

Twentieth century capitalist patriarchy has hitched its wagon to 'development and technology transfer', but in a world where a (so called) privileged 6% of the population consume 40% of global resources, more of the same is not the answer. This is why ecofeminists see the 'population debate' as a scurrilous distraction from the main cause of environmental degradation. Mies and Shiva stand alongside Manfred Max-Neef and Ted Trainer as uncompromising critics of 'catching up development', and their 'subsistence perspective' proposals for self reliance through consumer resistance; men in nurturing roles replacing militarisation; a people's science; are unquestionably the way to go.¹ At base, it is a question of reclaiming the parts of ourselves that an industrial civilisation has forced us to repress – a resocialisation, yet re-earthing of our human identity in nature.

Earth Follies is strongest in the chapters dealing with social structures; less satisfying when Seager turns to ideological debates within environmentalism. Her critical portrait of deep ecology is entertaining, if a little journalistic. Unfortunately, she does not have an equally sceptical eye view of the social ecologists, taking their rejection of ecofeminism at face value without examining the local personal/political agendas behind it. This part of her book could have done with more research all round. In particular, one wonders what US mega stars Sonia Johnson and Camille Paglia are doing in a section on ecofeminist ideas. While she acknowledges ecofeminism as 'virtually the only ideology to self-consciously bridge feminism and environmentalism' (p.11), her own relation to it is ambivalent. I read this as a reaction to unresolved tensions in the US Green scene. But has Seager, in fact, written an ecofeminist book, in spite of her desire to marginalise ecofeminism as 'fringe' and play for the political centre as 'feminist'? Yes and no: Seager's structural analysis of environmental crisis takes us half way. If we are to complement that with a deeper cultural critique, then Mies' and Shiva's *Ecofeminism* is indispensable.

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¹ See for example: Salleh, Ariel (1984), 'Contribution to the critique of political epistemology', *Thesis Eleven*, No. 8, pp.23-43; King, Ynestra (1989), 'Healing the wounds', in A. Jaggar and S. Bordo (ed.) *Gender/Body/Knowledge* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press) pp.115-41; Birkeland, Janis, 'Ecofeminism: linking theory and practice', in G. Gaard (ed.), *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press) pp.13-59.

² Max-Neef, Manfred (ed.) 1992. *Real Life Economics*. London: Routledge. Trainer, Ted 1987. *Abandon Affluence!* London: Zed Books.

Human Ecology: Fragments of Anti-fragmentary Views of the World
ed. Dieter Steiner and Markus Nausser
London: Routledge, 1993
ISBN 0-415-06777-4 (HB) £65.00. xiv + 365pp.

Why did I find this an unusually difficult book to review? To start with, it was hard to read. The text looks formidable; the reading supports this. A colleague and I received three review copies between the two of us. We came to refer to it wryly as 'the black book.'

'How are you getting on with ...' and the other would finish the sentence '... the Black Book?'

We placed the third copy on reserve in the library. There it found its function. A student wonders whether human ecology is 'really an academic subject'. 'Ah well', we'd say gleefully, 'Read the Black Book. Come back and then we'll discuss the academic credentials of human ecology.'

Oh the abuse of teaching power! It worked every time. I even took a copy to flash around at the occasional academic meeting. 'This is the way academic human ecology's going', I'd comment to an economist friend; calculating that it would fall open at one of the calculus pages. The impression sunk in with due gravity. Human ecology, within the university, has finally come of age. Here is the proof of its seriousness, of its coherence within the greater body of knowledge. And may those two sentences be the soundbyte grabbed by the publicity agent from this review.

So what do we have here? A book divided into four parts. The first addresses transdisciplinarity, biohistory, and the human ecological triangle of person-society-environment. Part two largely addresses questions of epistemology, including one of the best papers (by one of the few women contributors, Ingela Josefson) which exposes the inadequacy of expert systems in nursing care for the terminally ill. This is the only paper which seriously discusses the human ecology of love – a word which otherwise does not even appear in the index. Part three is on structuration, with the warning that 'structuration theory is sensitive to the shortcomings of the orthodox consensus'. Amazing! And part four is on the regional dimension, effectively showing human ecology to be just another name for human geography – which of course it is, when aliveness to the power of love, the plight of the poor, humour, poetry, deep ecology and the movement of the Spirit are largely left out.

I found this a frustrating yet valuable book. I was struck by how much it is needed. We need something with which to counter pseudo-academic carping that human ecology is all surface and no depth. Our subject may leave the detail to the disciplinary specialists, but it certainly does not lack penetration. Having a text like this, soundly rooted in contemporary geographical theory and social science perspectives, is therefore of value.

Such a book needs to be in all our libraries. It needs to be read by teachers of human ecology. But I question how far it is a book to teach from – a textbook for students. The authors do subtitle it, 'Fragments of anti-fragmentary views of the world'. That is honest for the book does not and possibly could not offer in any way an adequate rendition of the richness and pertinence of what human ecology can be about.

Yes, we need the social sciences with their structuration theories, epistemologies, and even the (radical?) suggestion that feeling and doing have a role alongside thinking. But the real fire of human ecology is much more passionate than the editors' very-Swiss, coolly-analytical treatment suggests.

Where, I wondered, is the fire that gets the academics off their asses (I mean, of course, the plodding horse-like creature). Where are the voices speaking truths which hit hard at the political cutting edge? Is a distanced academic approach like most of the writers in this volume adopt really going to change anything one iota for those and that which suffers now, today?

Would the contributors not have found more to teach their students from a summer on the barricades at the Twyford Down motorway protest with the Dongas Tribe? Or touching the hearts of submariners at the Faslane Peace Camp? Or up a tree house with the urban unemployed at Pollock Park in Glasgow or in Claycoquet Sound? Or in a German

alternative community where disabled persons find meaningful lives in the organic gardens? Or lobbying hard in the corridors of corporate, governmental and academic power? Or caring for children in gentle, creative ways?

For me, this volume poses a question bigger than the nature of human ecology in a fragmentary world. It indirectly begs: what is the role of the contemporary Academy at a time of catastrophic change? Is it to get fat on tenure and research contracts? Or is it, faithful to the original Academy of Plato, to subvert (in the sense of to transform) the youth and to be fearless of the charge of apostasy?

The Platonic Socrates, of course, lost his tenure through a cup of hemlock. This book smacks of those concerned with securing theirs – I mean, tenure, not hemlock. It voices an important word in the discussion about human ecology, but strikes me as neither the last nor the most urgent word. It is typical of the genre which advocates 'more research', as indeed does at least one contributor.

I say, f*** such displacement activity! Let's get on with real lived philosophy. Socrates. Radical love of the goddess of wisdom. Walking the talk.

'And the little problem about, hemlock?' ... whispers the old codger's daemon.

'Oh yes ... but rather than Bateson's slowly boiled frog.'

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Toward Improved Accounting for the Environment

E. Lutz (ed.)

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For the past five years or so, much of the 'environmental community' has enthusiastically embraced resource and environment (or 'green') accounting. This interest is reflected in a burgeoning literature as to what 'green accounting' actually is and how exactly should it be done. Five years is also the time that has elapsed since the publication of the World Bank/UNEP book, *Environmental Accounting for Sustainable Development* (Ahmad et al. 1989). That publication is still widely cited in the literature, not least when attention is drawn to the seemingly disparate approaches to 'green accounting' that appear to be available.

With this in mind, Ernst Lutz's edited volume is a timely sequel (if that is its intention). How far have we come to a consensus on the numerous issues raised in Ahmad et al. (1989)? The chapters in this book bringing together both existing and new material appears to offer some cause for optimism. Divided in three sections the book opens with an outline and discussion of perhaps the most significant piece of evidence for this hopefulness: the United Nation's proposed Integrated System of Environmental and Economic Accounting (SEEA) (a satellite account not actually integrated in the System of National Accounts [SNA] yet consistent with its core accounting framework). While Anne Harrison (ch. 3) meticulously sets out the differences between the treatment of natural assets in the SNA and the SEEA, Bartelmus, Stahmer and van Tongeren (ch. 4) concentrate their efforts on the framework for the latter. Although the main proposals that have emerged from this process will be familiar to many, this chapter does at least provide

a concise version of the more detailed UN Handbook (United Nations, 1993). Case studies using the SEEA are provided in the opening two chapters of section 2 for Mexico and for Papua New Guinea.

The remainder of section 1 is devoted to an assessment of this framework by various experts. All share the sentiment that the SEEA represents a significant achievement and several other unifying points in these commentaries can be identified. One example is the vagueness of the valuation procedures set out in the SEEA. With respect to the valuation of commercial natural resources the basic menu consists of two approaches from which UNSTAT leaves it to users to choose from. One of these approaches – the El Serafy method (ESM) – is the subject of a chapter by Hartwick and Hageman (ch. 12). As El Serafy did not investigate the economic foundations of his proposed measure this chapter is a useful addition to the literature. The authors conclude that this method is in some circumstances a good approximation of economic depreciation. In practice, as the case study chapters show, this method and its chief rival – the 'net price method' – usually yield vastly different magnitudes.

Some of the issues surrounding appropriate valuation can be resolved by reference to an adequate conceptual framework for suggested revisions. Hence, a request to maintain a theoretical underpinning to measurement is another common thread running through the comments. John Proops takes the opportunity to expand on his comments in a separate chapter (ch. 15) emphasising the dynamic setting of sustainability and natural resource use questions. In doing so, he offers an interesting alternative framework to the conventional neoclassical approach that is used to good effect by John Hartwick (chs 12 and 17).

A criticism of this volume (and, in fairness, to most of the green accounting literature) is that while significant energy has been spent defining what is green accounting and what activities it encompasses, very little attention is given to an equally important issue. As Lorents Lorentsen comments, in the context of the SEEA, this issue is the *uses* of 'green accounts' and the likely impact on decision-making of revised measures of income. One would expect this to be of crucial concern but it is seldom addressed, that is, other than by sceptics, including here, Mike Young (ch. 9). Of course, a key 'use' is in the measurement of sustainability. Yet, according to Richard Norgaard (ch. 16) even this use is dubious as the prices with which we make such calculations will be determined by the attitudes of the current generation towards the future. Indications of sustainability given in this way may be deceptive, however appealing they might appear to those of a practical persuasion.

Peckin and Lutz (ch. 8) tackle the more practical side of the 'uses' issue by looking at the efforts expended in 'greening' national accounts by government departments and statistical offices in several industrialised countries. However, the main stress is on approaches themselves rather than their uses and it is apparent the material in the chapter has not been updated with more recent accounts of country experience (i.e. post 1990). Yet, if one accepts Wilfred Beckerman's claim made in this very journal one could be forgiven for concluding that such efforts 'are virtually worthless' (Beckerman, 1994, p.206). That claim rested on the non-reliance of industrialised countries on a commercial resource base. But what of the non-marketed environmental sources of what we vaguely term 'well-being': how might these affect our accounting frameworks and aggregates?

Possible answers to these questions are given good coverage here as in John Hartwick's excellent chapter on the integration of environmental services (derived from forested land) into a measure of Net National Product. Putting numbers on such measures