does not have to be "reductive," it does *typically* have a gaping hole in its analyses. That is to say, many of those who explicitly view their work as falling under the heading "deep ecology" have been relatively unconcerned with, and sometimes quite disparaging of, many forms of socio-political, cultural and even political theory (Sessions 1995 & 2006).[4] Sale (1999, 217) approvingly notes that "it is probably accurate to say that deep ecologists think primarily in biotic rather than social terms" and he considers that from "this *larger* perspective, it does not really matter what the petty social and political arrangements are that have led to our ecological crisis" (217, my emphasis).

Sale, I think, is profoundly mistaken, although his views may explain why many deep ecologists write as if social, cultural and political theories and philosophies (hereafter abbreviated to "social theory") did not, or might as well not exist, and as if deep ecological politics was just a matter of psychological / spiritual enlightenment, bioregionalism, and/or science driven *policy*. They often assume that the relations that should concern us are only those that operate directly between the consciousness of the ecologically entangled human individual and something un-problematically called nature, which is also the locus of their concerns. There are, of course, exceptions to this, but even these more socially aware approaches have to note this lacuna (McLaughlin 1993, 211). The social, we might say, is left as something of a black box and to this extent the proclamations of some deep ecologists do indeed appear socio-politically reductive and naively naturalistic. For example, deep ecologists have frequently underplayed the effects of social relations on their own ideas, as past debates about the "social construction" of nature show (Smith 1999).[5]

One recurrent worry of many deep ecologists seems to be that any serious recognition of the effects of society on our self-understandings and our environmental relations, and especially on

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[4] Interestingly, while Naess (1997) was not entirely negative in his assessment of cultural theorists such as Derrida, he is at best equivocal. They might prove of a source of "inspiration" (4) but, like "most philosophically concerned supporters" of deep ecology he does not expect they "can be of much help" (Naess 1997, 6).

[5] This article drew a rather bizarre response from Arne Naess (2000, and see my reply in Smith 2001). Naess could not, it seems, distinguish between my setting out the diverse positions held by social theorists on the social construction of nature and my own quite different views. This lack of communication is symptomatic of the difficulty in trying to take both deep ecology and social theory seriously.

our ethical and aesthetic values, leads us down the slippery slope of cultural relativism. This might, in turn, be thought to undermine the possibility of deep ecology speaking of and/or for "nature" per se, rather than just offering other, culturally mediated, understandings of the world.

For example, in volume 4, issue 4 of *The Trumpeter*, Warwick Fox's critique of Henryk Skolimoswski hinges on

> the essential point ... that he has not overcome the basic problem of relativism that besets all subjectivist and non-cognitivist positions. If my values are simply a function of my culture or of my species then what claim do they have to be better than those of any [other] culture or species. (Fox 1987, 33)

But, of course, values are never "simply a function" of one's culture. They are not, by any stretch of the imagination, *simple*, they are not just functionally pre-determined by one's culture, and they are not developed in relation to culture alone; my encounters with "nature", my self-reflections, my brain chemistry, the weather, my knowledge of ecology, etc., can all have profound effects on my values and actions, and, what is more, all of these things also interact in complex ways with each other. That said, even our most reflexive values are, to some extent, (and perhaps even to a large degree) affected, enabled, and (de)limited by our economic, social, historical, and cultural circumstances, and I think we really do have to admit that any one set of values cannot be claimed better than any other without recourse to at least some socially particular presuppositions. And values *do* vary and change, both culturally and temporally, as *every* study of environmental sociology or history shows, and even the kinds of arguments that might convince others that certain values, including those of deep ecology, are "better" also change (not least because "better" is itself a *relative* term).

The fear of socio-cultural "relativism" and the spectre of social theory in general has, I think, been theoretically and ethically/politically debilitating for deep ecology. Recognizing the important and often inextricable effects of social as well as natural history on our understandings of self and nature is actually a vital aspect of our ability to respond to constantly changing circumstances.[6]

[6] As if to prove my point, one reviewer of the paper did indeed see the claims made here as indicative of a slippery slope towards cultural relativism and "strong social constructivism". Their comments focused on three things. First, that I was simply stating, without providing evidence that culture influences ethical values. Second, that despite my explicit comments here to the contrary, this must mean that I think that "in the end" such values are grounded in or determined by culture alone. Third, that any such values can have no normative force because they are not universal or objective. Let me take these in turn.

First, the claim that social, cultural, historical circumstances inform our values, including our ethical values, should not really be controversial – it is attested in very great detail by a huge volume of historical, anthropological, socio-cultural, philosophical etc. data, not to mention our own life experiences. Take, for example, the very well-

WHAT CAN SOCIAL THEORY DO (FOR DEEP ECOLOGY)?

Imagine a society in which people had no theoretical understanding of their own situation in relation to each other, to their architecture and technology, to their political and economic institutions, to processes of social stagnation or change that affect them, to the relations between self, values, ethics and society and between these and nature, to the language they use to communicate, the media of communication used – whether written, spoken, electronically transmitted, the relations between society and health, to the role or status of different kinds of knowledge and of knowledge production, of history, aesthetics, ideology, power, gender, and so on. Such a scenario seems more like an ant colony than a society, although there are, indubitably, societies where there is only supposed to be *one* way to understand all of these things, whether in accordance with fate, tradition, the will of some

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documented influence of Romanticism as a social, literary, artistic, and scientific, movement on modern Western evaluations of natural landscapes (see, for example, Evernden 1993; Bate 1991). Wordsworth's views of nature are obviously very different from those of most contemporary venture capitalists and from members of any Amazonian rainforest culture, then or now. I'm not sure on what grounds one could possibly ignore such influences and variations or think them somehow incidental but it would presumably have to depend on the person concerned making claims that they have some privileged access to *the* truth of the matter where nature is understood, that only their views are "rational" etc. This seems, *a priori*, unlikely.

Second, the claim that the "social" informs our understandings and values does not mean that these understandings and values are, in the end, *determined* by culture – it means just what it says it means - that these values are, often inextricably, *informed* by these social aspects of our worldly existence – *along with many others*. Social theorists are not all cultural determinists, they do not all reduce nature in the sense of the more-than-just-human world to just an artifact of culture. Of course some forms of "strong" social constructivism have come perilously close to stating this but this is neither a necessary concomitant of taking social theory seriously nor, as I explain in great detail elsewhere, is it my position (Smith 1999). What it does mean is that there is no philosophical "view from nowhere." All views are informed (but again not necessarily determined) by our historical *and* natural historical emplacement, they are all expressed from *somewhere*. This seems an eminently ecological as well as a sociological position to me, our varying socio-natural positions, our "environmental" contexts, really do matter in terms of value formation.

Third, the fact that our values are differently informed by our "cultural" as well as our "natural" situations does not mean that such values have no ethical or normative force. This view rests on a kind of all or nothing position where either values are "objective" and universal or they are just subjective and hence just matters of personal taste. But, notice that this division between objective and subjective is a particularly modern Western perspective, one often associated by environmentalists in its extreme (Cartesian) forms as partly to blame for our current environmental problems. Also note that social theory, even in most of its traditional humanist forms, attempts to emphasize the *constitutive* effects of social relations upon our subjectivity, it is all about understanding *inter*-subjectivity *including* the formation of behavioral and evaluative norms and their cultural force. Here too there is a link to ecological theories that also focus on relations and contexts, not just individual beings qua individuals. Some Kantians (and various religions) may think that ethical values have to have some form of "universal" assent to have any normative force but, I'm not a Kantian and I don't think this. In any case we might ask how many, if any, of our ethical values relating to nature are objective and universal and actually have such normative force. Is it wrong to kill sentient creatures for food? Some animal rights theorists might think so, and may lay down a universal law to such ends, but actually this does not tend to be the case with deep ecologists.

almighty leader, a party line, biology, an institutional religion, the dictates of an "invisible hand," and so on.

Such a society, lacking the possibility for these dimensions of social reflexivity, are not likely to be well equipped to understand, let alone alter, situations where that society is placed at serious risk due to changing circumstances. This is especially so if those changing circumstances are actually initiated and promoted by certain aspects of that society's own socio-cultural and economic structure, that is, where there are contradictions between its (lack of or extremely limited) self-understanding and reality it faces. The requirement for critical reflexivity becomes even more apparent in a situation where this reality, let's call it "nature," rather than just being an external environment with its own entirely separate dynamics, is itself caught up in, and sometimes radically transformed by, its relations with that society – that is where we might be speaking, in many, if not all, cases, of nature(s)-culture(s) – a rice paddy, an agricultural field, a city park, a weather system affected by global warming – rather than nature and culture as two entirely separate realms. Here, it is in many cases impossible to disentangle the natural from the cultural. But if the problem is, even in part, a lack of social reflexivity then critics need to do more than just point this out; they need to try to provide ways to think about and address these contradictions.

To recognize that ecology needs to be socio-theoretically informed does not mean that we have submit to the kind of "anything goes equivalence" stressed by critics of cultural relativism, or to ignore the natural sciences or our "ecological selves." Recognizing the reality of social relations does not mean that we are driven to deny every society's dependence upon a more-than-social world that predates it and will also antedate it (albeit in forms that have often been irremediably altered through these encounters). It means giving due consideration to the social mediations of our understandings and activities with(in) the more-than-just-human world. Indeed, if we think about it, another term for this broader kind of relativism, if we start thinking against the tendency to separate social from natural conditions, might actually be "ecology."

This might seem a strange claim but to return to Drengson's opening remarks, "ecological paradigms" involve understanding "the relationships and inter-connections *within* and *between* living beings which give to each its special place and identity" (1983, 2). If this applies to the ecological relations within which each beings' *existence* and *identity* is composed then it seems entirely reasonable to assume that this applies to beings' *values* as well. Indeed, many deep ecologists would want to emphasize this where nature is concerned. And if we admit that social relations have effects then there is, after all, a "social ecology," (and not just in Bookchin's sense) that is, a socio-cultural "level [sic] of existence" (2), which deep ecology needs to address. So, insofar as deep ecology wants to provide plausible (and in this sense a 'better') analyses of how nature is currently (mis)understood, then it makes sense to engage with those

"disciplines" and perspectives that make understanding society and culture their focus. It can only avoid seeming (and/or being) reductive to the extent that social and cultural theories are taken seriously for the ecological possibilities they might offer. That deep ecology has so far (and here again I am generalizing) failed to do this, or has even focused on those socio-biological[7] theories that are most reductive and least ecological in this broader – not just biological – sense, is the main reason why many socio-theoretically oriented ecologists, myself included, are reticent to call themselves deep ecologists.

So if societies are not, actually, like ant colonies, if they are not *just* biotic, and where there are frameworks, possibilities, and entire fields of research for thinking about social relations and dynamics, surely it makes sense to engage with them. The task of critical social and cultural theories is to provide such understandings.[8] *If* the social analysis of deep ecology is to be anything more than a repository for reductive sociobiological speculation and philosophical naturalism then it needs to address this social-theoretical void, and address it in a creative manner.[9]

WHAT NEEDS TO BE SAID?

There are, of course, some serious difficulties in attempting to combine deep ecology's critiques with most social, cultural and political theory. The focus on meaningful relations with *and between* more than just human-beings distinguishes deep ecology from more dominant political approaches and from diverse theoretical paradigms within disciplines such as sociology – whether Marxist, rational choice, Weberian, hermeneutic, structural-functionalist, feminist, systems theoretical, symbolic interactionist, ethnomethodological postmodern, and so on. The social sciences have only recently begun to take ecology seriously, and even then usually only as

[7] For an account of some of the problems with the E. O. Wilson's sociobiological research program in relation to hermeneutic understandings of social and natural history see Smith (2014).

[8] To be against sociobiological reductionism is not reject the idea that "biology has a significant role to play in understanding human behaviour" (Sessions 2006, 127). It is to reject the idea that biology has such a significant role to play that one can effectively excise or ignore the socio-historical, economic, cultural etc. aspects of our activities and understandings, including our ecological activities and understandings, in favour of an analysis of a metaphysical abstraction referred to as our "human nature" (ibid).

[9] I do not want this to be misunderstood. While I can see nothing but the bleakest possible future for sociobiological reductionism, or any society and ecology that might end up being informed by it (Smith 2014), there is certainly plenty of room for the philosophical, poetic, and spiritual (in the broadest sense) approaches found in deep ecology. These often offer profound insights into our individual relations with nature, and there is no denying its effectiveness in expressing and inspiring various forms of ecological activism. Even if deep ecology does no more than provide an intellectual environment where such approaches might prosper and thereby keep alive the idea of nature's non-instrumental worth, it will remain a vital strand of ecology. But these approaches are not enough by themselves.

the "external environment" or "system" within which and upon which societies operate, rather than as a mode of more-than-just biological inter-relatedness, still less as a mode of constituting more-than-just-human ethical and political values and communities (but see below).

Deep ecology on the other hand is often framed in terms of the idea of a much broader "sociality"; it recognizes diverse communities of life on Earth that are composed not only through biotic factors but also, where applicable, through ethical relations, that is, the valuing of other beings as more than just resources. Put simply, deep ecology would obviously not be deep ecology without environmental *ethics*, without heartfelt expressions of concern for the wellbeing of at least some more-than-just-human others. This ethical resistance to a core assumption shared by all traditional political ideologies – that *only* humans can be considered ends in themselves – is also what inspires and informs much environmental activism. Deep ecology, in all its diversity, and like other forms of radical environmentalism, finds ways of trying to speak about values and meanings that anthropocentric, or perhaps, at the risk of misunderstanding, we might just say, "humanist," paradigms consider valueless and/or meaningless.[10]

This makes it impossible for deep ecologists to simply adopt or deploy the theoretical frameworks and ideological presuppositions of mainstream social-theory and / or traditional politics. No one should expect that. And, where humanism is so ideologically ingrained and so explicitly promoted, as the ultimate political principle, then to even question its role is, almost automatically, to be labeled misanthropic. But, as radical ecologists often find themselves arguing, to take a position against the unquestioned assumption of human sovereignty is not to disparage or denigrate human beings; it is to take sides in an argument about the ethical importance of *more* than just humans (Livingstone 1988, 116; Drengson 1995, 5; Smith 2011, passim). Radical ecology counters a restrictive humanism that is pervasive, and not just in dominant (neo)liberal approaches but also, for example, in Western Marxist thought, which, for all its critical insights, has remained resolutely humanist with regard to nature being only a

[10] There are, of course, valuable ethical, political, and epistemic aspects of humanist thought in its more general historical sense, especially insofar as it has contributed to the broadening of ethical concerns, the emergence of various sciences, and the development of a culture of skeptical and reflexive criticism that Gianni Vattimo refers to as "weak thought," that is, thought that critiques claims to absolute and/or divine "forms of authority" (2004, 32), whether epistemic and/or political. Humanism may even have contributed to certain forms of environmental concern as Hinchman (2004) for example, argues. However, humanism as an ideology has also implicitly and explicitly depended upon and promulgated its own divisive metaphysics, one that excepts humans as such from the rest of the world through various metaphysical iterations of the "anthropological machine"(Agamben 2004; see also Smith 2011 for an ecological take on this).

resource for human use.[11] This *partly* explains why deep ecologists have tended to avoid framing their discussions of an environmental crisis in Marxian terms at all. But, if we take this as just one example, any analysis of environmental issues without some analysis of its dominant socioeconomic form, that is, *capitalism* is obviously going to appear socio-politically reductive.[12] And if Marx gets short shrift it is hardly surprising that other social and cultural theorists get even less attention.

Yet deep ecology, as a field, might find engagement with at least some of the various and ever changing forms of social and cultural theory both inspiring and useful, and this *despite* the serious ecological problems these theories might have when taken as a whole and/or in their usual academic habitats, and even their explicit antipathy of some of their proponents towards deep ecology. I do not want to underestimate the difficulties here. I am heartily sick of reading and reviewing dismissive (and sometimes just ignorant) accounts of radical and deep ecology from mainstream socio-theoretical and political perspectives. But, as already outlined, my worry has also been that many of these accounts do indeed pick on a deep ecology that is not entirely a straw person precisely because of this social void. And contra certain views expressed by some deep ecologists, authors as diverse as Irigaray, Derrida, Said, Foucault, Agamben, Butler, Rancière, Gadamer, Adorno, hooks, Virilio, Latour, Deleuze, Kristeva, Grosz, Lacan, Benjamin, Arendt, Lefebvre, etc. etc. etc. do have important and interesting things to say that are of *direct* relevance to ecology, especially if we take ecology in the wider sense of more-than-just human community, just outlined. Some of them, like Virilio, even use the term ecology as a key concept in their works albeit with particular inflections that may not seem immediately applicable to deep ecology.

I think it is fair to say that few who write positively about such theories from an environmental perspective count themselves as deep ecologists. Such thinkers may be sympathetic to some,

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[11] Look, for example, at the vast majority of papers discussing ecology published in journals like *New Left Review* or *Radical Philosophy.* Interestingly *Radical Philosophy* used to provide a venue for the formalistic, and sometimes terminologically opaque, variety of "anti-humanism" that briefly gained some ground through the structuralist writings of Louis Althusser in the 1970's and 80's but then this certainly never challenged the idea of human sovereignty and nature as a resource. The days when it would publish the work of Richard and Val Routley seem long gone. For my own views of some of the ecological problems with Marxist theory see Smith (2001), chapter 3.

[12] Back when *The Trumpeter* began deep ecologists might have pointed to the Soviet Union and China as examples where very different economic systems, ones explicitly founded on Marxist principles, certainly had no better environmental records (see, for example, McLaughlin 1993, Shapiro 2001). Ecological problems are obviously not *just* reducible to capitalism. But now that capitalism is global there seems very little excuse for not taking at least some aspects of Marx's analysis of it, such as commodity fetishism, seriously. In any case, the fact that different forms of society seem to create environmental problems requires *more* detailed attention to be paid to the social level, not less. According to *The Trumpeter*'s online search engine there have been 57 articles that mention the term "capitalism" since the journals' inception but a quick look through these leaves one feeling that *most* of these, with a few obvious exceptions like the work of the late David Orton (2000), are really little more than passing mentions.

perhaps all, aspects of Naess's famous eight point platform, but they have no interest in signing up to it as anything like a deep ecology manifesto. They may even regard the obsession with this platform amongst some deep ecologists as counter-productive, because its defense, in one or other of its versions, has become something of a rallying point against "unwelcome" socio-theoretically informed critiques of deep ecology.

For example, George Sessions, in the course of a very wide ranging critique of social theoretical approaches, berates ecofeminist Karren Warren for daring to suggest that there may be differences between certain deep ecologists in North America and the "founding father" of the "movement," Arne Naess. She had not, it seems, understood that all of the "five major American theorists" of deep ecology all "accepted the 1984 Eight Point platform, together with the Apron Diagram which separates 'ultimate premises' (such as Self-Realization) from the Eight Point platform" (Sessions 2006, 153). But even saying this risks making deep ecology sound like Scientology or some tiny Marxist-Leninist sect from the 1970's where people's capacity to be identified as sect/party members counts on their acceptance of a particular doctrinal position (interestingly, if Warwick Fox had been American, he would, have failed the 'audit' at this level (Sessions 2006, 152)). Sessions then claims that

> "... this ongoing so-called "ecofeminism/deep ecology debate" by Plumwood, Warren, and other ecofeminists has amounted to little more than academic 'game playing' and political power trips involving a 'jockeying for position' which has basically obfuscated the issues and delayed realistic solutions to the ecological crisis." (Sessions 2006, 153)

Such claims are unhelpful, to say the least. Not only does it derogate the character of thinkers with deep-running ecological concerns but it explicitly suggests feminist critiques of deep ecology are guilty of delaying "realistic solutions" – *whatever they might be!* – to the environmental crisis. It thereby dismisses an entire area of socio-theoretically informed work that has produced some of the most interesting, astute, and varied approaches to understanding the ecological crisis. Far from impeding realistic solutions eco-feminists have provided multiple understandings of what the problems and solutions might involve. They have also pointed out some glaring gaps in deep ecological theory (see for example Salleh 1999).[13]

What Sessions is really complaining about is the apparent side-lining of deep ecological concerns over nature whenever social issues intrude. In other words, from his position, cultural relativism is not the only danger posed by taking social theory seriously; there is also the real risk of mixing its predominantly anthropocentric concerns with deep ecology's ecological and

[13] Interestingly, all five of Sessions' key North American deep ecologists were male, as were the authors of all but two of the thirty-nine chapters in his edited collection *Deep Ecology for the 21st Century* (1995) – no less than thirteen of the thirty nine articles in the book were by Naess himself.

ethical concerns in ways that detract from deep ecology's mission. This "dilution" of ecological concerns proceeds on two fronts: politically/economically from the continual pressure to put environmental concerns in terms of human benefits/losses, and theoretically through the anthropocentric assumptions promoted by social theorists. So, far from seeing it as a (political) danger that deep ecology will be regarded as "ecology-only" movement, Sessions claims that, in a broad sense, this is precisely what Naess himself proposed (Sessions 2006, 122). Naess and Sessions, want at least one movement to stand for "an undiluted ecological position" (166) and stand out against co-option by, for example, by the environmental justice movement, which Sessions also targets.

This, however, confuses two rather different issues. No one doubts the anthropocentric (and we might add, historically ethnocentric, androcentric, occidental etc.) biases of much social theory, although there is evidence that this is changing in several different and interesting fields (and ecofeminism is one of the reasons for this). It is certainly true that, from a radical ecological perspective, this anthropocentrism typifies and promulgates many ideas and practices that are implicated in producing, rather than solving, the ecological crisis. It also exemplifies the explicitly anthropocentric position taken by key proponents of the environmental justice movement which, as DeLuca (2007) rightly points out, is not so much an environmental justice movement as a human justice movement focused on addressing the roles that social inequalities play in people's exposure to environmental harms. But social theory does not have to be used for solely anthropocentric purposes and, vitally necessary as the idea of environmental justice is (and it *is* vital and often missing from deep ecological positions), it does *not* obviate the pressing need for approaches that express concern for the more-than-just-human world, positions that are not co-opted back into treating nature as simply a human resource. Just as some deep ecologists might broaden their social concerns, it is also important to influence those whose involvement may begin in environmental justice to *deepen* their ethical concerns, because the ecological crisis is certainly not just a crisis for humans.

Social, cultural and political theories can have an important role here, although this obviously requires a quite radical re-thinking of the very idea of the social, the cultural, and the political (something that, by the way, social theorists have done on many occasions). But there is no fundamental reason why, here and now, this deeper re-thinking should not start from the felt reality of radical ecologist's ethical and political concerns for non-human beings, just as previous attempts to provide alternative understandings of society in the past began from particular ethical and political concerns for specific *human* constituencies. What we need are creative ways of thinking about the entanglement of ecologies and societies, ways that do not involve seeing nature wholly, or even primarily, in terms of resource extraction and distribution. There are myriad possibilities here that can supplement and inform diverse deep ecological

approaches, but would no longer leave it possible to argue that deep ecology is necessarily reductive. Here again it is worth emphasizing that regarding societies and nature as entangled does not mean that they are entangled in the same ways or to the same degrees, nor does it preclude seeing that some forms of entanglement are more damaging to some constituents than others. It does mean that such assessments cannot be undertaken *only* on biotic grounds, that is to say, we need to be reflexive about the social, political, and cultural tropes informing such claims.

There are, we might say, "symbiotic" possibilities in terms of a future co-evolution of deep ecological thought and ecologically oriented social theory. Deep ecologists could find these developments conducive *so long as they explicitly recognize the importance of ethical relations to the more-than-just-human world*. These approaches will, no doubt differ from many perspectives within deep ecology as it is currently constituted. For example, they not need to be philosophically "holistic," they will almost certainly not focus on human population *numbers* per se, they may not necessarily proclaim the intrinsic value of *all* life or involve ideas of, say, transpersonal psychology but they would, nonetheless, challenge the principle of human sovereignty and offer very different ways of thinking about the communities of life on Earth.

So I see this development of, what might be termed "ecologically oriented social theories / radical ecology" (let's use the acronym EOSTRE)[14] informed by the ethos of deep ecology is, as a crucial way of addressing the lacuna in deep ecology and yet carrying its spirit and politics forward. And even Naess, who was hardly enthusiastic about social theory, sometimes recognized this lacuna. For example, commenting on Salleh and Warren's ecofeminist critiques of deep ecology, he remarks that it is "lamentable that among deep ecology theorists there are so few who are able to write extensively from within areas of social and political theory" (Naess 1999, 271). It is indeed lamentable and something a radical ecosophy should be trying to address, especially if, as Sessions notes, Naess

> "genuinely believes in a diversity of world views (*similar to the best of postmodernist thinking*) ... and wants to attract as many diverse religious and philosophical positions as possible to provide support for the deep ecology movement." (Sessions 2006, 166 my emphasis)[15]

[14] Ēostre was is the name of a pagan goddess with associations with the dawn and spring (etymologically 'aus' means to shine) and her name survives in the word Easter. To use this acronym, perhaps risks confirming at least some of Ferry's suspicions, but I think it unlikely that an acronym for a combination of social and ecological theory will take on the same quasi-religious interpretations as Lovelock's view of earth as GAIA.

[15] It is heartening to find that Sessions is willing to criticize the doyen of sociobiology for his lack of awareness of socio-economic realities, as, for example when he states that Edward O. "Wilson tends to be politically naive in

AFTER ALL IS SAID AND DONE

To return to issue one of *The Trumpeter*: A key question for social theory *and* deep ecology is how might "we approach understanding the relationships and inter-connections *within* and *between* living beings which give to each its special place and identity" (Drengson 1983, 2). This question might, alternatively, be expressed as "how we might understand, and what might constitute, 'ecological community.'" That is to say, how might we understand ecological community in a way that is ethically, socially, politically, broader than, yet might still be informed by the "narrow" (2) scientific biotic understanding of ecological communities? How might we recognize and theorize the way that myriad *senses* of ecological community (material, phenomenological, hermeneutic, ethical) all relate to the ways in which we *share* this world – not in the sense of sharing it out or dividing it up like slicing a cake or sharing resources – but sharing our lives with others and being *touched* by the living magical co-creation and sustenance of this world.

This question needs to be addressed through diverse theoretical approaches that can speak to, rather than ignore the ways that societies and natures are irretrievably intertwined. What I am suggesting here is a socio-theoretical expansion of the plurality of ecosophies that Naess always argued were advantageous, despite, or perhaps because, they are not easily transformed into a single ideology or theory of a transition (for some of my own suggestions, see Smith 2013). This means that we need to move away from a preoccupation with "the question of who is and who isn't a deep ecologist" and especially the idea that this "can be settled by referring to the [eight point platform] platform [as] a "common ground for those who value *all* nature" (McLaughlin 1995, 92). This is because we need to recognize that how "we approach understanding the relationships and inter-connections *within* and *between* living beings which give to each its special place and identity" *and*, as I have argued, its unique *values*, are matters that are inherently social too. Such matters cannot be addressed in ways that are purely biotic, especially if we want to argue for the ethical rather than just instrumental values generated in and through such relations.

Perhaps, we might say that the common ground between deep ecologists and ecologically oriented social theorists is that of recognizing that there are ecological communities, and relations within and between more than just humans, that matter in more than just instrumental ways. But beyond this shared concern, the very notion of a "common ground" in a wider ecological sense is precisely where theoretical differences arise and where ecology happens. The key question for deep ecology and EOSTRE, I think, is what does being-in-

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thinking that free market capitalism (and biotechnology) will provide realistic solutions to the ecological crisis" (Sessions 2006, 163).

common-with-others involve? And furthermore any explication of this has to be provided in terms that inevitably have social, historical, and cultural and political aspects *and* consequences. This means both that no single explication will have universal assent even amongst deep ecologists but it also means that we can offer diverse understandings of ecological community that go far beyond the narrow confines of humanism. Perhaps the time is ripe for just such a development.

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