

GRAND PHILOSOPHIES AND ENVIRONMENTAL CRISES:

an initial report.¹

Much of what follows is organised around the following *anti-mainstream* thesis, which it aims to further, to sharpen and to support:

mainstream Western philosophy is dismal environmental news, or still more colloquially and generally, mainstream philosophy continues to be bad socio-environmental news. Presumably that expands, in turn, to something like: grander mainstream Western philosophy continues to be a significant factor in the ideologies (or paradigms) that inform destructive social and environmental practices. There are some striking corollaries, among them that, like dialectical material in Eastern Europe, such Western philosophy should be substantially abandoned, its furthering and frequent celebration in the schools and universities discontinued, its place taken by more benign humble alternatives.

Sharpening the anti-mainstream thesis.

All the qualifications prove to be important. *Mainstream*, because there are lesser or recessive traditions that are comparatively benign. *Grander*, because small-scale analytic philosophy for example, while likely operating within a damaging paradigm, may have little or no impact on its own (consider the impact of a philosopher who spends all research time on the unexpected examination problem). *Western*, because classical Taoism affords a counter-example to the anti-mainstream thesis, virtually however it is sharpened.² However the qualification *Western* is decidedly narrower than need be, and moreover gives a misleading impression. For conspicuous non-Western philosophy, such as Confucianism and Islam, is also dismal news. Other major philosophies can, and do, drive environmental destruction as well. Accordingly too what uniqueness there is to the Western role has to be differently made out, in terms of its special (though perhaps inessential) linkage to industrialization.

Although it is expositionally advantageous to highlight present serious predicaments in terms of *crises*, one thing should be clarified at the outset. It is not essential, or even *critical*, to the main arguments outlined that there should be environmental or other crises. It is enough that severe *degradation* or the like is occurring. Some sort of responsibility for this will afford a solid basis for criticism of a doctrine or practice.

1 The main title evolved from that of Caldera, *Philosophy and Crisis*, who was searching (rather unsuccessfully) for a Latin-American philosophy. Some of this report was thought through in Brasil, under the partial support of FASPEC.

2 See, for instance, the explication of Taoism in UTD.

But, as it happens, conditions for crises are satisfied.³ There are crises conditions in *many places* in *many regards* (some of which we will simply allude to, as there is copious documentation). Elsewhere, where crises have not yet broken, there are often near crises conditions.

Many there are, of course, conspicuously politicians and economists, still labouring under the impression that the current dominant ideology and its development model is not obsolete, that all is more or less well. They imagine 'that we are passing through an unusually severe but still cyclical crisis. That all we have to do is stimulate demand through public investment and build up enough business confidence so that there is a recovery of private investment and production. Then we can afford to resume efforts to control environmental and social problems.'⁴ They have misread the signs. The problems are not merely cyclic or temporary; they are intensifying (if in a wavelike pattern, with deterioration surging in, then ebbing somewhat before the next bigger wave).

Nor are larger ideological cycles quite the same, though much of the rhetoric is similar from cycle to cycle. No longer is it imagined that social or environmental problems can be substantially resolved next times around business cycles (though the illusion that most of us will be 'better off' persists, conveniently buttressed by loaded statistics).

Comparisons, features and pedigree.

Of course European civilization has more to answer for than its environmental practice, and its extraordinarily destructive impact on natural systems, especially non-European systems. It has to answer also for its impact upon humans, in particular classes, cultures or races marked out as inferior (persisting prominently into this century, emanating from sources of high Western culture). But for many of these human impacts Western philosophy does *not* have to answer, by contrast with other impacts.

Indicative of dominant environmental attitudes are attitudes towards and treatment of what were, and often still are, seen as lesser humans: slaves, blacks, women, yokels, children, or so on. Take women. Among significant philosophers, virtually the only exception before contemporary times is J.S. Mill, who, under feminine influence, deplored the subjection of women. Unfortunately, for all the brilliant and oft-quoted Milleian anti-mainstream passages, Mill himself did not swim far out of the mainstream. Most notably he did not amend his utilitarianism in the direction already contemplated by Bentham, to take passing account of the

3 For definitional details, see GE. For one of numerous summaries of present dire circumstances, see Paleocrassas.

4 Paleocrassas p.12: one among many voices.

interests and sufferings of other animals. Human chauvinism survived, relatively unscathed, for all that Mill deplored loss of flowers and habitats, throughout his works.

Features of the anti-mainstream thesis, its justification and relevant qualifications, can be brought out by considering its pedigree. Partial versions of, or variations upon, an anti-mainstream thesis can be found in several sources; for instance in the deeper-environmental and rival-paradigms productions of the 70s. Consider the following examples:

- the contrast of the Cartesian technocratic paradigm with the person planetary paradigm, where destructive environmental attitudes and practices are ascribed to adherence to the Cartesian-Enlightenment analytic-reductionist mind-set.⁵

Similar related clusters of contrasts appeared across social sciences, in political science, sociology and economics. For example

- the dominant modern paradigm, essentially the same as the Cartesian technocratic paradigm was contrasted, by Rodman, with a benign classical paradigm.

• the dominant social paradigm, another version of the same environmentally oppressive schema, was contrasted, by Cotgrove and Duff, with the alternative environmental paradigm. All these and other similar examples were duly elaborated in work on the roles (and limits) of paradigms in environmental thought and action.⁶ A critical point is that what social scientists were digging up (and reditching) was pretty much what mainstream philosophy was espousing or assuming (and, despite the new global wave of environmentalism, not that much has changed philosophically).

It is worth recording that restricted versions of these contrasts (which do not touch basic shallow utilitarian assumptions) are now being presented and considered not only by academic theorists but by bureaucrats and working politicians and economists. Thus for example

- a new development model, as contrasted with the current development model, outlined by a member of the European Commission (I. Paleocrassus)—who incidently devotes much space to documenting the present environmental crises (*environment* construed in a wide sense, to encompass decaying and dangerous urban environments often unfit for human habitation). Many features of the crisis are attributed to a faulty development model, portrayed as once perhaps appropriate, but no longer so.⁷ But there is more, much more to it than that.

5 Just such a contrast was elaborated by Drengson, drawing heavily upon Roszak. For documentation then, see their work.

6 Thus Routley in an exercise with just that title. Needless to add, paradigms are rough and uneven. Some components of them have much more to answer for than others. For example, possessive individualism with its self-interest hypothesis, has been a particularly damaging part of dominant social ideology.

7 Curiously, though his entire discussion circulates around 'the current development model', what went wrong with it and what might replace it, Paleocrassus never bothers to explain that model or

The current ubiquitous development model did not derive from nothing, but is, in main, an Enlightenment parcel, fuelled by ideals of material progress and the like, which is duly underpinned by the dominant social paradigm.⁸ It is not enough to simply change the development model; what drives it has also to be changed, namely the supporting philosophy.

Development of anti-mainstreamism in recent critical philosophy.

Differently, impacts of thorough-going (deep) environmental ethics, and of deep ecology, on philosophy and social theory were being assessed. It was observed that very much in mainstream philosophy would have to be jettisoned or substantially modified.⁹ Heavily targetted were forms of idealism, including phenomenism and existentialism, and forms of empiricism. But the criticism swept much further, to prevailing metaphysics and 'the limiting ideological principles of both the Renaissance and the Enlightenment'. In effect the criticisms extended to mainstream Western civilization.

But no doubt claims here are technically different, because, for all the merits of deep positions, it is not usually being suggested that environmental storms could not be weathered to some extent under shallow cover,¹⁰ or that duly environmental but shallow philosophies are in some way responsible for gathering environmental crises.

More sweeping anti-mainstream theses have been stated however by Hargrove, by Gare, and by others, including famous philosophers in their latter days.¹¹ To the late Heidegger we appear to owe a rather interesting (if abominable) argument, which runs as follows:

Western philosophy	→	technological mastery (supremacy, dominance)
	→	environmental destruction

— or some such, with '→' symbolising leads to, or yields (granted *leads to* faces a validity issue).

to supply its components. But what can be gleaned indicates that it is a submodel of the dominant social paradigm. For instance, we are informed that natural resources are treated as 'expendable raw materials or even worse as free goods' (p.24), in effect as without initial value.

8 For details see DP, and in condensed form Sylvan 95.

9 Notably at the end of EE, pp.188-9.

10 Deep positions *divide* significantly on this issue. For it is now widely argued that shallow environmentalism *coupled with* heavy technofix— a common position among scientists—is not going to succeed.

11 See Hargrove and Gare, and the ensuing discussion below in the text.

It is a little tempting to suggest that Hargrove presents his thesis as it were by accident, given how little he actually does to defend it. In the main, Hargrove looks as if he is repeating Roszak and Drengson rather than proceeding to a larger sounder claim.

If something like this enjoyed plausibility, it would support a *different* thesis: Western philosophy *should* end.¹² That argument is by contraposition, and then *should* transmission from an evident premiss. (Thatcherites and Wittgensteinians and others of a decidedly mixed company, reached a similar conclusion, that philosophy should end, by entirely different, very dubious by-roads.) There are several problems with the Heidegger schema. For one thing, the argument leaves out other critical components of an important environmental impact equation: notably excess human population and excess human consumption.

In any event, Heidegger certainly thought that philosophy—as distinct from a quasi-mystical “thought”—should end. But he exaggerated the importance of such an outcome by exaggerating, in characteristic German style, the importance of philosophy, the importance of German philosophy above all. For example he supposed that modern German philosophy influenced the rise of industrialism and all it brought in train. It can be plausibly contended, however, in characteristic disparaging British style, that philosophy had comparatively little influence in such ultimately damaging development as European agricultural and industrial revolutions (for example, technology, but not philosophy, played a role in the invention of artificial dyes, a development which can be seen as setting European industrialization in train:) But such examples do not penetrate deep enough to the conditions of and preparation for change.

There are myriad ways in which philosophy has shaped historical developments: through its major input into (other) ideologies such as religions, through its place in politics and law. With Protestant philosophy, in particular, basic ground for industrialism was prepared: the further development of highly exploitative Christian attitudes to nature (and to pagans) and of appropriate attitudes to technology, disciplined education and inculcation of a work ethic, and so on. Or consider, for instance, the fairly direct role of philosophy in the formulation of modern appropriation theories of property (notably by Locke), which enabled dispossession and displacement of native peoples in colonized lands, and are now ceding undue power to exploitative corporations. Consider its less direct role in the preparing ground for industrialization, the presumption that the earth, its habitats and other inhabitants, its natural landforms and its matter were and are of no value, but of value only as transformed by industrial activity, that entrepreneurs were free to do whatever they liked with them. No doubt

12 The form of the argument is extracted from Passmore's end-of-philosophy address (thanks to Passmore too for further comments). The argument is much harder to find in Heidegger's later work. But rudiments are present. The first linkage of philosophy and technology is managed by an extraordinary redefinition of technology (see p.17?). For the second linkage, Heidegger was presumably reflecting upon high destructive technology of war, nuclear weapons and so on. Note however that the middle term has changed; so the argument fails, courtesy of the ancient fallacy of equivocation.

many untoward things would have happened without much philosophy, where for instance philosophy had little influence (as with habitat destruction by excessive populations of animals). Unfortunately such examples are exceptions; as a rule, noticed philosophy appears to have helped in underwriting, shaping and even fostering dominant practices. It could regularly have been different: wherever theory operated to influence practice, philosophy could have served negatively, as a prime element of *resistance*.¹³ That too could be a significant role for philosophy today.

Whatever the extent—arguably, then, very substantial—to which they actually impinge, main philosophical traditions and ideologies do have very negative implications for environmental theory and practice. So much has been argued or alleged, in one fashion or another, in several contemporary sources.¹⁴ For example, Hargrove has recently investigated, in uneven detail, negative implications of mainstream philosophy for three environmental reaches: environmental attitudes concerned with nature and creature preservation, with nature appreciation, and with development of a proper ecological perspective. However Hargrove has ventured some of his particularly challenging themes in insufficiently careful form, thereby leaving himself unnecessarily vulnerable to criticism and counter-claims. These include the criticisms assembled by Attfield, who, though not unsympathetic to Hargrove's case, has excessively weakened the themes. For example, what Attfield presents as 'substantially correct' is Hargrove's 'verdict that the history of philosophy has discouraged preservationist attitudes', vastly less than Hargrove's actual negative verdict which comprehended considerably more than just "preservationist attitudes", and recorded a situation conspicuously worse than mere "discouragement" of nature and creature preservation, as well as much else. Indeed it is worse than Hargrove has charged; Hargrove's indictment of mainstream philosophy is itself weaker than that here ventured, which takes mainstream philosophy as thoroughly implicated in the present escalating environmental mess, through its roles as a major source and supplier of operative ideas and paradigms.

There is a single qualification, invoked incidentally by Attfield himself, that would remove much of Attfield's criticism: a restriction to *mainstream* philosophy (or differently, to dominant philosophy in a region). Consider Attfield's exceptions to 'the adverse impacts of Western philosophy', those alleged 'philosophical traditions that have encouraged taking nature seriously':-

Firstly, insofar as the Church Fathers, medieval Christians and others that Attfield alludes to are

13 On the place in philosophy, and in environmental thought in particular, of resistance, see the discussion of Rodman's preferred fourth ideal type, Ecological Resistance, in EE, p.146ff.

14 For example, see Hargrove, p.21.

philosophers at all, they are entirely minor figures, unlikely to be known to many philosophers, and but rarely or never referred to in regular philosophy courses; they do not form part of mainstream philosophy. Consider the sorts of exceptions:

- minor philosophers, many of whom we know very little about, outside gossip and speculation, such as Theophrastus, early Stoics, and lesser Epicureans.
- figures who are only secondarily or marginally philosophers, such as Hooke, Boyle, Ray and Evelyn.
- medieval and early modern Christians, who typically are not significant philosophers, and in fact were usually not committed to nature preservation and the like, but to nature management or perfection.

Secondly, these minor figures do not afford the clear support for his claims that Attfield has regularly assumed.¹⁵ Many of the statements supposed to offer support are ambivalent, or environmentally dubious, supporting some form of managerialism (e.g. perfectionism or stewardship). And in any case they have to be set against the remainder of what a figure says and does (so far as that can be ascertained), often telling against substantial environmental sensitivity and concern.

As regards the latter matter, there are, inversely, isolated claims in major philosophers (Plato is regularly cited in this regard) which may make them appear environmentally aware and even sympathetic.

Although Plato's philosophy generally suggests that he neither knew or cared about environmental problems, one passage in the *Critias* shows that he was very much aware of at least one problem: the effect of deforestation on soil quality in Greece during his own lifetime.¹⁶

Unfortunately Hargrove does but a comparatively poor job in accounting for what he alleges, Plato's indifference and lack of ecological concern.¹⁷

The reasons for Plato's indifference to serious ecological degradation of forests and soils in Greece can be ascribed to a combination of several elements of Plato's philosophy (a natural-world-dismissive ideology) including: elevation of transcendental forms as what was truly real and really of value; denigration and dismissal of the everyday natural world as utterly inferior, of entirely lower existence or even illusory, and certainly not of rational concern. This dualistic

15 In work referred to on p.127. The main historical claims, many of them based on secondary sources, are stated in his *The Ethics of Environmental Concern*. A more detailed criticism of these claims will be attempted elsewhere.

16 Hargrove, p.29.

17 This sort of problem arises not merely in regard to Plato, as Attfield observes, with decided relish. There is little doubt but that what Attfield pronounces as Hargrove's historical "excess" needs to be sharpened and much elaborated, and, in some critical areas, rectified.

ontology and axiology—a wonderfully valuable world of forms standing in complete contrast with the illusory material world of perception—was supplemented and reinforced by a corresponding epistemology. Under a tripartite theory of mind, the higher rational part, which gave epistemic access to the forms, a part exhibited only by humans and more elevated beings, was sharply separated from the two lower animal parts. Thus under Plato's conception of the human, humans and especially the important rational component of the human, stood in opposition to nature; the distinctively human task is completely separate from nature and concerned with control of it and its unruly elements. It is because what really has value—rational selves cavorting among the forms—is separate from nature, transcending it, with nature at best comprising very inferior copies, of lower existence, that it does not matter what happens to the earth and earthly things, to mere matter. That is a matter of indifference.¹⁸

A significantly better critical exercise, as regards not merely Plato, but the extensive and important neo-Platonic tradition, is effected by Gare, who also advances however an insufficiently specified version of the anti-mainstream thesis. In fact Gare tends to slide back and forth from Western civilization and metaphysics, both of which are too wide, to mechanistic materialism (and social Darwinism), which is much too narrow, particularly if social Darwinism is included (about which Gare vacillates). The latter leaves out such damaging sources as Cartesianism and contemporary idealism; the former would include the recessive Western metaphysical tradition Gare wants to refurbish, what has grown into "process" philosophy. So while there is a great deal of worthwhile historical documentation to be found in Gare, the target thesis has so far eluded his critical exercise.

While the restriction of the anti-mainstream thesis to Western doctrine is both somewhat misleading and more confining than need be, that to mainstream is different. Something of the sort is essential. But it itself raises other difficulties, beginning with: what counts as *mainstream*? How is the image cashed out? A contextual explication is conveniently straightforward, an abstract definition of 'mainstream' in terms of the principal course or flow less helpful. By mainstream Western Philosophy—Western philosophy providing the context—is meant the principal movements in that philosophy, the chief philosophers and schools and their relevant philosophical interrelations. And who and what these are gets shown, nearly ostensibly in some cases (with portraits and diagrams), in histories of Western philosophy.¹⁹ Shorter and less encyclopaedia histories in fact tend to portray just the sought

18 On this classical polarisation of nature and higher humanity, see Plumwood. For requisite elaboration, see Gare.

19 One admirable example in this regard is B. Russell's *Wisdom of the West*, a popular work with a title that should be viewed henceforth, given that Russell was serious, with some incredulity.

mainstream (that they differ somewhat in coverage does not matter, but emphasizes, in a super-valuational fashion, the blurred edges of this typically vague mainstream). Long histories usually indicate the mainstream both by the way they apportion their space, and also in their judgements as to what is important, which were principal movements, and so on.

The essential qualification, to mainstream or similar, is independently grasped by Singer in his account of the dominant Western paradigm and his brief but pointed criticism of Aristotelianism and mainstream Hebrew and Christian philosophy.

The biblical story of creation, in Genesis, makes clear the Hebrew view of the special place of human beings in the divine plan:

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

And God blessed them, and God said upon them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

Today Christians debate the meaning of this grant of 'dominion'; and those concerned about the environment claim that it should be regarded not as a license to do as we will with other living things, but rather as a directive to look after them on God's behalf, and be answerable to God for the way in which we treat them. There is, however, little justification in the text itself for such an interpretation; and given the example God set when he drowned almost every animal on earth in order to punish human beings for their wickedness, it is no wonder that people should think the flooding of a single river valley is nothing worth worrying about. After the flood there is a repetition of the grant of dominion in more ominous language:

And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered.

The implication is clear: to act in a way that causes fear and dread to everything that moves on the earth is not improper; it is, in fact, in accordance with a God-given decree.

The most influential early Christian thinkers had no doubts about how man's dominion was to be understood. 'Doth God care for oxen?' asked Paul, in the course of a discussion of an Old Testament command to rest one's ox on the sabbath, but it was only a rhetorical question—he took it for granted that the answer must be negative, and the command was to be explained in terms of some benefit to humans. Augustine shared this line of thought; referring to stories in the New Testament in which Jesus destroyed a fig tree and caused a herd of pigs to drown, Augustine explained these puzzling incidents as intended to teach us that 'to refrain from the killing of animals and the destroying of plants is the height of superstition'.

It is a little surprising, too, that the usual uncritical apriorism about the natural world and its other inhabitants, should pervade Russell's work. But consider, to take just one example, the inaccurate and demeaning comparison of animals with humans that fires up his neglected analysis *Power*.

When Christianity prevailed in the Roman Empire, it also absorbed elements of the ancient Greek attitude to the natural world. The Greek influence was entrenched in Christian philosophy by the greatest of the medieval scholastics, Thomas Aquinas, whose life work was the melding of Christian theology with the thought of Aristotle. Aristotle regarded nature as a hierarchy in which those with less reasoning ability exist for the sake of those with more:

Plants exist for the sake of animals, and brute beasts for the sake of man—domestic animals for his use and food, wild ones (or at any rate most of them) for food and other accessories of life, such as clothing and various tools.

Since nature makes nothing purposeless or in vain, it is undeniably true that she has made all animals for sake of man.

In his own major work, the *Summa Theologica*, Aquinas followed this passage from Aristotle almost word for word, adding that the position accords with God's command, as given in Genesis. In his classification of sins, Aquinas has room only for sins against God, ourselves, or our neighbours. There is no possibility of sinning against non-human animals, or against the natural world. This was the thinking of *mainstream Christianity* for at least its first eighteen centuries. There were gentler spirits, certainly, like Basil, John Chrysostom, and Francis of Assisi, but for most of Christian history they have had no significant impact on the dominant tradition. It is therefore worth emphasising ... major features of this *dominant Western tradition*, because these features can serve as a point of comparison when we discuss different views of the natural environment.

According to the dominant Western tradition, the natural world exists for the benefit of human beings. God gave human beings dominion over the natural world, and God does not care how we treat it. Human beings are the only morally important members of this world. Nature itself is of no intrinsic value, and the destruction of plants and animals cannot be sinful, unless by this destruction we harm humans beings.²⁰

Singer goes on to labour the familiar point that anthropocentrism of this harsh tradition need not exclude some concern for the preservation of nature. But for most of recorded history it has not included much concern. Moreover, lesser Christian alternatives, notably stewardship and perfectionism, while they lessen some of the brutal impact of domination upon the natural world, offer little improvement upon longer term invidious environmental erosion, or as regards retention of now emphasized desiderata: retention of wilderness, and maintenance and enhancement of biodiversity.

As disturbingly, the rival humanist paradigm of modern times, running from the French enlightenment through 20th century Anglo-American empiricism, as exemplified in Russell, Ayer and Quine among many other luminaries, differs from mainstream Christianity only in leaving God out of the account (as He does not exist, He is utterly impotent, so to illicitly say). Exceptional human features themselves, naturalistically achieved, justify dominion and domination.

²⁰ Singer pp.265-8, italics added. Singer prefers *tradition* discourse to the substantially equivalent (historical linkage diminished) *paradigm* discourse.

Outline of a main argument

Detailed argument for the anti-mainstream thesis, as refined, is, so to say, case by case, through cases in the mainstream history, considering main philosophers and main schools. Some of this hard piecemeal work, some already illustrated, has been carried out, in more or less detail by others: Drengson, Gare, Hargrove, Heidegger and Passmore, among many others. But, within that uneven treatment, there remain conspicuous gaps. For example, among the principal 17th century rationalists, while there is much material upon Descartes (along now with a conservative back-lash defending Descartes), and some increasingly divisive material upon Spinoza, there is little at all on Leibnitz.

As there is no prospect here of reworking the dismal history of Western philosophy, case by case, let us consider a few illustrative examples, which help plug some obvious gaps. Take again the distinguished early modern rationalists—Descartes, Leibnitz and Spinoza—as examples. Descartes' significant negative contribution is now well-known, so much so that Descartes is sometimes represented as the main villain of the environmental piece.²¹ Owing to the premature enthusiasm of various deep ecologists for Spinoza's contribution, the blacker environmental feature of Spinoza's theory have been enthusiastically exposed to view by a jubilant opposition. As a result, some deep ecologists have back-tracked, but only a little:

Some Spinoza scholars have recently claimed that an ecological interpretation of Spinozism is not justified. There are notes in the *Ethics* where Spinoza says that we can treat other animals in any way which best suits us. [These authors] have argued that although the metaphysics is nonanthropocentric, the ethics is rightfully anthropocentric. Schopenhauer, who was steeped in Eastern philosophy, was quick to pick up on the anomalous attitude of Spinoza toward other animals: "Spinoza's contempt for animals, as mere things for our use, and declared by him to be without right, is thoroughly Jewish, and in conjunction with pantheism is at the same time absurd and abominable." Arne Naess and I agree that Schopenhauer was correct in his criticism of Spinoza. Naess admits that although Spinoza himself was what we would now call a "speciesist", his system is not speciesist.²²

If Spinoza's system includes his anthropocentric ethics (and is not illegitimately restricted to an ecologically convenient selection from his holistic metaphysics), then it seems Naess is astray. The negative character of Spinoza's contribution was rediscovered by Bookchin (unversed in basic deep ecological texts), who applies this finding to lambast deep ecology regarding 'double standards' in its

one-sided treatment of philosophers and philosophical traditions. Spinoza, for example is cast frequently as a nouveau Taoist and is interpreted more in the romantic tradition than in the scholastic one to which he has more affinities, despite his many differences with medieval thinkers. That this great thinker was militantly anthropocentric is consistently ignored by deep

21 Thus for example by Drengson.

22 Session, in Appendix D to Devall and Sessions, p.240.

ecologists, as far as I have been able to ascertain. I have yet to encounter any attempt to explain Spinoza's extraordinary statement: "Besides man, we know of no particular thing in nature in whose mind we may rejoice, and whom we can associate with ourselves in friendship or any sort of fellowship; therefore, whatsoever there be in nature besides man, a regard for our advantage does not call on us to preserve, but to preserve or destroy according to its various capabilities, and to adapt to our use as best we may."²³

So much for sensitive treatment of natural environments and their other inhabitants! Spinoza appears to have irreparably damaged any claim to exceptional positive standing.

So far the third of the great rationalist trio, Leibnitz, appears to have escaped critical re-appraisal (in an overdue *green* history of philosophy). Yet, as it happens, Leibnitz's position can be applied to illustrate features of considerable green generality. In brief, any philosophy is liable to be environmentally unfriendly that guarantees satisfaction of all or enough elements of the consumption impact equation, and so would generate excessive impacts. Leibnitz's overall position does just that. Consider what might be called *Leibnitzianism*, in honour of Leibnitz (though Leibnitz's fragmentary work did not initiate any genuine historic school). Leibnitz was heavily committed to all of human population growth, unfettered technological advance, and human lifestyles of consumption, in short, to precisely those factors that combine in the familiar impact recipe to produce excessive human impacts upon environments. There is fair evidence for these contentions. First, Leibnitz was an early exponent of utilitarianism, indeed he was all-round an enthusiastic maximizer. From his formulation of utilitarianism, he drew an immediate obvious corollary: the directive to increase human population (maximizing on aggregate human pleasure is most obviously achieved by production of more happy humans, other aspects of which technology and affluence can assure).²⁴ Secondly, Leibnitz was a technology enthusiast; he was heavily committed to the development and use of scientific technology, for which he had all sorts of schemes (e.g. not only the *characteristica universalis* intended to encapsulate all of knowledge in an accessible useable form, a complete calculus duly mechanised, but as well numerous technological projects.²⁵). Thirdly, he was committed to an affluent lifestyle for himself and (through symmetry and basic assumptions of utilitarianism) for others. For his own part, he abandoned an academic career at an obscure German university 'in favour of the

23 Bookchin, p.261. The quotation from Spinoza's *Ethics* is fully cited in Bookchin.

24 For Leibnitz's anticipation of utilitarianism, see Hruschka. For Leibnitz's immediate application of the principle, to support human population increase, see p.172.

25 'Leibnitz's interest in machinery is illustrated by his complicated plan to drain the Harz mines, which involved the construction of a new type of windmill, and a virtually friction-free pump', Cottingham p.193. For a detailed account of Leibnitz's extensive entrepreneurial and technological activities, see Aiton.

more active and lucrative pursuits of the courtier and diplomat' and, so it turned out, the bright lights of major European cities and grand tours of Europe.²⁶ No doubt Leibnitz's lifestyle commitments need not (and may not) be reflected in his philosophy, which may have independent environmental merit, for example as stimulation or input for later developments. There is unfortunately little evidence that that is so. Nonetheless, substantial fragments of Leibnitz's philosophy—of a different unauthentic subphilosophy—do admit environmental bending and adaptation, in a way that Descartes' philosophy does not at all easily.

Leibnitz has sometimes been accounted environmentally friendly. Some of that apparent friendliness appears due rather to scholastic conservatism. Thus he was opposed to mechanism; he was sympathetic to the organic and teleological, which did not contract to isolated human and superhuman loci. His metaphysical theory of monads, which are centres of living energy, effectively distributed life everywhere, though not equally. Harmony and order too prevailed throughout the universe, though under God's maximizing management, the presence of which they duly established! But even this life-expanding harmonious order, variants of which are now familiar from Whiteheadian and deep ecological quarters, was not as benign as it has superficially appeared.

Leibnitz supposed that, by virtue of pre-established harmony and final causes governing inevitable progress, humans would not go wrong in the longer term in their environmental activities, that they could not '*cumulatively* make undesirable changes in nature'.²⁷ Leibnitz joyfully foresaw more and more of the Earth coming under cultivation, and its long-term advancement to a complete intensive garden, even if there were occasional relapses where parts deteriorated back temporarily towards wild state. Leibnitz even criticised Cartesianism, now widely regarded as prime villain of the environmental piece, as *failing* 'to provide the modal stimulus to the control of nature' ... 'to scientific advance'. The idea of control, advancing to total control, total management, is prophesized in Leibnitz (in a sort of chauvinistic Gaia hypothesis). He saw 'order as progressively increasing, with the help of man [as] a finisher of nature. He boldly applauded the idea of progress to the earth as a unit, assuming both an orderliness on earth and an orderliness in the changes it had undergone by man'.²⁸

An important corollary does emerge: that a promising new partial metaphysics is no panacea for improved environmental performance or paradigms. Not merely neutral

26 Cottingham p.24, p.26.

27 Glacken p.478. As he remarks, these bold assumptions made by Leibnitz have proved wrong. The preposterous infallibility-in-practice assumption has resurfaced recently in a less attractive aspect of the Gaia hypothesis as peddled by Lovelock.

28 Glacken p.506.

metaphysics, but even positive metaphysics, such as certain organic and process theories, are compatible with, and can be coupled with, damaging philosophies, social theories and lifestyles. It is almost enough to consider the theories and practices, commitments and lifestyles of Aristotle, Leibnitz and Whitehead.²⁹

Things even deteriorated on many fronts under the main philosophical movements that succeeded Leibnitz in Germany, and overwhelmed European and much of Western philosophy for more than a century, namely Kantianism and subsequent German idealism. Virtually all the prominent positions in this philosophical galaxy, in the main strongly supportive of a supposedly enlightened Protestantism, presumed and imposed a blanketing human chauvinism and associated social reductionism. For example, the universal universe of Kantian ethics composed the circle of humans (and perhaps super humans) only; nothing else counted, and even the proper treatment of animals (which was at least not entirely neglected) was supposed reduced to that of interhuman relations. Regrettably human chauvinistic assumptions also underlay and handicapped more benign recessive alternatives in Germany, such as those afforded by Herder and through the much heralded nature romanticism movement. As is widely appreciated now, later parts of the broad German mainstream flowing on from Kant were much more deleterious, neglecting Enlightenment advances and sponsoring elements of Aryan or super-race chauvinism.

Things were certainly rather different off the Continent in modern England, but in most environmental respects hardly better. But no doubt a different example is furnished by mainstream British philosophy, a philosophy which has influenced most of the English speaking world for the worse, environmentally and also otherwise. This philosophy is highly empiricist in orientation, a reductionistic ideas, impressions or sense-data empiricism characteristically sharing the anthropocentrism of idealism,. Worse, this empiricism normally expands through ethics and social theory in the form of utilitarianism, typically a possessive individualistic human chauvinistic utilitarianism.³⁰

Despite appearances and propaganda, there has been comparatively little improvement in recent times. For positivism and its irrationalist successors, all ecologically shallow, all committed to technofix and for the most part to social engineering, have been prime

29 Leibnitz's standing in the history of philosophy is somewhat curious. His main achievement, setting aside his reputation as an intellectual wizard with *lots* of ideas, appears to be spasmodic work upon a beautiful ruin, an incomplete (and incompletionable) metaphysics, of which only tantalizing fragmentary structures were ever available. It is not even as if there is a surviving supply of challenging bad arguments that can be put before baffled students, as with Descartes and Berkeley for instance.

30 For elaboration and defence of these stark claims, see Sylvan 94.

philosophical inputs into the physical sciences and also into mainstream economics. Shallow utilitarianism persists as the main philosophical informant of and input into social sciences, including fashionable new areas such as ecological economics, public choice theory, and so on. Incidentally, not much is to be expected in the way of deeper change from contemporary universities and research institutions from where these new fashions emanate. For these places are, by and large, part of the advanced industrial problematic; they are, almost without exception, urbanocentric conjectural-information factories. Unfortunately, the other main movements in Anglo-American philosophy are even more conservative, for example analytic philosophy and its variants, such as conceptual analysis, and Wittgensteinianism. For they leave almost everything as it is, as environmentally unsatisfactory as it is.³¹

Nor is recent Continental philosophy, a main contrast class, any better, but in many respects worse. Anthropocentric emphases remain heavy in both French and German philosophy, which are the predominant forms. Both existentialism and phenomenism, as well as passé-isms such as Marxism, are mired in human chauvinism. Social criticism, which has at least seriously addressed wider environmental problems, remains shallow. For example, the communicational theory of Habermas is heavily biased in favour of articulate humans, and excludes other animals and the rest of creation from any but very secondary roles.

Modest out-fall.

No doubt the anti-mainstream thesis is not the sort of proposition that most philosophers care to encounter. For one reason, it may seem like offering free ammunition to those who would like to put an end to philosophy, for political or ideological purposes. But it does not: not without a serious confusion of *change*—or end *in* present dominant form—with *end*, end period. Similarly, it may appear to give reinforcement to those who, with scant justification, have prematurely pronounced the end of philosophy.³² But this makes a similar confusion.

Spectacular conclusions such as those that have sometimes been drawn from considerations like those assembled—such as, again, the end of philosophy, the demise of grand philosophy, the deconstruction of metaphysics—do not then emerge. For one reason, it is not philosophy that leads to disaster, but only certain sorts of grand philosophy, gray and brown sorts, which accordingly are liable to critical rejection. No end is implied to less grand and greener regional philosophies, recessive metaphysics, or the like.

31 Such a theme is developed, though poorly and in a social setting, by Gellner. His case applies, with even more force, to environmental matters.

32 Later authors tend to appeal back to earlier false prophets, notably Heidegger, who really had no viable arguments for his floated claims. There are other, quite different, equally poor, arguments to an end to philosophy, for instance those to an end of ideology, from the fall of one awful alternative, soviet "communism". And so on; see also above.

Development of some recessive alternative or other—different ones—is now a favoured alternative idea (thus Gare and others advocating elaboration of process philosophy, environmentalists favouring ecological paradigms, etc.). But a more effective course, duly pluralistic, looks to locally and regionally based philosophies, with worthwhile linkages with local aspirations and regional cultures.³³ Once again, there are philosophies and philosophies—and appalling regional philosophies (e.g. business philosophies, as promoted by local chambers of commerce; fundamentalist philosophies stoked by organised religions). Ways out, if they can be found, lie not through reproduction of dominant destructive ideologies at local levels, but through less damaging alternatives, fitted to ecoregional circumstances.

Some broad corollaries of the anti-mainstream thesis are accordingly evident. Philosophy teaching and practice should be drastically reorganised, almost everywhere. Many features of historical approaches would be transformed. “Great thinker” and like series would vanish. Celebratory aspects of philosophy approached through its history would be abandoned: both the mainstream historic emphasis and the celebration. Grand but invariably flawed figures from history would no longer be revered, or celebrated in the same way, even if some of their arguments are retained for exhibition or criticism. There would be new histories of philosophy, different in different regions, with their own pantheons of prominent philosophers, pantheons not set in stone. Nor would systematic philosophy remain unscathed. For its usual operational framework is that of the dominant social paradigm. It would be relocated and reoriented.

There *would* be an end to the transfer of inappropriate models, technology (including logical) and practices (as of temperate agriculture to tropical regions). There would be a reduction in borrowing and unseemly imitations. Borrowed philosophy is inappropriate for Latin America, or elsewhere in the South. Consider French philosophy, which along with Catholicism and Marxism, still tends to swamp what little happens in Latin America. The milieu in which French philosophy occurs is not established, the infrastructure is not in place, namely a variety of literary criticism and like mags, an active cafe society, and so on. French philosophy does not export that well and, by and large, should not be imported, for all its flashy fashionability.

Regions should try to do their own appropriate intellectual things, importing only what they really need. Regional philosophies do not, after all, have to start from nothing or nowhere; they can draw upon and adapt what already has some local basis, perhaps a strong base. What is more, they can be directly applied to prevent or delay outside destructive incursions. For illustration, consider the place of tribally recognised values of forests in delaying grand pulpwood and integrated forestry [integrated destruction] projects. Through a

33 No doubt this is an intended idea in Caldera, for all that it is scarcely articulated or developed. Similarly in other productions on Latin-American philosophy.

regional network, a mesh of constraints can be introduced, controlling intrusions of unregulated or prejudicially regulated international capitalism. Compare a promising strategy for trying to achieve a nuclear free world, building up by free or freed regions.

Nor does a *case* for ideological regionalism have to start from nothing. Some of the arguments for regionalism in organisation also support or suggest regionalization in reaches of ideas, including philosophy. For example, many of the advantages of subsidization transfer. Naturalism regionalism does not preclude global linkages; what it should resist are forms of imperialism.³⁴

None of this will be easy, or achieved without effort. Change is generally hard to achieve against inertia. And most intellectuals, for all their craving to be first in little approved ideas, are resistant to extensive change. Moreover the changes modestly proposed will not be simple; there is not, and cannot be, a simple uniform alternative. What is needed is fragmentation, pluralisation, regionalisation—unpopular, unfashionable ideas.

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34 Fortunately we have not yet ascended to an edified world philosophy, any more than the world car (despite American efforts at globalization, including Solomon and Higgins), but the number of mainstream models is now rather small, and almost all so far are noisy and polluting.

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