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## Radical Environmentalism

Radical environmentalism most commonly brings to mind the actions of those who break laws in sometimes dramatic displays of “direct action” in defense of nature. Such action – which may involve civil disobedience and sabotage, some instances of which involve risks to people – have generated criticism and vilification of these movements. Radical environmentalists are sometimes labeled terrorists and believed to harbor, and hope to develop, weapons of mass death. The focus on their tactics, real and imagined, often obscures their religious motivations as well as their ecological, political, and moral claims.

Not all radical environmentalists engage in illegal activities, of course, and many specific tactics are controversial within these movements, especially those which might entail risks to living things, including human adversaries. While the embrace of direct action and support for extra-legal nature defense is an important common denominator in radical environmental sub-cultures, it is even more important to understand radical environmentalism as a cluster of environmental political philosophies, and corresponding social movements, which claim to understand the roots of the environmental crisis and offer effective solutions to it. In this sense radical environmentalism includes not only groups like EARTH FIRST! AND THE EARTH LIBERATION FRONT, but also bioregionalists and green anarchists, deep ecologists and ecopsychologists, ecofeminists and participants in the feminist spirituality movement, Pagans and Wiccans, anti-globalization protesters and some animal-liberation activists.

Radical environmentalists can be recognized by their diagnoses and prescriptions regarding the environmental crisis. Their diagnoses generally involve a critique of the dominant streams of occidental religion and philosophy, which are said to desacralize nature and promote oppressive attitudes toward it, as well as toward people. Prescriptions generally include overturning anthropocentric and hierarchical attitudes (especially capitalist and patriarchal ones). Accomplishing this is generally believed to require “resacralizing” and reconnecting with nature (which is usually gendered as female, as in “mother earth” or “mother nature”), combined with direct-action resistance to oppression in all forms.

Reconnection and consciousness transformation can be facilitated in a number of ways. Most important among these is spending time in nature with a receptive heart, for the central spiritual episteme among radical environ-

mentalists is that people can learn to “listen to the land” and discern its sacred voices. Other means of evoking and deepening a proper spiritual perception include visual art (appearing in tabloids or photography presented in public performances), which appeal to one’s intuitive sense of the sacredness of intact ecosystems, and music, dancing, drumming (sometimes combined with sacred herbs or “ENTHEOGENS”), which can erode the everyday sense of ego and independence in favor of feelings of belonging to the universe, or even kindle animistic perceptions of interspecies communication.

Many radical environmentalists can accurately be labeled “nature mystics.” And many of them express affinity with religions they generally consider more nature-beneficent than occidental religions, such as those originating in Asia such as Buddhism and Daoism, religious beliefs or practices surviving among the world’s remnant indigenous peoples, or being revitalized or invented anew, such as PAGANISM and WICCA. Paganism and Wicca are considered to be (or to be inspired by) the Aboriginal nature religions of the Western world, which have been long suppressed by imperial Christianity and Islam.

Sometimes newly invented nature spiritualities, such as JAMES LOVELOCK’S Gaia hypothesis or THOMAS BERRY’S Universe Story (and the corresponding EPIC OF EVOLUTION), have become new, free-standing religious movements which promote radical environmental ideas. Other times, stories without an immediately apparent religious theme, such as ALDO LEOPOLD’S epiphany about the intrinsic value of all life, including predators, upon seeing the “green fire” die in the eyes of a she-wolf he had shot, have become mythic fables incorporated into poetry, song, and movement ritualizing. Regularly, newly invented songs, myths, or nature-related ritual forms are grafted onto already existing religious forms in the constantly changing religious bricolage that characterizes countercultural spirituality in general, and radical environmentalism in particular. Increasingly, nature-related spiritualities birthed and incubated at the margins of countercultural environmentalism are escaping these enclaves and influencing both mainstream environmentalism and institutional religion, and arguably, even institutions like the United Nations, and the UNITED NATIONS’ “EARTH SUMMITS.” In such ways radical environmental spirituality has, despite its marginality, become a significant social force.

Whatever the nature of the hybrids and new religious amalgamations, the religious alternatives to occidental

monotheisms that characterize radical environmentalism are thought to harbor environmentally friendly values and to promote behaviors that cohere with them. These alternatives promote not only a sacralization of nature but a kinship ethics wherein all life forms are considered family in the journey of evolution. Within this kind of worldview, all life deserves respect and reverent care.

Not all participants in radical environmental movements, of course, consider themselves “religious,” and this includes many scientists and CONSERVATION BIOLOGY pioneers who have supported certain radical environmental groups and initiatives. Participants who do not consider themselves religious usually say this is because they equate religion with the Western, institutional forms that they consider authoritarian and anti-nature, and have thus rejected. Nevertheless, such figures rarely object to and almost always rely on metaphors of the sacred to express their conviction that nature has intrinsic value (value apart from its utility for humans). They likewise commonly describe environmental destruction as “desecration” or “defilement.” Even though some participants in these movements consider themselves atheists, this generally means they do not believe in other-worldly deities or divine rescue from this world, not that they disbelieve that there is a sacred dimension to the universe and biosphere. And they often characterize as “spiritual” their own connections to nature and ultimate values.

Certainly religious studies scholars can identify features of these movements that are typical of what they call “religion.” They have myth, symbol, and ritual, for example. The myths usually delineate how the world came to be (cosmogony), what it is like (cosmology), how people fit in and what they are capable of (moral anthropology), and what the future holds. Whatever the variations may be, radical environmentalists share an evolutionary cosmology and cosmogony – they generally derive their view of the unfolding universe from cosmological and evolutionary science and their understandings of humanity from primatology and anthropology. Their apocalyptic

view of the present – namely that human beings are precipitating a massive extinction episode and threatening life on Earth – are gathered from contemporary environmental science. They differ widely over whether, how, and when there might be a reharmonization of life on Earth, based on differing perceptions about human beings and their potential for changing in a positive direction.

Toward the envisioned, needed changes, radical environmentalists have invented new forms of ritualizing, such as the COUNCIL OF ALL BEINGS, to promote proper spiritual perception. Such ritualizing functions in a typically religious way, drawing devotees and intensifying commitment. Moreover, movement stories and rituals express ethical mores and social critiques that are essential to the action repertoires of the movement.

Although such stories and ritualizing promote solidarity and ethical action, radical environmentalism is plural and contested, both politically and religiously; it is characterized by ongoing controversies over strategies and tactics, as well as over who owns, interprets and performs the myths and rites. Nevertheless, certain core beliefs, values, and practices make it possible to speak of “radical environmentalism” in the singular, as a complex and plural family; for there are some critical ideas and beliefs that unify these groups, at the same time that there are penultimate ideas and practices that produce various and different tendencies, priorities, and practices.

Views generally shared by radical environmentalists are depicted in the chart below, “Binary Associations Typical of Radical Environmentalism” (adapted from Taylor 2000: 276).

**Shades of Radical Environmentalism**

Differing stresses on the relative importance of such elements lead to differing priorities and factions among radical environmentalists. Among the most militant and best-known branches of the radical environmental tree are EARTH FIRST! AND THE EARTH LIBERATION FRONT, which are discussed separately in more detail elsewhere in this

**Binary Associations Typical of Radical Environmentalism**

<i>Good</i>	<i>Bad</i>
Foraging (or small-scale organic horticultural) societies	Pastoral and agricultural societies
Animistic, Pantheistic, Indigenous, Goddess-Matriarchal, or Asian Religions	Monotheistic, Sky-God, Patriarchal, Western religions
Biocentrism/Ecocentrism/Kinship ethics (promotes conservation)	Anthropocentrism (promotes destruction)
Intuition	Reason (especially instrumental)
Holistic worldviews	Mechanistic & dualistic worldviews
Decentralism	Centralization
Primitive technology	Modern technology
Regional self-sufficiency	Globalization and international trade
Anarchism/Bioregionalism/Participatory democracy	Hierarchy/Nation-states/Corruption/Authoritarianism
Radicalism	Pragmatism

encyclopedia. They tend to be among the most apocalyptic in their view of the human role in causing species extinctions and the most insistent that political systems are corrupt, dominated by corporate and nation-state elites, who cannot be reformed and must be resisted. Other branches of radical environmentalism have their own distinctive emphases, but in reviewing these branches it is important to recognize the extent to which they are engaged in a reciprocal process of mutual influence, often sharing religious and ethical ideas, political perceptions, and tactical innovations.

#### Green Anarchism, Daoism, and Paganism

Green anarchists and social ecologists focus on hierarchy as the chief cause of social and environmental calamity. Anarchists exposed to radical environmental thought rather easily adopt environmental and animal liberationist concerns, as anthropocentrism and “speciesism” are obviously oppressive, hierarchal value systems. (Speciesism is a term coined by Richard Ryder and spread widely by the Animal Liberationist philosopher Peter Singer to liken the oppression of animals to racism or sexism.) Moreover, because small-scale, indigenous societies are viewed as more ecologically sensitive and less- (or non-) hierarchal, they and their supposedly animistic nature religiosity are often held in high esteem. Indigenous societies are therefore viewed, and increasingly so, as religious and ethical models for a post-revolutionary world.

This is a remarkable development given how much anarchist thought was birthed in Europe and has long had a decidedly anti-religious ethos. In European anarchist thought, religions have often been viewed as the instrument of rulers used to legitimate and maintain oppressive regimes. Early in the emergence of radical environmentalism, figures like the social ecologist Murray Bookchin were harshly critical of the nature mysticism he believed typical among radical environmentalists; this was an unsurprising critique given anarchist history.

Increasing numbers of anarchist thinkers, however, such as John Clark, have countered that religions such as Daoism, and many minority sects within larger religions, have promoted environmentally sensitive forms of anarchism. Meanwhile other anarchist thinkers, such as John Zerzan, who promotes a type of anarcho-primitivism, express increasing openness to considering non-hierarchal, nature-spirituality as an important resource for the struggle to overturn industrial civilization (telephone discussion with Zerzan, October 2003). And this kind of anarchism has become increasingly influential within the radical environmental milieu, including within Earth First! and the Earth Liberation Front. Moreover, certain streams of Paganism and Wicca have adopted anarchist ideology or had members promoting it enthusiastically, from the DONGA TRIBE and DRAGON ENVIRONMENTAL NETWORK in the United Kingdom to the CHURCH OF ALL WORLDS in

Northern California. Perhaps best known in this regard has been the Wiccan priestess and author STARHAWK, whose RECLAIMING collectives by early in the twenty-first century had spread beyond the San Francisco Bay area, gaining adherents and sponsoring events at a wide variety of locations throughout the United States and Western Europe. Indeed, Starhawk’s long-term work within the anti-globalization movement has both drawn Pagans and Wiccans into it while also exposing other anti-globalists to this kind of anarchistic, radical environmental Paganism.

#### Bioregionalism

BIOREGIONALISM is a rapidly growing green political philosophy that by the turn of the twenty-first century boasted over a hundred regional organizations in the United States, and conservatively, at least several thousand adherents. Jim Dodge, an early proponent, explained in an early treatise that the term comes “from the Greek bios (life) and the French region (region), itself from the Latin regia (territory), and earlier, regere (to rule or govern).” A bioregion, therefore, as “life territory” or “place of life,” can mean, “perhaps by reckless extension, government by life” (1981: 7).

The three tributaries to bioregionalism are thus, according to Dodge: “regionalism” (with regions defined by one or another set of ecological criteria), “anarchism” (meaning “political decentralization, self-determination, and a commitment to social equity”), and “spirituality” (with its key sources being, “the primitive animist/Great Spirit tradition, various Eastern and esoteric religious practices, and plain ol’ paying attention”) (Dodge 1981: 7–9).

Put simply, bioregionalism envisions decentralized community self-rule (“participatory” or “direct” democracy), within political boundaries redrawn to reflect the natural contours of differing ecosystem types. Its goal is the creation (some would say “remembering” or “borrowing”) of sustainable human societies in harmony with the natural world and consistent with the flourishing of all native species.

Bioregionalism is animated by two central convictions: 1) people within a given ecological region can, by virtue of “being there” and “learning the land” (its climate patterns, native flora and fauna, water systems, soils, and even its spirits), better care for and build ecologically sustainable lifeways than can people and institutions placed further away; and 2) if local communities are to revision and construct sustainable and just lifeways, a fundamental reorienting of human consciousness is needed – at least this is the case for modern, industrial humans. As with other branches of radical environmentalism, this reformation of consciousness includes a “deep ecological” valuing of the natural world for its own sake. Usually this deep ecological conviction is tied to a perception that the land is sacred and its inhabitants are kin to whom humans owe reverence and care giving. Moreover, we should listen to

and learn from the land and its inhabitants. As the bioregionalist poet Gary Lawless put it in *Home: A Bioregional Reader* (1990),

When the animals come to us,  
 asking for our help  
 will we know what they are saying?  
 When the plants speak to us  
 in their delicate, beautiful language,  
 will we be able to answer them?  
 When the planet herself  
 sings to us in our dreams,  
 will we be able to wake ourselves and act?  
 (in Taylor 2000: 50)

Not only Lawless and Dodge express affinity with animism or Gaian spirituality; so have most of the pioneers of the bioregional movement. Some of them wrote books that convey such spiritual perceptions which, they believe, have affinity with the spirituality of indigenous peoples – for example GARY SNYDER in *Turtle Island* (1969), David Abram in *The Spell of the Sensuous* (1996) and Freeman House in *Totem Salmon* (1999). Snyder's book was especially important, breaking ground by promoting both animistic spirituality and a bioregional sensibility, thereby significantly contributing to another wave of America's countercultural BACK TO THE LAND MOVEMENTS. And *Turtle Island* was one of the first books to use the term “biological diversity” (1969: 108) and to champion its importance, placing Snyder among the earliest proponents of deep ecological and radical environmental thought.

Although bioregionalists share the ecological apocalypticism common within radical environmental sub-cultures, they tend to be somewhat more hopeful than their more militant brethren that the worst of the suffering brought on by environmental degradation can be avoided. Instead, they generally tend to take a longer view, believing that by working on alternative visions and models for spirituality, livelihoods and politics, they can point the way toward a sustainable future.

### Ecopsychology

ECOPSYCHOLOGY is both a distinct enclave within radical environmentalism and a significant contributor to its spirituality and religious practice. Ecopsychology can be traced at least as far back as the publication of *Nature and Madness* (1982) by the influential ecologist and environmental theorist PAUL SHEPARD. Gary Snyder and Shepard are probably the most influential scholars of radical environmental and deep ecology theory in America. In their own ways they both provided critical spadework for bioregionalism, ecopsychology, and neo-animism, all of which are closely related, and reinforce a radical environmental worldview.

Put simply, ecopsychology considers human alienation

from nature as a disease born of Western agriculture and its attendant monotheistic religions and dualistic philosophies. It offers as a prescription diverse therapeutic and ritual strategies, including WILDERNESS RITES OF PASSAGE and RE-EARTHING processes, as well as workshops in BREATHWORK and Spiritual Activism.

Interestingly, ecopsychology has had increasing intersections with the psychodynamic therapy of Carl Jung and the therapeutic schools known as Humanistic and Transpersonal Psychology. James Hillman, one of the leading figures in Jungian, archetypal psychology, for example, took a surprising ecological turn with the publication (with Michael Ventura) of *We've Had a Hundred Years of Psychotherapy and the World's Getting Worse* (1993). This complemented a growing number of books (for example by Theodore Roszak, Warwick Fox, David Abram, Roger Walsh, Ralph Metzner, and Andy Fisher) promoting earthen spiritualities, therapies, and ritual processes – pantheistic, Gaian, animistic, indigenous, and shamanistic – as antidotes to human alienation from nature and as a means to foster an environmental renaissance.

On-the-ground evidence of the blending of ecopsychology with a radical environmental-style deep ecology was evident in 1993 and 1995 at two conferences sponsored by the International Transpersonal Association, the first in Ireland, the second in Brazil. Both conferences included an eclectic mix of proponents of New Age spirituality and transpersonal psychology. The Ireland gathering featured figures known for working at the intersection of consciousness, spirituality, and New Age spirituality (Ram Dass, Stanislav Grof, and Roger Walsh), radical environmentalists, especially those who had worked with indigenous peoples (David Abram, Alastair McIntosh, and Erik Van Lennep) and indigenous environmental justice advocates (Winona LaDuke, Millilani Trask, and others) and the Indian ecofeminist and anti-globalization leader Vandana Shiva.

The psychologist Ralph Metzner, who was the driving force behind these two conferences, labored to build bridges between these therapeutic, New Age, and radical environmental sub-cultures. His own nature-spirituality began with his participation with Timothy Leary in some of the earliest LSD experiments at Harvard. But he found in the 1990s that his bridge-building efforts had limits. A number of Transpersonal Association Board members felt he had taken the organization too dramatically in a radical environmental direction. Nevertheless, he continued to work toward the transformation of human consciousness that he considered a prerequisite to environmental sustainability, including helping organize a conference in San Francisco in the year 2000, this time sponsored not by the International Transpersonal Association, but by the California Institute of Integral Studies. Titled “Ayahuasca: Shamanism, Science and Spirituality,” the conference was devoted to the use of entheogenic plant medicines (and in

particular to the Ayahuasca plant used for spiritual and medicinal purposes by a number of Amazonian peoples). Metzner had come to believe that, if taken in proper spiritual and therapeutic contexts, sacred plants like Ayahuasca can play a positive role in transforming human consciousness in ways that promote deep ecological spirituality and ethics.

The suspicion of some transpersonal psychology advocates (like those on the International Transpersonal Association board) toward radical environmentalists is reciprocated by radical greens who view with suspicion the emphasis on personal experience that is prevalent among ecopsychologists. Many radical environmentalists feel the critical thing, once one understands the environmental crisis and the accelerating rate of species extinction, is to resist the destruction. Such activists may be sympathetic to and even influenced by the nature spirituality in ecopsychology but critical of what they take to be its self-indulgent tendencies. Such mutual suspicion is likely to be long-standing and keep these groups from forming strong strategic alliances. Nevertheless, there is substantial worldview agreement, and significant mutual influence, between ecopsychologists and other radical greens.

#### Ecofeminism and Feminist Spirituality Movements

This general worldview agreement is true also for ECOFEMINISM, which, like green anarchism and bioregionalism, is especially critically of hierarchy, but stresses a particular kind, patriarchy, as the most fundamental cause of environmental decline and interhuman injustice. Some ecofeminists have been harshly critical of at least some radical environmentalists, particular in the early years of the Earth First! movement, viewing it as led by boorish and sexist men. But generally speaking, these criticisms have come more from individuals outside of these movements than inside of them. Radical environmental groups are so deeply influenced by both anarchist and feminist ideals and individuals that they are vigilant against behavior that appears to be hierarchal or sexist, indeed, to the point that some activists believe this and other anthropocentric concerns have distracted the movement from its biocentric mission.

The basic proposition of ecofeminism, that a “logic of domination” is at work in modern civilizations which subjugates women and nature, is quite widely accepted within radical environmental sub-cultures. This provides a solid ground for collaboration between ecofeminists and other radical environmentalists. It may be that it was the affinity for such ideas within radical environmental sub-cultures that drew ecofeminists to them in the first place. It is certainly true that aggressive environmental campaigns were looked upon favorably by many ecofeminists, drawing many of them and their ideas into the movement. Whatever dynamics were most responsible, ecofeminist per-

spectives have been influential and sexism has been taken seriously within the radical environmental milieu.

#### Animal Rights and Animal Liberationism

In their most influential, early articulations, “animal rights” and “animal liberation” philosophies, as articulated by Peter Singer or Tom Regan, were not articulated in religious terms. These ethics have not, generally speaking, been considered close kin to radical environmentalism in the philosophical literature. Yet there are interesting intersections both religiously and ethically between animal-focused and radical environmental activism and ethics, as well as significant differences. As explained in ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS, the apprehension of the value of animals, and the affective connection to them, can be understood in spiritual terms by participants in these movements and such spirituality sometimes leads to the development of ceremonies to express and deepen such perceptions, as is the case with Tom Regan.

The key to understanding whether animal liberationists fit in a radical environmental camp, of course, depends on how one defines radical environmentalism. One prerequisite seems clear: radical environmentalism must be biocentric or ecocentric; the good of whole ecosystems and well-being of habitats must take precedence over the lives or well-being of individual sentient animals. As unfortunate as it may be, there are many cases where a moral agent cannot have it both ways. With animal rights or liberationist perspectives, there is no reason to value organisms which there is little reason to believe can suffer (plants or amoebas for example), or to prefer the lives of individuals essential to the survival of an endangered species over those who are not. Radical environmentalists but not animal liberationists approve of hunting, for example, in cases where killing is the only effective means to reduce the populations of animals threatening endangered species. These are intractable differences.

Yet in the cross-fertilizing milieu of radical environmental and animal liberationist sub-cultures, there are many causes in which collaboration is not only possible but common. Such encounters rarely if ever cause a narrowing of ethical concern among the radical environmentalists to an exclusive concern for sentient animals, although environmentalists often adopt a vegetarian or vegan lifestyle out of revulsion for the ways animals raised for food are treated. Such encounters more often facilitate the broadening of ethical concern among animal liberationists toward an ecocentric perspective. Moreover, as animal liberationists move toward greater collaboration with radical environmentalists and become engaged with them, those who continue in such collaborations tend to shift their activist priorities toward issues that have more to do with the protection of wild, endangered animals than with protecting domestic animals. Animal activists rarely, however, abandon entirely their activism on behalf of

### Rodney Coronado and the Animal Liberation Front

The Animal Liberation Front (ALF), which was founded in the United Kingdom in 1976 and has spread to many other countries in Europe as well as having a strong presence in the United States and Canada, can be considered, in many but not all ways, to be a radical environmental group. One of the ALF's most notorious activists, Rodney Coronado, has worked hard to build bridges between radical environmental, animal liberationist, and anarchist sub-cultures, especially in North America. His activist career illuminates the affinities and limits to the fusion of the Animal Liberation Front and radical environmentalism.

Moved and angered by the suffering he witnessed when viewing a television documentary about the Canadian harp seal hunt when he was 12 years old, Coronado immediately contacted and sent money to Captain Paul Watson of the Sea Shepard Conservation Society, who was featured in the film directly resisting the sealers. Seven years later, in 1985, Coronado volunteered as a crew member, and a year later in a Sea Shepard-supported mission, he helped destroy a whale-processing station and sink two whaling ships in Iceland.

After this Coronado became a spokesperson for the Animal Liberation Front, and in 1988 attended the national Earth First! Rendezvous. There he flew anarchist and ALF flags, which helped to escalate already present political and ethical tensions, which showed the fault line between the animal liberationists, like Coronado, and biocentric activists including meat-eating ones like Earth First! co-founder Dave Foreman, who took pleasure in grilling steaks near these vegan activists.

Coronado would soon launch an aggressive campaign against the fur industry, infiltrating it to capture images of the suffering animals, releasing minks from their cages (with ceremonial blessings from a Blackfoot medicine woman who "smudged them off" as they were sent "into the wild world for the first time"), and beginning in 1991, torching the facilities of a number of industry-affiliated researchers. Coronado eventually served four years in prison for a 1992 arson attack on the office of a Michigan State University researcher for which the ALF had claimed responsibility. After his release from prison Coronado worked periodically for the *Earth First!* journal, contributing significantly to its increasingly militant and anarchistic character, and began to travel regularly to promote radical environmental and animal liberationist activism at university campuses and other venues. He became a visible and charismatic activist working at the intersection of animal liberationist and radical environmental sub-cultures.

Coronado considers himself an indigenous and spiritual natural rights activist, promoting freedom both for domestic and wild animals, as well as indigenous and other oppressed peoples. An activist of Pascua Yaqui Indian ancestry from the Southwestern United States, he believes that the destruction of life comes from the same, dominating mindset of the European conquistadors; consequently the liberation of nature, animals, and human beings, are mutually dependent:

I never became first an environmental activist, then an animal rights activist and then an indigenous rights activist. I always was a natural rights activist because I believe everything in nature has a right to exist (Wolff 1995: 24).

Moreover, Coronado claims that spiritual power depends on its connection to the power of Earth, its spirits, and animal relations:

As an indigenous person, I've had to relearn that fighting for the Earth as Earth First! does is a very old, sacred and honorable duty. It's one where I've learned that we can be the most effective when we take advantage of the knowledge and power our enemies know nothing of. They have laughed at this kind of thing for hundreds of years, and I'm glad they don't get it. They never will, but I've seen the Earth spirits. I pray to them and have had them help me carry out successful attacks against the Earth's enemies. I know that when I was out there on the run, it was they who protected me and warned me of danger . . . Spirituality [is] . . . a kind of road map one uses to successfully navigate through life . . . When who you are and what you are is about the Earth, you learn that your own true power can only come from the Earth. That's what Geronimo and other great warriors knew. Only when we believe in our own power more than that of our enemies will we rediscover the kind of power the Earth has available to us as warriors. My power comes from the very things I fight for (interview in *Earth First!* 23:3 (2003), online).

Indeed, "Anarchism" itself, Coronado believes, "is grounded in spirituality, in listening to the Earth and her creatures" (public talk, the University of Florida, March 2003). And thus for Coronado, anarchism, animal activism, and Earth liberation are all grounded in an animistic episteme, a religious thread common to radical environmentalist groups.

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Despite his efforts to fuse animal, anarchist, and Earth activism, Coronado believes that if a choice must be made between an individual animal (*including a human animal*) and the health of an ecosystem or the survival of a species, he would prioritize the latter (author's interview, Fresno, California, February 2003). He would insist, however, that while such a concession might occasionally be a tragic necessity in the short term, the long-term struggle is to make such tragic choices

unnecessary and a thing of the past. Even so, Coronado's viewpoint suggests that while radical environmentalists, anarchists, and animal liberationists will often find common cause, the difference between spiritual holism and empathetic individualism will prevent these groups from a thoroughgoing fusion.

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domesticated animals and generally retain their lifestyle choices, such as veganism, even if they become more biocentric in their overall ethical outlook.

In addition to a biocentric outlook, radical environmentalism also involves a political ideology harshly critical of current political arrangements if not of nation-state governance itself. Here, participants in animal liberation movements are as diverse as other radical environmentalists, from those who retain hope that their movement of conscience will precipitate effective political reforms, to anarchists who believe the entire system must be torn down.

Animal rights and liberation movements, then, prompt some radical environmentalists to add to their array of concerns, sentient, domestic animals, and in a reciprocal way, often provide new activists for biodiversity protection campaigns. And they are often influenced by the religious metaphysics of interconnection and kinship ethics often found in the increasingly global environmental milieu. Nevertheless, a philosophical line between individualism and holism limits the extent to which animal liberationist sub-cultures belong to radical environmental ones, despite the efforts of some activists, such as Animal Liberation Front activist Rodney Coronado, to unite these sub-cultures.

### Criticisms and Responses

There are as many criticisms of radical environmentalism as there are differing ideas, emphases, factions and priorities within these movements and adversaries to them. Some of the criticisms come, of course, from those who profit from resource extraction of various sorts, who sometimes label vandalism, verbally abusive behavior, or even civil disobedience as "ecoterrorism." But criticisms also come from other environmentalists as well as a wide variety of religious actors, social justice advocates, and political theorists.

Some of the typical arguments are not directly or obviously related to religion. For example, environmentalists and liberal democrats Martin Lewis and Luc Ferry, claim that these movements are atavistic, primitivist, and Ludite; offer no realistic way to live in the modern world; and are anti-democratic, refusing to abide by decisions

arrived at through democratic processes. Others argue that these movements are counterproductive to building sustainable societies because they do not value and support science, which is a critical foundation for environment-related public policies, but is already assailed by religious conservatives and hardly needs its credibility further eroded in the public mind by radical greens.

Some in the less developed world, such as Ramachandra Guha, have criticized the effort to protect wilderness and biodiversity as elitist, misanthropic, and callous to the needs of the poor. As radical environmentalism turned its attention to globalization, some multinational corporations piggybacked on such criticisms, arguing that the aversion of radical greens to biotechnology and free trade reflected a pernicious elitism that is callous to the needs of growing human populations.

Meanwhile, religious conservatives from the Abrahamic traditions often view these Pagan or quasi-pagan movements with suspicion or worse, as agents of dark, demonic forces. It is not uncommon for corporations, perhaps especially in rural communities with religiously conservative workers, to fan such fears among them in order to galvanize support during resource-related controversies. Some writers on radical environmental movements contribute to such fears. In *Earth First!: Environmental Apocalypse* and subsequent articles, Martha Lee asserted that some radical environmentalists represent violence-prone forms of religious millenarianism. Gary Ackerman, Deputy Director of the Chemical and Biological Weapons Nonproliferation Program at the Monterey Institute of International Studies, concluded even more chillingly that the likelihood is increasing that one or another radical environmental group will deploy weapons of mass death to promote their cause.

Social scientists and political theorists sympathetic to environmental causes have, more judiciously, focused on radical environmentalism's typical presuppositions, diagnoses, prescriptions, and tactics. They often find these simplistic and counterproductive.

Radical environmentalists widely presume, for example, that a transformation or "resacralization" of consciousness is necessary for radical action to occur. But scholars who have studied grassroots environmental



movements globally have found that direct-action resistance to environmental degradation has also been undertaken by those whose religious traditions are Abrahamic or whose value systems are anthropocentric. Moreover, the common radical environmental belief in the importance of consciousness toward a spiritual biocentrism and away from monotheisms does not fully appreciate the extent to which all religions are malleable and change in response to changing and exigent circumstances.

The radical environmental prescription to decentralize political arrangements by abolishing nation-states has also been sharply criticized by a number of political theorists, including Andrew Dobson, Dan Deudney, and Paul Wapner. Another critic, Andrew Bard Schmookler, criticized green anarchism not only in general in *The Parable of the Tribes*, but also right in the pages of the *Earth First!* journal. He asked how good people can prevent being dominated by a ruthless few, and what will prevent hierarchies from emerging if decentralized political self-rule is ever achieved. One does not have to believe all people are bad to recognize that not all people will be good, he argued, and unless bad people all become good, there is no solution to violence other than some kind of government to restrain the evil few; moreover, those who exploit nature gather more power to themselves, and therefore, there must be institutions to restrain that growing power. While Schmookler agreed that political decentralization could be beneficial, it must be accompanied by a "world order sufficient [to thwart] would-be conquerors" and "since the biosphere is a globally interdependent web, that world order should be able to constrain any of the actors from fouling the Earth. This requires laws and means of enforcement" (1986: 22). There is no escaping government or the need to deal with power, Schmookler concluded, because "our emergence out of the natural order makes power an inevitable problem for human affairs, and only power can control power" (1986: 22). Schmookler's analysis challenged not only the decentralist social philosophy of radical environmentalism and much green political thought, but also the prevalent hope that a return to small-scale, tribal societies, with their nature-based spiritualities, would solve our environmental predicaments.

Radical environmentalists would or could respond to the battery of criticisms they typically face along the following lines. To environmentalists who assert that they hurt the environmental cause they could point out, accurately, that many mainstream environmentalists, even some who denounce them publicly, share their sense of urgency and feel that radical tactics contribute significantly to the environmental cause, in part by strengthening the negotiating positions of "moderate" environmentalists. To those who call them terrorists they could ask them to produce the bodies or document the injuries that would prove the charge. To those who use anthropocentric and monotheistic environmentalism to dispute their insistence

that a wholesale change in the consciousness of Western peoples is needed, they could offer the rejoinder that spiritualities which consider nature sacred and displace humans as the center of moral concern provide more consistent and powerful motivations for environmental action than other religious ethics. And to those who criticize willingness to break laws, they would certainly respond that reformist, politics-as-usual, and centralized nation-state governance have not slowed environmental degradation and species loss, and would accuse their critics of complacency and of promoting anemic responses that promise nothing but more of the same.

The more thoughtful among them acknowledge that they do not have all the answers and that some of the criticisms need to be taken into consideration. But they would nevertheless insist that the primary moral imperative is to halt the human reduction of the Earth's genetic, species, and cultural variety. And they would claim that direct-action resistance is a necessary, permissible, and even morally obligatory means in the sacred quest to preserve life on Earth.

Bron Taylor

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- See also: Abbey, Edward; Ananda Marga's Tantric Neo-Humanism; Anarchism; Animism (various); Berry, Thomas; Biocentric Religion – A Call for; Bioregionalism; Bioregionalism and the North American Bioregional Congress; Breathwork; Conservation Biology; Council of All Beings; Deep Ecology; Depth Ecology; Diggers and Levelers; Donga Tribe; Dragon Environmental Network (United

Kingdom); Earth First! and the Earth Liberation Front; Ecofeminism – Historic and International Evolution; Ecopsychology; Ecosophy T; Environmental Ethics; Epic of Evolution; Faerie Faith in Scotland; Gaia; Gaian Pilgrimage; Green Politics; Heathenry – Ásatrú; Heidegger, Martin; Hopiland to the Rainforest Action Network; Indigenous Environmental Network; Left Biocentrism; Lovelock, James; Magic, Animism, and the Shaman's Craft; Music and Eco-activism in America; Music of Resistance; Naess, Arne; Pagan Environmental Ethics; Paganism – Contemporary; Re-Earthing; Reclus, Elisée; Religious Environmentalist Paradigm; Romanticism – American; Romanticism – Western toward Asian Religions; Romanticism and Indigenous People; Scotland; Seed, John; Shepard, Paul; Snyder, Gary; Starhawk; Transpersonal Psychology; Wicca; Wilber, Ken.

**Raëlian Religion** – See UFOs and Extraterrestrials.

## Rainbow Family

In the summer of 1972, while hippie back-to-nature idealism was still in full bloom, a crowd of some 20,000, mainly young counterculturists, gathered near Granby, Colorado, for a several-days-long "gathering of the tribes" inspired by some of the legendary hip music festivals (especially the Vortex Festival near Portland, Oregon, in 1970), the San Francisco "Be-In" of 1967, rural hip communes, and other such countercultural phenomena. The gathering would have no central stage, no paid or featured entertainers, and no fee for admission. It would be free-form and self-defining, although the original organizers did proclaim that the fourth and last day would feature a silent meditation for world peace. A remote wilderness location was chosen to emphasize close contact with nature and rejection of contemporary urban life.

Although there were no initial plans for a second gathering, one was held rather spontaneously the following year in Wyoming, and by the third year (in Utah) the Rainbow Gathering had become an annual event. In 1976 the Rainbow Family, as participants were by then calling themselves, decided to have the festival always occur on the first seven days of July. That time-period remains the heart of the festival, although participants, including those who volunteer to provide set-up and clean-up, are typically at the site for at least two months.

The Rainbows, whose core principles are egalitarianism and non-hierarchical organization, insist that the Family have no leaders and no formal structure. Decisions, for example, are made at the Gatherings by consensus by a council consisting of anyone who wants to attend. No one is excluded from joining. Some dedicated, long-term participants, however, have devoted considerable energy to