



THE TRUMPETER

Voices From the Canadian EcoNet Work

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On the basis of your letters I am considering changing the subtitle of **The Trumpeter** to "A Canadian Environmental Philosophy Network." This change would emphasize that we are a network of persons who feel that preserving the integrity of Earth's ecosystems requires reflection on ends, values and priorities. Environmental philosophy includes both theoretic and normative areas related to environmental policy. People in all disciplines contribute to environmental philosophy. When environmental philosophy is pursued as a practical activity which aims to understand and attune self and community to nature it becomes ecophilosophy.

"Ecophilosophy" emphasizes attaining ecosophy. "Ecosophy" means "household wisdom." The household is our place, which includes traditions and values, as well as natural elements. Different disciplines try to understand different aspects of this place, such as the biological, the physiological, or the psychological. Philosophy inquires into the conceptual dimensions of knowing and feeling.

Ecophilosophy involves philosophical concerns that stress relationships involving our cultural and biological identities. How do these interact and what role do our mental structures (e.g. beliefs and expectations) play in our perceptions? Ecophilosophy proceeds by means of ecological models. It strives to understand how to design appropriate activities for current

ecological and valuational constraints. Ecophilosophizing can help us to see through our faulty pictures and metaphors, and to accommodate a wider spectrum of intrinsic values in our approach.

Philosophy, to paraphrase Goethe's Faust, may bake no bread, but it does ruminate on its quality, distribution, use, and the manner of its production. It reflects on the recipes, menus and life into which bread enters and from which it was composed. It is an illusion, from the standpoint of ecophilosophy, to think that the world is divided according to our categories. Experienced reality is rarely neutral of such impacts. Although not reality, theories, pictures, metaphors and images can be used to "get a clear understanding." Ecophilosophical inquiry aims not at the true theory of the world, but at a clear perception of the world as it is, not only as it is reflected through our cultural and personal matrices. Ecophilosophy involves inquiry into how our "pictures" and values affect and construct systems of interrelationship, at various levels, e.g. mental, physical, ecological, social, etc., and how these interact with nature through our actions.

The aim of this newsletter is to promote exchange of information and discussion on the (interdisciplinary) **philosophical** dimensions of environmental issues, policy and debate. It will address the various value dimensions of existing

problems. It will analyze narrow conceptual problems, but also will discuss philosophical problems inherent in various approaches to understanding whole systems. The range of these problems is illustrated by the following questions: What would a completely non-anthropocentric world model be like? What are the criteria for appropriate environmental policy, given the relevant values and constraints? What is an appropriate environmental ethic given current limits and realities? What are the features of technologies appropriate to these same constraints? **The Trumpeter** will be geared to such questions as they relate to broader issues of social philosophy.

In 1983 a new organization was formed in North America dedicated to the study of social philosophy. It is the **North American Society for Social Philosophy**. There are U. S. and Canadian sections. Those interested in participating in its conferences, or in learning about its publication program and journal, should write to Prof. Creighton Peden, Dept. of Philosophy, Augusta College, Augusta, Georgia, 30904. Profs. Robert Ware (Dept. of Philosophy, U. of Calgary, Calgary T2N 1N4) and David Harvey (Dept. of Philosophy, U of Toronto, Toronto M5S 1A1) are Canadian contacts. **NASSP** is considering founding an institute to encourage research and publication in social philosophy through grants, fellowships, honorary titles, and so on. The organization as a whole is non-partisan and ideologically unaligned. It encourages interdisciplinary interaction. It has members from a variety of disciplines and has formed subsections in such areas as political science and sociology.

Social philosophy is intertwined with philosophy of self, community and nature. It involves the concepts of work and leisure, as well as the role and value dimensions of technology in human life. Environmental ethics is a subset of environmental philosophy, and both are intertwined with social philosophy. Some philosophers think that environmental ethics can be "done" independent of the wider questions of environmental philosophy. Others think that a sound

environmental ethic requires fundamental change in our metaphysics and philosophy of nature. For the creative ecophilosopher our concepts of life are seen as part of the art of life. These concepts become elements in an activity for the design of aesthetically sound, ecologically balanced, life-fulfilling forms of interaction and response between self, community and nature. This is an on-going **activity** that does not terminate in a static "view." Thus if humans philosophize from a love for understanding nature ever more deeply, they will find ecosophy in the activity of knowing nature in this way, with the humility of their own aware ignorance.

"Philosopher" comes to us from ancient Greek words meaning lover of wisdom, and one of the best examples of a lover of wisdom is Socrates. His wisdom lay in self-knowledge and awareness of his own ignorance. Ecosophy involves the virtue of this Socratic ignorance (that is aware of itself). It is expressed as humility in one's approach to nature. Cf. Commoner's 3rd law of ecology, "Nature knows best." The ecosopher realizes power is not understanding. Existence is a mystery. The more we study nature, the more awed we will be by its complexity, beauty, perfection and creative possibilities.

The first Trumpeter discussed Arne Naess's distinction between shallow and deep ecology. There have been many objections raised to this terminology. It has been observed that the term "shallow ecology" is negative and prejudicial. Furthermore, many deep ecologists started out as shallow ecologists and many contemporary shallow ecologists will end up as deep ecologists. Shallow ecology is not without sympathy from the deep ecologist. Our social institutions have high inertial forces. It takes time to incorporate new constraints and values. Thus shallow ecology can be seen, not as a bad "position", but as a necessary transition. Since the term "shallow" is prejudicial, I propose that we use different terminology to cover the same distinction. Instead of "shallow

ecologist" let us use the terms "reform environmentalist" (following Michael Zimmerman) or sometimes "reform ecologist."

Reform environmentalists think that environmental problems can be solved through modest changes in procedures and laws, and by means of technological fixes and innovation. In contrast, deep ecologists want to question whole ends. They do not think that technological pursuits, whether legal or mechanical, will repair the basic flaws in our relationships with nature. These flaws are in our conceptualizations of the natural world, and are in some cases as fundamental as our hierarchical classification charts. A biased anthropocentrism is built into our very perceptions and experiences of the world. Experience contains ecologically interdependent systems of values and perceptions that are partially shaped (or conditioned) by our own mental "sets", e. g. our rigid ideals.

We all participate in the creation of our collectively experienced world, but we usually are not aware of this. The deep ecologists seek to increase this awareness. Such an awareness focuses on the fundamental issues of life and its sense. Environmental problems are seen by the deep ecologist as symptoms of an illness in a way of life. Hence, we must question our ends and values, the state of our way of life, the causes of its violence toward nature and its own kind.

The response to the first Trumpeter has been quite good. Thanks to each of you who wrote in support with useful comments. I cannot write to each of you personally, for the list is too long. Future issues of the Trumpeter will discuss various topics which your letters will help to determine. Thanks again.

From readers this information: ** **Synthesis** is a newsletter dedicated to a world-wide ecological society. Published by the League for Ecological Democracy, it is concerned primarily with social ecology. Address: PO Box 1858, San Pedro, Ca. 90733. ** M. William Crowfoot of the Tribal Institute for Symbiosis (Gen. Delivery, North Fork, Ca. 93646)

3 publishes a newsletter on "useful plants" and is coordinating information from researchers on symbiotic relationships of plant communities and species. He works with The Edible Landscape Nursery. The plant project is specific to the Sierras of California, but it has deep ecology significance, for its aim is symbiotic, rather than technocratic, relationships with plants, other humans and the soil. ** Dr. S. B. Hill writes on agricultural projects that are ecologically sound and distinguishes deep and shallow ecology approaches to agriculture in his articles. He can be contacted for further information about the activities of the project he directs at McGill. Write to him at Ecological Agricultural Projects, PO Box 225, Macdonald Campus, Ste-Anne-de-Bellvue, P. Q. Canada H9X 1C0. ** ISPEL is an institute dedicated to the study of the interrelationships between policy, ethics and law. For information write: Prof. Patrick Fitzgerald, Faculty of Law, Carleton University, Ottawa, Ont. K1S 5B6. ** In British Columbia Mike Humphries chairs the Islands Trust, which develops policy recommendations on the administration of the Gulf Islands with reference to preservation of their significant social and ecological values. The Trust publishes a newsletter with articles that sometimes touch on ecophilosophical issues. His address: Islands Trust, Parliament Buildings, Victoria, B. C. V8W 3E1. ** Prof. Henryk Skolimowsky, Philosophy Dept., University of Michigan, publishes an **Ecophilosophy Newsletter**. Address: 1002 Granger, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104. He will be leading an ecophilosophy workshop starting on August 12th, which will involve participation in eco-yoga and reverential thinking. The basic principles of ecophilosophy will be explained and examined in comparison to other philosophies. ** From Australia comes news of deep ecology in Australian rainforests. John Seed is the person to contact: Rainforest Information Centre, P. O. Box 368, Lismore, NSW 2480, Australia. John is also involved in "Earth First!" a road show of films, discussions, talks, songs, etc. about the Earth and forms of action designed to

preserve it. U. S. coordinator for the road show is John Foreman, 230 W. 7th Ave., Chico, Ca. 59926. ** Prof. Neil Everndon can provide information about programs in environmental studies at York University. His address: Fac. of E. S., York University, Downsview, Ont. M3J 2R2. York has the most extensive E. S. program in Canada, and many of its faculty are vitally interested in issues in environmental philosophy.

Book Notes: Eco-Philosophy: Designing New Tactics for Living (Marion Boyars, Salem, NH, 1981) by Henryk Skolimowski, seeks to unravel and to show how the mechanistic and physical relationships in which we are wrapped, and by which we are defined, are not in crisis because of ill will or mismanagement, but "arise for more fundamental reasons; arise because we have constructed a deficient code for reading nature." He seeks to develop new tactics for a way of reading nature that is free of these deficiencies. Skolimowski develops a detailed set of criteria for sound ecophilosophy, and he illustrates the practical implications of this with examples in such areas as architecture. More on this book in future issues. **The Primal Mind** (Meridian, New York, 1981) by Jamake Highwater is a profoundly vivid portrait of the characteristics of what Highwater calls the primal mind, the actions, attitudes and sensibilities toward nature of Indian America. Highwater does not claim to represent all of the native peoples, as diverse in culture as they are. Instead, he attempts to distill the spirit of the approach to nature that runs through so many of these cultures. The primal mind is oriented toward nature primarily through aesthetics. It is not incompatible with the use of science, but its vision of nature is larger, for it includes dimensions of meaning that only a whole art can contain, even though it could contain science. Donald Hughes's book **American Indian Ecology** (Texas Western Press, El Paso, 1983) makes a good companion to *The Primal Mind*. Hughes's book is comprehensive, well researched and a pleasure to read. The best I have seen on this most important subject. Finally, a new

anthology edited by R. Elliot and A. Gare, **Environmental Philosophy** (Penn State Press, University Park Pa., 1983). This is a more comprehensive and less specialized book than the anthology mentioned in the last *Trumpeter*. It has articles on "shallow" and deep ecology, on shifting paradigms of nature, on different cultures and their diverse orientations toward nature, as well as on environmental ethics. It would be a good text for courses in environmental philosophy. Two important journals relevant to our interests are: **Environmental Ethics** (write to Prof. Eugene Hargrove, Philosophy Dept., University of Georgia, Athens, Ga. 30602, and **Environmental Review** (write to Prof. Donald Hughes, History, University of Denver, Denver, Co. 80208).

Are any readers interested in exchange of materials relevant to courses in environmental philosophy, ethics or policy? I have bibliographies, study questions and other material that might be of interest to you. No doubt some of you have material that would be useful to me. Also, are any of you interested in hearing about new courses relevant to environmental philosophy? For example, next year I will be teaching a new course on technology which will inquire into the philosophy of appropriate technology. Finally, let us exchange information on research relevant to environmental philosophy. Let us know what projects are in progress.

The Trumpeter will appear next in the spring. Please write before the end of March. So far subscriptions have paid the production and mailing costs for all of the first and part of the second issues of **The Trumpeter**. Subscribe by sending \$4.00 to LightStar Press, 1138 Richardson St., Victoria, B. C., Canada V8V 3C8. Please make your cheque to LightStar.

Alan R. Drengson

