

The Toxicity of Environmentalism

by

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THE TOXICITY OF ENVIRONMENTALISM

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Recently a popular imported mineral water was removed from the market because tests showed that samples of it contained thirty-five parts per billion of benzene. Although this was an amount so small that only fifteen years ago it would have been impossible even to detect, it was assumed that considerations of public health required withdrawal of the product.

Such a case, of course, is not unusual nowadays. The presence of parts per billion of a toxic substance is routinely extrapolated into being regarded as a cause of human deaths. And whenever the number of projected deaths exceeds one in a million (or less), environmentalists demand that the government remove the offending pesticide, preservative, or other alleged bearer of toxic pollution from the market. They do so, even though a level of risk of one in a million is one-third as great as that of an airplane falling from the sky on one's home.

While it is not necessary to question the good intentions and sincerity of the overwhelming majority of the members of the environmental or ecology movement, it is vital that the public realize that *in this seemingly lofty and noble movement itself can be found more than a little evidence of the most profound toxicity*. Consider, for example, the following quotation from David M. Graber, a research biologist with the National Park Service, in his prominently featured *Los Angeles Times* book review of Bill McKibben's *The End of Nature*:

This [man's "remaking the earth by degrees"] makes what is happening no less tragic for those of us who value wildness for its own sake, not for what value it confers upon mankind. I, for one, cannot wish upon either my children or the rest of Earth's biota a tame planet, be it monstrous or—however unlikely—benign. McKibben is a biocentrist, and so am I. We are not interested in the utility of a particular species or free-flowing river, or ecosystem, to mankind. They have intrinsic value, more value—to me—than another human body, or a billion of them.

Human happiness, and certainly human fecundity, are not as important as a wild and healthy planet. I know social scientists who remind me that people are part of nature, but it isn't true. Somewhere along the line—at about a billion years ago, maybe half that—we quit the contract and became a cancer. We have become a plague upon ourselves and upon the Earth.

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It is cosmically unlikely that the developed world will choose to end its orgy of fossil-energy consumption, and the Third World its suicidal consumption of landscape. Until such time as *Homo sapiens* should decide to rejoin nature, some of us can only hope for the right virus to come along.

While Mr. Graber openly wishes for the death of a billion people, Mr. McKibben, the author he reviewed, quotes with approval John Muir's benediction to alligators, describing it as a "good epigram" for his own, "humble approach": "Honorable representatives of the great saurians of older creation, may you long enjoy your lilies and rushes, and be blessed now and then with a mouthful of terror-stricken man by way of a dainty!"

Such statements represent pure, unadulterated poison. They express ideas and wishes which, if acted upon, would mean terror and death for enormous numbers of human beings.

These statements, and others like them, are made by prominent members of the environmental movement. The significance of such statements cannot be diminished by ascribing them only to a small fringe of the environmental movement. Indeed, even if such views were indicative of the thinking only of 5 or 10 percent of the members of the environmental movement—the "deep ecology," Earth First! wing—they would represent toxicity in the environmental movement as a whole not at the level of parts per billion or even parts per million, but at the level of *parts per hundred*, which, of course, is an enormously higher level of toxicity than is deemed to constitute a danger to human life in virtually every other case in which deadly poison is present.

But the toxicity level of the environmental movement as a whole is substantially greater even than parts per hundred. It is certainly at least at the level of *several parts per ten*. This is obvious from the fact that the mainstream of the environmental movement makes no fundamental or significant criticisms of the likes of Messrs. Graber and McKibben. Indeed, John Muir, whose wish for alligators to "be blessed now and then with a mouthful of terror-stricken man by way of a dainty" McKibben approvingly quotes, *was the founder of the Sierra Club*, which is proud to acknowledge that fact. The Sierra Club, of course, is the leading environmental organization and is supposedly the most respectable of them.

There is something much more important than the Sierra Club's genealogy, however—something which provides an explanation in terms of *basic principle* of why the mainstream of the ecology movement does not attack what might be thought to be merely its fringe. This is a fundamental philosophical premise which the mainstream of the movement shares with the alleged fringe and which logically implies hatred for man and his achievements. Namely, the premise that *nature possesses intrinsic value*—i.e., that

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nature is valuable in and of itself, apart from all contribution to human life and well-being.

The antihuman premise of nature's intrinsic value goes back, in the Western world, as far as St. Francis of Assisi, who believed in the equality of all living creatures: man, cattle, birds, fish, and reptiles. Indeed, precisely on the basis of this philosophical affinity, and at the wish of the mainstream of the ecology movement, St. Francis of Assisi has been officially declared the patron saint of ecology by the Roman Catholic Church.

The premise of nature's intrinsic value extends to an alleged intrinsic value of forests, rivers, canyons, and hillsides—to everything and anything that is not man. Its influence is present in the Congress of the United States, in such statements as that recently made by Representative Morris Udall of Arizona that a frozen, barren desert in Northern Alaska, where substantial oil deposits appear to exist, is “a sacred place” that should never be given over to oil rigs and pipelines. It is present in the supporting statement of a representative of the Wilderness Society that “There is a need to protect the land not just for wildlife and human recreation, but just to have it there.” It has, of course, also been present in the sacrifice of the interests of human beings for the sake of snail darters and spotted owls.

The idea of nature's intrinsic value inexorably implies a desire to destroy man and his works because it implies a perception of man *as the systematic destroyer of the good, and thus as the systematic doer of evil*. Just as man perceives coyotes, wolves, and rattlesnakes as evil because they regularly destroy the cattle and sheep he values as sources of food and clothing, so on the premise of nature's intrinsic value, the environmentalists view man as evil, because, in the pursuit of his well-being, man systematically destroys the wildlife, jungles, and rock formations that the environmentalists hold to be intrinsically valuable. Indeed, from the perspective of such alleged intrinsic values of nature, the degree of man's alleged destructiveness and evil is directly in proportion to his loyalty to his essential nature. Man is the rational being. It is his application of his reason in the form of science, technology, and an industrial civilization that enables him to act on nature on the enormous scale on which he now does. Thus, it is his possession and use of reason—manifested in his technology and industry—for which he is hated.

The doctrine of intrinsic value is itself only a rationalization for a preexisting hatred of man. It is invoked not because one attaches any actual value to what is alleged to have intrinsic value, but simply to serve as a pretext for denying values to man. For example, caribou feed upon vegetation, wolves eat caribou, and microbes attack wolves. Each of these, the vegetation, the caribou, the wolves, and the microbes, is alleged by the environmentalists to possess intrinsic value. Yet absolutely no course of action is indicated for man. Should man act to protect the intrinsic value of the vegetation from

destruction by the caribou? Should he act to protect the intrinsic value of the caribou from destruction by the wolves? Should he act to protect the intrinsic value of the wolves from destruction by the microbes? Even though each of these alleged intrinsic values is at stake, man is not called upon to do anything. When does the doctrine of intrinsic value serve as a guide to what man should do? Only when *man* comes to attach value to something. Then it is invoked to deny him the value he seeks. For example, the intrinsic value of the vegetation et al. is invoked as a guide to man's action only when there is something man wants, such as oil, and then, as in the case of Northern Alaska, its invocation serves to stop him from having it. In other words, *the doctrine of intrinsic value is nothing but a doctrine of the negation of human values*. It is pure nihilism.

It should be realized that it is logically implicit in what has just been said that to establish a public office such as that recently proposed in California, of "environmental advocate," would be tantamount to establishing an office of Negator of Human Valuation. The work of such an office would be to stop man from achieving his values for no other reason than that he was man and wanted to achieve them.

Of course, the environmental movement is not pure poison. Very few people would listen to it if it were. As I have said, it is poisonous only at the level of several parts per ten. Mixed in with the poison and overlaying it as a kind of sugar coating is the advocacy of many measures which have the avowed purpose of promoting human life and well-being, and among these, some that, considered in isolation, might actually achieve that purpose. The problem is that the mixture is poisonous. And thus, when one swallows environmentalism, one inescapably swallows poison.

Given the underlying nihilism of the movement, it is certainly not possible to accept at face value any of the claims it makes of seeking to improve human life and well-being, especially when following its recommendations would impose on people great deprivation or cost. Indeed, nothing could be more absurd or dangerous than to take advice on how to improve one's life and well-being from those who wish one dead and whose satisfaction comes from human terror, which, of course, as I have shown, is precisely what is wished in the environmental movement—openly and on principle. This conclusion, it must be stressed, applies irrespective of the scientific or academic credentials of an individual. If an alleged scientific expert believes in the intrinsic value of nature, then to seek his advice is equivalent to seeking the advice of a medical doctor who was on the side of the germs rather than of the patient, if such a thing can be imagined. Obviously, Congressional committees taking testimony from alleged expert witnesses on the subject of proposed environmental legislation need to be aware of this fact and never to forget it.

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Not surprisingly, in virtually every case, the claims made by the environmentalists have turned out to be false or simply absurd. Consider, for example, the recent case of Alar, a chemical spray used for many years on apples in order to preserve their color and freshness. Here, it turned out that even if the environmentalists' claims had actually been true, and the use of Alar would result in 4.2 deaths per million over a seventy-year lifetime, all that would have been signified was that eating apples sprayed with Alar would then have been *less dangerous than driving to the supermarket to buy the apples!* (Consider: 4.2 deaths per million over a seventy year period means that in any one year in the United States, with its population of roughly two hundred and fifty million people, approximately *fifteen* deaths would be attributable to Alar! This is the result obtained by multiplying 4.2 per million times 250 million and then dividing by 70. In the same one-year period of time, approximately fifty thousand deaths occur in motor vehicle accidents in the United States, most of them within a few miles of the victims' homes, and undoubtedly far more than fifteen of them on trips to or from supermarkets.) Nevertheless, a panic ensued, followed by a plunge in the sale of apples, the financial ruin of an untold number of apple growers, and the virtual disappearance of Alar.

Before the panic over Alar, there was the panic over asbestos. According to *Forbes* magazine, it turns out that in the forms in which it is normally used in the United States, asbestos is *one-third as likely to be the cause of death as being struck by lightning.*

Then there is the alleged damage to lakes caused by acid rain. According to *Policy Review*, it turns out that the acidification of the lakes has not been the result of acid rain, but of the cessation of logging operations in the affected areas and thus the absence of the alkaline run-off produced by such operations. This run-off had made naturally acidic lakes non-acidic for a few generations.

Besides these cases, there were the hysterias over dioxin in the ground at Times Beach, Missouri, TCE in the drinking water of Woburn, Massachusetts, the chemicals in Love Canal, and radiation at Three Mile Island. According to Prof. Bruce Ames, one of the world's leading experts on cancer, it turned out that the amount of dioxin that anyone would have absorbed in Times Beach was far less than the amount required to do any harm and that, indeed, the actual harm to Times Beach residents from dioxin was less than that of drinking a glass of beer. (The Environmental Protection Agency itself subsequently reduced its estimate of the danger from dioxin by a factor of fifteen-sixteenths.) In the case of Woburn, according to Ames, it turned out the cluster of leukemia cases which occurred there was statistically random and that the drinking water there was actually above the national average in safety, and not, as had been claimed, the cause of the leukemia cases. In the

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case of Love Canal, Ames reports, it turned out upon investigation that the cancer rate among the former residents has been no higher than average. (It is necessary to use the phrase “former residents” because the town lost most of its population in the panic and forced evacuation caused by the environmentalists’ claims.) In the case of Three Mile Island, not a single resident has died, nor even received an additional exposure to radiation, as the result of the accident there. In addition, according to studies reported in *The New York Times*, the cancer rate among residents there is no higher than normal and has not risen.

Before these hysterias, there were claims alleging the death of Lake Erie and mercury poisoning in tuna fish. All along, Lake Erie has been very much alive and was even producing near record quantities of fish at the very time the claims of its death were being made. The mercury in the tuna fish was the result of the natural presence of mercury in sea water; and evidence provided by museums showed that similar levels of mercury had been present in tuna fish since prehistoric times.

And now, in yet another overthrow of the environmentalists’ claims, a noted climatologist, Prof. Robert Pease, has shown that it is impossible for chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) to destroy large quantities of ozone in the stratosphere because relatively few of them are even capable of reaching the stratosphere in the first place. He also shows that the celebrated ozone “hole” over Antarctica every fall is a phenomenon of nature, in existence since long before CFCs were invented, and results largely from the fact that during the long Antarctic night ultraviolet sunlight is not present to create fresh ozone.

The reason that one after another of the environmentalists’ claims turn out to be proven wrong is that they are made without any regard for truth in the first place. In making their claims, the environmentalists reach for whatever is at hand that will serve to frighten people, make them lose confidence in science and technology, and, ultimately, lead them to deliver themselves up to the environmentalists’ tender mercies. The claims rest on unsupported conjectures and wild leaps of imagination from scintillas of fact to arbitrary conclusions, by means of evasion and the drawing of invalid inferences. It is out and out evasion and invalid inference to leap from findings about the effects of feeding rats or mice dosages the equivalent of a hundred or more times what any human being would ever ingest, and then draw inferences about the effects on people of consuming normal quantities. Fears of parts per billion of this or that chemical causing single-digit deaths per million do not rest on science, but on imagination. Such claims have nothing to do either with actual experimentation or with the concept of causality.

No one ever has, can, or will observe such a thing as two groups of a million people identical in all respects except that over a seventy-year period the members of one of the groups consume apples sprayed with Alar, while

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the members of the other group do not, and then 4.2 members of the first group die. The process by which such a conclusion is reached, and its degree of actual scientific seriousness, is essentially the same as that of a college students' bull session, which consists of practically nothing but arbitrary assumptions, manipulations, guesses, and plain hot air. In such a session, one might start with the known consequences of a quarter-ton safe falling ten stories onto the head of an unfortunate passerby below, and from there go on to speculate about the conceivable effects in a million cases of other passersby happening to drop from their hand or mouth an M&M or a peanut on their shoe, and come to the conclusion that 4.2 of them will die.

Furthermore, as indicated, in contrast to the procedures of a bull session, reason and actual science establish causes, which, in their nature, are *universal*. When, for example, genuine causes of death, such as arsenic, strychnine, or bullets, attack vital organs of the human body, death is absolutely certain to result in *all but* a handful of cases per million. When something is in fact the cause of some effect, it is so *in each and every case* in which specified conditions prevail, and fails to be so only in cases in which the specified conditions are not present, such as a person's having built up a tolerance to poison or wearing a bulletproof vest. Such claims as a thousand different things each causing cancer in a handful of cases are proof of nothing but that the actual causes are not yet known—and, beyond that, an indication of the breakdown of the epistemology of contemporary science. (This epistemological breakdown, I might add, radically accelerated starting practically on the very day in the 1960s when the government took over most of the scientific research in the United States and began the large-scale financing of statistical studies as a substitute for the discovery of causes.)

In making their claims, the environmentalists willfully ignore such facts as that carcinogens, poisons, and radiation exist in nature. Fully half of the chemicals found in nature are carcinogenic when fed to animals in massive quantities—the same proportion as applies to man-made chemicals when fed in massive quantities. (The cause of the resulting cancers, according to Prof. Ames, is actually not the chemicals, either natural or man-made, but the repeated destruction of tissue caused by the massively excessive doses in which the chemicals are fed, such as saccharin being fed to rats in a quantity comparable to humans drinking eight hundred cans of diet soda a day.) Arsenic, one of the deadliest poisons, is a naturally occurring chemical element. Oleander, one of the most beautiful plants, is also a deadly poison, as are many other plants and herbs. Radium and uranium, with all their radioactivity, are found in nature. Indeed, all of nature is radioactive to some degree. If the environmentalists did not close their eyes to what exists in nature, if they did not associate every negative exclusively with man, if they applied to nature the standards of safety they claim to be necessary in the case of man's

activities, *they would have to run in terror from nature*. They would have to use one-half of the world to construct protective containers or barriers against all the allegedly deadly carcinogens, toxins, and radioactive material that constitute the other half of the world.

It would be a profound mistake to dismiss the repeatedly false claims of the environmentalists merely as a case of the little boy who cried wolf. They are a case of the *wolf* crying again and again about alleged dangers to the little boy. The only real danger is to listen to the wolf.

Direct evidence of the wilful dishonesty of the environmental movement comes from one of its leading representatives, Stephen Schneider, who is well-known for his predictions of global catastrophe. In the October 1989 issue of *Discover* magazine, he is quoted (with approval) as follows:

. . . To do this, we need to get some broad-based support, to capture the public's imagination. That, of course, entails getting loads of media coverage. So we have to offer up scary scenarios, make simplified, dramatic statements, and make little mention of any doubts we may have. This "double ethical bind" we frequently find ourselves in cannot be solved by any formula. Each of us has to decide what the right balance is between being effective and being honest.

Thus, in the absence of verification by sources totally independent of the environmental movement and free of its taint, all of its claims of seeking to improve human life and well-being in this or that specific way must be regarded simply as lies, having the actual purpose of inflicting needless deprivation or suffering. In the category of malicious lies fall all of the environmental movement's claims about our having to abandon industrial civilization or any significant part of it in order to cope with the dangers of alleged global warming, ozone depletion, or exhaustion of natural resources. Indeed, all claims constituting denunciations of science, technology, or industrial civilization which are advanced in the name of service to human life and well-being are tantamount to claiming that our survival and well-being depend on our abandonment of reason. (Science, technology, and industry are leading products of reason and are inseparable from it.) All such claims should be taken as nothing but further proof of the environmental movement's hatred of man's nature and man's life, certainly not of any actual danger to human life and well-being.

It is important to realize that when the environmentalists talk about destruction of the "environment" as the result of economic activity, their claims are permeated by the doctrine of intrinsic value. Thus, what they actually mean to a very great extent is merely the destruction of alleged intrinsic values in nature such as jungles, deserts, rock formations, and animal species which are either of no value to man or hostile to man. That is their concept of the "environment." If, in contrast to the environmentalists, one

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means by “environment” *the surroundings of man*—the external material conditions of human life—then it becomes clear that all of man’s productive activities have the inherent tendency to *improve* his environment—indeed, that that is their essential purpose.

This becomes obvious if one realizes that the entire world physically consists of nothing but chemical elements. These elements are never destroyed. They simply reappear in different combinations, in different proportions, in different places. Apart from what has been lost in a few rockets, the quantity of every chemical element in the world today is the same as it was before the Industrial Revolution. The only difference is that, because of the Industrial Revolution, instead of lying dormant, out of man’s control, the chemical elements have been moved about, as never before, in such a way as to improve human life and well-being. For instance, some part of the world’s iron and copper has been moved from the interior of the earth, where it was useless, to now constitute buildings, bridges, automobiles, and a million and one other things of benefit to human life. Some part of the world’s carbon, oxygen, and hydrogen has been separated from certain compounds and recombined in others, in the process releasing energy to heat and light homes, power industrial machinery, automobiles, airplanes, ships, and railroad trains, and in countless other ways serve human life. It follows that insofar as man’s environment consists of the chemical elements iron, copper, carbon, oxygen, and hydrogen, and his productive activity makes them useful to himself in these ways, his environment is correspondingly improved.

All that *all* of man’s productive activities fundamentally consist of is the rearrangement of nature-given chemical elements for the purpose of making them stand in a more useful relationship to himself—that is, for the purpose of improving his environment.

Consider further examples. To live, man needs to be able to move his person and his goods from place to place. If an untamed forest stands in his way, such movement is difficult or impossible. It represents an improvement in his environment, therefore, when man moves the chemical elements that constitute some of the trees of the forest somewhere else and lays down the chemical elements brought from somewhere else to constitute a road. It is an improvement in his environment when man builds bridges, digs canals, opens mines, clears land, constructs factories and houses, or does anything else that represents an improvement in the external, material conditions of his life. All of these things represent an improvement in man’s material surroundings—his environment. All of them represent the rearrangement of nature’s elements in a way that makes them stand in a more useful relationship to human life and well-being.

Thus, all of economic activity has as its sole purpose the improvement of the environment—it aims exclusively at the improvement of the external,

material conditions of human life. Production and economic activity are precisely the means by which man adapts his environment to himself and thereby improves it.

So much for the environmentalists' claims about man's destruction of the environment. Only from the perspective of the alleged intrinsic value of nature and the nonvalue of man, can man's improvement of his environment be termed destruction of the environment.

The environmentalists' recent claims about the impending destruction of the "planet" are entirely the result of the influence of the intrinsic value doctrine. What the environmentalists are actually afraid of is not that the planet or its ability to support human life will be destroyed, but that *the increase in its ability to support human life* will destroy its still extensively existing "wildness." They cannot bear the thought of the earth's becoming fully subject to man's control, with its jungles and deserts replaced by farms, pastures, and forests planted by man, as man wills. They cannot bear the thought of the earth's becoming man's garden. In the words of McKibben, "The problem is that nature, the independent force that has surrounded us since our earliest days, cannot coexist with our numbers and our habits. *We may well be able to create a world that can support our numbers and our habits*, but it will be an artificial world. . . ." (Italics supplied.)

The toxic character of the environmental movement implies the observance of a vital principle in connection with any measures which the movement advocates and which might actually promote human life and well-being, such as those calling for the reduction of smog, the cleaning up of rivers, lakes, and beaches, and so forth. The principle is that even here one must not make common cause with the environmental movement in any way. One must be scrupulously careful not to advocate even anything that is genuinely good, under its auspices or banner. To do so is to promote its evil—to become contaminated with its poison and to spread its poison. In the hands of the environmentalists, concern even with such genuine problems as smog and polluted rivers serves as a weapon with which to attack industrial civilization. The environmentalists proceed as though problems of filth emanated from industrial civilization, as though filth were not the all-pervasive condition of human life in pre-industrial societies, and as though industrial civilization represented a decline from more healthful conditions of the past.

The principle of noncooperation with the environmental movement, of the most radical differentiation from it, must be followed in order to avoid the kind of disastrous consequences brought about earlier in this century by people in Russia and Germany who began as basically innocent and with good intentions. Even though the actual goals and programs of the Communists and Nazis were no secret, many people did not realize that such pronouncements and their underlying philosophy must be taken seriously. As a

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result, they joined with the Communists or Nazis in efforts to achieve what they believed were worthy specific goals, above all, goals falling under the head of the alleviation of poverty. But working side by side with the likes of Lenin and Stalin or Hitler and Himmler, did not achieve the kind of life these people had hoped to achieve. It did, however, serve to achieve the bloody goals of those monsters. And along the way, those who may have started out innocently enough very quickly lost their innocence and to varying degrees ended up simply as accomplices of the monsters.

Evil needs the cooperation of the good to disguise its nature and to gain numbers and influence it could never achieve on its own. Thus, the doctrine of intrinsic value needs to be mixed as much as possible with alleged concern for man's life and well-being. In allowing themselves to participate in advancing the cause of the mixture, otherwise good people serve to promote the doctrine of intrinsic value and thus the destruction of human values.

Already large numbers of otherwise good people have been enlisted in the environmentalists' campaign to throttle the production of energy. This is a campaign which, to the degree that it succeeds, can only cause human deprivation and the substitution of man's limited muscle power for the power of motors and engines. It is actually a campaign which seeks nothing less than *the undoing of the Industrial Revolution*, and the return of the poverty, filth, and misery of earlier centuries.

The essential feature of the Industrial Revolution is the use of *man-made power*. To the relatively feeble muscles of draft animals and the still more feeble muscles of human beings, and to the relatively small amounts of useable power available from nature in the form of wind and falling water, the Industrial Revolution added man-made power. It did so first in the form of steam generated from the combustion of coal, and later in the form of internal combustion based on petroleum, and electric power based on the burning of any fossil fuel or on atomic energy.

This man-made power is the essential basis of all of the economic improvements achieved over the last two hundred years. Its application is what enables us human beings to accomplish with our arms and hands the amazing productive results we do accomplish. To the feeble powers of our arms and hands is added the enormously greater power released by these sources of energy. Energy use, the productivity of labor, and the standard of living are inseparably connected, with the two last entirely dependent on the first.

Thus, it is not surprising, for example, that the United States enjoys the world's highest standard of living. This is a direct result of the fact that the United States has the world's highest energy consumption per capita. The United States, more than any other country, is the country where intelligent human beings have arranged for motor-driven machinery to accomplish results for them. All further substantial increases in the productivity of labor and

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standard of living, both here in the United States and across the world, will be equally dependent on man-made power and the growing consumption of energy it makes possible. Our ability to accomplish more and more with the same limited muscular powers of our limbs will depend entirely on our ability to augment them further and further with the aid of still more such energy.

In total opposition to the Industrial Revolution and all the marvelous results it has accomplished, the essential goal of environmentalism is to block the increase in one source of man-made power after another and ultimately to roll back the production of man-made power to the point of virtual nonexistence, thereby undoing the Industrial Revolution and returning the world to the economic Dark Ages. There is to be no atomic power. According to the environmentalists, it represents the death ray. There is also to be no power based on fossil fuels. According to the environmentalists, it causes “pollution,” and now global warming, and must therefore be given up. There is not even to be significant hydro-power. According to the environmentalists, the building of the necessary dams destroys intrinsically valuable wildlife habitat.

Only three things are to be permitted as sources of energy, according to the environmentalists. Two of them, “solar power” and power from windmills, are, as far as can be seen, utterly impracticable as significant sources of energy. If somehow, they became practicable, the environmentalists would undoubtedly find grounds for attacking them. The third allowable source of energy, “conservation,” is a contradiction in terms. “Conservation” is *not* a source of energy. Its actual meaning is simply using less. Conservation is a source of energy for one use only at the price of deprivation of energy use somewhere else.

The environmentalists’ campaign against energy calls to mind the image of a boa constrictor entwining itself about the body of its victim and slowly squeezing the life out of him. There can be no other result for the economic system of the industrialized world but enfeeblement and ultimately death if its supplies of energy are progressively choked off.

Large numbers of people have been enlisted in the campaign against energy out of fear that the average mean temperature of the world may rise a few degrees in the next century, mainly as the result of the burning of fossil fuels. If this were really to be so, the only appropriate response would be to be sure that more and better air conditioners were available. (Similarly, if there were in fact to be some reduction in the ozone layer, the appropriate response, to avoid the additional cases of skin cancer that would allegedly occur from exposure to more intense sunlight, would be to be sure that there were more sunglasses, hats, and sun-tan lotion available.) It would *not* be to seek to throttle and destroy industrial civilization.

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If one did not understand its underlying motivation, the environmental movement's resort to the fear of global warming might appear astonishing in view of all the previous fears the movement has professed. These fears, in case anyone has forgotten, have concerned the alleged onset of a *new ice age* as the result of the same industrial development that is now supposed to result in global warming, and the alleged creation of a "nuclear winter" as the result of man's use of atomic explosives.

The words of Paul Ehrlich and his incredible claims in connection with the "greenhouse effect" should be recalled. In the first wave of ecological hysteria, this "scientist" declared:

At the moment we cannot predict what the overall climatic results will be of our using the atmosphere as a garbage dump. We do know that very small changes in either direction in the average temperature of the Earth could be very serious. With a few degrees of cooling, a new ice age might be upon us, with rapid and drastic effects on the agricultural productivity of the temperate regions. With a few degrees of heating, the polar ice caps would melt, perhaps raising ocean levels 250 feet. Gondola to the Empire State Building, anyone?

The 250-foot rise in the sea level projected by Ehrlich as the result of global warming has been scaled back somewhat. According to McKibben, the "worst case scenario" is now supposed to be eleven feet, by the year 2100, with something less than seven feet considered more likely. According to a United Nations panel of alleged scientists, it is supposed to be 25.6 inches. (Even this still more limited projected rise did not stop the UN panel from calling for an immediate 60 percent reduction in carbon-dioxide emissions to try to prevent it.)

Perhaps of even greater significance is the continuous and profound distrust of science and technology that the environmental movement displays. The environmental movement maintains that science and technology cannot be relied upon to build a safe atomic power plant, to produce a pesticide that is safe, or even to bake a loaf of bread that is safe, if that loaf of bread contains chemical preservatives. When it comes to global warming, however, it turns out that there is one area in which the environmental movement displays the most breathtaking confidence in the reliability of science and technology, an area in which, until recently, no one—not even the staunchest supporters of science and technology—had ever thought to assert very much confidence at all. The one thing, the environmental movement holds, that science and technology can do so well that we are entitled to have unlimited confidence in them is *forecast the weather*—for the next one hundred years!

It is, after all, supposedly on the basis of a weather forecast that we are being asked to abandon the Industrial Revolution, or, as it is euphemistically

put, “to radically and profoundly change the way in which we live”—to our enormous material detriment.

Very closely connected with this is something else that might appear amazing. This concerns prudence and caution. No matter what the assurances of scientists and engineers, based in every detail on the best established laws of physics—about backup systems, fail-safe systems, containment buildings as strong as U-boat pens, defenses in depth, and so on—when it comes to atomic power, the environmental movement is unwilling to gamble on the unborn children of fifty generations hence being exposed to harmful radiation. But on the strength of a weather forecast, it is willing to wreck the economic system of the modern world—to literally throw away industrial civilization. (The 60 percent reduction in carbon dioxide emissions urged by that United Nations panel would be utterly devastating in itself, totally apart from all the further such measures that would surely follow it.)

The meaning of this insanity is that industrial civilization is to be abandoned because this is what must be done to *avoid bad weather*. All right, very bad weather. If we destroy the energy base needed to produce and operate the construction equipment required to build strong, well-made, comfortable houses for hundreds of millions of people, we shall be safer from the wind and rain, the environmental movement alleges, than if we retain and enlarge that energy base. If we destroy our capacity to produce and operate refrigerators and air conditioners, we shall be better protected from hot weather than if we retain and enlarge that capacity, the environmental movement claims. If we destroy our capacity to produce and operate tractors and harvesters, to can and freeze food, to build and operate hospitals and produce medicines, we shall secure our food supply and our health better than if we retain and enlarge that capacity, the environmental movement asserts.

There is actually a remarkable new principle implied here, concerning how man can cope with his environment. Instead of our taking action upon nature, as we have always believed we must do, we shall henceforth control the forces of nature more to our advantage by means of our *inaction*. Indeed, if we do not act, no significant threatening forces of nature will arise! The threatening forces of nature are not the product of nature, but of *us*! Thus speaks the environmental movement.

All of the insanities of the environmental movement become intelligible when one grasps the nature of the destructive motivation behind them. They are not uttered in the interest of man’s life and well-being, but for the purpose of leading him to self-destruction.

It must be stressed that even if global warming turned out to be a fact, the free citizens of an industrial civilization would have no great difficulty in coping with it—that is, of course, if their ability to use energy and to produce is not crippled by the environmental movement and by government controls

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otherwise inspired. The seeming difficulties of coping with global warming, or any other large-scale change, arise only when the problem is viewed from the perspective of government central planners.

It would be too great a problem for government bureaucrats to handle (as is the production even of an adequate supply of wheat or nails—as the experience of the whole socialist world has so eloquently shown). But it would certainly not be too great a problem for tens and hundreds of millions of free, thinking individuals living under capitalism to solve. It would be solved by means of each individual being free to decide how best to cope with the particular aspects of global warming that affected him. Individuals would decide, on the basis of profit and loss calculations, what changes they needed to make in their businesses and in their personal lives, in order best to adjust to the situation. They would decide where it was now relatively more desirable to own land, locate farms and businesses, and live and work, and where it was relatively less desirable, and what new comparative advantages each location had for the production of which goods. The essential thing they would require is the freedom to serve their self-interests by buying land and moving their businesses to the areas rendered relatively more attractive, and the freedom to seek employment and buy or rent housing in those areas.

Given this freedom, the totality of the problem would be overcome. This is because, under capitalism, the actions of the individuals, and the thinking and planning behind those actions, are coordinated and harmonized by the price system (as many former central planners of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union have come to learn). As a result, the problem would be solved in exactly the same way that tens and hundreds of millions of free individuals have solved much greater problems, such as redesigning the economic system to deal with the replacement of the horse by the automobile, the settlement of the American West, and the release of the far greater part of the labor of the economic system from agriculture to industry.

Indeed, it would probably turn out that if the necessary adjustments were allowed to be made, global warming, if it actually came, would prove highly beneficial to mankind on net balance. For example, there is evidence suggesting that it would postpone the onset of the next ice age by a thousand years or more and that the higher level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, which is supposed to cause the warming process, would be highly beneficial to agriculture.

Whether global warming comes or not, it is certain that nature itself will sooner or later produce major changes in the climate. To deal with those changes and virtually all other changes arising from whatever cause, man absolutely requires individual freedom, science, and technology. In a word, he requires the industrial civilization constituted by capitalism.

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This brings me back to the possibly truly good objectives that have been mixed in with environmentalism, such as the desire for greater cleanliness and health. If one wants to advocate such objectives without aiding the potential mass murderers in the environmental movement in achieving their goals, one must first of all accept unreservedly the values of human reason, science, technology, and industrial civilization, and never attack those values. They are the indispensable foundation for achieving greater cleanliness and better health and longer life.

In the last two centuries, loyalty to these values has enabled man in the Western world to put an end to famines and plagues, and to eliminate the once dread diseases of cholera, diphtheria, smallpox, tuberculosis, and typhoid fever, among others. Famine has been ended, because the industrial civilization so hated by the environmentalists has produced the greatest abundance and variety of food in the history of the world, and created the transportation system required to bring it to everyone. This same hated civilization has produced the iron and steel pipe, and the chemical purification and pumping systems, that enable everyone to have instant access to safe drinking water, hot or cold, every minute of the day. It has produced the sewage systems and the automobiles that have removed the filth of human and animal waste from the streets of cities and towns.

Such improvements, together with the enormous reduction in fatigue and exhaustion made possible by the use of labor-saving machinery, have resulted in a radical reduction in mortality and increase in life expectancy, from less than thirty years before the beginning of the Industrial Revolution to more than seventy-five years currently. By the same token, the average newborn American child today has a greater chance of living to age sixty five than the average newborn child of a nonindustrial society has of living to age five.

In the earlier years of the Industrial Revolution, the process of improvement was accompanied by the presence of coal dust in towns and cities, which people willingly accepted as the by-product of not having to freeze and of being able to have all the other advantages of an industrial society. Subsequent advances, in the form of electricity and natural gas, have radically reduced this problem. Those who seek further advances along these lines, should advocate the freedom of development of atomic power, which emits no particulate matter of any kind into the atmosphere. Atomic power, however, is the form of power most hated by the environmentalists.

Also essential for further improvements in cleanliness and health, and for the long-term availability of natural resources, is the extension of private ownership of the means of production, especially of land and natural resources. The incentive of private owners is to use their property in ways that maximize its long-term value and, wherever possible, to improve their property. Consistent with this fact, one should seek ways of extending the princi-

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ple of private ownership to lakes, rivers, beaches, and even to portions of the ocean. Privately owned lakes, rivers, and beaches, would almost certainly be clean lakes, rivers, and beaches. Privately owned, electronically fenced ocean ranches would guarantee abundant supplies of almost everything useful that is found in or beneath the sea. Certainly, the vast land holdings of the United States government in the western states and in Alaska should be privatized.

But what is most important in the present context, in which the environmental movement is operating almost unopposed, is that anyone who is afraid of becoming physically contaminated by exposure to one or another alleged toxic chemical should take heed that he does not place an indelible stain on his very existence through his exposure to the deadly poison of the environmental movement. This is what one is in danger of doing by ingesting the propaganda of the environmental movement and being guided by it. I do not know of anything worse that anyone can do than, having been born into the greatest material civilization in the history of the world, now take part in its destruction by cooperation with the environmental movement, and thus be a party to untold misery and death in the decades and generations to come.

By the same token, there are few things better that one can do than, having become aware of what is involved, take one's stand with the values on which human life and well-being depend. This is something which, unfortunately, one must be prepared to do with few companions in today's world. The great majority of those who should be fighting for human values—the professional intellectuals—either do not know enough to do so, have become afraid to do so, or, still worse, have themselves become the enemies of human values and are actively working on the side of environmentalism.

It is important to explain why there are so few intellectuals prepared to fight environmentalism and why there are so many who are on its side.

I believe that to an important extent the hatred of man and distrust of reason displayed by the environmental movement is a psychological projection of many contemporary intellectuals' self-hatred and distrust of their own minds arising as the result of their having been responsible for the destruction wrought by socialism. As the parties responsible for socialism, they have certainly been "a plague upon the world," and if socialism had in fact represented reason and science, as they continue to choose to believe, there would be grounds to distrust reason and science.

In my judgment, the "green" movement of the environmentalists is merely the old "red" movement of the communists and socialists shorn of its veneer of science. The only difference I see between the greens and the reds is the superficial one of the specific reasons for which they want to violate individual liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The reds claimed that the individual could not be left free because the result would be such things as "exploitation" and "monopoly." The greens claim that the individual cannot

be left free because the result will be such things as destruction of the ozone layer and global warming. Both claim that centralized government control over economic activity is essential. The reds wanted it for the alleged sake of achieving human prosperity. The greens want it for the alleged sake of avoiding environmental damage. In my view, environmentalism and ecology are nothing but the intellectual death rattle of socialism in the West, the final convulsion of a movement that only a few decades ago eagerly looked forward to the results of paralyzing the actions of individuals by means of “social engineering” and now seeks to paralyze the actions of individuals by means of prohibiting engineering of any kind. The greens, I think, may be a cut below the reds, if that is possible.

While the collapse of socialism is an important precipitating factor in the rise of environmentalism, there are other, more fundamental causes as well.

Environmentalism is the leading manifestation of the rising tide of irrationalism that is engulfing our culture. Over the last two centuries, the reliability of reason as a means of knowledge has been under a constant attack led by a series of philosophers from Immanuel Kant to Bertrand Russell. As a result, a growing loss of confidence in reason has taken place. As a further result, the philosophical status of man, as the being who is distinguished by the possession of reason, has been in decline. In the last two generations, as the effects of this process have more and more reached the general public, confidence in the reliability of reason, and the philosophical status of man, have declined so far that now virtually no basis is any longer recognized for a radical differentiation between man and animals. This is the explanation of the fact that the doctrine of St. Francis of Assisi and the environmentalists concerning the equality between man and animals is now accepted with virtually no opposition.

The readiness of people to accept the closely connected doctrine of intrinsic values is also a consequence of the growing irrationalism. An “intrinsic value” is a value that one accepts without any reason, without asking questions. It is a “value” designed for people who do what they are told and who do not think. A rational value, in contrast, is a value one accepts only on the basis of understanding how it serves the self-evidently desirable ultimate end that is constituted by one’s own life and happiness.

The cultural decline of reason has created the growing hatred and hostility on which environmentalism feeds, as well as the unreasoning fears of its leaders and followers. To the degree that people abandon reason, they must feel terror before reality, because they have no way of dealing with it other than reason. By the same token, their frustrations mount, since reason is their only means of solving problems and achieving the results they want to achieve. In addition, the abandonment of reason leads to more and more suffering as the result of others’ irrationality, including their use of physical

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force. Thus, in the conditions of a collapse of rationality, frustrations and feelings of hatred and hostility rapidly multiply, while cool judgment, rational standards, and civilized behavior vanish. In such a cultural environment, monstrous ideologies appear and monsters in human form emerge alongside them, ready to put them into practice. The environmental movement, of course, is just such a movement.

But if, because of these reasons, there are no longer many intellectuals ready to take up the fight for human values—in essence, for the value of the intellect, for man the rational being and for the industrial civilization he has created and requires—then all the greater is the credit for whoever is willing to stand up for these values now and, in so doing, don the mantle of intellectual.

There is certainly ample work for such “new intellectuals” to do.

At one level, the work directly concerns the issue of environmentalism.

The American people must be made aware of what environmentalism actually stands for and of what they stand to lose, and have already lost, as the result of its growing influence. They must be made aware of the environmental movement’s responsibility for the energy crisis and the accompanying high price of oil and oil products, which is the result of its systematic and highly successful campaign against additional energy supplies. They must be made aware of its consequent responsibility for the enrichment of Arab sheiks at the expense of the impoverishment of hundreds of millions of people around the world, including many millions here in the United States. They must be made aware of its responsibility for the vastly increased wealth, power, and influence of terrorist governments in the Middle East, stemming from the high price of oil it has caused, and for the resulting need to fight a war in the region.

The American people must be made aware of how the environmental movement has steadily made life more difficult for them. They must be shown how, as the result of its existence, people have been prevented from taking one necessary and relatively simple action after another, such as building power plants and roads, extending airport runways, and even establishing new garbage dumps. They must be shown how the history of the environmental movement is a history of destruction: of the atomic power industry, of the Johns Manville Company, of cranberry growers and apple growers, of sawmills and logging companies, of paper mills, of metal smelters, of coal mines, of steel mills, of tuna fishermen, of oil fields and oil refineries—to name only those which come readily to mind. They must be shown how the environmental movement has been the cause of the wanton violation of private property rights and thereby of untold thousands of acres of land not being developed for the benefit of human beings, and thus of countless homes and factories not being built. They must be shown how as the

result of all the necessary actions it prohibits or makes more expensive, the environmental movement has been a major cause of the marked deterioration in the conditions in which many people now must live their lives in the United States—that it is the cause of families earning less and having to pay more, and, as a result, being deprived of the ability to own their own home or even to get by at all without having to work a good deal harder than used to be necessary.

In sum, the American people need to be shown how the actual nature of the environmental movement is that of a *virulent pest*, consistently coming between man and the work he must do to sustain and improve his life.

If and when such understanding develops on the part of the American people, it will be possible to accomplish the appropriate remedy. This would include the repeal of every law and regulation in any way tainted by the doctrine of intrinsic value, such as the endangered species act. It would also include repeal of all legislation requiring the banning of man-made chemicals merely because a statistical correlation with cancer in laboratory animals can be established when the chemicals are fed to the animals in massive, inherently destructive doses. The overriding purpose and nature of the remedy would be to break the constricting grip of environmentalism and make it possible for man to resume the increase in his productive powers in the United States in the remaining years of this century and in the new century ahead.

In addition to all of this vital work, there is a second and even more important level on which the new intellectuals must work. This, ironically enough, entails a form of cleaning up of the environment—the *philosophical, intellectual, and cultural environment*.

What the cultural acceptance of a doctrine as irrational as environmentalism makes clear is that the real problem of the industrialized world is not “environmental pollution” but *philosophical corruption*. The so-called *intellectual mainstream* of the Western world has been fouled with a whole array of intellectual toxins resulting from the undermining of reason and the status of man, and which further contribute to this deadly process. Among them, besides environmentalism, are collectivism in its various forms of Marxism, racism, nationalism, and feminism; and cultural relativism, determinism, logical positivism, existentialism, linguistic analysis, behaviorism, Freudianism, Keynesianism, and more.

These doctrines are intellectual toxins because they constitute a systematic attack on one or more major aspects of the requirements of human life and well-being. Marxism results in the kind of disastrous conditions now prevailing in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. All the varieties of collectivism deny the free will and rationality of the individual and attribute his ideas, character, and vital interests to his membership in a collective:

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namely, his membership in an economic class, racial group, nationality, or sex, as the case may be, depending on the specific variety of collectivism. Because they view ideas as determined by group membership, these doctrines deny the very possibility of knowledge. Their effect is the creation of conflict between members of different groups: for example, between businessmen and wage earners, blacks and whites, English speakers and French speakers, men and women.

Determinism, the doctrine that man's actions are controlled by forces beyond his power of choice, and existentialism, the philosophy that man is trapped in a "human condition" of inescapable misery, lead people not to make choices they could have made and which would have improved their lives. Cultural relativism denies the objective value of modern civilization and thus undercuts both people's valuation of modern civilization and their willingness to work hard to achieve personal values in the context of it. The doctrine blinds people to the objective value of such marvelous advances as automobiles and electric light, and thus prepares the ground for the sacrifice of modern civilization to such nebulous and, by comparison, utterly trivial values as "unpolluted air."

Logical positivism denies the possibility of knowing anything with certainty about the real world. Linguistic analysis regards the search for truth as a trivial word game. Behaviorism denies the existence of consciousness. Freudianism regards the conscious mind (the "Ego") as surrounded by the warring forces of the unconscious mind in the form of the "Id" and the "Superego," and thus as being incapable of exercising substantial influence on the individual's behavior. Keynesianism regards wars, earthquakes, and pyramid building as sources of prosperity. It looks to peacetime government budget deficits and inflation of the money supply as a good substitute for these allegedly beneficial phenomena. Its effects, as the present-day economy of the United States bears witness, are the erosion of the buying power of money, of credit, of saving and capital accumulation, and of the general standard of living.

These intellectual toxins can be seen bobbing up and down in the "intellectual mainstream," just as raw sewage can be seen floating in a dirty river. Indeed, they fill the intellectual mainstream. Virtually, every college and university in the Western world is a philosophical cesspool of these doctrines, in which intellectually helpless students are immersed for several years and then turned loose to contaminate the rest of society. These irrationalist doctrines, and others like them, *are the philosophical substance of contemporary liberal-arts education.*

Clearly, the most urgent task confronting the Western world, and the new intellectuals who must lead it, is *a philosophical and intellectual cleanup.*

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Without it, Western civilization simply cannot survive. It will be killed by the poison of environmentalism.

To accomplish this cleanup, only the most powerful, industrial-strength, philosophical and intellectual cleansing agents will do. These cleansing agents are, above all, the writings of Ayn Rand and Ludwig von Mises. These two towering intellects are, respectively, the leading advocates of reason and capitalism in the twentieth century. A philosophical-intellectual cleanup requires that all or most of their writings be introduced into colleges and universities as an essential part of the core curriculum, and that what is not included in the core curriculum be included in the more advanced programs. The incorporation of the writings of Ayn Rand and Ludwig von Mises into a prominent place in the educational curriculum is the central goal that everyone should work for who is concerned about his cultural environment and the impact of that environment on his life and well-being. Only after this goal is accomplished, will there be any possibility that colleges and universities will cease to be centers of civilization-destroying intellectual disease. Only after it is accomplished on a large scale, at the leading colleges and universities, can there be any possibility of the intellectual mainstream someday being clean enough for rational people to drink from its waters.

The 21st Century should be the century when man begins the colonization of the solar system, not a return to the Dark Ages. Which it will be, will depend on the extent to which new intellectuals can succeed in restoring to the cultural environment the values of reason and capitalism.