

The Ecology of Environmentalism

By Sam Vaknin

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The concept of "nature" is a romantic invention. It was spun by the likes of Jean-Jacques Rousseau in the 18th century as a confabulated utopian contrast to the dystopia of urbanization and materialism. The traces of this dewy-eyed conception of the "savage" and his unmolested, unadulterated surroundings can be found in the more malignant forms of fundamentalist environmentalism.

At the other extreme are religious literalists who regard Man as the crown of creation with complete dominion over nature and the right to exploit its resources unreservedly. Similar, veiled, sentiments can be found among scientists. The Anthropic Principle, for instance, promoted by many outstanding physicists, claims that the nature of the Universe is preordained to accommodate sentient beings - namely, us humans.

Industrialists, politicians and economists have only recently begun paying lip service to sustainable development and to the environmental costs of their policies. Thus, in a way, they bridge the abyss - at least verbally - between these two diametrically opposed forms of fundamentalism. Still, essential dissimilarities between the schools notwithstanding, the dualism of Man vs. Nature is universally acknowledged.

Modern physics - notably the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum mechanics - has abandoned the classic split between (typically human) observer and (usually inanimate) observed. Environmentalists, in contrast, have embraced this discarded worldview wholeheartedly. To them, Man is the active agent operating upon a distinct reactive or passive substrate - i.e., Nature. But, though intuitively compelling, it is a false dichotomy.

Man is, by definition, a part of Nature. His tools are natural. He interacts with the other elements of Nature and modifies it - but so do all other species. Arguably, bacteria and insects exert on Nature far more influence with farther reaching consequences than Man has ever done.

Still, the "Law of the Minimum" - that there is a limit to human population growth and that this barrier is related to the biotic and abiotic variables of the environment - is undisputed. Whatever debate there is veers between two strands of this Malthusian Weltanschauung: the utilitarian (a.k.a. anthropocentric, shallow, or technocentric) and the ethical (alternatively termed biocentric, deep, or ecocentric).

First, the Utilitarians.

Economists, for instance, tend to discuss the costs and benefits of environmental policies. Activists, on the other hand, demand that Mankind consider the "rights" of other beings and of nature as a whole in determining a least harmful course of action.

Utilitarians regard nature as a set of exhaustible and scarce resources and deal with their optimal allocation from a human point of view. Yet, they usually fail to incorporate intangibles such as the beauty of a sunset or the liberating sensation of open spaces.

"Green" accounting - adjusting the national accounts to reflect environmental data - is still in its unpromising infancy. It is complicated by the fact that ecosystems do not respect man-made borders and by the stubborn refusal of many ecological variables to succumb to numbers. To complicate things further, different nations weigh environmental problems disparately.

Despite recent attempts, such as the Environmental Sustainability Index (ESI) produced by the World Economic Forum (WEF), no one knows how to define and quantify elusive concepts such as "sustainable development". Even the costs of replacing or repairing depleted resources and natural assets are difficult to determine.

Efforts to capture "quality of life" considerations in the straitjacket of the formalism of distributive justice - known as human-welfare ecology or emancipatory environmentalism - backfired. These led to derisory attempts to reverse the inexorable processes of urbanization and industrialization by introducing localized, small-scale production.

Social ecologists proffer the same prescriptions but with an anarchistic twist. The hierarchical view of nature - with Man at the pinnacle - is a reflection of social relations, they suggest. Dismantle the latter - and you get rid of the former.

The Ethicists appear to be as confounded and ludicrous as their "feet on the ground" opponents.

Biocentrists view nature as possessed of an intrinsic value, regardless of its actual or potential utility. They fail to specify, however, how this, even if true, gives rise to rights and commensurate obligations. Nor was their case aided by their association with the apocalyptic or survivalist school of environmentalism which has developed proto-fascist tendencies and is gradually being scientifically debunked.

The proponents of deep ecology radicalize the ideas of social ecology ad absurdum and postulate a transcendentalist spiritual connection with the inanimate (whatever that may be). In consequence, they refuse to intervene to counter or contain natural processes, including diseases and famine.

The politicization of environmental concerns runs the gamut from political activism to eco-terrorism. The environmental movement - whether in academe, in the media, in non-governmental organizations, or in legislature - is now comprised of a web of bureaucratic interest groups.

Like all bureaucracies, environmental organizations are out to perpetuate themselves, fight heresy and accumulate political clout and the money and perks that come with it. They are no longer a disinterested and objective party. They have a stake in apocalypse. That makes them automatically suspect.

Bjorn Lomborg, author of "The Skeptical Environmentalist", was at the receiving end of such self-serving sanctimony. A statistician, he demonstrated that the doom and gloom tendered by environmental campaigners, scholars and militants are, at best, dubious and, at worst, the outcomes of deliberate manipulation.

The situation is actually improving on many fronts, showed Lomborg: known reserves of fossil fuels and most metals are rising, agricultural production per head is surging, the number of the famished is declining, biodiversity loss is slowing as do pollution and tropical deforestation. In the long run, even in pockets of environmental degradation, in the poor and developing countries, rising incomes and the attendant drop in birth rates will likely ameliorate the situation in the long run.

Yet, both camps, the optimists and the pessimists, rely on partial, irrelevant, or, worse, manipulated data. The multiple authors of "People and Ecosystems", published by the World Resources Institute, the World Bank and the United Nations conclude: "Our knowledge of ecosystems has increased dramatically, but it simply has not kept pace with our ability to alter them."

Quoted by The Economist, Daniel Esty of Yale, the leader of an environmental project sponsored by World Economic Forum, exclaimed:

"Why hasn't anyone done careful environmental measurement before? Businessmen always say, 'what matters gets measured'. Social scientists started quantitative measurement 30 years ago, and even political science turned to hard numbers 15 years ago. Yet look at environmental policy, and the data are lousy."

Nor is this dearth of reliable and unequivocal information likely to end soon. Even the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, supported by numerous development agencies and environmental groups, is seriously under-financed. The conspiracy-minded attribute this curious void to the self-serving designs of the apocalyptic school of environmentalism. Ignorance and fear, they point out, are among the fanatic's most useful allies. They also make for good copy.

Sam Vaknin is the author of Malignant Self Love - Narcissism Revisited and After the Rain - How the West Lost the East. He is a columnist for Central Europe Review, PopMatters, and eBookWeb , a United Press International (UPI) Senior Business Correspondent, and the editor of mental health and Central East Europe categories in The Open Directory Bellaonline, and Suite101 .

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I Want To Be A Democrat

By Vern B. Southern

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I Want To Be A Democrat.

I want ecology to be a important part of American politics. I want my American rivers, lakes and streams to be clean and natural. I want to see new and clean ways to produce energy and keep my American sky's free of pollution. I want to be a Democrat.

I want my fellow Americans to have "GOOD" jobs. I want American Unions to be strong and free of political corruption. I want every American to have the opportunity to receive training for quality employment. Everyone has an American right to receive a "LIVEABLE" wage. I want to be a Democrat.

I want American equality to continue to be a important part of American politics. I want to continue to fight for true African-American equality, Hispanic-American citizenship and equal pay for Women. I want to be a Democrat.

When John F. Kennedy saw the evil of communism marshaling it's forces against America he drew a line in the sand and stopped a threat to our country. I want to be a Democrat.

When Franklin D. Roosevelt saw the evil of fascism growing and attacking all of Europe he did everything he could to fight against it. He knew of the decency of Americans and called all of us to war. I want to be a Democrat.

I Can't Be A Democrat.

Where is the Democrat who will stand against the evil that now grows in the Middle East? Where is the Democrat that will stand up for me? What happened to the core values of the Democratic Party? I Can't Be A Democrat.

Peace is a wonderful concept and people who seek it walk in the words of God. However the word "Peace" has taken on a false meaning. Many people believe that it means the absence of conflict when actually it is the presence of Justice. I Can't Be A Democrat.

Accepting the absence of conflict without the presence of Justice at the insistence of others is capitulation. Standing on the side lines at the request of others while people suffer through the evil of our day is appeasement. I Can't Be A Democrat.

I am a American Christian and there is no way I can support any politician who condones abortion. Many Democrats say that abortion is a Constitutional Right. A Constitutional Right? No where in the United States Constitution does it state that a person has the right to end the life of their child. I Can't Be A Democrat.

Many politicians use the terms "Women's reproductive rights", "Fetus" and "Embryo". There are "Sales Tactics" to make abortion sound American, legal and acceptable. Women's reproductive rights sounds much nicer than voluntarily ending your child's life. Aborting a fetus sounds much nicer than killing a baby. I Can't Be A Democrat.

Even if abortion is not murder, it still eliminates a potential person, a potential daughter, a potential son, a potential American. Democrats say that American Patriotism is not just a Republican value but Democrats actively fight for the right to kill their own citizens. Where is the American Patriotism in killing your own people? I Can't Be A Democrat.

After polling voters from the 2004 election it became obvious that the reason that George W. Bush won was the majority of Americans believed that the President's Values would make him a better leader.

For years now, with every election the Democratic Party slowly loses ground. Every year their influence ebbs away and if something is not done the Republicans will have total controll of America.

Why do the politicians in the Democratic Party not get it? In order for George W. Bush to win the election some Democrats had to vote for him. Why would they do that? Because the Democratic Party does not share their values. Why don't these Democrats change political parties? Ecology, Jobs, Equality and American Patriotism.

I want strong ecology laws. I want a good job with a future. I want American equality. I want to be a Democrat.

May God continue to bless America...
Vern B. Southern

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This article can be found at: <http://usa.god-country-history.com/want2b-dem.shtml>

Vern B. Southern is the Owner and Editor of God-Country-History.Com. A website for Patriotic American Christians. We started our web site because of all the people who seem to hate the country they live in and spend so much time us about that hatred.

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