

Environmentalists: The New Life Haters

by

**Michael S. Berliner, Ph.D.,
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There is a grave danger facing mankind. The danger is not from acid rain, global warming, smog, or the logging of rain forests, as environmentalists would have us believe. The danger to mankind is from environmentalism.

The fundamental goal of environmentalists is not clean air and clean water; rather it is the demolition of technological/industrial civilization. Their goal is not the advancement of human health, human happiness, and human life; rather it is a subhuman world where "nature" is worshipped like the totem of some primitive religion.

If the good of man were the aim of environmentalists, they would embrace the industry and technology that have eradicated the diseases, plagues, pestilence, and famines that brought wholesale death and destruction prior to the Industrial Revolution. They would embrace free enterprise and technology as the only solution to the relatively minor dangers that now exist minor compared to the risks of living in a nontechnological world.

But by word and deed, they demonstrate their contempt for human life.

In a nation founded on the pioneer spirit, they have made "development" an evil word, attacking the man-made as an infringement on pristine nature. They inhibit or prohibit the development of Alaskan oil, offshore drilling, nuclear power and every other practical form of energy. In the name of "preserving nature," they undermine our quality of life and make us dependent on madmen like Saddam Hussein. Housing, commerce, and jobs are sacrificed to spotted owls and snail darters. Medical research is sacrificed to the "rights" of mice. Logging is sacrificed to the "rights" of trees. No instance of the progress which brought man out of the cave is safe from the onslaught of those "protecting" the environment from man, whom they consider a rapist and despoiler by his very essence.

Nature, they insist, has "intrinsic value," to be revered for its own sake, irrespective of any benefit to man. As a consequence, man is to be prohibited from using nature for his own ends. Since nature supposedly has value and goodness in itself, any human action to change the environment is necessarily branded as immoral. This doctrine of intrinsic value, points out economist George Reisman, turns man into "the systematic destroyer of the good." { 1 } In fact, Reisman explains, "the degree of man's alleged destructiveness and evil is directly in proportion to his loyalty to his essential nature," i.e., his use of reason to control his environment and direct his life. The doctrine of intrinsic value, writes Reisman, is nothing more than

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Nature, they insist, has "intrinsic value," to be revered for its own sake, irrespective of any benefit to man. As a consequence, man is to be prohibited from using nature for his own ends. Since nature supposedly has value and goodness in itself, any human action which changes the environment is necessarily branded as immoral. Environmentalists invoke this argument from intrinsic value not against lions that eat gazelles or beavers that fell trees; they invoke it only against man, only when man wants something. The environmentalists' concept of intrinsic value is nothing but the desire to destroy human values.

"a rationalization for preexisting hatred of man." It is not invoked against caribou who feed on vegetation, or wolves who eat caribou, or microbes that attack wolves. It is invoked only against man, only when man wants something. The alleged intrinsic value of vegetation is to be protected not against caribou but against man's desire for Alaskan oil. "In other words," writes Reisman, "the doctrine of intrinsic value is nothing but a doctrine of the negation of human values. It is pure nihilism."

"The intrinsic theory," charges Ayn Rand, "divorces the concept of 'good' from beneficiaries, and the concept of 'value' from valuer and purposeclaiming that the good is good in, by, and of itself." {2} But, in fact, she observes, "The concept of 'value' is not primary; it presupposes an answer to the question: Of value to whom and for what?" {3}

Values exist in a hierarchy, some being pursued only because they are means to other, higher ends. This implies the existence of an ultimate end that grounds the hierarchy. "Without an ultimate goal or end, there can be no lesser goals or means.... It is only an ultimate goal, an end in itself, that makes the existence of values possible." {4} Things qualify as good or evil, valuable or detrimental, only insofar as they serve or frustrate the ultimate value; and the ultimate value is one's life. "Man must choose his actions, values and goals by the standard of that which is proper to man in order to achieve, maintain, fulfill and enjoy that ultimate value, that end in itself, which is his own life." {5}

The ideal world of environmentalists is not 20th century Western civilization; it is the Garden of Eden, a world with no human intervention in nature, a world without innovation or change, a world without effort, a world where survival is somehow guaranteed, a world where man has mystically merged with the "environment." Had the environmentalist mentality prevailed in the 18th and 19th centuries, we would have had no Industrial Revolution, a situation environmentalists would cheer at least those few who might have managed to survive without the lifesaving benefits of modern science and technology.

The expressed goal of environmentalism is to prevent man from changing his environment, from intruding on nature, and that is why environmentalism is fundamentally antiman. For, in reality, man as such is an "intrusion" on the status quo of nature. Environmentalists, in fact, have a distorted concept of "the environment," as Reisman shows: "If, in contrast to the environmentalists, one means by 'environment' the surroundings of man then it becomes clear that all of man's productive activities have the inherent tendency to improve his environment indeed, that is their essential purpose." Man's life requires productive work, which as Ayn Rand described it, is a

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The expressed goal of environmentalism is to prevent man from changing his environment, from intruding on nature. That is why environmentalism is fundamentally antiman. For, in reality, man as such is an "intrusion" on the status quo of nature. Only by intrusion can man avoid pestilence and famine. Only by intrusion can man project longrange goals and control his life. Intrusion improves the environment, i.e., man's surroundings. Man's life requires productive work, which, as Ayn Rand described it, is a process of "shaping matter to fit one's purpose, of translating an idea into physical form, of remaking the earth in the image of one's values" (Atlas Shrugged, p. 937).

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They don't mean it? Well, heed their words, for the consistent environmentalists openly announce their goals. "Given the total, absolute, and final disappearance of Homo Sapiens," writes philosopher Paul Taylor, "not only would the Earth's community of life continue to exist, but in all probability, its wellbeing would be enhanced. Our presence, in short, is not needed. And if we were to take the standpoint of that Life Community and give voice to its true interests, the ending of the human epoch on Earth would most likely be greeted with a hearty 'Good riddance!'" {7} In a glowing review of Bill McKibben's *The End of Nature*, biologist David Graber writes: "Human happiness, and certainly human fecundity, are not as important as a wild and healthy planet....[The ecosystem has] intrinsic value, more value to me than another human body or a billion of them.... Until such time as Homo Sapiens should decide to rejoin nature, some of us can only hope for the right virus to come along." {8} Such is the naked essence of environmentalism: it mourns the death of one whale or tree but actually welcomes the death of billions of people. A more malevolent, manhating philosophy is unimaginable.

The guiding principal of environmentalism is self-sacrifice, the sacrifice of longer lives, healthier lives, more prosperous lives, more enjoyable lives. But an individual is not born in servitude. He has a moral right to live his own life for his own sake. He has no duty to sacrifice the needs of others and certainly not the needs of the nonhuman.

To save mankind from environmentalism, what's needed is not the appeasing, compromising approach of today's conservatives, who urge a "balance" between the needs of man and the "needs" of the environment. To save mankind requires the return to a philosophy which makes life on earth possible: Ayn Rand's philosophy of Objectivism.

References:

1. George Reisman, "The Toxicity of Environmentalism," (1990, The Jefferson School of Philosophy, Economics, and Psychology, P.O. Box 2934, Laguna Hills, Ca 92654; all subsequent quotes from Professor Reisman are from this pamphlet).
2. Ayn Rand, "What is Capitalism?" (1965) in *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal* (New America Library), p. 21.

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To save mankind from environmentalism, what's needed is not the appeasing, compromising approach of today's conservatives, who urge a "balance" between the needs of man and the "needs" of the environment. To save mankind requires the wholesale rejection of environmentalism as hatred of science, technology, progress, and human life. To save mankind requires a philosophy of reason and individualism, a philosophy which makes life on earth possible: Ayn Rand's philosophy of Objectivism.

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3. Ayn Rand, "The Objectivist Ethics" (1961) in *The virtue of Selfishness* (New American Library), p. 15.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

6. Ayn Rand, "Galt's Speech," from *Atlas Shrugged* (1957), in *For the New Intellectual* (new American Library), p. 130.

7. Paul Taylor, *Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics* (1986, Princeton University Press), p. 115.

8. David M. Graber, "Book Review" section, the *Los Angeles Times*, (October 29, 1989), p. 9.

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