

The Intrinsic Value of the Whole: Cognitive and Utilitarian Evaluative Processes as they Pertain to Ecocentric, Deep Ecological, and Ecopsychological “Valuing”

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Overview

One of the central tenets of the long-range, deep ecology movement is valuing the intrinsic rights of organisms. Although this is a credo for many of us, a commitment to all life processes irrespective of human evaluating, antagonists to the “intrinsic rights” argument, several of them committed environmentalists themselves, shy away from its stronger ethics. The thesis presented here is based on a *biosemiotic* assumption that *natural systems are intrinsically evaluative from within precisely because signification occurs at all levels*. If this is the case, *human Evaluative practices do not have a forgone evaluative supremacy over cognitive and utilitarian evaluative processes* displayed by many, if not all, non-human animals. The stronger *biosemiotic* argument asserts that because *meaning* and *signification* are widespread in the natural world, all creatures are relative evaluators with respect to their *umwelten* and each other. Thus to have an *intrinsic value* is to function in an intermediated, interrelated *whole*. This biosemiotic approach then

asserts that no single creature can fully evaluate for another or for the *whole*, or if it does, it must conclude that everything has an “intrinsic right” to evaluate. When understood, this position obligates and amplifies the initial “intrinsic right” argument in a paradoxical but still deep ecological way.¹

Because no animal ever plays the role of an observer, one may assert that they never enter into relationships with neutral objects. – Jacob Von Uexküll²

Introduction: Uexküll’s Functional Circles

Present-day biosemioticians recognize in Jacob Von Uexküll³ the ecologist/ethologist who could transcend the biology of his day to capture the *evaluative biosemiotic* quote that starts off this writing and the thoughts that follow:

Only when we recognize that everything in nature is created by its meaning, and that all Umwelts are but voices that take part in a universal score, will the way be open to lead us out of the narrow confines of our own Umwelt.

That his insight has been slow to trickle into psychology, as ecopsychology, or into ecology and the deep ecology movement is a mystery of philosophy of science or a historical matter. His biosemiotic ideas are paraphrased and expanded here to assert the following:

1. Natural systems are intrinsically evaluative from within and throughout precisely because signification occurs at all levels.
2. No being is exempt from evaluation and itself values or evaluates (is in turn valued and evaluated) for maximizing its survival odds and well being.
3. To the extent that several beings value or evaluate their inner and outer environments or each other, they enter into ecological relationships best described as function circles.
4. The integrative value of the WHOLE with respect to diversity and additive effects of evaluative beings, makes the whole (a function circle) the intrinsic unit to which VALUE can be given.
5. Because WHOLES cannot be broken without leading to diseased umwelten, the individual contributions toward integration possess intrinsic values.

6. There is no neutral value to anything.

From his beginning quote and insight, “Because no animal ever plays the role of an observer, one may assert that they never enter into relationships with neutral objects,” I will emphasize the obvious: every ecological transaction has meaning, everything is imparting or deducing meaning, and therefore, *everything* has more than *intrinsic value*--*Intrinsic rights* can then be assigned and follow from an *intrinsic value* position. They are all equal *interpretants* and no interpretation can be said to be inclusive of the whole or exclusive of the others.

Paradoxically, even humans cannot confer the designation *intrinsic right* unless it is a basic and irrefutable observation of their relative, and only relative, role as *interpretants* of nature. The claim of something (everything) having *intrinsic value*, even when used as a shorthand phrase to describe its *awesome relative* role in the *whole*, minimizes in my mind the *active interpretative* role of every thing, capable in its own right, to make judgments about human actions. It is a *trialectics*: we are being *Evaluated* as well.⁴

Finally, it is difficult to ignore much of present-day natural history and ecology and conclude that systemic, functional wholes do not exist, or that these wholes are not supported by the functional and existential diversity of many individual organisms, or that their existential doings are unrelated to each other, or that any one thing in the whole is less than any one other thing. Biosemiotics includes the central notion that all these existential doings range from the internally communicative (*endosemiotic*—hormonal interactions) to the externally communicative.⁵

Meaning is at the core of everything nature does because one would presume that messaging implies, at the very least, an intention or an object, a sign, and an interpreter of that sign. A biosemiotic description of LIFE would include the maxim that meaning precedes intelligence, intelligent function, or that IT supports intelligent processes. The preceding is a more fundamental distinction than predicating LIFE on pervasive, widespread intelligence. By keeping this distinction in mind, one is protected somewhat from assuming *ipso facto Anthropic Principles* or Intelligent Teleologies that may distract us from thinking about or partaking of natural process as they are or have existed, irrespective of human fancy or fantasy. Equally, unfortunately for all of us, some psychologists have misappropriated or abused the term “intelligence” and robbed it of its more biosemiotic *meaning* substrate

for most of the twentieth century. Intelligence, word and idea, has a bad reputation; a tainted eugenic genesis.

Valuing Versus Evaluating

In order to use a common ecological and functional frame of reference, I will refer to most basic sensorial, perceptual, and cognitive processes as *evaluation* or *evaluating*. On the other hand, I will refer to the *self-conscious* aspects of *evaluation* or *evaluating* as *valuing*. In doing this, I do not mean to imply that evaluation or evaluating is less than *valuing*, only that *valuing* is its self-conscious aspect. Humans and many other non-human animals do both, *evaluate* and *value*. The term *Evaluation*, capitalized, includes both *evaluating* and *valuing*. Moreover, *Evaluation* is assumed to be a *biosemiosis* where signs are interpreted in either unconscious or self-conscious ways.

The following are examples of *evaluation* to the extent that we assume no self-conscious effort is taking place in the minds of all involved:

1. A bird *considers* the strength of an opponent and decides not to contest a given territory.
2. An amoeba *discerns* that a certain noxious chemical is present and moves away from its concentration in a tropic fashion.
3. A human artist *unconsciously decides* that black crows are needed in order to “balance” a yellow field of painted sunflowers.
4. A bear *judges* a certain leaping salmon to be more nutritious than another and plunges into the frigid waters after it.
5. A bear *decides* that a certain human hiker is more nutritious than blackberries.

The following are examples of *valuation* to the extent that we assume self-conscious effort is taking place in the minds of all involved:

1. A chimpanzee looks into a mirror, finds a morsel of food lodged between his teeth and decides to pick it away because that makes him look more handsome.
2. A human miner decides, after some thought, that it is to his financial self-interest to bulldoze a certain hill, irrespective of the effects of his actions.

3. A wolf is self-conscious of his newly acquired alpha status and produces the expected dominant posturing to broadcast his position.
4. A big bird arranges his feathers and positions himself advantageously in order to maximize the glittery effects of reflected light on his multicolored plumes.
5. A mouse or a louse generates an image of himself that distinguishes him from any other mouse or louse.

What matters to other arguments made later is not that *evaluation* is different from *valuation* but that *both confer a relative status to any creature, allowing it to make judgments about their situational action fields or their permanent umwelten*, and that the rest of the inhabitants of the *whole* can evaluate as often and as capably as humans do. Last, two general aspects of Evaluation can be noted: *social evaluative cognition* and *utilitarian evaluative choices*.⁶ Social evaluative cognition may lead to *valuation* to the extent that sophisticated social hierarchies are in place and individuals must keep track of their often shifty social status. George Herbert Mead made the case that these intense social situations can lead to the cognitive generation of *The Generalized Other*, or in today's terminology, the basis for a theory of mind. *Utilitarian evaluative choices* need not be related to *socialness* or to social standing, and are more universal or basic existential judgments pertaining to the general welfare of the individual creature. Again, both humans and non-human animals do both.

According to Sessions and Naess's eight-point, deep ecology platform, for example (point one):

The flourishing of human and non-human life on Earth has inherent value. The value of non-human forms is independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes.

If an Uexküllian biosemiotic synthesis is possible with deep ecology movement principles and Ecopsychology, then neither humans nor non-human animals, if they are able, can help but to make all sorts of value judgments (aesthetic, spiritual, scientific, or utilitarian-commercial) about one another. In a biosemiotic sense, "The value of non-human forms" cannot be said to be "independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes." There is perhaps a deeper way to interpret this relationship. Paradoxically, this new interpretation may be a true synthesis of Uexküllian biosemiotic, Deep Ecology, and Ecopsychology. The successful synthesis hinges in Uexküll's

biosemiotic and ecological insight pertaining *function circles*. Function circles are integrated wholes where intelligences flourish in the context of a whole. Thus, *Evaluation* cannot be prevented, but only corrected and shaped toward an original or biosemiotic genesis.

Only Humans Evaluate?

In environmental ethics, the jury still seems to be out regarding the deep ecology movement's tenet that natural things, beings, and so on, have "inherent value," "independent value," or "intrinsic worth."⁷ To some philosophers of environmental ethics, this is a Buddhist fantasy or an ecological ideal that becomes impractical when applied to human "needs" to extract from Nature whatever we need to pursue our realizations.

Some of these philosophers⁸ argue that only human beings can *evaluate* their reality, thus all natural objects *have a value relative to a human need, from aesthetic to profit-based*. This is a "good argument" to the extent that (a) other creatures do not *evaluate* or *value*; (b) self-conscious evaluation is of a higher moral order than unconscious evaluation; (c) only humans using language can describe the value of things, to each other, and make comparisons about the relative worth, significance, and reality of any values at all; or (d) humans are endowed with special extra-natural properties and ensuing rights that confer their *Evaluating* with a supervisory role over all other organisms.

These are "good" arguments to the extent that these philosophers assume that wolves, for example, have no value systems of their own, have no aesthetic sense, or are incapable of hierarchical or classificatory cognition. But because wolves in fact do live in highly regulated and hierarchical packs, even the staunchly anthropocentric philosopher must admit that wolves have *social evaluative cognition*, otherwise there would be no need to describe readily observable behaviour in terms of an alpha or omega "something." *Social evaluative cognition* has been studied and reported in many animals. But even at a more basic evaluative level, animals, such as the South American macaw, have been observed making *utilitarian evaluative choices*. (Wolves and many other animals do as well: the choice of a place to sleep in the cold at night, for example.)

If empirical research is of any use to philosophers, the questions get more complicated for them: does a wolf with a readily observable sense

of social hierarchy even *have* intrinsic rights to have, or to express, this social sense of hierarchy? Are these rights the same or different than the human rights to do the same or something similar? If a wolf decides to fight for an Alpha role, how does he do that? Is this some kind of lowly instinctual behaviour that has nothing to do with having evaluated first his social status and the entire panorama of his social pack structure?

If we twist their arms enough and philosophers admit that intelligent and social animals have more intrinsic rights than, say, a rock, they have lost their sagacious argument already, because the rock and its minerals feed the plants that feed deer that the wolf hunts in an interrelated ecological pattern and *whole*. Remove the rock, the water, the lowly plants, the forest, and what do we end up with? Nothing to evaluate or to philosophize about! Now here comes our important counterargument: *the value has never been on any single thing but in the ensemble, on the ecological pattern and the ensemble that evaluates from within and throughout*. That is the wisdom of ecology and that was the wisdom of humans who bothered to understand it.

It is perhaps a decontextualized question, when thinking in ecological totalities, to ask whether wolves, plants or rocks have intrinsic rights in and of themselves? I think they do, in and of themselves, but that is my own deep ecological intuition. Some deep ecology supporters, arguing from Buddhist insights, are not really saying that a single rock has an absolute, *unrelated intrinsic value*, but rather that everything has value because everything has *interrelated Buddha nature*. If one does not like the *Buddha nature* clause, then one could rephrase this claim in ecological whole terms as saying that everything contributes to a majestic pattern of life, *together*. To the extent that deep ecology principles are not interpreted from a Buddhist perspective, Arne Naess, for example, argues that its many manifestations are principled in a reverence for LIFE.⁹

The other important element of this discussion hinges on *the relative evaluative role that each evaluative being has on the WHOLE*. Should we give more weight to humans evaluating their *umwelten* than to wolves and foxes? If so, why? By what fair rule do we make the human a hierarchical superior evaluative being? If nothing else, greater consciousness and self-awareness pins that mind to a tighter commitment to the rule: “I, out of all evaluative beings, shall not, cannot evaluate above them, for my own selfish wants, because I should know better.” And the reason for this is rather simple: *a being with greater consciousness and self-awareness is in a position of advantage to begin to understand ecological interrelatedness as a pervasive*

existential principle and is thus also obligated to honour it. That understanding should continue into an extended morality of natural inclusiveness that clearly grasps and acts from the principle stated above: everything contributes to a majestic pattern of life, *together*.

In general, *valuative* self-conscious processes, including human semiosis, are not superior to generic for-survival *evaluative* ones for the simple reason that the former can easily lead (and do often) into self-deluding, incorrect, *bad text*. The word “text” is used in both semiotic and biosemiotic senses. That is, “text” not merely as a human-generated graphic and linear representation of language, but as an all-encompassing communicative exchanges as described by Jacques Derrida.¹⁰ For biosemioticians, “text” includes all communicative processes: molecular transactions, broadcasted signals, tracks, bird songs, or cows mooing.¹¹ All the preceding communicative processes are assumed to be in either pre-evaluative-human and original natural contexts or affected by, and transformed from their original meaning, *semioses* into new synthetic and possibly *false* interpretations. These humanly transformed synthetic interpretations are either erosive of original “text” transactions or edifying to the extent that they reiterate their meaning of original natural affiliation. To sum up, in semiotics and biosemiotics (and their extended disciplines in ecopsychology), the usage of the term “text” means not solely its graphic or artifactual expression, but also includes real physical organic processes and the complex levels of meaning interactions discovered in ecology. Particularly for biosemioticians, the written human word is thus an impoverished and anorexic sign standing for real psychobiological or psycholinguistic processes that once were in sustainable harmonies with a natural world. Ecopsychologically speaking, then, the extrication of the human body-mind-spirit system from that original biosemiotic context produces “bad text” and possibly illness.

Thus the phrase “bad text” assumes a false or nature decontextualized text that affects cognition/consciousness leading to *falsches Bewusstsein*, “false consciousness,” and acts.¹² This distinction is crucial to understanding ecopsychological issues of nature estrangement, or alienation to the extent that a “natural text” and original communication, rooted in ancient and sustainable human-nature communicative exchanges, is in decline. Whether in oral or written communication, if “text” is a reflection of a purely synthetic and decontextualized manner of associating with Nature, or whether it is symptomatic of nature estrangement or alienation, then they are both “bad text.”

Furthermore, some supporters of deep ecology principles make a strong non-anthropocentric argument in this respect with their Buddhist distrust of linguistic processes, as language can be a hinderance to ecological insight. Zazen meditation, for example, becomes the active practice of text deconstruction. Zazen meditation is radical text deconstruction to the extent that thought-words are paid attention to in a focused manner, some of these thought-words can be discovered to be part of false speech or consciousness, or thought-words are themselves an impediment to word-less intuitions and meanings—messages from an ecological unconscious.¹³

Without this ongoing *text deconstruction* or some similar telluric correcting mechanism, bad text leads to bad consciousness and illness. This point will be expanded in the section dealing with ecopsychology.

Ecopsychological Wellness: What Happens When We Evaluate Incorrectly?

The *intrinsic right, worth, value* argument, particularly, runs the risk of being misappropriated or misunderstood during *valuative* self-conscious processes by a malicious ape.¹⁴ Practically speaking, it could backfire into *ecopsychological estrangement* or *alienation* when the *original telluric connection* to pre-historical biosemiotic existential doings, does not exist or no longer has the lead role in *whole communicative processes*. (By *original telluric connection* is meant the original biosemiotic Earth-grounded text that more credibly described ecological and ontological realities.) For example, the talkative ape can be deluded into thinking that *wants* are *needs* or that its wants have an intrinsic right to be pursued by any means. (This is a respectful pun-variant of Naess's observation: "the difference between a means to the satisfaction of the need and the need must be considered.")¹⁵

Given our present environmental and ecopsychological crises, it can be argued that Western philosophy and psychology have not been explicit enough about the morality, the relative role, that human actions have within the whole of Nature. Otherwise these crises would not be or there would be more debate. This is a personal opinion. The results of this moral ambiguity has been, with some notable exceptions, that much of humanity has been quite content to be in close proximity, association, and collusion with civilized centres as part of many anthropocentric and hyper-humanistic communal experiments. These experiments consistently reduced Nature to shreds. It is seldom the case

that anthropocentric or hyper-humanistic philosophers, psychologists, or our combined lifestyles are thought to be of blame. Denial or the deflection of responsibility seems to be the norm. Otherwise these crises would not be.

So self-convincing and propagandistic is human text that it converts *gatos* (cats) into *liebres* (hares).¹⁶ Also, the “talking ape” can be deluded to the extent that it believes that because it uses language and other creatures seem not to, it has a default primacy over them. That it can or must speak for them, much like the patronizing of a person who speaks with an accent or is speech impaired (e.g., speaks for all animals and plants—an artificial semiosis that wants to speak for everything). A biosemiotic approach to this problem and arrogance does not cure every ill, but it does point to the fact that all beings have equal standing as *evaluative* and *valuative trialectic* agents, and that human language is neither more nor less worthy than all these other interpretative transactions.

My perception of this self-delusion runs something like this: *because I use language, and I have the intrinsic right to use it as a species that has it, I can broadcast more openly anything that comes to mind. Therefore, these things that come to mind have an intrinsic right onto themselves, by association. If the wolf has an intrinsic right to howl, why can't I “howl” with empty text?*

And thus, environmental, ecological, and ecopsychological problems are created by dissociated text, cognition, and by estranged or alienated psychologies. The problem is grave indeed. Unfortunately, because most people do not have the advantage of meta-linguistic or self-critiquing education, their self-delusion is easily manipulated by others.¹⁷

Language that dissociates natural mentality from its telluric origins and takes itself, synthetically, into an imploded artificial semiosis, is the beginning of mental illness. Erich Fromm recognized this process as *abstractification* and I have given it a more semiotically relevant name: *singularization*.¹⁸ I have also employed this analogy to illustrate the problem:

semiosis – psychology — biosemiosis – ecopsychology

This shorthand analogy appears in many guises in other work and distinguishes, I believe, my *ecopsychological* and *biosemiotic*

perspectives from those of others.¹⁹ This analogy says that on the left side belong *synthetic and corruptible text* and on its right our more *ancient telluric origins* and *original text*. In other work, I have admitted this analogy is imperfect in that its *biosemiotic* and *ecopsychological* side also implies a higher experiential level²⁰ of *becoming*: transpersonalization into NATURE.

By associating the words *biosemiotics* with *ecopsychology*, there is an implication that civilized culture produces *semiosis* and cannot be called ecological or ecopsychological (as K. Lewin, U. Broffenbrenner, and A. Lang do). To the extent that civilized culture is significantly *estranged* or even *alienated* from *raw nature* and its processes, *it cannot be called ecological or ecopsychological*. (It should not!) This careless labeling deceives in implying that humans, immersed in the civilized milieu, still have the capacity to interpret natural or biological signs²¹ and thus enter into a proto-human *biosemiosis* with pristine surroundings. It is only the human at the fringes of civilized culture, or the one who is fully immersed in raw nature, the one who **MUST** understand the natural sign, that has an *ecopsychology* in this sense.

Once this relationship and analogy are understood, both the *biosemiotician* and the *ecopsychologist* can shake hands and recognize that they are doing the same work. On the other hand, the human at the fringes of civilized culture, or the one who is fully immersed in raw nature, need not hear from me about their fundamental intimation.

Elsewhere, I have written about the semiotic process I call *singularization* and described it as *funneled-semiosis*. More specifically:

. . . *singularization* implies a . . . narrowing down, or impoverishment of meaning because the object [natural] being designated no longer exists, or, more importantly, has lost its original *telluric connection*, and because the semiotic triad does not function in its original context [in pristine, natural conditions]. By losing its *telluric connection* I mean that its original denotative and connotative function as part of a hunter-forager and early sustenance agricultural ethos, or, its *hypological* and intra-psychic function²² is no longer available to conscious mind.

To the extent that we can deconstruct bad *text*, to the extent that we can rebuild the ancient *telluric text*, to the extent that this *ancient text* leads back toward healthy behaviours, and to the extent that this text and these behaviours are, once again, in harmony with ancient natural

patterns, then the way to ecopsychological wellness is, if not insured, at least on the path to mending. This is, in a nutshell, by incantation, conjuring, meditation, cajoling, embracing, or song, what an ecopsychologist attempts to do.

Finally, it could be said that at the most fundamental level of ecopsychological work, assuming ecopsychological unconscious vitality and vital need or even a nascent awareness phrased in the realization that “I am better, whole, in the wild,” is the deconstruction of civilized *tinsel text, false text*, that stands in the way of a *reconfiguration of consciousness itself*.

Such reconfiguration requires a radical and ongoing discipline of undoing civilized *tinsel text, false text*, while at the same time an authentic immersion in the *wild*. The immersion into the *wild*, in addition to presupposing being invested in an authentic path toward *individuation*,²³ produces a new biosemiosis, and in a self-correcting way, forbids *tinsel texting* from remarking on the *awesome*. No one can underestimate the power of semiotic and biosemiotic processes, nor imagine that their transformation occurs at the surface of *texting*. In the manner of a koan we could say that: the *head* does not think *the text*, *the text* thinks the head, but Nature thinks the TEXT. Ecopsychological wellness means rethinking the text with Nature.

Conclusion

Karl Marx said that “language comes into being, like consciousness, from the basic need, from the scantiest intercourse with other humans.”²⁴ Marx was not an ecologist, thus he could not extend his insight to an original and pristine mind in close trialectical exchanges with raw nature or derive from this insight a more encompassing philosophy leading to ecopsychology. Otherwise, Marx fails us, more often than not, like any other thinker who describes human activity anthropocentrically. Authentic language that signifies meaningfully and profoundly has its origins in direct experiences and, ideally, in experiences chosen by the individual to enhance LIFE and human development. To update Marx,²⁵ if we can be so presumptuous, we must say that “Language comes into being,” or at least it did in the beginning, “. . . like consciousness, from the basic need,” *of a full-fledged immersion in a grander natural universe that included entire ecosystems and their mythical description when language, authentically, described an ecologically valid reality*.

Both capitalist and socialist philosophies often disappoint us by ending with a bottom line that excludes the whole planet and with descriptions of language that arrive at the humanistic phrase “the needs and the wants of a human.” If their conclusions about human prosperity lay in an exclusion of grander natural processes, in an assumption that humanity sits in a parapet above these processes ready to yield utilitarian bottom lines, both ideologies leave humanity’s spirit thirsty and a planet in ruins.

To reiterate our biosemiotic thesis, urban life and civilization that aims at subjugating Nature, produces “bad text,” semiotically defined, which is: *chaotic, fragmented, propagandistic, technically alien, created and served by others, and extant from a genuine dialectics of manual dexterity disciplined by patience, apprenticeship, or true craftsmanship in the service of LIFE.* To the extent that pristine nature, behaviour, cognition, and language not only inform one another but are shaped to their mature and life-fulfilling forms by a cultural context, then an artificial and fragmented life leads to an artificial being who is fragile in his psychology and oblivious to life’s fundamental realities.

It is a much more complicated and dire problem than when Marx and Engels singled out *Estranged Labour* or the alienation of labour.²⁶ My previous paragraph describes an extended and perpetual *being* condition where the labourer can never escape his sub-existence, even when he is removed from the inhuman conditions of repetitive and meaningless labour. *The entire horizon of the labourer’s existence is dominated by false consciousness created by false text (propaganda), false institutions, false meanings, false ideologies, and a host of materialistic narcotics.* The labourer as a hypercivilized citizen of most industrialized nations is also provided with a false sense of empowerment, an earned and disposable income (and credit as a new form of usury), that allows him or her to continue on with his or her slumber from one purchase to another, from one toy to the next.²⁷ This restricted sense of freedom, *consumer freedom*, cannot be underestimated by the ecopsychologist because the practice taps into earlier juvenile wish-fulfillment trends assisting a pernicious regression.

I would argue that the human animal, regardless of the fact that he could make “his life activity an object of his will and consciousness,” is equally “immediately one with its life activity”²⁸ in the same manner and to the same degree that other animals experience this intimacy. If this intimacy were not possible or frequent it would not be reflected so strongly in naturalism, animism, Taoism, Shinto, or even Zen

Buddhism. If this intimacy did not exist, we could not explain the common feeling of connection obtained while in nature, or after having switched to activities that increase the awareness of new body routines, the feeling that the person is “one with the task,” or better, “one with the task of living.”

The above implies that an ecopsychology that is grounded in deep ecology movement principles and in biosemiotics suspects that ecopsychological wellness depends on the deconstruction of bad, artificial text. But bad, artificial text, and the ultra-comfortable and pampered situations that it has led to, is deeply ingrained in Western industrialized nations and ethos. Many generations of civilized urbanites having been born outside of nature’s cycles or restraints (and having developed and been affected by political or corporate propaganda, nationalism, or unsustainable growth) have created a mindless purchasing mass that refuses to admit that something is wrong. Consequently, they will not take responsibility for their thoughts and actions. Consequently, the planet is going to pieces.

For ecopsychological wellness it is perhaps more important to ask: What are my ecological intrinsic duties? rather than: What are my rights? If all organisms have duties to the whole, then abiding by these leads the way to health; organismic well-being is usually achieved within natural-ideal parameters. I have argued elsewhere, with countless others, that better than ecopsychological therapy, better than trying to teach an *unapely* ape that it conforms to natural habits, would be to address the youngest. This is Paul Shepard’s (and many other educators’) ontogenic salvation and formula.²⁹ I have concluded with him, “*that the lion’s share of ecopsychological work to be done is more educational more than therapeutic.*”

Imposing ecopsychological mental hygiene with political will and determination is another option. Short of a benign dictator legislating an ecopsychological wellness plan for an entire nation, these policies could be achieved through the democratic process.³⁰ But, when the Al Gores of the world are not elected by the reflexive purchasing mass that wishes to continue their ultra-comfortable and pampered ways, we can take it as a sign that things have turned for the worse.

History has found itself at this crossroads before. The decay of glittery and false civilization, via ecopsychological estrangement or alienation, is followed by its demise, and in the chaos that ensues in its aftermath, only the natural religions, the ecopsychologically nimble, or the cynegetically able groups and individuals survive. An ecopsychologist,

by choice of profession and having a compassionate heart, has no other recourse. While waiting for chaos and for reconstruction, she has to heal in the present. She has to teach the cynegetic generations that will lead the way in the aftermath of chaos.

Her message in the future will be identical to the ecopsychologically enduring messages of our distant past or better present: *we are a hive, the hive is this planet, and whether queen, drone or worker, the hive, the whole, comes first*. To live like this demands courage and fortitude, both good things, both ennobling.

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Notes

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² The Theory of Meaning, *Semiotica* (42)-1982

³ See Jacob Von Uexküll, V. J. 1926. *Theoretical Biology*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, & Company, Inc; Jacob Von Uexküll. 1982. The Theory of Meaning. *Semiotica*, 42-1, 25-82; and Jacob Von Uexküll. 1992. A Stroll Through the Woods of Animals and Men: A Picture Book of Invisible Worlds. *Semiotica*, 89-4, 319-391.

⁴ Charles S. Peirce. 1966. *Selected Writings*. New York: Dover.

⁵ See Jesper Hoffmeyer. 1996. *Signs of Meaning in the Universe*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press.

⁶ See Jorge Conesa-Sevilla. 2006. *Ecopsychology as Ultimate Force Psychology: A Biosemiotic Approach to Nature Estrangement and Nature Alienation*. Pennsylvania: Xlibris/Randomhouse.

⁷ See Arne Naess. 2005. The Basics of Deep Ecology. *The Trumpeter*. 21 (1), 61-71, and also William Devall and George Sessions, G. 1985. *Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered*. Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith Books/Gibbs M. Smith, Inc.

⁸ In Kant's distinction of *good will* versus *practical reason* and in Heidegger's forced evaluation as part of an existential condition. The issue is addressed directly by Alan Marshall. (2002). *The Unity of Nature: Wholeness and Disintegration in Ecology and Science*. London: Imperial College Press.

⁹ Naess, Arne. 2005. The Basics of Deep Ecology. *The Trumpeter*. 21 (1), 61-71.

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- ¹⁰ See Jacques Derrida. 1967. *La Voix et le Phénomène: Introduction au Problème du Signe dans la Phénoménologie de Husserl*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, and Betty Danon. 2006. *Art as Life, Life as Art*. Osnago (Lc): Grafica C. & P. – Inventare Il Mondo.
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- ¹² Karl Marx. 1844. *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*.
- ¹³ Roszak, Theodore. 2001. *The Voice of the Earth*. New York, Simon & Schuster.
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- ¹⁵ Naess, Arne. 2005. The Basics of Deep Ecology. *The Trumpeter*. 21 (1), 61-71.
- ¹⁶ A Spanish proverb: *Me diste gatos por liebres*—You gave me cats instead of hares.
- ¹⁷ Conesa-Sevilla, Jorge. 2005. The Singularization of Reality: Implications of a Synnomic Evolution of Language to Semiotics, Biosemiotics, and Ecopsychology. *GATHERINGS: Journal of the International Community for Ecopsychology*.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 2005
- ¹⁹ Conesa-Sevilla, Jorge. 2006. *Ecopsychology as Ultimate Force Psychology: A Biosemiotic Approach to Nature Estrangement and Nature Alienation*. Pennsylvania: Xlibris/Randomhouse.
- ²⁰ Hence the larger type size for the right side of this analogy
- ²¹ Some do, such as naturalists, but they now belong to the group human in the fringes.
- ²² The primary and fundamental function of language that assists self-definition and gives rise to ego-driven and rational assessments of information for the benefit of survival and adaptation, and one assumes, ecological honesty.
- ²³ Metzner, Ralph. 2006. Transitions to an Ecological Age. *The Trumpeter*, 22 (1), 89-100.
- ²⁴ Karl Marx. 1844. *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*
- ²⁷ Engels' *Commodity Fetishism*
- ²⁸ Karl Marx. 1844. *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*.
- ²⁹ Shepard, Paul. 1982. *Nature and Madness*. San Francisco: Sierra Club.
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