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Earth First!'s Religious Radicalism



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FRUSTRATED IN their efforts to halt further environmental decline, environmentalists are resorting increasingly to illegal tactics. Most Americans have seen pictures of radical environmentalists blockading roads, sitting in trees, and many have heard about incidents of tree spiking and bulldozer destruction, a tactic called "ecotage" or "monkeywrenching." In California in 1990, the bombing of two Earth First! activists, and the 1989 F.B.I. infiltration, arrests, and subsequent convictions of five others, has catapulted Earth First! into public consciousness. Although groups such as Earth First! have been receiving increasing media attention, few recognize the role that religion plays in animating the ecological passions of these activists.

My first task is to suggest (but not fully develop) the claim that today's environmental controversies substantially reflect a battle between conflicting *religious* worldviews. My primary aim follows: to illuminate the religious dimensions of this movement by demonstrating that understanding the ethics and politics of Earth First! requires a clear perception of its spiritual underpinnings. Following this, I will reflect on the impact of—and prospects for—this movement.

But before proceeding, first a few preliminary points about religion: All religious traditions involve myth, symbol, and ritual; and the myths usually delineate how the world came to be (cosmogony), what it is like (cosmology), what people are like and capable or incapable of achieving (moral anthropology), and what the future holds (eschatology). Second, religious ethics are directly informed by these very mythic elements. Third, religious traditions are plural; they are neither monolithic nor static; they are char-

acterized by ongoing controversies over who owns, interprets, and performs the myths, rituals, and rites (Chidester 1991). Fourth, despite great internal plurality, certain core beliefs, behaviors, and values unify and make it possible to speak of a diverse religious movement as a *tradition*. Each of these four elements can be found in Earth First!

But why should Earth First! be considered a religious movement—and the controversies it engenders be viewed as religious conflicts—especially when some Earth First! activists do not see themselves as very “religious?” To begin with, both proponents and opponents of these movements recognize the importance of religion in environmental conflicts. One extreme example can be found in a letter, purportedly from Judi Bari’s bomber, who, quoting Genesis 1:26 (the “dominion” creation story), wrote that “this possessed [pagan] demon Judy Bari . . . [told] the multitude that trees were not God’s gift to man but that trees were themselves gods and it was a sin to cut them. [So] I felt the Power of the Lord stir within my heart and I knew I had been Chosen to strike down this demon.” The letter concludes by warning other tree worshipers that they will suffer the same fate, for “I AM THE LORD’S AVENGER.” The letter’s authenticity is in doubt. Some view it as an authentic, hard-to-fabricate synthesis of Christian fundamentalism and mental illness. American Indian Movement activist Ward Churchill and some Earth First!ers believe the letter is an F.B.I. hoax—patterned after similar letters authorities received after abortion clinic bombings—designed to cast suspicion away from law enforcement agencies involved in the assassination attempt.¹ But whether authentic or a ploy designed to divert attention from the actual perpetrator(s), this remarkable letter illustrates dramatically how, for some, spiritual values are at the heart of these controversies.

It is easy to find similar views in less violent forms. Charles Cushman of the pro-development Multiple Use Land Alliance thinks that preservationists are promoting “a new pagan religion, worshipping trees and animals and sacrificing people.” He sees the environmental conflicts over old-growth forests as “a holy war between fundamentally different religions” (Satchell 1991, 76).

Such sentiments can be found even among conservationists. Although without the martial enthusiasm, Alston Chase similarly criticizes the “mindless pantheism” and “clandestine heresies” of these movements (1986, 309, ch. 16 & 18). He complains that militant environmentalists have uncritically accepted Lynn White’s (1967) accusation that Judaism and Christianity produced the West’s anti-nature tendencies through their rejection of animism and pantheism, by promoting anthropocentric ethics with humans “ruling” all other life, and by viewing wilderness as “cursed” land. Chase believes White’s article gave the environmental movement “an epistle for spiritual reform” hostile to Western religion (1986, 299).

Indeed, one can see evidence of the influence of White’s article in Earth First! For example, Dave Foreman, one of Earth First!’s co-founders, has

echoed White's thesis: "Our problem is a spiritual crisis. The Puritans brought with them a theology that saw the wilderness of North America as a haunt of Satan, with savages as his disciples and wild animals as his demons—all of which had to be cleared, defeated, tamed, or killed. Opening up the dark forests became a spiritual mission: to flush evil out of hiding. If we are going to survive in North America, we have to go back, metaphorically, to that pilgrim shore again. Let's seek to learn from the land this time" (Harpers Forum 1990, 44).

Although Earth First! militants tend to reject *organized* religion, and many are uncomfortable with the explicitly religious rituals and songs now popular in the movement, most report a "spiritual" connection to nature. Earth First!ers often speak of the need to "resacralize" nature. Indeed, the heart and soul of Earth First! resides in a radical "ecological consciousness" that intuitively, affectively, and deeply experiences a sense of the sacredness and interconnection of all life. From this experience is derived the claim that all life, and even ecosystems, are intrinsically valuable—apart from their usefulness to human beings. Ecosystems and all species have a right to flourish—human beings ought to protect and not destroy them. This perspective, known as *Deep Ecology*, *ecocentric ethics*, or *biocentric ethics*, contrasts with "shallow," or "anthropocentric" environmental ethics, which base ecological concern upon human interests. But from where do biocentric ethics ultimately come?

The notion of evolution in the ecological sciences provides a primary cosmogony that promotes biocentric ethics. If all species evolved through the same process, and none were specially created for any particular purpose, then, as Earth First! philosopher Christopher Manes notes, the metaphysical underpinnings of anthropocentrism are displaced, along with the idea of human beings at the top of the "Great Chain of Being," ruling over all on Earth. "Taken seriously," Manes concludes, "evolution means that there is no basis for seeing humans as more advanced or developed than any other species. *Homo sapiens* is not the goal of evolution, for as near as we can tell evolution has no telos—it simply unfolds, life-form after life-form . . ." (Manes 1990, 142). Cosmogonies always have ethical implications, and for Earth First!ers, the evolutionary cosmogony suggests that all life is valuable. Since evolution gives life in all its complexity, the evolutionary process itself is of highest value. The central moral priority of Earth First! is to protect and restore wilderness because undisturbed wilderness provides the necessary genetic stock for the very continuance of evolution.²

This still does not answer the question: Why should we care about evolution, or wild places, in the first place? Manes's argument whereby the evolutionary cosmogony displaces human beings as the most valuable creatures does not explain where *value* actually resides. This, I think, is why so much spirituality gets pulled into the Earth First! movement, with evolution as a fundamental premise; some form of spirituality is logically needed to

provide a basis for valuing the evolutionary process and the resulting life-forms. Manes himself roots Deep Ecology and Earth First! in “the profound spiritual attachment people have to nature” (1990, 149). This type of affective, intuitive appreciation of nature does appear to undergird Deep Ecology and Earth First! (Scarce 1990, 39, 55). Earth First!ers believe that all life is sacred and interconnected, whether or not they consider themselves religious. Even those drawn to a biocentric ethic largely based on an evolutionary cosmogony eventually rely on metaphors of the sacred to explain their feelings. Although conventional political analysis tends to see religion as peripheral to social movements, in-depth analysis reveals a complex spiritual substructure undergirding the Earth First! movement. The main feature of the ethics and politics of the movement emerge by analyzing this mythic, symbolic, and ritual substructure.

Some of the diverse tributaries of the Earth First! movement are *explicitly* religious, tracing their biocentric sentiments to Taoism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Christian nature mysticism, witchcraft, and pagan earth-worship. Few Earth First!ers, however, become radical environmentalists due to socialization in or conversion to these traditions. The ecological consciousness uniting Earth First!ers usually begins early in life—in experiences I cannot here typify—long before exposure to these religious traditions.³ It is usually as young adults or later that many of the activists discover religious traditions sharing affinity with their religious sentiments. Most Earth First!ers are first “generic” nature mystics. Although they appreciate nature-grounded spiritual traditions, few identify with any particular religious tradition.⁴

With this qualification in mind, we can explore the influences of various nature-sympathetic religious traditions upon the emerging, plural religion of Earth First!

Probably least important is Christian nature mysticism. Two radical environmentalist Christians told me that they no longer directly participate with Earth First! because its members refuse unequivocally to renounce tactics that involve risks to human beings, and because of the anti-theistic attitudes of many members. I have found a few more Earth First!ers who consider themselves Hindu. A much more significant tributary to the movement is found in neo-paganism, including *wicca* or witchcraft.

For example, one pagan Earth First!er argues that modern people cannot experience the world as enchanted because paving over wilderness has muted its sacred voices. He believes that Earth First! is among the few groups who can still perceive the sacredness of the Earth:

Gnomes and elves, fauns and faeries, goblins and ogres, trolls and bogies . . . [today must infiltrate our world to] effect change from the inside . . . [These nature-spirits are] running around in human bodies . . . working in co-ops . . . talking to themselves in the streets . . . spiking trees

and blowing up tractors . . . starting revolutions . . . [and] making up religions (Young 1991).

Another pagan, a male witch, accuses the pagan community of "desecrating and misusing the divine energies" through their political apathy. This apathy permits unchecked "wilderness desecration [and] species extinction." He demands pagan support for radical environmental actions including road blockading and tree spiking (Wagar 1987). This militant expression was followed immediately with an editorial statement that these views do not necessarily reflect the views of the neo-pagan journal publishing it. Although neo-pagan environmental radicals exist (see Adler 1986, 149, 152, 238–250), the overwhelming majority of the neo-Pagan community is not environmentally militant (Adler 1986, 102, 392, 395, 399–405, 412).⁵

The most important spiritual home for Earth First! activists resembles what American historian of religion Amanda Porterfield calls "American Indian Spirituality"—"a countercultural [and religious] movement whose proponents define themselves against the cultural system of American Society" (1990, 152). The central tenets of this spirituality, Porterfield explains, "include the condemnation of American exploitation of nature and mistreatment of Indians, regard to precolonial America as a sacred place where nature and humanity lived in plentiful harmony, certainty that American Indian attitudes are opposite to those of American culture and morally superior on every count, and an underlying belief that American Indian attitudes toward nature are a means of revitalizing American culture" (1990, 154).

When speaking of Earth First! I will relabel Porterfield's term *primal spirituality*, since Earth First!ers believe we should emulate the indigenous lifeways of most primal peoples, not just those in North America (Snyder 1977 and 1990, LaChapelle 1988, 80–87). Moreover, it is not merely the precolonial American landscape that is sacred but wilderness in general, wherever it can be found or restored.

Evidence is ubiquitous of Earth First!ers' respect for and desire to emulate primal lifeways (at least after the eco-collapse, as described later). A few typical examples will introduce important myths, symbols, and rituals of this emerging tradition, and clarify why Earth First! must be understood as a religious movement: To some extent, all Earth First!ers participate in the rituals and songs and resonate with the myths and symbols of the movement.

Earth First!ers often express affinity with the lifeways of primal peoples, particularly their purported reverence for Earth and her creatures. Some directly trace their Earth-activism to "vision quests" common in Native American cultures. For example, two leaders of the Sea Shepherd Society—a group that has sunk whaling vessels and committed other acts of

sabotage in their efforts to protect marine life, and who refer to themselves as the navy of Earth First!—trace their militant vocations to religious visions guided by Sioux shamans (Russell 1987).⁶

Earth First!ers generally call themselves tribalists, and many deep ecologists believe that primal tribes can provide a basis for religion, philosophy, and nature conservation applicable to our society (Manes 1988, 27, 1990, 240, 154, 230, 237, 239, 245; Devall and Sessions 1985, 96; Foreman 1990a, 61. For qualifying views, see Wuerthner 1987; Devall 1987). Moreover, Earth First!ers increasingly discuss the importance of ritual for any tribal "warrior society." At meetings held in or near wilderness, they engage in ritual war dances, sometimes howling like wolves. Indeed, wolves, grizzly bears, and other animals function as totems, symbolizing a mystical kinship between the tribe and other creature-peoples. This is another example of primal spirituality. Native Americans often conceive of non-human species as kindred "peoples," and through "rituals of inclusion" extend the community of moral concern beyond human beings.

Some Earth First!ers have developed their own rituals of *inclusion*, called "Council of All Beings" workshops, which provide a ritual means to connect people spiritually to other creatures and the entire planet (Seed and others, 1988). During these workshops, Zen-like exercises help people to experience their connection with the entire web of life. Understanding oneself as one with all else is often called developing one's "ecological self." The Councils provide rituals in which people allow themselves to be imaginatively possessed by the spirits of non-human entities—animals, rocks, soils, and rivers, for example—and to verbalize their hurt at having been so poorly treated by human beings. As personifications of these non-human forms, participants cry out for fair treatment and harmonious relations among all ecosystem citizens. Finally, the humans seek personal transformation and empowerment through the gifts of special powers from the non-human entities present in their midst. Ecstatic ritual dance, celebrating inter-species and even inter-planetary oneness, may continue through the night.

The Council of All Beings has come to function almost as a rite of passage within the movement. Sooner or later, the majority of Earth First!ers participate. The Council draws its rituals from many types of primal cultures, because "rituals affirming the interconnectedness of the human and nonhuman worlds exist in every primitive culture" (Seed and others 1988, 11). Primal rituals included in the Council include those drawn from Tai Chi, neo-paganism, Native American religion and vision quests, shamanism, and many styles of primal drumming (Macy 1983, 110–113; Seed and others 1988, 109). Although various forms of primal spirituality are incorporated into these rituals, Buddhism provides the most important resource for the Council's rituals.

Indeed, many of the adaptor-creators of these rituals, such as John Seed and Joanna Macy, are practicing Buddhists. With the words of Vietnamese Zen Buddhist Thich Nhat Hanh, they characterize the central intention of the Council's rituals: to help people "hear within themselves the sounds of the Earth crying" (Seed and others 1988, 7). This intention is grounded, Macy explains, in the doctrine of *paticca sammuppada* (or dependent origination). She believes the experience of dependent origination helps activists to transcend their senses of individual ego and thus to achieve the realization of *anātman*—the "absence of a permanent unchanging self or soul" (Macy in Ingram 1990, 158–9)⁷. Within the Council, the experience of interdependence, interrelatedness, and essential oneness is called not by Buddhist terms, but rather are referred to as the experience of "ecological consciousness," the "ecological self." A primary means to this consciousness is "breathwork," adapted from individual Buddhist meditation practices for the social context of the Council. The goal of breathwork is to create "mindfulness" of all the ways we harm the planet. This notion is also well captured by Thich Nhat Hanh: "To me, practicing mindfulness in the act of consuming is the basic act of social justice" (Ingram 1990, 83).⁸

Another Council practice, which involves prolonged eye-to-eye contact, intends to draw participants into empathetic understanding of the partner. This exercise, Joanna Macy explains, "is derived from the Buddhist practice known as the Brahmaviharas, or the four Abodes of the Buddha, which are lovingkindness, compassion, joy in the joy of others, and equanimity. Adapted for use in a social context, [Macy believes] it helps us to see each other more truly and experience the depths of our interconnections" (Macy 1983, 157–8).

The experience of the ecological, related self, provides the cosmological basis for the Council's concluding rituals, which purport to empower humans with the special powers of non-human entities. Since we are intimately related at a metaphysical level, we can appropriate the powers of other beings. Thus the Council becomes a primal rite of passage empowering the initiate for the struggles to come.

Macy concludes that experiencing *anātman*, our ecological self, can "pop us out of that narrow prison of the separate ego"; and since "caring springs from interconnectedness," the Council's rituals can lead to personal, and even planetary, transformation (Ingram 1990, 166; see also Macy 1983, 155–157; Seed and others 1988, 13, 108–9). Some Earth First!ers, and especially those most indebted to Buddhism and involved in the adaptive creation of the tradition's rituals, believe that spiritual changes resulting in people finding their ecological selves are the most important prerequisites to protecting and restoring the Earth.

There are, then, many affinities with Buddhism in Earth First!—particularly in the Council of All Beings, which self-consciously seeks to de-

velop a ritual life for the movement. Nevertheless, it should be remembered that few in the movement identify with any one organized religious tradition. Moreover, as important as the myths and rituals self-consciously developed by an emerging priestly class may be within the movement, as or more important are those myths and rituals that have emerged without obvious intent.

For example, Aldo Leopold's 1949 story in his "Thinking like a Mountain" essay has become the central myth of the tradition. He begins by suggesting that perhaps mountains have knowledge superior to ours. Then he tells of an experience he once had of approaching an old wolf he had shot, just

in time to watch a fierce green fire dying in her eyes. I realized then, and have known ever since, that there was something new to me in those eyes—something known only to her and to the mountain. I was young then . . . I thought that because fewer wolves meant more deer, that no wolves would mean hunters' paradise. But after seeing the green fire die, I sensed that neither the wolf nor the mountain agreed with such a view.

Among Earth First!ers, this story has evolved into a mythic moral fable in which the wolf communicates with human beings, stressing inter-species kinship. (Of course, animal-human communication is a common theme in primal religious myth, and animal-human and human-animal transmogrification and communion are a part of shamanism. Many Earth First!ers report shamanistic experiences, which I cannot discuss in detail here.) The wolf's "green fire" has become a symbol of life in the wild, incorporated into the ritual of the tradition. Soon after its founding, several Earth First! activists went on "green fire" road shows, essentially biocentric revival meetings. "Dakota" Sid Clifford, a balladeer in these road shows, referred to them as "ecovangelism." In these shows, the personified wolf calls humans to repent from their destructive ways and to revere Earth and her creatures. Some of the shows ended with converts howling in symbolic identification with the wild and wolves.

Earth First!ers symbolically express their identification with other creatures through sensual songs such as "I am an animal" (sung to primal chant-rhythms). A typical ecowarrior war dance, described in the *Earth First!* journal, included "pounding drums, naked neanderthals, and wild creatures. An industrial machine was [symbolically] stopped in its tracks by monkeywrench-waving children. Nearly everyone joined in the primal celebration of wild nature." Commenting on the scattering of the warriors after the gathering, the author of the report exclaimed, "the green fire is still running wild and free [as] we are once again scattered across the country" (Circles 1989). Here we note the centrality of primal spirituality in the movement and also the notion that authentic human nature is that which is lived wildly and spontaneously in defense of Earth.

Primal war rituals are needed, some Earth First!ers say, to ready warriors for eco-battles and to restore them afterward to the community. For example, responding to tensions within the tribe (discussed later), Dave Foreman suggested that primal war rituals are needed to preserve tribal unity:

We've forgotten how to be ethical warriors . . . Too often we take this no-compromise, us-versus-them attitude back into our own councils, and we fight the same way with each other as we do, say, with the forest service . . . In hunter-gatherer tribes, there were rituals and other types of cleansing ceremonies, both to prepare oneself for potential violence and then to de-program and get back into the community after it was over . . . that's certainly one of the things that [we should] work on (Foreman 1990a, 61).

Ecotage, of course, is not merely acted out symbolically in ritual dance. Ecotage and civil disobedience are real-life ritual actions. Earth First!ers themselves increasingly recognize this. Dave Foreman, for example, although sometimes claiming to be an atheist (Bookchin and Foreman 1990a), speaks nevertheless of ecotage as ritual worship: Monkeywrenching is "a form of worship toward the Earth. It's really a very spiritual thing to go out and do" (Bladow 1990, 4; see also Foote 1990, 24).⁹ Religious rituals function to transform ordinary time into sacred time, even to alter consciousness itself (Seed and others 1988, 10–12, 16, 91; Snyder 1977; LaChapelle 1978, 1988, 146–164). Earth First! rituals are no different. One Earth First!er, for example, described "a slow dawning of awareness of a hitherto unknown connection—Earth bonding—" that occurred when he was buried up to his neck blockading a logging road (Seed and others 1988, 91). The Earth's "pulse became mine, and the vessel, my body, became the vehicle for her expression. . . . it was as though nature had overtaken my consciousness to speak on her behalf. . . ." (Seed and others 1988, 92). Another activist ecstatically explains, "There's a kind of magic that happens when you do an action. You can be up all night, then alert all day. There's a sense of magic, calmness, clarity. It's a life experience you cherish" (Parfit 1990, 194–95). Earth First!ers have described the removal of survey stakes as ritual action (Scarce 1990, 65), and John Davis, an editor of the *Earth First!* journal, suggested that tribal rites of passage requiring direct action should be developed: "Rites of passage were essential for the health of primal cultures . . . so why not reinstitute initiation rites and other rituals in the form of ecodefense actions? Adolescents could earn their adulthood by successful completion of ritual hunts, as in days of yore, but for a new kind of quarry—bulldozers and their ilk" (Davis 1988 [Nov 1]).

Ecofeminism provides another tributary to Earth First!'s nature-revering spirituality (Plant 1990; Diamond and Orenstein 1990; Scarce 1990, 39). Its ideas have been incorporated into Earth First! liturgy: Many

song-hymns heard at Earth First! gatherings satirize macho-hubris and male domination of nature and women, decry male massacres of witches, and praise various pagan earth-goddesses.

Ecofeminism, and primal spirituality, have a close affinity with yet another tributary—Bioregionalism—which is a countercultural movement with increasing connections to Earth First! Bio-regionalism envisions communities of creatures living harmoniously and simply within the boundaries of distinct ecosystems. It critiques growth-based industrial societies preferring locally self-sufficient and ecologically sustainable economies and decentralized political self-rule. Bioregionalists share Earth First!'s ecological consciousness regarding the intrinsic value and sacred interconnection of all life (Andruss 1990; Plant and Plant 1990; Haenke 1986; Naess 1985; LaChapelle 1988, 166–215). The Earth-spirituality of Bioregionalists parallels the primal spirituality prominent among Earth First!ers (with an Indian-like sense of the Earth as sacred place). In some cases their Earth-spirituality is tied to the theory that conceives of Earth as a living spirit, a self-regulating organism, and is named after Gaia, goddess of the Earth.

Earth First!ers have a natural affinity for bioregionalism. Dave Foreman even suggested that bioregionalism was one term for what Earth First! was seeking: “the future primitive.” He added that Earth First! could be the bioregional militia: As bioregionalists inhabit a place and *become* that place, they should defend it with Earth First!'s militant tactics (Foreman 1987 [Aug. 1]). Ecowarriors are part of nature; ecotage is nature defending herself (Foreman 1990a, Seed and others 1988, 6, 36).

Before bioregionalism can flourish, however, many Earth First!ers believe that industrial society must first collapse under its own ecologically unsustainable weight. The theory that society is creating an ecological catastrophe containing the seeds of its own destruction introduces another key part of Earth First!'s mythic structure: its apocalyptic eschatology. Earth First! is radical largely due to this apocalyptic worldview: There will be a collapse of industrial society, because this society is ecologically unsustainable. After great suffering, if enough of the genetic stock of the planet survives, evolution will resume its natural course. If human beings also survive, they will have the opportunity to re-establish tribal lifeways compatible with the evolutionary future. Edward Abbey, whose novel *The Monkeywrench Gang* helped launch the movement, provides a typical example of Earth First! eschatology:

Whether [industrial society is] called capitalism or communism makes little difference. . . . [both] destroy nature and themselves . . . I predict that the military-industrial state will disappear from the surface of the Earth within fifty years. That belief is the basis of my inherent optimism, the source of my hope for the coming restoration of higher civilization: scattered human populations modest in number that live by fishing, hunting,

food-gathering, small-scale farming and ranching, that assemble once a year in the ruins of abandoned cities for great festivals of moral, spiritual, artistic and intellectual renewal—a people for whom the wilderness is not a playground but their natural and native home (Abbey 1986 [Aug. 1]; Manes 1990, 241).

Abbey and most Earth First!ers anticipate ecocollapse, but also find *hope* in the corresponding collapse of industrial society, provided they succeed in preserving enough of the “evolutionary soup” (Foreman’s term, Fayhee 1988, 23) to ensure that the process can continue. Apocalyptic eschatology generally holds out hope for the future, even in the face of great tribulations and against great odds. Earth First!’s eschatology is no different.

So while bioregionalism focuses on developing models for the future, many within Earth First!’s mainstream believe bioregionalism will not flourish without the prior catalyst of an ecocollapse. For this reason, Earth First!ers tend to have a different priority than most bioregionalists, prioritizing ecodefense for now while awaiting industrial collapse. Earth First!ers believe that it is not yet possible to create the perfectly sustainable and harmonious future. In fact, while praising its promise, Foreman has criticized the practice of most bioregionalists for becoming “mired in its composting toilets, organic gardens, handcrafts, recycling,” etc. Although he admits, “these . . . are important” he insists that “*bioregionalism is more than technique, it is resacralization [of Earth] and self-defense*” (Foreman 1987 [Aug. 1] my emphasis).¹⁰

Stopping here would leave a misleading portrait. Certainly biocentric and evolutionary premises, primal spirituality, Eastern religions, and a panoply of other spiritual tributaries contribute to Earth First!’s worldview. Certainly Earth First!ers often distrust reason, deriving their fundamental premises on intuitions and feelings: their love for wild, sacred places, and their corresponding rage at the ongoing destruction of such places. Certainly the tradition has evolved by appropriating and creating a fascinating variety of myths, symbols, and rituals. But reason is not abandoned: Ecological science and political analysis is essential to Earth First! praxis. Many within the movement worry about excessive preoccupation with spirituality, with what they musingly call “woo woo.” John Davis, himself responsible for much discussion of spirituality and ritual, cautions:

Spiritual approaches to the planet seem to be of growing concern these days. The last issue of the Journal reflects this trend. We ran many articles on sacred sites, rituals, and such, but very few articles pertaining to specific wild lands. (Almost we replaced ‘No Compromise in Defense of Mother Earth’ on the masthead with ‘All Aboard the Woo Woo Choo Choo’.) This is not all to the good. Sacred sites, ritual, and matters of personal growth are important . . . However, Earth First! may lose effective-

ness if it promotes these matters while neglecting the time-worn practices of presenting wilderness proposals . . . and other such largely left-brain activity (Davis 1989 [Nov. 1]).

Both "left-brain" critical analysis and "right-brain" love and spiritual connection with natural places are important—and mutually influential—within Earth First!

The ecological sciences provide the first wave of Earth First!'s left-brain activity. Earth First!'s more apocalyptic predictions are based not on intuitive revelation, but on the research of ecologists concluding that we are in the midst of an unprecedented extinction crisis. High extinction rates result directly from human population growth and industrial activity, which destroys the habitats upon which biodiversity depends (Catton 1980; Mueller 1989; Bookchin and Foreman 1990a, 112; Lerner 1990, 16). "We're in a war," Foreman says bluntly, "the war of industrial civilization against the natural world. If you look at what the leading scientists are telling us, we could lose one-third of all species in the next forty years . . . We're in one of the greatest extinction episodes in three and a half billion years of evolution" (Gabriel 1990, 58). Such analyses, along with the affective/spiritual sense of the intrinsic worth of intact ecosystems, converges in a radical critique of both industrial society and human breeding.

Not only do we need bioregional tribalism as a new social organizing principle, but commitment to negative population growth is a moral "litmus test" for inclusion within the tribe (Foreman 1987). The Journal is full of exhortations to breed less, and sometimes runs apparently serious letters advocating genocidal solutions to overpopulation. The basic procreative ethics is well summarized by Dave Foreman (writing under a pseudonym): Remember, "the impact of each of our middle-class babies is equivalent to that of forty in the Third World—more old-growth timber clearcut, increased grazing pressures on marginal grasslands, another irrigation project drowning a desert. . . . Think before you have that baby. One more to cause suffering. One more to suffer. Have your tubal ligation, your vasectomy now" (Blea 1986 [Aug. 1]; cf. McCormick). Some even humorously proposed vasectomy tables for Earth First! wilderness gatherings.

Political analysis provides the second critical wave of Earth First!'s left-brain activity. The founders of Earth First! were disgruntled conservationists who were licking their wounds after losing an important legislative battle over the Federal Government's 1980 Roadless Area Review and Evaluation process (RARE II). The lobbyists concluded that the government had protected only "rocks and ice" rather than the areas most important to the preservation of biodiversity (Foreman, in Fayhee 1988, 23). What struck them afterwards was that they had been reasonable and moderate, basing their proposals on ecological science, while their opponents acted like lunatics, casting the debate in terms of "sacred" values such as private prop-

erty and the American way of life. Moreover, despite their moderation, they were repeatedly and absurdly accused of being "environmental extremists." So, they concluded, reasonableness often fails—perhaps Earth needed a group of wild-eyed, unreasonable fanatics.¹¹

The overall strategy was to provide some real extremists and thereby strengthen the hand of the mainstream environmental groups, making them appear more moderate (Manes 1990, 187, 201). Furthermore, they wanted to promote Deep Ecology—which they knew did not animate most mainstream environmentalists—and shift environmental debates from protecting scenic places to preserving biodiversity (Fayhee 1988, 23). In their judgment, this requires the protection and restoration of vast areas to their natural state (e.g., Sayen 1989 [May 1, June 21]). Mainstream groups rarely proposed restoration at all, and never on a large scale.

Beyond the effort to provide by their presence a trump card to mainstream environmentalists, Earth First!ers began to experiment with civil disobedience and monkeywrenching in a concerted strategy to protect biodiversity and raise awareness. Civil disobedience, and especially destroying equipment (property) used to destroy habitat, dramatically posed the moral premise of the movement: Biodiversity is more important than the superfluous desires and property of greedy human beings.

Of course, when people break the law for reasons of conscience, particularly in formally democratic societies, they feel compelled to justify morally their actions. The major justifications advanced by Earth First!ers could be titled "It's really that bad": Representative democracy is a sham, controlled as it is by the true criminals—corporate devils and government co-conspirators—who rape the land with impunity.¹² "Wilderness is our true home," and extra-legal direct action is justified as self-defense (Abbey, in Foreman and Haywood 1987, 7–9).

Meanwhile, environmental groups have failed to protect biodiversity, largely because they share the anthropocentric and industrial premises of mainstream culture. Worse yet, the mainstream environmental movement has been overrun by well-paid bureaucrats and attorneys less concerned about Earth than their careers. The mainstream has been co-opted. Wilderness has been sold out (Manes 1990, 45–65). Additional moral warrants justifying radical actions are found in the justifications for specific tactics.

Civil disobedience was originally justified as a stalling tactic: "in the [long-term] hope that an enlightened citizenry will one day appreciate more fully the need for the conservation of natural resources" (Wuerthner 1985); in the short-term hope of providing time to win legislative victories or to file lawsuits ("paper monkeywrenching" in the parlance of the movement). Ecotage was also conceived of as a means to stall or prevent the destruction of wild places—again, to try to save some biotic diversity short-term. "When the floundering beast," Howie Wolke's metaphor for industrial so-

ciety, “finally, mercifully chokes in its own dung pile, there’ll at least be *some* wilderness remaining as a seedbed for plant-wide recovery. Maybe even some Griz; . . . some wild humans; . . . some hope . . . maybe even some human wisdom” (Wolke 1989, 29).¹³

Just as important a rationale for ecotage is the idea that monkey-wrenching can actually prevent destructive activity already underway—driving the worst Earth destroyers right out of business; erasing their profits by slowing their work and destroying their tools (Hellenbach 1987, 21–22). Early successes with tree spiking—some activists put nails into trees, thereby preventing some timber sales—convinced many Earth First!ers that ecotage could be effective (Foreman and Haywood 1987: 26, see also 27; 32–33).

Others within the movement, however, doubt ecotage is effective. Disagreements about ecotage led to some early disaffections from the movement and have been part of the tensions leading to the first major schism in the movement since its founding in 1980.

Some observers, such as Michael Parfit, see tensions in the movement between “pragmatic” and “spiritual” factions (1990, 96). Although some *are* uncomfortable with the spirituality in the movement, the overwhelming majority within the movement respect most forms of Earth-spirituality. We have already noted Foreman’s spiritual side, but Parfit would place him among the alleged pragmatists. Parfit may have been misled by Foreman’s comment that “the woo woo stuff . . . is beyond me.” He does not adequately recognize that Foreman then added, “. . . but the diversity is good” (Parfit 1990, 97). Elsewhere, Foreman says that central to Earth First! is “a refusal to accept rationality as the only way of thinking. There is room for diversity within Earth First! on matters spiritual, and nowhere is tolerance for diversity more necessary” (Foreman 1987, 20 [Nov. 1]). Nevertheless, not all forms of Earth spirituality are orthodox. “New Age” spirituality is often derided by Earth First!ers for its anthropocentrism and overly optimistic view about the role of humans in creating, often through technology, a new golden age. Such criticisms have served to keep New Age devotees largely outside of the movement; the major schism within Earth First! has little to do with New Age spirituality.

Dave Foreman, Christopher Manes, and quite a few other important Earth First! activists, recently disassociated themselves from the movement. In some of their hyperbole, they have inaccurately claimed that the competing faction—located mostly in California and Oregon—was abdicating biocentrism. Meanwhile, the California/Oregon-based faction, led by Judi Bari, Darryl Cherney, and Mike Roselle (another movement co-founder), in turn charged in exaggerated tones that the Foreman faction was misanthropic, racist, and elitist, ignoring social justice issues intrinsically related

to biocentric concerns. Disputes about orthodoxy in religious traditions often break down into criticisms based on mis-characterizations and personal invective—this is also true with Earth First!'s schism. It is possible, however, to characterize these disputes in a way that is more accurate and fair to all parties than the pictures painted by those in the heat of verbal battle.

In my judgment, the schism is grounded more in disagreements about strategy and tactics than in disagreements about ecocentrism.¹⁴ (For example, up until now, the portrait I have been painting generally reflects both factions.) We can best understand the schism by discussing several major, related disputes having more to do with strategy and eschatology than biocentrism or spirituality.

I call the Foreman/Manes faction the "Wilders," because they fought to keep the journal *Earth First!'s* focus exclusively on wilderness and thereby, in their minds, on biodiversity and biocentrism. (The new journal they began publishing in 1991 is called *Wild Earth*.) Wilders believe that tying environmental protection to other issues, such as social justice, anti-imperialism, or workers rights, alienates many potential wilderness sympathizers. They also often consider themselves true patriots, trying to preserve the sacred landscape of America. Sometimes they fly the U.S. flag, not out of nationalism (the system being morally bankrupt) but because they believe the flag can also symbolize the love of the land, which fits well with their overall moral sentiments. Moreover, Foreman once told me, they did not want to leave the power of that symbol purely in the hands of land-rapers like James Watt and Ronald Reagan.

Opposite the Wilders is the group I call the "Holies"—the Bari, Chorney, Roselle faction—who insist that a "holistic" perspective is needed: Wilderness and biodiversity cannot be saved by narrowly focusing upon them. Rather, one has to examine how threats to biodiversity are related to other social issues. (The "Holies" label is also appropriate because many in this faction tend toward more overtly spiritual expression.) Holies argue that activism based on the separation of ecological and social issues will ultimately fail because industrial society itself destroys biodiversity—not only commercial incursions into biologically rich wilderness areas (Geniella 1990). In Judi Bari's words, Deep Ecology stresses interrelationships, so you cannot separate wilderness from the society around it: The strategy of focusing on wilderness set-asides "contradicts the very theory of biocentrism" (Keyser 1991). Bari continues that environmental and class exploitation have to be fought together: "Our society has been built on the exploitation of both the lower classes *and the Earth*" (Keyser 1991). The primary dispute, then, is over the relative priority Earth First! should place on social issues that may not at first glance appear as environmental issues.¹⁵

A related battle is over whether civil disobedience or ecotage is the most effective tactic. This debate is related to another dispute about the ultimate goal of direct action: to create a mass movement, or simply to thwart commercial incursions into biologically sensitive areas.

The Holies want the strategic priority to be the building of a mass movement to stop wilderness destruction and, ultimately, to supplant industrial lifeways altogether. They believe that civil disobedience, with its focus on arousing the conscience of the community, is the best mass-movement strategy. While many of the Holies have monkeywrenched, and most do not condemn it across the board, they do not think it should be emphasized. Some think it usually does more harm than good. Even advocates of ecotage worry about this possibility. Monkeywrenchers generally urge caution in choosing targets: "Target only the really bad guys, and do everything possible to minimize the risk that anyone could be hurt." They fear that otherwise a backlash will undo any positive effects of the ecotage. Holies have completely rejected tree-spiking, fearing loggers could be hurt, irreparably harming their efforts to organize a mass movement.

Roselle complains that "Foreman doesn't realize we can accomplish more these days with civil disobedience than monkeywrenching" (Talbot 1990, 77). Judi Bari adds, "I don't think people sneaking around in the woods pouring sand in gasoline tanks on bulldozers are going to bring about the level of pressure needed. . . . The only thing that brings about change is the fear of [the] loss of social control" (Mendocino Environmental Center 1990, 166). To save the Earth, she believes, we are going to have to expand beyond the white middle and upper classes, because they are the ones "who most benefit from the destruction of the Earth" (Keyser 1991).

Wilders, on the other hand, prefer monkeywrenching to civil disobedience, hoping to thwart industrial society and preserve as much biodiversity and wilderness as possible—at least until the ecological collapse arrives, ushering in new, more humble lifeways. They generally agree that civil disobedience is an overrated tactic. Wilders assert that civil disobedience is often impractical because Earth First!ers are usually poor and cannot afford to be arrested and fined. This argument was strengthened when several activists lost a lawsuit filed against them for blockading a logging operation: The logging company was awarded \$58,000 in compensatory and punitive damages (Manes 1990, 206; Scarce 1990, 69–70). Successful monkeywrenching does not entail such risks and costs, and can be "extremely effective" (Foreman and Haywood 1987, 26).

I believe the fundamental root of the schism I have been describing can be traced to small but significant differences in beliefs about human nature and eschatology. Holies are more optimistic than Wilders that human beings can be converted to biocentrism and can change their lifestyles. (They tend to be more influenced by "human potential" notions and less hostile to

“New Age” beliefs than the Wilders). In short, they have not despaired completely of the potential for voluntary reform by the human species.

Wilders tend to be less optimistic than Holies about the human species. Wilders deride what they claim is humanism among Holies-types—a charge deeply resented by Holies such as Judy Bari, who points out that she and others have risked their own lives and been injured in their efforts to save the forest (Bari 1990). Some Wilders are unapologetically misanthropic (Foreman as Blea 1986; Manes as Miss Ann Thropy 1987; Manes 1990 [Dec. 21]). Bari calls Foreman and others macho individualists and elitists (Keyser 1991), while others suggest that they are even fascistic (Alien Nation 1987). Wilders have either despaired of reform, or believe any reform will be insufficient (Manes 1990, 170). They tend to leave long-term hope to Mother Earth herself. In their more apocalyptic view, ecocollapse is probably inevitable; but if they do their part in thwarting industrial destruction, this may not be bad. Ecocollapse may be the means Mother Earth will use in her self-defense—a way she can remove the human industrial cancer and create the conditions people need to develop appropriate lifeways.¹⁶

Finally, the schism is also related to disagreements about the proper level of commitment to nonviolence. When asked at a gathering, “What are the ethics of monkeywrenching?”, Earth First!ers voiced two versions: First, “Don’t hurt anybody. Don’t get caught. If you get caught, don’t fink.” The second version reversed the priority: “Don’t get caught. Don’t hurt anybody. If you get caught, don’t fink.”¹⁷ These two slogans reflect some of the tensions in the movement: Both factions see themselves as nonviolent, but Holies tend to place a premium on nonviolence. Wilders, who try to keep ecotage nonviolent, nevertheless are reluctant to take nonviolence as an absolute principle. They fear that nonviolence is based on a pacifist humanism at odds with nature itself and biocentrism.

Intuition is an important source for these activists’ ethics. But so is natural law: These activists claim to derive many of their norms directly from observing nature. Moreover, nature is often violent, and so are threatened animals. Human beings are animals, and there may be times when their survival requires an emotional and adrenaline-fueled response. It may be, one corporately written article suggests, that under certain circumstances—violence may be more deeply nonviolent in the long run; violence may be necessary to cut off “the gangrene now infesting” Earth (Bats 1989). The commitment to nonviolence among radical environmentalists is not principled and deep in all quarters.¹⁸

Despite these tensions and the recent schism, there is far more that unites than divides these radical environmentalists. They are all animated by a deeply spiritual biocentrism; they share or respect the plural myths, symbols, and rituals of the emerging Deep Ecology worldview as well as a

cynicism about the system's willingness or ability to respond to the ecological catastrophe descending upon us; and they are committed to extra-legal direct action to save as much of the genetic stock of the planet as possible. Both Holies and Wilders tend to claim success for their preferred tactics, believing that, all things considered, their tactics provide the most hope.

The Impact of and Prospects for Radical Environmentalism

The ethics and politics of Earth First! are based on or have affinity with religious premises challenging the dominant religious sentiments of Western Culture. Earth First! and other groups promoting biocentric ethics pose a remarkable dilemma: Should environmental ethics be based exclusively on human interests? Or rather, should we *resacralize* Mother Earth and base environmental ethics on reverence?

Some Earth First!ers hope for a moral-paradigm shift from anthropocentrism to biocentrism. Some even hope this shift will make the 1990s "make the '60s look like the '50s." Assessing the actual impact of and prospects for such movements, however, is a difficult empirical task. Earth First! is making itself increasingly felt. One indication of this, of course, is the F.B.I. infiltration of the movement. Another comes from reports about damage done by "ecoteurs," which has led some commercial interests to increase security and in some cases hire their own infiltrators to keep tabs on radical environmentalists (Manes 1990, 9, see also 3-22).

It would be premature to evaluate definitively the success of these groups; and, of course, an evaluation would depend on the standard one applies. Dave Foreman says that saving one tree, one acre of grizzly bear or wolf habitat, is an accomplishment (1990a, 65). Those hoping to create a mass movement have set a higher standard of success, but they also can point to small victories that seem to have been won through direct action. There is widespread recognition that Earth First!ers have brought public exposure and debate to many previously ignored environmental issues. Moreover, many among the mainstream groups acknowledge that their hand is strengthened by the presence of unreasonable Earth First! activists. Mainstream environmentalists increasingly, but quietly, call Earth First!ers and inform them of opportunities for their unique form of activism. An American Indian tribal chairman once told me that, although he could not say this publicly, he was glad about an Earth First! campaign to disrupt mining threatening his people.

On the other hand, we have seen how some believe that ecotage does more harm than good. To this, T.O. Hellenbach responds,

The charge that monkeywrenching alienates public opinion stems from an incomplete understanding of propaganda and history. Scientific studies

of propaganda and the press show that the vast majority of the public remembers the news only in vaguest outline. . . . Basic concepts like 'opposition to logging' are all that are retained. History informs us that direct action engenders as much support as opposition. . . . The majority of the public floats noncommittally between the conflicting forces (1987, 22).

Although he does not cite his "scientific studies," my speculation is that radical environmentalism does promote its objectives by extending the range of the debate, thereby shifting the middle of public opinion closer to the positions of environmentalists than they would otherwise be. If I am right, this impact will only increase as these groups grow in number and intensify their resistance. There will be, of course, a negative reaction. But in general, concrete opposition to radical groups comes from people already hostile to environmentalists' concerns. This would not produce a shift in public opinion against environmental concern.

More importantly, the growth of biocentric ethics in general, and of this movement in particular, suggests that both will be having an increasing impact within North America. In ten years the *Earth First!* journal gained between 7,500 and 15,000 regular readers, with some decline after the schism. Numerous smaller newsletters have sprung up. And *Earth First!*'s numbers are dwarfed by other less militant sister groups, including Greenpeace and those promoting animal liberation. Radical environmental groups are also emerging abroad; indeed, the boldest acts of ecotage have occurred outside the United States (Taylor and others 1992/1993; Scarce 1990, 139–162). As the environmental costs of industrial growth intensify, so will green rage—this has only begun to emerge. Depending on one's perspective, the militancy of *Earth First!* provides either hope or an ominous portent of things to come.

Notes

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1. Interview with Judy Bari, 20 November 1992, Ukiah, California.
2. For an excellent example of the role of the evolutionary cosmogony in Deep Ecology, see Seed and others, 1988.
3. In her study of neo-paganism, another nature religion, Margo Adler found a similar dynamic: Rarely do pagans get "converted." Rather, they feel they simply "found" or "came home to" paganism (1986, 14).
4. Survey research on attitudes toward global warming currently being conducted by Willett Kempton at Princeton and Jim Boster at the University of Cali-

fornia, Irvine, confirms this impression. (I gathered the sample from Earth First! activists.)

5. My own experience at the 1991 Pagan Spirit festival confirms Adler's impressions. At a "warrior path" workshop, no one among the 25 participants spoke of defending the Earth. (For the entire two-hour period discussion was about defending the pagan community from external threats.) Assuming an Earth First! persona, I expressed frustration as to why nature mystics at such a workshop were not dealing with the militant defense of the planet. I received a chilly response, with a few individuals suggesting that they wanted nothing to do with "terrorism." Only two or three expressed appreciation and support for the sentiments.

In the 1990 *Circle Guide to Pagan Groups*, 174 pagan groups provide self-descriptions. Only about 12 percent mentioned environmental activism, and none were obviously militant. My best guess at this point is that about 5 percent of the neo-pagan community is supportive of militant environmental activism. (I am grateful to Tess Johnson for the many ways she has helped me explore environmental activism in the neo-pagan community.)

6. Most of the prominent leaders seem to have some connection to American Indian peoples or myths. Dave Foreman spent two years at a Zuni pueblo (Foreman 1989 [May 1]). After Judi Bari's bombing, Indians at Big Mountain held healing ceremonies for her, which she claims had miraculous effects (Keyser 1991).

7. Macy borrows this definition of *anātman* from Buddhism scholar Nancy Wilson Ross (Ingram 1990, 158fn5).

8. Thich Nhat Hanh and Buddhist activist A.T. Ariyaratne, founder of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement in Sri Lanka, both promote a vision of engaged, non-violent ecological and social justice activism. Both were deeply influenced by Mahatma Gandhi. Both have in turn influenced those who developed the Council of All Beings, also thereby extending Gandhi's influence into the movement (Macy 1983; Seed and Others 1988; Ingram 1990). Traveling with Earth First!ers I have heard the poetry of transcendentalists Emerson and Thoreau, and the poets Robinson Jeffers and Gary Snyder. Gary Snyder's blending of primal spiritualities and Buddhism are especially important in the movement. This underscores further the affinity and influence that Buddhism has within the movement. Indeed, much of the ecological spirituality found in movement writers resembles the consciousness found in Buddhism.

9. He also has been known to describe his religion as Zuni or "twisted" Zen Buddhism (Foreman 1990a).

10. A good example of Earth First! eschatology and strategy can be seen in Foreman's article about bioregionalism. Bioregionalists should work toward re-inhabiting natural preserves. "That is where the warrior society of Earth First! comes into the bioregional world. In re-inhabiting a place, by dwelling in it, we become that place. We are *of* it. Our most fundamental duty is self defense. We are the wilderness defending itself. . . . We develop the management plan for our region. We implement it. If the dying industrial empire tries to invade our sacred preserves, we resist its incursions. In most cases we cannot confront it head to head because it is temporarily much more powerful than we are. But by using our guerrilla wits, we can often use its own massed power against itself. Delay, resist, subvert using all the

tools available to us: File appeals and lawsuits, encourage legislation—not to reform the system but to thwart it. Demonstrate, engage in nonviolent civil disobedience, monkeywrench. Defend. . . . Our self-defense is damage control until the machine plows into that brick wall and industrial civilization self-destructs as it must. Then the important work begins”—namely building an ecologically sustainable tribal society (1987 [Aug.1]).

11. The result of RARE II was that only 15 of 60 million roadless acres were designated as wilderness and protected from road building and commercial exploitation, this out of 220 million total acres in the National Forests. After the loss, Foreman reports having been shocked by being threatened by some ranchers because he thought he had been so moderate. This caused him to think again “about the different approaches to RARE II: the moderate, subdued one advanced by the major conservation groups; the howling, impassioned, extreme stand set forth by off-road-vehicle zealots, many ranchers, local boosters, loggers, and miners. They looked like fools. We looked like statesmen. Who won? They did” (Foreman 1981, 40).

12. Typical of such sentiments is Edward Abbey’s “Foreward!” to *Ecodefense*, “Representative democracy in the United States has broken down. Our legislators do not represent those who elected them but rather the minority who finance their political campaigns and who control the organs of communication—the Tee Vee, the newspapers, the billboards, the radio—that have made politics a game for the rich only. Representative government in the USA represents money not people and therefore has forfeited our allegiance and moral support. We owe it nothing but the taxation it extorts from us under threats of seizure of property, or prison, or in some cases already, when resisted, a sudden and violent death by gunfire” (Foreman and Haywood 1987, 8). George Wuerthner, on the other hand, redefines the criminal: “the real criminals [are] the logging companies and their lackeys, the Forest Service . . . destroying more than ‘government property,’ they [are] cutting down a rich and diverse ecological heritage” (1985).

13. Foreman states the similar idea, monkeywrenching as “damage control,” until major social changes occur.

14. For a counterpoint to this assertion, also made in an earlier article (Taylor 1991), George Sessions (1992:70) expresses sentiments common among the “Wilder” faction—that the “Holies” are not really ecocentric.

15. Recently, Dave Foreman responded to such criticisms, admitting that he has not said enough about his concern for “victims of multinational imperialism around the world” and other typically left-wing issues. He insisted that he is concerned about human suffering, but “I’m also very concerned with what’s happening to a million other species on the planet. . . . And I have a connection that is very fundamental and very passionate with those other species. I feel a real kinship with them, as well as [with] members of my own species. . . . One problem I’ve had in getting the fullness of my message out comes from my impatience at seeing ecocatastrophe going on all around me while so many of those on the left who are always talking about social justice don’t seem to even see the problem or care about other species. Let’s face it: right now we’re facing the greatest extinction crisis in the entire three-and-a-half-billion-year [evolutionary] history of this planet.” Foreman

wants activists with different emphases to respect the efforts of those prioritizing related issues. (Bookchin and Foreman 1990a, 112–113).

16. I am trying to characterize the two major types here—as sociologists often do—in an attempt to clarify complex phenomena. Exceptions and overlaps between these two types within Earth First! activists (present and former) could no doubt be found.

17. An alternative third stanza was “If you get caught, you’re on your own,” which is the version from which this code was drawn; see Edward Abbey’s preface “George Hayduke’s Code of the Eco-Warrior” in Wolke 1991.

18. Foreman is ambivalent about civil disobedience because it comes largely out of a Christian tradition often more concerned with personal transformation and purity than with results. He worries, however, that concern for results can lead to an “attitude where the ends justify the means” (1990a, 61). He does not explain how one can prioritize results and not end up with such an ethic.

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