

Introduction

The essays gathered here were originally published in *Environmental Ethics*, recognized as the leading journal in the field, indeed, as almost defining environmental ethics as an area of philosophical inquiry (Fox 1990). The maturing of environmental ethics and its increasing acceptance into the philosophical community are manifest in several ways, such as the growth of professional societies, other journals, specialized graduate programs, and increasing numbers of academic books on environmental ethics. Perhaps the leading indicator that the field has arrived is the appearance of environmental ethics anthologies from trade publishers. I find collections that are potpourris, as well as ones that emphasize deep ecology, ecofeminism, animal rights, and so on; to date, no anthology has emphasized postmodern themes. So the collection here is unique, and it may be useful in opening up postmodern approaches to those who have not heretofore considered the possibility. I have confined my selections to essays that have already been refereed and published in *Environmental Ethics*, although there are many other possibilities, on the premise that others will find postmodern approaches more acceptable if they see that ecophilosophy is already being done that way.

Postmodernism is notoriously difficult to define, finding a multiplicity of meanings within the natural and social sciences as well as architecture, literature, art, and the humanities (Natoli and Hutcheon 1993). Postmodern currents run through disciplines as disparate as environmental history, ecotheology, literary criticism, nonlinear thermodynamics, ecophilosophy, and chaos theory. Postmodernism is methodologically open; postmodernists employ a wide variety of techniques in their work, such as critical rhetoric, poststructuralist methods, and discourse theory. Although some common themes run across postmodern thought, such as the opposition to essentialism (the idea that there are timeless, universal truths), it cannot be claimed that a postmodern paradigm exists.

Accordingly, no definition can be given for postmodern environmental ethics, not even in terms of a broad methodological statement. Any such definition would be too narrow and thereby exclude some of the essays anthologized here. Perhaps its methodological and definitional openness indicates that postmodernism is more than anything else a transformational process that is helping to reshape modern culture. Clearly, as an avalanche of scientific data makes clear, we live in a time of ecocrisis. If the modern trajectory

continues, the likely outcome will be the collapse of our social and natural ecology (Firor 1990; Wilson 1992; Kennedy 1993). Life will go on, but civilization will no longer be a possibility. The question postmodern environmental ethics faces is that, paradoxically, of defining itself through the very transformational process that leads toward sustainability (Wright 1992).

Regardless of the problems inherent in defining postmodernism, the essays gathered here can be contextualized in two ways: positively, in terms of the so-called linguistic turn and its implications; and negatively, in terms of the kind of ethical theory to which postmodern environmental ethics is a reaction. The following section offers an account of the linguistic turn, followed by an account of two general postmodern approaches, the deconstructive or negative and reconstructive or affirmative. In the ensuing section I develop an account of postmodern environmental ethics as effective discourse; so conceptualized, when postmodern environmental ethics has run its course, we will find ourselves living in a new age (and the term *postmodernism* will pass out of usage). In the final section I contextualize each chapter to show, insofar as possible, that there is a coherence through difference to the postmodern project. Readers will have to decide for themselves if such a context is useful, that is, offers advantages relative to other interpretive frames.

The Linguistic Turn and Postmodernism

Paradoxically, it may seem, my approach to postmodern environmental ethics begins with the scientific revolution and its consequences for the theory of language. My rationale is simple: no adequate description of postmodern environmental ethics can be given apart from language. Modern science has had an enormous effect on the way in which language is conceptualized. Indeed, it can be claimed that modern science engendered the so-called linguistic turn. Thus, modern science has also had an enormous effect on postmodern environmental ethics, since it explicitly takes the linguistic turn. But I am getting ahead of the story.

Painting with a broad brush, it is permissible to say that prior to the twentieth century most modern people, including intellectuals, believed that a sure and certain knowledge of the world was theoretically possible, if not actualized in practice. So-called modernists typically believe that human reason—epitomized by modern science—is supreme, that it exists without limits, as it were, that the whole world lies open to disclosure by human intelligence. It is also characteristic of modernists to consider religion as a mythic form of consciousness, the hangover from a premodern worldview that combined Greek speculative philosophy with Hebraic cosmology. The modern worldview, thus, overturned a view of language that saw nature as a divinely

constructed semiosis—literally, the words (works) of God. Interestingly, as many commentators argue, as modern science came into being it initially traded on the legitimacy of religion, on the premise that scientific language was not a threat to religious belief but simply a more accurate description of nature. Today science no longer justifies itself through the claim that it more accurately reveals the underlying principles of the creation. Further, religious narrative has been excluded from the modern worldview; nature is no longer thought of as an expression of a divine semiosis but as nothing more than objectively described matter in motion.

Which is to say that a designative theory of language (also called *representationalism*) now dominates the modern mind (Taylor 1985). Scientific language is conceptualized not as constitutive but as representative of a nature that stands apart from the human enterprise as an object to be objectively known and technologically appropriated. Accordingly, true statements are understood as the mirror of nature, conceived as veridical accounts (in the case of true knowledge) of reality represented through scientific law and description (objective knowledge). The rest is history, a cultural trajectory dominated by instrumental reason and utilitarian values that culminates in global ecocrisis and, as Herman Daly and John Cobb, Jr., (1989) remind us, social crisis.

However, a number of unsettling events, some engendered by natural science itself, have weakened the modern worldview. With the rise of evolutionary thinking and nonlinear thermodynamics, some members of the scientific community came to believe that the cosmos was better described in Heraclitean than Parmenidean terms (Bohm 1957; Prigogine 1980). A number of philosophers, including C. S. Peirce, Henri Bergson, and Alfred North Whitehead (Griffin 1993), can be read as being among the postmodern avant garde, that is, as initiating a sustained critique of the modern worldview and affirming an alternative or postmodern worldview. Quantum theory and the theory of indeterminacy also contributed to the unravelling of modernism, implying that not only was the world in process, but that various aspects of the process influenced or co-determined other aspects. Even the most basic or atomic level of reality appears indeterminate. Further, events are more participatory interminglings than subjective perceptions of objective things standing apart from human consciousness.

In the wake of scientific discovery came increasingly refined observations of scientific behavior, both longitudinally, that is, the process of scientific discovery over time, and sociologically, that is, the behavior of scientists in groups. Scientists themselves, like Albert Einstein (1954), Erwin Schrödinger (1952), and C. F. von Weizsäcker (1949), argued vigorously that science is incomprehensible apart from a culture that gives it meaning, purpose, a *raison d'être*. Historians and philosophers of science, like T. S. Kuhn

(1970) and Mary Hesse (1980), made evident that scientific inquiry is an ongoing social practice carried out through symbolic means. Knowledge itself is socially constructed, subject to the ongoing historical and linguistic processes of conjecture and refutation. Today, science is conceptualized by a generation of postmodern scholars as a narrative practice operating in and through language (Locke 1992).

To say that science itself is linguistically and historically constructed is not only permissible, but perhaps the only defensible position. A scientific account of the world is no more and no less than an explanation proffered at a particular place and time that is judged by a particular community of researchers to be true. Nonetheless, at some future time almost any scientific belief may find itself to be perfectly apropos of nothing. This does not mean, of course, that scientific truth does not exist, or that we are caught up in a world of vicious relativism, where whatever anyone says is true just because it has been said. Rather it means that scientific truth exists relative to a community of practitioners who have created a variety of procedures that guide research and criteria by which truth claims are evaluated. Further, as Prigogine and Stengers (1984) insist, alternative communities exist and therefore alternative descriptions for any natural process can always be offered.

Given this brief account of science and its situatedness in language, it is little wonder that postmodern currents run even more swiftly and deeply in the humanities generally and philosophy specifically. Although it is to some extent arbitrary to contextualize postmodern philosophy in terms of the linguistic turn, it is necessary in an abbreviated account such as this introduction. Suffice it to say that, after Wittgenstein's (1953) *Philosophical Investigations*, no claim that philosophical knowledge is apodictic can be sustained any more than it can be claimed that scientific knowledge is an isomorphic representation of reality. Even formal logic itself (as well as mathematics, though I do not discuss mathematics here), long believed to be a province of timeless laws of thought and transcendental forms of argument, has been reconceptualized. Postmodern thinkers such as Stephen Toulmin (1958) and Andrea Nye (1990) have made the social construction of logic evident. Again, as with charges from positivists that postmodernists relativize science, such reconceptualization of logic is often misunderstood as tantamount to irrationalism. In truth, postmodern accounts of logic do not deconstruct so much as reconceptualize the understanding of argumentative discourse. We now realize both what logic is, the indispensable formalization of argument forms that vary across disciplines (rather than knowledge of field invariant criteria that determine valid inferences in all cases at all times), and what it is not, that is, not the only mode of human cognition or reason. Indeed, the cogency of postmodern prose depends upon the appeal to logical criteria, such as the notion that the plausibility of conclusions hangs on supporting evidence.

Reconstructive postmodernists, such as Steven Connor, David Griffin, and Richard Rorty, *affirm in different ways* the importance of linguistic conventions that frame rational discussion and the possibility of collective projects. Rorty (1991) finds it difficult to imagine any discussion of solidarity that is consistent with political freedom outside the narrative tradition of democratic liberalism. Griffin (1988) argues that nihilistic deconstruction ignores the basic truth that the past conditions the future. However problematic life may be, no generation is free to entirely repudiate the past and invent the future *ex nihilo*. The question, Griffin argues, is what kind of a worldview postmodernism is going to create. Connor (1989) makes a convincing case that nihilistic deconstructionists refute themselves, because they presuppose criteria for critical analysis, rational argumentation, and even the inherent structure (grammar) of language in their writing.

After Wittgenstein, *reality* is a word that increasingly finds itself between quotation marks: "reality." The modern project aimed to discover and elucidate reality objectively, that is, in a way that required no quotation marks, so that all people in all places at all times might uniformly agree that, for example, green grass is really green. The problem, post-Wittgenstein, post-Prigogine, and so on, is that even those spots out there in the "real world" that we call green grass needed naming, needed designation. But this does not mean that reality is a contest among a welter of claims and counter-claims to determine who can "yell" the loudest. Rather it is an affirmation that humans grasp the world and their relations to the world in and through language. Humans, regardless of place or time, can never stand outside language to offer descriptions to each other of the thing itself (although they often claim to do so).

So stated, the linguistic turn appears to entail a new paradigm, that is, a reflexive comprehension of language that has consequences across all areas of human endeavor, including science, religion, and philosophy (Lawson 1985). Language is more and more seen as ontogenetic, that is, as constitutive of the *meaningful* world that humans inhabit, and less and less seen as representative of an independent reality. Science itself is viewed as a form of discourse through which our own society typically constructs its picture of the world, the things in the world, and the relations among the things in the world, including our own ecosocial processes of production and reproduction (Locke 1992).

As with science, so with religion. Religious discourse is viewed as constitutive, offering a frame for meaningful self-conceptualization as well as a language through which disparate individuals achieve a sense of community (Lindbeck 1984; Griffin 1989; Burnham 1989). As David Tracy (1987) notes in *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope*, stable texts have been replaced by unstable readers, that is, readers who are willing to risk

ambiguity and plurality in interpretation of their faith (or the narratives that carry faith) because they find themselves in a culture at risk.

And as with science and religion, so with postmodern environmental ethics. Although some of the contributors to this volume might disagree, in my reading they all converge upon the awesome implication that we are language animals (Taylor 1985). Which is to say that if the modern story, in all its different guises, is ecologically pathological, then those activities that disclose its problematic aspects are a prelude to the construction of a post-modern, sustainable society.

Deconstructive and Reconstructive Postmodernism

Deconstructive postmodernists believe that the modern age is based on flawed Enlightenment, capitalistic, and scientific narratives that must be repudiated before culture can be constructed anew. Deconstructive analysis, literally, the close reading of a text that exposes its underlying ideology and assumptions (subtexts), has been brought to bear on the reality of history, truth, God, democracy, the soul, objectivity, science, and technology. These ideas are framed as contingencies, textual artifacts, and human inventions maintained through intellectual dogmatism and political and economic power. Deconstructionists decry all foundational claims; thus, they open themselves to charges that they are self-defeating, because the possibility of human existence requires an assumptive framework—cultural leaps of faith—that guides human action. We are, after all, biologically underdetermined.

A number of commentators have explored the insufficiencies of deconstructionism. Clearly, this Introduction is not the occasion for a detailed discussion of such issues. If deconstructionism is defined as the radical skepticism of the possibility of coherent meaning in language, then it is self-defeating as charged. However, if deconstructionism is interpreted as a form of critical thinking that reveals the evolutionary potential inherent in all socially constructed realities, it is less objectionable. Again, if deconstruction is interpreted as denying the possibility of critical judgment, such as the claim that “Y is better than Z,” on the ground that such claims are logocentric, that is, either establish or conceal binary oppositions (so-called transcendental signifieds, metaphysical claims), then again it is self-defeating. However, if deconstruction is interpreted as a form of discourse analysis that reveals hidden discourses of power by which privileged groups (e.g., males, Europeans) establish and maintain dominance over marginalized groups (e.g., females, Africans), then it is not objectionable. Similarly, if deconstruction denies the reality of history, then it is self-defeating, since deconstruction itself is an intellectual figure that makes sense only against the ground of intellectual history (Megill 1985). Finally, if deconstruction is interpreted as

denying legitimacy to scientific truth, it is, in the context of ecocrisis, self-defeating; humankind simply cannot name holes in the stratospheric ozone, the extinction of species, climate change, and other aspects of ecocrisis independent of scientific judgment.

Reconstructive or affirmative postmodernists share with deconstructionists the idea that culture can be read as a text, but differ in that they see textual analysis of, for example, Judeo-Christian or Enlightenment narrative traditions, as a prelude to reconstruction. Tracy's work is exemplary in this regard, that is, in recognizing that in a time of crisis a literate culture must reconsider the meaning of its basic stories, be these scientific, economic, religious, or philosophic. Accordingly, affirmative postmodernists do not deny the importance of scientific truth, but read science as writing, as a textual enterprise that continually reshapes itself through discourse that occurs in communities (Locke 1992). So construed, science is grasped as ontogenetic, that is, as world making: what humans claim to be scientifically true exists, as Whitehead perhaps first discerned, at the boundary of the subjective and objective, a dynamic interface that conditions the reality in which we live.

Similarly, affirmative postmodernists do not deny the reality of power and the necessity of political process, as deconstructionists sometimes appear to do. Rather, affirmative postmodernists use discourse analysis to expose ideological constructs that marginalize some groups and place others at the center; but deconstructive analysis is followed by reconstructive thinking that attempts to move beyond the disclosure of social anomalies to pragmatic issues involved in societal transformation, placing particular emphasis on the transformative role of discourse. Affirmative postmodernists, like Daly and Cobb (1989), offer both critical analysis of dominant socioeconomic and intellectual paradigms as well as reconstructive alternatives that might facilitate new forms of existence. Affirmative postmodernists do not repudiate history as sound and fury signifying nothing other than the momentary triumph of one social group over the other. Instead, they attempt to change the course of history, that is, rework existing social constructions into new forms. As evident in the collected essays, most postmodern environmental ethicists are not repudiating so much as attempting to recontextualize and thus redirect or alter the course of history. Rather than deconstruction, affirmative postmodernists naturalize the category of "history," so that human beings are described as members of the earth community.

If reconstructive postmodern environmental ethics has a constant theme, it is the importance of sustainability—a term distinct from *sustainable development*, which is primarily an apologetic for the continued wholesale exploitation of the earth and Third World peoples by multinational corporations and developed nations (Shiva 1989; Kennedy 1993). Affirmative postmodernists argue that all discourse is subject to the formal requirement of

sustainability, because any cultural narrative that leads humans to degrade either natural ecology or social ecology is not a viable strategy for life (Wright 1992). Postmodernists generally revel in diversity and ambiguity, believing that Cartesian certitude and definitive analysis, and thus closure of the processes of discussion and further inquiry, are more illusion than reality. Postmodern ecophilosophers seek to reopen subjects, economic theory being one example, that are generally believed closed. As a deconstructive prelude to such inquiry, they argue that mainstream economic theory is a rhetorical construction modeled on classical physics and maintained by a discourse of power that places socially dominant groups at the center of society while marginalizing others. Alternative forms of economic discourse, such as steady state economics (Daly 1991) or ecological economics (Costanza 1991), are introduced as conceptual strategies for building a sustainable society. Textual analysis discloses that civilization is at the center and nature is at the margin of the dominant cultural narrative; accordingly, the earth is exploited without limit. Thus, transformation to a postmodern age of sustainability entails voicing concerns that the dominant narrative marginalizes.

Postmodern Environmental Ethics as Effective Discourse

The essays collected here are all, in one way or another, forms of effective discourse; that is, the writers are reflexively aware of the linguistic predicament, our human situatedness in language, and working through language to promote societal transformation toward sustainability. The notion of effective discourse presupposes the convergence of a variety of twentieth-century language studies on a postmodern, interdisciplinary theory of language as a form of social behavior, where knowledge is constituted through linguistically framed conventions that guide inquiry and judgment, and where power is socially created and exercised through open-ended conversation that facilitates solidarity (that is, cultural cohesiveness, a sense of guiding principles and broad agreement on policy). From a postmodern perspective, language is the primary means by which human beings come to know and participate in a world, both natural and social. Language is also the means by which culture is reproduced, not only maintained or perpetuated but also transformed in response to natural and social exigencies.

Although no complete description of modern approaches to environmental ethics is possible, postmodern environmental ethicists are critical of so-called systematic environmental ethics. In the first place, they believe that modern ethical theory is linguistically naive. Although ethical theories are constructed from inside and through language, that linguisticity is ignored by modernists, who refuse to step inside the hermeneutic circle, fearing that plurality and ambiguity will overwhelm the possibility of rational discourse.

As Taylor (1985) argues, modern philosophy is based on the premise that language is purely designative; thus, any philosophical system or ethical theory is represented as “pure depiction, utterly undetermined by its place in a potential conversation” (p. 267). Postmodern environmental ethics, in contrast to modernist ethical theory, is always situated in language, especially attentive to linguistic context, socially dominant forms of narrative (final vocabularies), and the potential for realizing change through alternative discourse.

Accordingly, there is a continual oscillation between deconstructive or critical and reconstructive or imaginative moments in postmodern environmental ethics. As the concluding section of the Introduction confirms, some postmodern ecophilosophers tend to be deconstructive and others reconstructive, but they all follow in the wake of the linguistic turn. So framed, postmodern environmental ethicists acknowledge that there are no privileged positions outside language, no foundational places upon which individuals can stand to build apodictic truth. Thus, rather than building master narratives, they are interested in what might be called *performativity* generally and *societal transformation* more specifically. No society can reinvent itself ex nihilo, but rather only move into the future through reinterpretation of its legitimating narratives. Postmodernists place far greater emphasis on communities and collaborative discussion than on individual judgment. Indeed, they would view the notion that a single individual produces theoretical truth good for all other individuals as a remnant of a modern, prelinguistic notion of philosophy.

Postmodernists also criticize modern ethicists for practical failure, because environmental ethics has not been socially effective (Hargrove 1993), as evidenced by the steady decline of the indices of ecosystem health, the continued explosion of human population, and the relentless growth dynamic of industrial society (Brown et al. 1993). This pragmatic failure implies that modern ethics produces arguments that are “hygienically pallid” (Nussbaum 1990) and that lack “moral authority” (McCann 1986). Even worse, perhaps, is Alasdair MacIntyre’s (1984) argument that post-Enlightenment ethical discourse is a failed project. “The most striking feature of contemporary moral utterances is that so much of it is used to express disagreements; and the most striking feature of the debates in which these disagreements are expressed is their interminable character” (p. 6). MacIntyre recontextualizes ethics within discourse communities; in short, human beings can judge what is good and bad only from within language, that is, on the basis of narrative traditions that make judgment possible.

Effective discourse is a relatively new concept, and no entirely adequate discussion of it can be offered here (see Lincoln 1989). However, it recognizes that language is inherently social, that is, there are no private languages. Thus, effective discourse, at least in the context of environmental ethics, is discourse that moves people. Even more specifically, as we will discover

through these essays, effective discourse should help to move a society in the direction of sustainability. However, if the ecophilosophical project is to be successful in a democratic context, that is, actually help transform the industrial growth society into a sustainable society, then it must meet at least three criteria (Lincoln 1989). Its discourse must be cognitively plausible. Second, it must evoke sentiment. Finally, ecophilosophical discourse must influence people, that is, gain a wide audience and hearing. Insofar as environmental ethics aspires to be effective discourse, then it needs to reconsider its pretense of producing knockdown arguments, philosophical foundations, and master narratives and begin attending to the narratives that actually determine human behavior. For a democratic society to move in a new direction, even if good reasons exist, the people must feel a compelling need to change course and redirect behavior.

Essays on Postmodern Environmental Ethics

Part I. Language and Environmental Ethics

In distinction from ethicists who theorize independently of any consideration of language and its effects on theorizing, the essays collected in Part I represent a step into reflexive, linguistic awareness. These writers may be read as being committed to at least one common premise: any kind of environmental ethics that is linguistically unconscious is basically irrelevant to achieving a sustainable condition of human existence, including the conservation of biodiversity, since the roots of ecocrisis originate through and are sustained by language itself.

The first chapter, "Postmodern Environmental Ethics: Ethics as Bioregional Narrative," by Jim Cheney, has proven itself to be the most catalytic essay in postmodern environmental ethics (at least among those essays published in *Environmental Ethics*). Although not the earliest piece anthologized here, "Ethics as Bioregional Narrative" has attracted considerable attention, being previously anthologized, valorized, and villainized. Several of the essays that follow in Parts II and III respond to Cheney's piece, some affirmatively and some negatively. In my reading, Cheney touches on most if not all of the issues that other postmodern environmental ethicists have taken up.

Cheney's thesis is that there are no solutions for environmental dysfunctions in general, but only in relation to specific ecosystems where human beings have effectively dug in and taken root. Such sustained living in place, Cheney claims, gives humans the opportunity to discover the fundamental rhythms and pace, the structures and dynamics, of particular ecosystems. Bioregional narratives reflect human situatedness in nature and articulate local knowledge of the interrelations between the human and the more than human. They also enable storied residence, where the transcendental subject

and the notion that language is solely a vehicle for expression of human intentionality is challenged by individuals who come to self-consciousness in place. Storied residence, an idea that Cheney takes from Holmes Rolston's (1988) work, offers a new way of being in the world, an alternative to the modern worldview that reduces the diversity and particularity of local places to one universal mechanism: nature as matter in motion. Cheney characterizes the modern worldview as totalizing and colonizing: totalizing in that it purports to be a master narrative that is epistemologically normative; colonizing in that it categorizes all places in terms of universals or principles that are indifferent to the texture of place.

One reason that "Bioregional Narrative" has generated so much discussion is that it raises the question of language itself, especially the theory of language and meaning. Interestingly, Cheney has been attacked (see later) for advancing a position that is relativistic. Yet he himself goes to considerable length to criticize such theories, using Richard Rorty as his foil. Cheney claims that Rorty's theory of the contingency of language and his attack on representationalism undercuts the reality of *the other*—that is, nature, the flora and the fauna. To accept the premise that language overdetermines human behavior does not also entail the conclusion, Cheney argues, that reality is "language all the way down." In Cheney's view, thinking of postmodern environmental ethics as bioregional narrative does not reduce the biophysical world to language but rather incorporates that world into human discourse. Cheney uses Heideggerian notions of language to argue that the world can speak through human beings who have taken up being in the world.

"Nature and Silence," by Christopher Manes, can be read as extending the argument advanced by Cheney in a way that helps to recontextualize deep ecology. Manes looks explicitly at the language that posits *Man* as a speaking-thinking subject apart from and in control of the earth. "The language we speak, today, the idiom of the Renaissance and Enlightenment humanism, veils the processes of nature with its own cultural obsessions, directionalities, and motifs that have no analogues in the natural world." Manes also calls systematic environmental ethics into question, because it is an abstraction from the life world of immediate human experience, the gesture of Man who is in control of the planet. Systematic philosophy is characterized by Manes as the discourse of reason that reflects the disembodied ego inherent in modern language; the consequence is the silencing of nature's voice. Manes notes that primary oral cultures have allowed the flora and the fauna "to speak." He valorizes deep ecology as perhaps the most linguistically open form of ecophilosophical discourse, but he carefully qualifies this contention. Humans need to speak a language, Manes argues, that cultivates a sense of ontological humility, reconnects human projects with the larger earth community, and moves us beyond our preoccupation with Man.

The third chapter, "Merleau-Ponty and the Voice of the Earth," by David Abram, brings the resources of continental philosophy to bear on environmental ethics. Working outward toward the world and the reality of lived experience from Merleau-Ponty's posthumously published *The Visible and the Invisible*, Abram attempts to disclose a transcendental signified embedded in the narratives of systematic philosophers: the disembodied thinking subject, the ego cogito, indeed, the environmental philosopher who is held apart from and above the world by *his* reason. Who is this ego that thinks? What is it? The systematic philosopher does not entertain such questions, for *his* language is assumed to be transparent, a virtual mirror of reality. Abram also explores the phenomenology of perceptual experience in a move, somewhat like Manes, to see if there is not a bodily discourse concealed beneath the customary forms of linguistic expression. We are, Abram insists, embedded as organisms in the awesome mystery of the corporeal world. Language itself reflects this primordial reality, the reality of lived experience and participation of the body in the world.

The fourth chapter, "Class, Race, and Gender Discourse in the Eco-feminism/Deep Ecology Debate," by Ariel Salleh, extends the hermeneutic horizon beyond the first three chapters. Although Salleh might agree with Manes and Abram that nature has been silenced, she sees silencing as including women and people of color; thus, the target of her criticism is the privileging of the male, patriarchal voice rather than any gender-free, transcendental ego. Unlike Manes, who identifies the patriarchal voice as Man and who affirms the language of deep ecology as an alternative, Salleh identifies the presence of the patriarchal voice in the language of deep ecology. In her reading deep ecologists still utter words of power by which they remain above both woman and nature. She argues that the narratives of deep ecology reflect the biases of middle class, professional (elite) males who remain enframed by traditional psychosexual mores and the hierarchies of dominant culture that place men over women and nature. Salleh points out that she cannot find anywhere in the deep ecology literature a concern for family, for the labor of women, and for the body itself as a means of finding (knowing) the human place in the world. Salleh also argues that the disdain for, inattention to, and misinterpretation of ecofeminist discourse is further confirmation that deep ecologists are embedded in modern liberalism. Her position, in this regard, is more like Cheney's, who is critical of deep ecology, and less like Manes's, who sees the potential for reform in deep ecology. Salleh ends her chapter, however, on an affirmative note, envisioning the possibility of women and men working together in a lateral-collaborative (or nonhierarchical) way to liberate all creatures, great and small.

"Green Reason: Communicative Ethics for the Biosphere," by John S. Dryzek, closes Part I with an exploration of communication itself—a subject

increasingly important in postmodern studies of language. Dryzek is especially interested in how communities create meaning; however, his chapter goes beyond typical modernist communication theory (e.g., J. Habermas), which limits communication to the human sphere. In Dryzek's view, communication also involves the voices of the more than human. Following the lead of what he terms postmodern biology, which views nature as self-creating, Dryzek contends that the modern worldview is wrong, that nature is not mere matter in motion but alive and full of purpose and value. In moves reminiscent of both Cheney and Abram, Dryzek contends that communicative reason is attentive to the peculiarities and specificities of place (bioregionalism). Like Salleh, who finds the language of deep ecology problematic, Dryzek also sees it as wanting, but for a different reason; rather than being patriarchal, Dryzek reads it as mystical, arguing that what is needed is less talk about deep ecological consciousness or the union of self with the world and more ecologically informed discourse that points the way toward solution of specific problems. Embracing the world in "rational terms," Dryzek suggests, thus rescues environmental ethics from its flight from science toward mysticism.

Part II: Environmental Ethics, Postmodern Politics, and the Other

Part II contains essays that, like those in Part I, reflect the linguistic turn; some could be included in Part I. But the chapters in this part generally look at language in terms of its shaping influence on political discourse and thus power. Assuming that postmodern environmental ethicists are actually attempting to facilitate the processes of societal transformation toward a socially just and ecologically sustainable society, such considerations of political power relations are vital—and all the more so in a democratic society.

Chapter 6, "Radical Environmentalism and the Political Roots of Postmodernism: Differences That Make a Difference," by Robert Frodeman, is critical of postmodern environmental ethics. Frodeman argues that the project is epistemologically misguided, politically naive, and thus ultimately self-defeating. The primary target of his critique is Cheney's "Bioregional Narrative." Frodeman reads Cheney as a romantic nature lover who offers slogans rather than meaningful analyses of real power relations. Even worse, according to Frodeman, postmodernists like Cheney remain caught in the political narrative of the Enlightenment; that is, they assume the outmoded political individualism that mirrors the metaphysical atomism of classical physics. The consequence is that the political community is defined by utilitarian relations, where the social good is conceptualized as no more than the aggregate of individual preferences. The politics of Cheney and other postmodernists, in Frodeman's reading, valorizes the inviolability of individual rights and private property. In the concluding part of the chapter, Frodeman suggests that the narratives of deep ecology escape the enframing of Enlightenment political discourse.

“The Incarceration of Wildness: Wilderness Areas as Prisons,” by Tom Birch, is a deconstructive analysis that attempts to show how the modern discourse of power—the narrative tradition that posits humankind as the engineer in control of the ecomachine—is hidden within the ideology and politics of wilderness preservation. More so than any other postmodern environmental ethicist, with the exception of Abram, Birch draws on continental philosophy, especially the work of Jean Baudrillard. Like Frodeman, Birch (an environmental activist) is concerned with political power and its implications for the protection of the earth, especially for the conservation of unhumanized land communities. Also like Frodeman, but for different reasons, Birch sees the political discourse of the Enlightenment as being the root of our ecomalaise. Birch argues that the modern narrative which frames political action, like the Wilderness Act (1964), is a discourse of power that privileges human interests over those of the more than human, thus silencing the voice of nature—an argument much like the one Manes trades on. Like Dryzek, Birch is interested in the question of how the other, or the voice of the other, can be represented, validated, and incorporated into political discourse. Birch, as I read him, appears more pessimistic than other postmodern environmental ethicists, because he claims that the West needs “an entirely different story about wildness and otherness.” He bases this claim primarily on a keen analysis of wilderness preservations as simulacra, as hyperrealities that deceive us into thinking that we are conserving wild nature when in fact such preservations conceal the gesture of continued domination.

“The Call of the Wild: The Struggle Against Domination and the Technological Fix of Nature,” by Eric Katz, can be read as picking up, at least in part, where Birch leaves off. Like Birch, Katz is concerned with the ideology and technology of wilderness conservation and restoration. And like Cheney, Katz believes that nature, if left free of technological manipulation and human intervention, has moral lessons to teach humankind, primarily that there are nonanthropocentric values outside the utilitarian web of economic valuation. Unlike Birch, Katz retains some sense that we can work our way toward sustainability without totally abandoning the past. The call of the wild, as Katz puts it, beckons human attention, reminding us that wild nature is a subject with its own imperatives rather than an object, subject only to human control. Katz’s position might be read as a less demanding approach to bioregional living than Cheney’s call for storied residence; simply by walking in wild nature and exploring the margins between the wild and the civil Katz believes that we can *dis-cover* the presence of the other, which lies concealed beneath the surface of conventional narratives of ethics, politics, and technology. Thus, wild nature invites each of us to recontextualize ourselves as a member of a moral community of subjects that goes beyond the conventional bounds of civilization (which accords agency only to human beings).

"Rethinking Resistance: Environmentalism, Literature, and Post-structural Theory," by Peter Quigley, is among the more theoretical pieces in this collection (rivaled in its technical argumentation by the chapters written by Cheney, Salleh, and Birch). Quigley argues that Cheney and other postmodern environmental ethicists have ignored the lessons of poststructural theory; he finds transcendental signifieds and hierarchial structures still haunting postmodern environmental ethics, especially in its discussion of things "wild and free" as well as things characterized as "natural." Much as Part I focused on the voice of Man, the ego cogito that silenced nature, Quigley directs us toward the concept of Nature. He finds Cheney's piece at once a conceptual advance and yet problematic: an advance because it brings into question the epistemological difficulties inherent in theories of meaning that depend on designation, but problematic in that his view of language is romantic and logocentric. Like Frodeman, albeit for different reasons, Quigley thinks Cheney's failure to deal with the poststructural analysis of language leads to political naiveté.

Part II closes with a chapter by J. Baird Callicott, "Traditional American Indian and Western European Attitudes Toward Nature: An Overview." Callicott would likely deny that he is a postmodernist (though he recently wrote a paper offering what he terms a *deconstruction*). I read this chapter as postmodern, because Callicott offers a carefully qualified comparison-contrast of two different language games (which he calls *worldviews*). One worldview is that of the primary oral peoples of Turtle Island, as the lands now named North America were called prior to European colonization. Callicott finds an implicit land ethic, or reverential relation to the earth, in the discourse of indigenous peoples of Turtle Island. The other language game is our own European worldview. Unlike the native Americans, Callicott finds nothing inherent in our discourse that suggests a reverential or ethical orientation toward the earth. Rather, he argues, we find an ideology of domination that attempts to harness the land to narrowly defined, economic purposes. Therefore, in Callicott's opinion, those of us who find ourselves embedded in Eurocentric discourse have much to learn from the stories of indigenous peoples.

Part III. Systematic Environmental Ethics Reconsidered

Postmodern environmental ethics remains an unfinished project, because the world lurches on toward ecological oblivion. The chapters in Part III are part of the new beginning, suggesting an array of possibilities for societal transformation and movement toward sustainability. In this regard these chapters might be viewed as framed by MacIntyre's (1984) critique of traditional ethical theorizing, the kind of theory that maintains the illusion that it is outside language.

"Before Environmental Ethics," by Anthony Weston, shows its

postmodern colors in a number of ways. He argues that the attempt by environmental ethicists to produce a master narrative is misguided because it remains bound by the modern worldview. Weston detects a number of characteristic gestures on the part of environmental ethicists that belie their embeddedness in modernism. For example, rather than call into question the “boundary” between the human and the more than human, environmental ethicists ask whether we should extend moral considerability to the “non-human,” thus cementing a socially constructed boundary into metaphysical place. Weston also advises environmental ethicists to become more concerned with social contexts, especially the institutions that direct human behavior and help to shape and maintain values. Today environmental ethics (theory) remains almost totally isolated from practice; tomorrow Weston hopes to see an environmental ethics that coevolves, as he puts it, with institutional practice. Such coevolution, he argues, makes impossible in principle the kind of analyticity that ethicists have traditionally sought in a master theory that stands over and above practice. Weston suggests that a more viable strategy is to lateralize the hierarchy (one that originates in Greek philosophy) that elevates theory over practice. Postmodern environmental ethics, in Weston’s reading, is the sustained practice of social reconstruction, where means and ends, theory and practice, coevolve.

“Moral Pluralism and the Course of Environmental Ethics,” by Christopher D. Stone, also calls into question the traditional philosophical goal of constructing a master theory, which he terms *moral monism*, that provides an overarching conceptual framework—either a single principle or coherent system—used to make ethical decisions. Stone contends that even a cursory familiarity with the problems faced by humans in their cultural interactions with the natural renders such a quest almost meaningless: any principle is overwhelmed by the great diversity and complexity of environmental problems. In the place of moral monism Stone recommends moral pluralism, that is, the recognition by the ecophilosophical community that a number of different language games are to be played, each guided by different conceptual frameworks that in turn enable different kinds of moral action, be this assuming responsibility for future generations, critical evaluation of policy and legislative oversight, or individual decision making regarding consumption patterns, housing, and recycling. Comparison-contrast of alternative vocabularies reveals what Stone calls *editorial viewpoints*; that is, the diversity and plurality of perspectives inherent in situations that seem simple on the surface but are capable of many different interpretations. Reflecting his background in law, Stone implies that environmental ethics might be more useful if modeled on casuistry rather than on the syllogism, because casuistry takes us down to the level of making good decisions that fit particular situations based

on precedents, or antecedently established principles, that are creatively and imaginatively applied in new contexts.

“Cheney and the Myth of Postmodernism,” by Mick Smith, is the most recent in the series of critical responses to Cheney’s “Postmodern Environmental Ethics: Ethics as Bioregional Narrative” (and there are others not anthologized in this collection). In my reading, Smith’s critique is particularly useful in helping us realize the awesome mystery of language; that is, the fact that humans always remain enframed by narrative, that there is no exit, no human position outside of language. In Smith’s reading, Cheney lapses in his postmodern project by privileging bioregional narrative and, thus, in making an implicit foundational claim, the hold of modernist epistemology on Cheney’s thinking is disclosed. In this sense, Smith defends Rorty’s theory that epistemology (as traditionally conceived) is no longer useful, rather it is useful to think of conversation as the context in which knowledge is defined (Rorty 1979). Although Smith also affirms Cheney’s emphasis on place or context, he argues that bioregionalism is just one among many possibilities for doing environmental ethics, rather than the one way as Cheney claims. Smith’s thesis is that no single language game is a priori privileged over any other because no language gives immediate access to nature. Smith emphasizes, in a move much like Stone’s, that the diversity of language games played by environmental ethicists, in their convergence on the importance of place, gives environmental ethics its moral authority rather than any one master theory (such as the putative necessity of “storied residence”).

“Quantum Theory, Intrinsic Value, and Panentheism,” by Michael Zimmerman, introduces the possibility of a postmodern environmental ethic at the interpretive interface of scientific and religious discourse. For modernists such an argument is impossible, because science and religion are conceptualized as antagonistic, even oppositional forms of discourse, making rival claims about the nature of reality. But the quantum theory, in Zimmerman’s reading, undercuts dualism, such as the rigid distinction of facts and values or the objective and the subjective, in favor of an interactive theory of knowledge. But, advancing from J. B. Callicott’s argument that quantum theory supports the theory of the intrinsic value of nature, Zimmerman argues that any environmental ethic derived from the language of quantum theory alone is not a sufficient condition, although it may be a necessary condition, to engender the respectful treatment of nature by humans. Zimmerman claims that a postmodern panentheism—a panentheism that draws on the possibility of the reenchantment of nature via quantum theory—offers good reasons for thinking that environmental ethics may become operative in human affairs. The discourse of panentheism, in

Zimmerman's interpretation, builds upon and also goes beyond quantum theory by offering us new interpretive possibilities for religion, such as an affirmation that God the transcendent creator is also present in the creation.

"Christian Existence in a World of Limits," by John B. Cobb, Jr., appears last in this collection, but is arguably the first postmodern piece to appear in *Environmental Ethics* (published in the second issue of the inaugural volume). In a radically postmodern move, that only now is being elucidated theoretically (Lindbeck 1984; Burnham 1989), Cobb argues that the Christian narrative tradition, whatever its responsibility and culpability in creating ecocrisis, can renew itself in a time of ecocrisis. Cobb dares to reread the Great Code to see what the implications of the biblical tradition are for the contemporary faith community. Only in the last few years has ecotheological discourse taken off; Cobb was there two decades previously. But Cobb's pioneering work has not been followed up with the care it deserves in the journal. Insofar as environmental ethics aspires to be effective discourse, that is, to actually promote movement toward sustainability, one must wonder why more philosophers have not seriously considered the contributions that religious narrative has to make (Oelschlaeger 1994).

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