

****The following content is intended solely for the educational use of the individual user.****

These digital images may not be copied, retained, printed, shared, modified or otherwise used without the copyright holder's express written permission, except as permitted for educational use.

Michael P. Nelson

Holists and Fascists and Paper Tigers...Oh My!

ABSTRACT: *Over and over, philosophers have claimed that environmental holism in general, and Leopold's Land Ethic in particular, ought to be rejected on the basis that it has fascistic implications. I argue that the Land Ethic is not tantamount to environmental fascism because Leopold's moral theory accounts for the moral standing of the individual as well as "the land," a holistic ethic better protects and defends the individual in the long-run, and the term "fascism" is misapplied in this case.*

In contemporary philosophic literature, and elsewhere, having one's position or person labeled as racist, sexist, or even speciesist is perceived to be sufficient reason to dismiss the position, or worse, the originator or proponents of the position, straight-away. Likewise, designating a putative *ethic* as implying one of the above "isms," functions not only as a highly emotive accusation, but also serves to encourage summary dismissal of that proposed ethic. However, before someone's position or person is damned, it seems only fair that careful, complete, and accurate consideration should be given to exactly what is asserted, that is, that what is being condemned actually does warrant one of these disparaging "isms."

Over the last decade, or so, attempts at positing and defending holistic, eco-centric environmental ethics have at many times and in many places been dismissed altogether because they too have been said to imply one of these despi-

Direct all correspondence to: Michael P. Nelson, Department of Philosophy, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, Stevens Point, WI 54481-3897.

cable "isms." Such approaches are often readily rejected because it is believed that they evince a sort of fascism; more specifically termed "environmental fascism".¹

This charge has been, and is, often leveled primarily against the Land Ethic² as formulated by Aldo Leopold and philosophically developed and defended by J. Baird Callicott.³ In fact, in the first issue of this very journal two leading environmental philosophers, Frederick Ferré and Kristin Shrader-Frechette, dredge up this imputation against holism and the Land Ethic once again.⁴

I contend that upon examination this charge simply does not stick. And since in defending the Land Ethic against such a charge not only do I defend the most common target of the criticism, I also show that there is at least one form of environmental holism which does not imply environmental fascism. Thus, environmental holism is not necessarily fascistic.

Of course no one wants to be a fascist or support fascism. In fact, the past is filled with poor excuses for the repression of the individual in order to promulgate the supposed "greater good." Such summons for individual sacrifice on behalf of the greater good have repeatedly turned out to be quite hideous in practice. We need only recollect the historically recent rise of fascist leaders in certain European countries, and the devastation they wrought, to convince ourselves of this truth. Therefore, if it is true that environmental fascism is implied by the Land Ethic, then we would be wise at least to rethink our possible allegiance to it, if not completely renounce it as a viable form of environmental ethics. However, many critics doubt not only the viability but even the possibility of the project of clearing the Land Ethic of its supposedly implied fascism. Bryan Norton, for example, has claimed that dealing with the charge of environmental fascism is "the most difficult problem in interpreting, and in advocating, Leopold's land ethic," and further, Norton feels the project of getting both individuals and wholes into the moral community to be "the great unfinished task of Leopold's land ethic."⁵

I. WHAT'S ALL THIS ABOUT ENVIRONMENTAL FASCISM ?

As the Land Ethic has come to the forefront of possible approaches to environmental ethics over the last two decades, philosophers increasingly have given it more serious thought. However, some thinkers who seriously contemplate the implementation of an ecocentric system of ethics are horrifically startled by the grave practical implications they assume a system of ethics which de-emphasizes concern solely for individuals—including individual humans—logically implies. The assumption is that shifting the locus of concern away from the individual and refocusing it on wholes (e.g., the biotic "community as such") necessarily grants moral significance *only* to the whole, and completely excludes any and all consideration for individuals.

It is supposed that since the summary moral maxim of the Land Ethic maintains that, "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and

beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise”⁶ that the only criterion of moral evaluation is the effect something has on the biotic community as a whole. If this were so, then the Land Ethic would indeed have unacceptable and fascistic implications. Philosopher William Aiken, for example, has suggested that the Land Ethic is “extreme eco-holism” which comes close to prescribing “mass genocide or species suicide,” or even “massive human diebacks,” in which we humans would be required to cull or “eliminate 90 percent of our numbers.”⁷

In addition to this repulsive and violently misanthropic insinuation, the Land Ethic would both permit and require the merciless culling of sentient or rights-possessing members of excessively reproducing species, such as deer and rabbits, because of the threat they present to the “integrity, stability, and beauty” of the ecosystems they overpopulate. This putative implication of the Land Ethic obviously alarms those who embrace an animal welfare ethics approach to environmental concerns. Such “paranoia” is represented by philosopher Edward Johnson when he warns that “we should not let the land ethic distract us from the concrete problems about the treatment of animals which have been the constant motive behind the animal liberation movement.”⁸ Callicott has observed that because of this partial understanding of the Land Ethic, that to those who expound one of the varieties of moral extensionism, the Land Ethic seems to be far removed from any traditional individualistic ethic, whether anthropocentric, zoocentric, or biocentric, and instead seems much more akin to a ‘termitarium or beehive ethic’.⁹

Moreover, as philosopher Michael Zimmerman has recently pointed out,¹⁰ there has been an attempt on behalf of conservative demagogues such as Rush Limbaugh and Ron Arnold (of “Wise Use Movement” fame) to label and dismiss all environmentalists as fascists for promoting biocentric and ecocentric ethics and environmental policy. There is an attempt to link biocentrism and ecocentrism with the National Socialism movement of the Nazi’s, which is best represented by the works of Nazi environmentalist Dr. Walter Schoenichen who, according to Zimmerman, “explicitly portrayed his ecosophy as consistent with the...racist ideology of National Socialism.”¹¹ All three views posit and defend the view that nature has value above and beyond its various uses as natural resources—or intrinsic value; ecocentrist Aldo Leopold and Nazi Schoenichen both speak of the land as an organism made up of species;¹² and all three speak highly of wilderness preservation and the protection of other lands, or the environment as a whole, for the greater good.

It is precisely these sorts of interpretations of the Land Ethic which have led those such as Tom Regan, the originator of the charge, to dub the Land Ethic ‘environmental fascism.’

Regan believes that a holistic ecocentric ethic, such as the Land Ethic, is tantamount to environmental fascism because, in focusing moral concern on the whole, it enjoins the sacrifice of the individual for the good of the whole. He assumes that the effect actions have on the biotic community is the only moral criterion, and that humans, therefore, would, actually and axiologically, become

reduced in stature, losing their special and privileged position. Why does he assume this? Because Leopold claims that once we come to an ecological understanding of the world we will realize that humans are "in fact, only a member of the biotic team," and that the Land Ethic therefore "changes the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it."¹³ Or, as Regan himself puts it:

What has ultimate value is not the individual but the collective, not the "part" but the "whole," whereby "the whole" is meant the entire biosphere: the *totality* of the things and systems in the natural order.¹⁴

If so, all consideration of the whole would appear to override any moral claims of the individual. However, Regan's is a misunderstanding and misinterpretation, the result of misusing selective quotations and misemphasizing certain words and phrases. His claim that an ecocentric ethic such as the Land Ethic cannot also account for the moral inclusion of individuals, and his perception that the Land Ethic threatens his own view, leads Regan quickly to distance his readers from it, by summarily sticking it with the highly visceral and emotive, but unwarranted, label of environmental fascism.

Now to be historically accurate and complete, as well as fair to Regan, Aiken, et al., it should be acknowledged that the charge of environmental fascism was invited, indeed, provoked by Callicott in his early and still well-known paper, "Animal Liberation: A Triangular Affair."¹⁵ In this paper, Callicott makes comments which those leveling the charge of environmental fascism can cite as evidence.

Claiming that "the good of the biotic *community* is the ultimate measure of the moral value, the rightness and wrongness, of actions," and that "*in every case* the effect upon ecological systems is the decisive factor in the determination of the ethical quality of actions," (emphasis added) Callicott concludes, from these premises, that therefore "the population of people should, perhaps, be roughly twice that of bears," and that "the extent of misanthropy in modern environmentalism thus must be taken as a measure of the degree to which it is biocentric."¹⁶ Fueling the fascist flame, Callicott mentions, with no apparent disapproval, Edward Abbey's now famous dilemma that if a choice were forced upon him between taking the life of a man or the life of a snake, he would eliminate the man ("I'm a humanist; I'd rather kill a man than a snake"). He cites, again without apparent disapprobation, Garrett Hardin's claim that we should employ no motor vehicles to save human beings lost or injured in wilderness areas; and he provides a precedent in Western moral philosophy of putting the good of the community over that of the individual by pointing to Plato's moral social philosophy.¹⁷ All of these passages in "Triangular Affair" serve to support Regan's fascist criticism.¹⁸ However, in order again to be accurate as well as fair—this time to Callicott—it is important to note that Regan is responding to some of the admittedly more thoughtless comments made by Callicott in what Callicott himself later characterized as one of his

less “tempered and considered interpretations and extrapolations” of the Land Ethic—a paper written primarily to “provoke controversy.”¹⁹

II. WHY THE LAND ETHIC ISN'T ENVIRONMENTAL FASCISM

Regan's epithet of environmental fascism has had an amazing effect. Often in professional publications, presentations, and discussions when one mentions Leopold, Callicott, or the Land Ethic, all three are immediately and altogether dismissed with little thought or discussion by the simple mention of environmental fascism. However, even though the Land Ethic is routinely treated in such a manner, the charge of environmental fascism has been addressed here and there in the literature.²⁰ Seldom is the fact that the charge has been rebutted or the rebuttal itself paid heed to.

Now, of course Leopold never intended the Land Ethic to imply anything like fascism. If we know anything about the character of the man, we know he was no fascist nor advocator thereof.²¹ Leopold's son, and well-known Emeritus Professor of Geology at the University of California, Berkeley, Luna B. Leopold, addresses this point when he writes:

It has been suggested that Leopold's words imply that the value of an individual person would be inversely proportional to the supply of people. The words have even been interpreted to convey the idea that abortion, infanticide, war, and other means for the elimination of the less fit may be unobjectionable because they are ecosystemically unobjectionable.²²

However, Luna Leopold testifies that his father had a very deep concern for individuals, and Luna Leopold sees the Land Ethic as “the outgrowth and extension of this deep personal concern for the individual.”²³ Likewise, many who advocate some form of environmental holism refuse to set aside various sorts of humanistic ethics or openly advocate the draconian measures their positions would appear to dictate.

Now, regardless of Leopold's character and personal concern and despite whether or not Leopold intended the Land Ethic to have inhumane and misanthropic implications, if such implications are a valid logical deduction from the Land Ethic's theoretical premises, then that would represent a *reductio ad absurdum* for the Land Ethic, since none but the greatest misanthropes among us would be willing to accept such odious consequences. Although we are relieved that Leopold and many contemporary environmental holists refuse to relinquish humanistic ethics, future proponents of holistic environmental approaches might not hold them so dear. They might instead feel coerced by force of logic to fulfill what they take to be the correct, albeit grisly, implications of their holism.²⁴ Therefore, if the logical road of all holistic environmental ethics necessarily leads to environmental fascism, we might wish to foreclose interest in such an approach.

Fortunately, though, the Land Ethic as a representative holistic approach is a much more expanded and rich position than some other, more simple, type of environmental holism which may indeed imply fascism. Not only did Leopold not intend for the Land Ethic to be fascist, but he also provided evidence to the contrary.

First, because Leopold recognized that the most fundamental result of an ecological education was the grasping of the complex interdependence of things, he subsequently realized that concern for the individual is not only encompassed by, but is best accomplished through, protection and defense of that upon which the individual depends. The human individual is not excluded from this system of interdependence, and hence the human individual is best protected and defended in the long-run by maintaining the "integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community." To put it more concisely, Leopold realized that holistic concern is actually a form of indirect individual concern. Therefore, given the dependence of the individual on the whole, the individual is better cared for in the long-run because of the protection of that upon which she or he depends.

This is, nevertheless, merely an enlightened collective self-interest defense of the Land Ethic. And, as such, it only states that we should protect and defend the whole because doing so would better insure individual survival (individual human survival). But there is even more reason to suppose that the Land Ethic is not equivalent to environmental fascism.

The Land Ethic is not environmental fascism because it expressly provides for the good of the individual as well as for the good of the whole. The Land Ethic accounts for both the moral consideration of individuals and wholes. As Leopold himself stated, "it [the Land Ethic] implies respect for [our] *fellow-members*, and also respect for the community as such."²⁵

But how exactly does the Land Ethic do this? How does it account for both individuals and wholes? Simply put, it accounts for both because of its foundations in bio-social evolution.

There are two stages in the development of ethics. The first is biological. Leopold anchors the Land Ethic upon a bio-social evolutionary analysis which, whether he was aware of it or not, stems from the basic Humean and Smithean precept that ethics are rooted in the moral sentiments. Leopold seems to have absorbed this notion through the writings of Darwin, who begins this account of the evolution of ethics with the basic and seemingly inescapable parental affections mammals have for their infants.

So, how exactly do we go from the love of parents for their helpless offspring to a more inclusive ethical system? Callicott explains:

Bonds of affection and sympathy between parents and offspring permitted the formation of small, closely kin social groups, Darwin argued. Should the parental and filial affections bonding family members chance to extend to less closely related individuals, that would permit an enlargement of the family group. And should the newly extended community more successfully defend itself and/or more efficiently provision itself, the

inclusive fitness of its members severally would increase, Darwin reasoned. Thus the more diffuse familial affections... would be spread throughout a population.²⁶

According to Darwin, this altruistic instinct—responsible for the formation of the family group—augmented by the intellectual and linguistic powers of human beings is the foundation of primitive human morality. The further evolution of human ethics is more a function of culture than biology.

The cultural dimension of the development of human morality depends upon people being cognizant of their relationships with others and upon their ability to respond ethically to such realizations. As the boundaries of human social and cultural communities have expanded historically to include members of one's own family, then clan, tribe, nation, etc..., our perceived moral community has expanded correspondingly to include those previously regarded as outsiders. Hence, as our moral sentiments respond to changes in the way we view the world our ethics change correspondingly. As Callicott puts it:

The moral community expanded to become coextensive with the newly drawn boundaries of societies and the representation of virtue and vice, right and wrong, good and evil, changed to accommodate, foster, and preserve the economic and institutional organization of emergent social orders.²⁷

Presently, many people recognize that *all* members of the human species ought to be accorded at least some fundamental human rights. We feel this way because we have a perception of all humans as essentially linked into one society or community—"the global village" as we sometimes call it. Our current "human rights" ethic corresponds to this change in perception.²⁸

Perhaps we can now understand how it is that individuals enter into the moral community. But what of wholes? How do wholes—including certain environmental wholes—garner ethical consideration *as such*; as more than just the sum of their respective individual constituents? Answer: the same way.

Interestingly enough, we have all along experienced certain moral sentiments toward wholes—toward family as well as family members and toward community as well as its constituents. And, hence, we have included wholes within our ethical systems all along. Examples of this abound. We might think of the sentiments of loyalty or love one feels for a football team (European or American—Blackburn Rovers or Green Bay Packers), or the loyalty and obligation one feels for one's neighborhood as prime examples of moral concern for wholes as such. Patriotism, the love and loyalty one feels for one's country, is currently perhaps the most obvious and universal example of familiar holistic moral concern. Protection through legal means of certain endangered species as *corporate entities* and not merely as a collection of individual members of endangered species is a more recent, and unfortunately, much less universal and familiar example of holistic moral concern. Philosopher Peter Wenz claims that "concern for corporate entities can be found in our culture." Lending support to this thesis Wenz writes:

Patriotism, and loyalty to religious, professional, and school traditions all bespeak concern for the welfare of corporate entities. These concerns can perhaps be reduced in the

manner of scientific reduction to concerns about individual human beings. But such reductions, even if they are possible, do not reflect the phenomenology of moral experience. People do not feel loyalty to an open set of other people, but to their country, school, religion, etc. Certainly, the *direct* object of their moral concern is a corporate entity.²⁹

So, what of the land? How do we come to include “soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land”?³⁰ Leopold observed that “all ethics so far evolved rest upon a single premise: that the individual is a member of a community.”³¹ Subsequently, he recognized that the land or biota, like our human societies, is organized as a community—the biotic community. Leopold posits the Land Ethic, then, as the proper response to these two realizations. Therefore, once we come to see the natural world as a community of interdependent parts to which we belong and upon which we depend, our feelings of care and respect further expand outward to include the biotic community. Since ecological theory changes our view of the world, we come to feel and realize that wholes such as ecosystems, species, or biotic communities might also be included within our moral community. Thus, the Land Ethic is the latest step in the evolution of ethics as sketched by Darwin.

It is important to note that Leopold’s literary style is unique. It is as holistic as the ethic he advocates. One must read *A Sand County Almanac* in its entirety to grasp properly the full meaning of its capstone essay “The Land Ethic.” As Dennis Ribbens points out, “Leopold’s attitude toward writing was no less ecological than was his attitude toward land.”³² Hence, the summary moral maxim of the Land Ethic (“A thing is right when it tends...”) is just that—the summary moral maxim of the Land Ethic—which is an accretion or addendum to a larger, more inclusive ethical system. The rest of that system includes individuals to varying degrees. To focus solely on the summary moral maxim of the Land Ethic is to see only the tip of the proverbial iceberg. One must comprehend the Land Ethic in its larger context to correctly comprehend the Land Ethic at all.³³ Dichotomous thinking is not always accurate or the only way to look at something. It does not always have to be either/or—in this case, either we have individuals in our moral community or we have wholes. We can have both. With the Land Ethic we can, and do, have a successful and coherent combination of the two.

It is of vital importance to note that when Leopold speaks of this “extension of ethics,” he uses words like “accretion” to refer to the Land Ethic. He goes to lengths to point out that the Land Ethic only “enlarges the boundaries of the [moral] community,” and therefore our ethical obligations still include our “fellow members.”³⁴ These are crucial intricacies which critics such as Regan seem to completely neglect or ignore.

So, enlarging our moral boundaries and changing the locus of concern to include environmental wholes, or the environment as a whole, does not necessarily entail abandoning or subordinating the individuals which make up that whole. The Land Ethic is not intended to override and erase our already existing ethical sys-

tems, but rather it is properly viewed as an “accretion” to those pre-existing moral sensibilities, it only fine tunes and adds to them. More needs to be said about this point.

Merely because we begin to include the “land” in the moral community does not mean that we must therefore exclude those other things which were in the moral community previously. To borrow an analogy, the evolution of ethics may be pictured like the cross-section of a tree, with concentric annual rings that are added to the prior rings lying within them.³⁵ The innermost ring we might see as the most basic of all human communities, the family, to which our strongest and most tender sentiments relate, namely the parental of filial affections, that motivate the altruistic behavior (upon which ethics ultimately rests) between parents and their children. Subsequent rings represent one’s extended family, clan, tribe, nation, country, and global village. When a new ring is added, the older ones do not disappear. Thus, we are not allowed to be remiss in our ethical obligations to members of more venerable communities when a new community is evolved or discovered.³⁶ Therefore, granting “the land” moral consideration does not imply that we should ignore our existing moral obligations. Quite the contrary. Callicott emphasizes this point when he writes:

That I am now a member of the global human community and hence have correlative moral obligations to all mankind does not mean that I am no longer a member of my own family and citizen of my local community and of my country or that I am relieved of the peculiar and special limitations on freedom of action attendant upon these relationships.³⁷

And, likewise, when we do what the Land Ethic requires and extend the boundaries of moral concern to include wholes, this does not mean that we lose our moral obligations to those individuals previously commanding them. As Callicott also points out,

The land ethic does not compete with familiar social ethics, nor does it swallow up earlier stages of moral natural history. Rather, the land ethic suggests an evolutionary interpretation of moral development in which it is the next step in a sequence of ethical accretions. All the previous accretions remain operative and in full force.³⁸

Now, in addition to being able to include individuals, human social wholes, and now environmental wholes within the purview of ethics, the Land Ethic also supplies a way in which to sort out the inevitable moral conflicts that arise between individuals and wholes.

The larger system of ethics to which the Land Ethic belongs differs significantly from most current moral thought. Because a thing gains acceptance into the moral community does not necessarily mean it gets equal moral consideration. Therefore, even though it appears that with the Land Ethic we have now included every natural entity under the sun within the sphere of moral concern, this does not mean we are obligated to protect and defend all inductees with equal fervor. Not only does the ethical system to which the Land Ethic belongs not override our prior moral obligations, it also allows us to rank them. *Prima*

facie, we have stronger obligations to those beings closer to us—and to those innermost accretions. Hence, my obligation to make sure my own brother is not starving is stronger than my obligation to feed the hungry in Somalia.³⁹ In this way we can avoid the problem of ethical overload, or the granting of equal moral consideration to *all* entities in our multiple moral communities and to those communities as such.

It may now appear that we have another problem: that our duties to the biotic community and its members will always be eclipsed by our stronger obligations to our various human communities and their members, since duties to the biotic community and its members are the final accretion to our already existing set or series of ethical obligations. Far from being a case of environmental fascism, the Land Ethic may now appear to be an environmental “paper tiger.” It has no teeth and, hence, no bite. It seems as though in practice we would never, or quite seldom, actually be able to apply any of the Land Ethic principles. Since we have stronger obligations to those closer to us, wouldn’t *all* those prior accretions *always* seemingly override *all* our obligations to the land?

No, because our ethical obligations are not all equal either. Certainly it would violate our obligations to other humans to reduce the human population by actively killing people or by more passively letting them starve. On the other hand, we might ask more affluent people to consume less in the interest of the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community, far short of sacrificing their own lives or well-being. There are ways to sort out competing moral obligations within the theoretical framework of the Land Ethic. As stated above, the measure of our obligation(s) is not necessarily any and all communities but rather those communities to which we belong. Hence, the closer we are to the community to which we belong, the stronger our obligations are to that community. Hence, we would not say that we have as strong as obligations to a village in Mexico as we do to our own in Wisconsin.

This also helps solve the paper tiger problem. The further we move from family outward toward the land community the more of us there are who belong to each of these communities. So, even though our *prima facie* obligations are not as strong to the outer accretions, more of us have and share these obligations. This adds up to give ethical clout or bite to our land obligations.

I want to stop with this line of inquiry at this point, however, and note that even though this topic deserves more attention, we should realize that we are a long way from the charge of environmental fascism with which this paper is principally concerned. How the Land Ethic sorts out competing moral claims is a topic beyond the argument that individuals as well as wholes can simultaneously occupy moral space. In fact, this problem—the paper tiger problem—actually assumes that the Land Ethic is not equivalent to environmental fascism since by the very pursuit of the problem we already take for granted that both individuals and wholes can be included in the moral community.

III. CONCLUSION

I would be willing to bet that we knew all along that the Land Ethic, and hence environmental holism, was not synonymous with environmental fascism. "Fascism" is mainly a term used in political theory. The closest thing to what Regan is referring to by calling the Land Ethic environmental fascism is found by selectively reading Roger Scruton's *Dictionary of Political Thought* in which he characterizes "fascism" as the notion of "social unity under political leadership," as "showing hostility to democracy" and "respect for collective organization," and as requiring "sacrifices for the nation." However, he also notes that the concept of fascism is moreover often referred to as "an amalgam of disparate conceptions, often ill-understood," "without specific content," and conveying "no clear idea."⁴⁰ Michael Zimmerman likewise notes that the implications of an untempered holism might certainly be described "as draconian or tyrannical, but not necessarily as fascist." As Zimmerman goes on to say:

Fascism gains its power by claiming to restore dignity, nobility, purpose, and privilege to some unique people or race whose members feel that their original mystical-organic social unity and their ties with the homeland are degenerating because of the insidious influence of alien races and foreign ideas.... To merit the name 'ecofascist', then, a radical ecology movement would have to...urge that society be reorganized in terms of an authoritarian, collectivist leadership principle based on masculinist-martial values.⁴¹

So, in addition to the fact that it does not correctly characterize the Land Ethic, "fascism," and hence "environmental fascism," defies clear and specific definition and characterization to begin with. It is, simply, a negative epithet.

As we saw above, the Land Ethic does not prescribe the abandonment of the individual for the greater good and hence is not really environmental fascism. If anything, the Land Ethic would more accurately be referred to as "environmental communitarianism."⁴² However, communitarianism obviously does not have the negative emotive and visceral connotations Regan is looking for and would hardly supply reason for immediate dismissal.

As we can see, the Land Ethic readily escapes both its supposed inhumane and inhuman consequences. It is not inhumane because, as fellow members of the biotic community, non-human individuals garner due moral consideration and respect. And, it is not inhuman because humans remain members of our human communities. Thus, not only are we subject to limitations on freedom of action with respect to protecting and furthering the good of the biotic community as a whole, we are subject to similar, even stronger limitations with respect to members of our various human communities.

Zimmerman even goes further to argue that it is simply not accurate to lump all forms of environmental holism with the ecofascism of Schoenichen and Nazi National Socialism. First, the leading role Schoenichen's position is played by human beings, making it much more closely akin to what environmentalists call "weak anthropocentrism."⁴³ Second, in Nazi ecofascism, the *Volk's* needs always trump the rights of individuals, and in at least some forms of holism, they do not.⁴⁴

Third, in an genuinely ecofascist state “one could not publicly condemn..., seek redress through the courts, organize political campaigns to oust those responsible..., or otherwise seek to overturn” an action of government appropriation of land that was deemed inappropriate in some way.⁴⁵ Fourth, for American environmentalism, “wilderness” is the earmark of “rugged individualism and personal liberty,” while for the German ecofascist, “wilderness” stands for “the instinctual bond between the vital blood of the *Volk* and its land, to both of which individuals were expected to submit themselves.”⁴⁶ And fifth, contemporary holistic environmental ethics differs significantly from Nazi ecofascism in that when contemporary holism strives for a deeper understanding and identification with, and grants intrinsic value to, all life, it includes the lives of blacks, Jews, homosexuals, and others that the Nazi’s did not. Moreover, the endowment of intrinsic value to all life implies the deep ecological principle of “letting (all) things be,” which is not consistent with the actions of the Nazi National Socialists.⁴⁷ So why is it that critics of holism in general and the Land Ethic specifically continue to reach into the aviary and pull out the same bird of refutation, refusing to realize that upon release the bird labeled “environmental fascism” simply does not fly? Perhaps they feel that if they continue to appeal to the same charge over and over that it will eventually take wing. Perhaps they see the Land Ethic as too threatening to their own positions, or to the supposed right of humans to freely raid “natural resources.”⁴⁸ Or, perhaps, and this is my hunch, they simply lack some fundamental understanding about the Land Ethic.

Labeling the Land Ethic “environmental fascism” is simply not accurate. And, since the Land Ethic is a holistic, ecocentric variety of environmental ethics, labeling the entire pursuit of holistic, ecocentric environmental ethics as fascist is not correct either. Therefore, since there is at least one holistic, ecocentric environmental ethic which does not fall prey to this “fascist” criticism, holistic, ecocentric environmental ethics is not a dead-end pursuit, but rather a viable and vibrant ethical road to travel after all.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The charge of environmental fascism is most popularly cited from Tom Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983, pp. 361-363), and most completely developed in Regan, “Ethical Vegetarianism and Commercial Animal Farming,” in *Contemporary Moral Problems*, ed. J. E. White, (St. Paul, MN: West Publishing 1985, pp. 279-288). Environmental fascism is also discussed or mentioned in some manner and to some degree by William Aiken. “Ethical Issues in Agriculture,” in *Earthbound*, ed. Tom Regan, (New York: Random House, 1984, pp. 247-288); Robin Attfield, *The Ethics of Environmental Concern*, 2nd edition, (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1991, pp. 180-181); Joseph Des Jardins, *Environmental Ethics*, (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1993, pp. 131, 142, 201-208); Robin Eckersley, *Environmentalism and Political Theory*, (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1992, pp. 60-61); Luc Ferry, *The New Ecological Order*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995, pp. 91-107); Warwick Fox, *Toward a Transpersonal Ecology*, (Boston and London: Shambhala, 1990, pp. 177-179); Kenneth Goodpaster, “Moral Considerability and the Environment,” *Topoi* 12(1993):12-14; James Heffernan, “The Land Ethic: A Critical Appraisal,”

- Environmental Ethics* 4(1982):242-247; Lawrence Johnson, *A Morally Deep World*, (New York: Cambridge, 1991, pp. 173-178, 239-240, 246); Marti Kheel, "The Liberation of Nature: A Circular Affair," *Environmental Ethics* 5(1985):138-139; Don Marietta, "Environmental Holism and Individuals," *Environmental Ethics* 10(1988):251-258, and *For People and the Planet*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995, pp. 50-54, 60-65); Jon Moline, "Aldo Leopold and the Moral Community," *Environmental Ethics* 8(1986):100-103, 112-114; Bryan Norton, "Review of J. Baird Callicott, In Defense of the Land Ethic," *Environmental Ethics* 13(1991):182-186; Peter Wenz, *Environmental Justice*, (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1988, pp. 308-309) and "Alternate Foundations for the Land Ethic," *Topoi* 12(1993):53-54, 64; Michael E. Zimmerman, "The Threat of Ecofascism," *Social Theory and Practice* 21(1995):207-238, among many others.
2. Although there are a variety of environmental ethics, there is only one Land Ethic. So, in order to avoid conflation and confusion with other approaches to environmental ethics which refer to themselves as "land ethics," it appears necessary to begin to refer to the environmental ethic of Leopold and Callicott as the Land Ethic: using capitals to classify it as a proper noun.
 3. Especially Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* (New York, Oxford: 1949) and J. Baird Callicott, *In Defense of the Land Ethic* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1989).
 4. Frederick Ferré, "Persons in Nature: Toward an Applicable and Unified Environmental Ethics," *Ethics and the Environment* 1 (1996):15-25. Kristin Shrader-Frechette, "Individualism, Holism, and Environmental Ethics," *Ethics and the Environment* 1 (1996):55-69.
 5. Norton, "Review of J. Baird Callicott, In Defense of the Land Ethic," pp. 185-186.
 6. Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, pp. 224-225.
 7. Aiken, "Ethical Issues in Agriculture," p. 269.
 8. Edward Johnson, "Animal Liberation Versus the Land Ethic," *Environmental Ethics* 3(1981):271.
 9. Callicott, "The Search for an Environmental Ethic," in *Matters of Life and Death*, 3rd edition, ed. Tom Regan, (New York: McGraw Hill, 1993, p. 366).
 10. Zimmerman, "The Threat of Ecofascism."
 11. *Ibid.*, p. 215. Zimmerman notes, however, that in a later work Schoenichen does not link environmentalism with the ideology of National Socialism, implying that he saw no necessary connection between the two.
 12. It should be noted, however, that Leopold abandoned his 1923 "Earth Ethic" or "Gaia Ethic," published posthumously in "Some Fundamentals of Conservation in the Southwest," *Environmental Ethics* 1(1979):131-141, for the Land Ethic which is founded on quite a different meta-ethics.
 13. Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, pp. 204-205.
 14. Regan, "Ethical Vegetarianism and Commercial Animal Farming," p. 290.
 15. In Callicott, *In Defense of the Land Ethic*, pp. 15-38.
 16. *Ibid.*, p. 326.
 17. *Ibid.*, pp. 326-329.
 18. Zimmerman, "The Threat of Ecofascism," pp. 226-232, also makes this point.
 19. Callicott, *In Defense of the Land Ethic*, pp. 6-7.
 20. Callicott's most complete defenses against environmental fascism to date are found in "The Conceptual Foundations of the Land Ethic," in *In Defense of the Land Ethic*, pp. 206-208; and "The Search for an Environmental Ethic," pp. 366-371, 375-376.
 21. For biographical sketches of Leopold affirming this point see the following Leopold biographies: Curt Meine, *Aldo Leopold: His Life and Work*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988); Robert McCabe, *Aldo Leopold: The Professor*, (Amherst, WI: Palmer Publishing, 1990); Susan Flader, *Thinking Like a Mountain*, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1974). See also the biographical essays in Callicott, *Companion to "A Sand County Almanac"*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987); and Thomas Tanner, *Aldo Leopold: The Man and His Legacy*, (Akeny, IA: Soil Conservation Society of America, 1987). See also the essays by Paul Errington, "In Appreciation of Aldo Leopold," *The Journal of Wildlife Management* 12(1948):341-350; Eric Freyfogle, "The Land Ethic and Pilgrim Leopold," *University of Colorado Law Review* 61(1990):217-256; Ernest Swift, "Aldo Leopold: Wisconsin's Conservation

- Prophet," *Wisconsin Tales and Trails* 2,3(1961):2-5; and Boyd Gibbons, "Aldo Leopold: A Durable Scale of Values," *National Geographic* (Nov. 1981):682-708.
22. In McCabe, *Aldo Leopold: The Professor*, p. viii.
 23. *Ibid.*, p.viii.
 24. Zimmerman, "The Threat of Ecofascism," pp. 216, 224-225, 231-234, likewise warns that environmentalists must always avoid the potential problem of something like environmental fascism sneaking into their ranks as ecological problems increase.
 25. Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, p. 204, emphasis added.
 26. Callicott, "The Conceptual Foundations of the Land Ethic," pp. 190-191.
 27. *Ibid.*, p. 192.
 28. "Perception" is the key word here. It is perception of the world, not necessarily fact, that influences our behavior. For example, Serbs, Croates, Armenians, in Bosnia do not see the world as a human global village. They perceive the world as a collection of ethnic nation states and, hence, they feel and act as if they have no moral obligations to those they perceive to be outside their community.
 29. Peter Wenz, "Alternate Foundations for the Land Ethic," p. 64. Two points here. First, what makes the claim about the moral inclusion of wholes as such even stronger is the fact that the members of the football team, community, or country can change but our loyalty and love for the team remains, even if over a long period of time *all* members of the corporate entity are replaced. Furthermore, we can be unaware of, or even dislike, our fellow citizens but nevertheless remain fanatically patriotic. This only goes to show that we really do include wholes as such in our moral community.
 Second, it seems that the realization that we have included wholes all along forces us to admit that Leopold's desired inclusion of "the land"--just another whole--is not quite as weird as some have made it out to be. In fact, far from being weird, it more correctly points out the "weirdness" implicit in traditional moral theory which only grants moral inclusion to individuals. This moral atomism simply does not represent the extent of our actual, contemporary moral sentiments.
 30. Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, p. 204.
 31. *Ibid.*, p. 203.
 32. Denis Ribbens "The Making of A Sand County Almanac," in Callicott, ed., *Companion to "A Sand County Almanac,"* p. 108.
 33. An example of this comes from philosopher James Heffernan who suggests that Leopold's summary moral maxim is only offered as a prima facie rule of conduct. Heffernan ("The Land Ethic: A Critical Appraisal," p. 245) interprets Leopold as perhaps saying something like, "Provided that in doing so I commit no greater wrong, a thing is right when it tend to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of an ecosystem."
 34. Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, pp. 202-204.
 35. Analogy borrowed from Richard and Val Routley, "Human Chauvinism and Environmental Ethics," in D. Mannison, et al., eds., *Environmental Philosophy*, Monograph Series 2, (Canberra: Dept. of Philosophy, RSSS, Australian National University, 1980).
 36. Primatologist Frans De Waal has recently proposed a "floating pyramid" analogy to illustrate this same point. See his book, *Good Natured: The Origins of Right and Wrong in Humans and Other Animals*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996, pp. 212-216).
 37. Callicott, "The Search for an Environmental Ethic," p. 367.
 38. *Ibid.*, p. 375.
 39. Another example of sorting out competing moral claims is illustrated in Baird Callicott's "Moral Monism in Environmental Ethics Defended," *Journal of Philosophical Research* 19 (1994):53-54. Referring to the ongoing Northern Spotted Owl/Logger controversy in the Pacific Northwest of the United States, Callicott writes:

We sympathize with our fellow-citizens in the Pacific Northwest whose livelihood depends upon logging and milling old-growth timber. Yet we have learned that we are citizens not only of a nation state, but also of hierarchically ordered biotic communities.... Membership in this larger biotic community generates duties to preserve the old-growth forest ecosystem and the endangered species, such as the northern spotted

owl, that depend upon it. Our duties to the local people whose way of life is destroying the forest would take precedence over our duties to less closely related life-forms and more diffuse and tenuous biotic communities if the choice were between cutting down all the trees and cutting down all the local people. But that is not the choice we face. Rather, the choice is between temporarily preserving a human life-style that is doomed in any event and preserving in perpetuity an ecosystem and the species that depend upon it. Things being what they are, our duties to preserve endangered species and the health and integrity of the mature Douglas fir ecosystem by banning further logging of old-growth forests...weigh in more heavily. And we can compensate the affected human beings by supporting job retraining programs, start-up funds for new businesses, and the like.

40. Roger Scruton, ed. *A Dictionary of Political Thought*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1982, p. 169).
41. Michael E. Zimmerman, "The Threat of Ecofascism," p. 209.
42. Zimmerman, *Ibid.*, pp. 225-226, notes that Deep Ecologists and Earth First!ers--as representative of another brand of ecocentrism--have more in common with anarchists than with fascists.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 215.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 221.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 223.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 224.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 226.
48. It is important to note that even though the Land Ethic does not side solely against humans it does change things. Human actions as they effect non-human individuals and wholes would not be allowed to continue unfettered. It really seems that the hard ethical pill to swallow is that with Leopold's Land Ethic humans may at times lose out.

Another speculation worth mentioning is the possibility that some people reject a holistic, ecocentric ethic such as the Land Ethic because they feel threatened by its evolutionary/ecological foundation. That is, perhaps some mistakenly view the Land Ethic as a threat to their sense of autonomy or self- and species importance due to the "*Homo sapiens* deemphasis" implicit in evolutionary and ecological theory and hence prevalent in the Land Ethic.