Ecologism

Ecology in the 20th Century. A History. ANNA BRAMWELL. Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 1989. xii, 292 pp. $40; paper, $16.95.

This work is not mainly a study of varieties, activities, and organizations of ecologists scientific or otherwise, but rather is concerned with those ideological trends which the author sees as central to the emergence of "ecologism." It is a complex book, both reflecting a wide-ranging intellect and substantive research and raising as many questions as it resolves.

For Bramwell, the modern ecological movement is rooted in two basic concerns originating in the 19th century: determining humankind's "place in the natural world," a corollary to Darwinian speculations, and dealing with perceived problems posed by urbanization and the depletion or misuse of natural and food resources. Bramwell sees the first concern as underlying what she calls "biological ecology," the second as providing the substructure of what she calls "economic ecology." She views these two currents as merging in the 20th century to form the ideological core of the modern ecology movement. Although, from the beginning, ecological issues tended to cut across political lines, Bramwell states, correctly I think, that the source of support for the ecological movement has shifted from what she calls the "soft right," which emerged most prominently in the 1920s, to the "soft left," largely a post-World War II phenomenon. Picking up on a theme central to her earlier work *Blood and Soil: R. Walther Darré and Hitler's "Green Party"* (1985), she points to ties between at least a portion of the National Socialist Party and the ecological concerns of the Green Party today. Here, also, she has a valid and important point to make.

Bramwell concludes her work by declaring that the political and social agenda of "today's ecological movement" is "a return to primitivism" and that "consciously or otherwise, this is a death-wish" (p. 248). Thus, in the end, the movement has turned out to be the domain of nature-worshippers, some of them fanatics, who would surrender all the achievements of a largely successful Western civilization in the name of a pernicious and self-destructive vision.

In developing her analysis, Bramwell brings to bear a variety of sources, focusing largely upon developments in Germany and Great Britain, but not neglecting the United States and the rest of continental Europe. This reviewer found her analysis of interwar developments in Great Britain particularly interesting. In her discussions of individuals such as John Hargrave, founder of the back-to-the-soil network known as Kibbo Kift Kin, and Rolf Gardiner, who glorified rural culture and was in contact with Walther Darré, the Nazi Minister of Agriculture, Bramwell offers fascinating insights into the genesis of concerns that would be picked up by the "soft left" after World War II. In this context, her treatment of J. R. R. Tolkien, who she maintains can be seen as a "Northern European nationalist" (p. 130), is both valuable and disturbing. After World War II, Tolkien's seemingly ingenuous anti-urban Hobbit-world would become the preserve of the "soft left" and somewhat harder right. What binds left and right together in an ecological context, Bramwell says, is a dislike of modernity in general and capitalism in particular. In some respects, this reviewer found her arguments persuasive. Or, to put it more honestly, some of them dovetail with views I articulated in *National Socialism and the Religion of Nature* (1985). Her crisply written attacks on some of the more extreme ecological positions, whose advocates I have often found to be tediously humorless, both pleased and entertained me.

Yet, though I can only agree with Bramwell's conclusion that a return to pre-industrial primitivism is not the answer to post-industrial problems, her work is, in some respects, problematic. First of all, there is the question of what the author perceives the modern ecology movement to be. Bramwell sees its participants as often informed by crackbrained and discredited left-wing conceptions of social engineering even as they prattle on about the joys of individualism and of living in tiny, self-supporting communities "full of faith and good works, but dependent on jet planes and telephones" (p. 244). She does not recognize or consider any alternative approach, though she does recognize that there *are* serious environmental issues.

At times Bramwell makes rather sweeping gratuitous judgments and leaves them pretty much unsupported. On p. 126, for example, in the course of discussing the earlier Guild Socialists in Britain, she characterizes the "culture known as 'Bloomsbury' " as "negative, flippant, and sterile," and on p. 240, in attacking unconditional aid to the Third World, she refers to "that dwindling portion of it still unaffected by prosperity." Whatever one may think of the merits of Bloomsbury overall, whether it was "sterile" or not is open to question, as is the extent to which the Third World now benefits from the "prosperity" generated by the Western countries, Japan, Korea, and Singapore.

More seriously, this tendency to present controversial viewpoints as givens turns up in Bramwell's treatment of figures and issues central to her work. Bramwell attributes responsibility for the shift to a holistic view of nature in part to Ernst Haeckel, who was founder and chairman of the international Monist League. Haeckel declared himself to be a pacifist and indeed was associated with peace movements. Bramwell seems to take him pretty much at his word regarding his pacifism and on p. 43 she states that he "failed to join fellow-academics and intellectuals in the near-universal celebration of the outbreak of the First World War." However that may be, Haeckel at times spoke in the idiom of racial war and within a very short time after the war began, was writing strong defenses of Germany's war effort. Though Bramwell concedes that Haeckel's "pacifism" did not last long, she declares that his successor in the Monist League, Wilhelm Ostwald, remained a pacifist "even during the War." Daniel Gasman, in *The Scientific Origins of National Socialism* (1971; p. 137), provides direct evidence to the contrary in the form of extensive quotations drawn from a newspaper interview of December 1914 and from an article published around the same time. Many members of the international Monist League were pacifists, but its German leadership was not. Overall, Bramwell seems simply to assume that the charge that Haeckel was a *völkisch* thinker is patently false and criticizes Gasman's argument that there was a direct link between Haeckel's thinking and that of Hitler. The evidence that Haeckel at the very least influenced *völkisch* thought, and that, if not Hitler, at least leading members of the National Socialist Party were influenced by Haeckel or his followers is very strong, and in his book (introduction and chapter 7) Gasman makes good arguments for these points. On p. 186, Bramwell declares that it is "hard to identify a specific change in late nineteenth century German society that was responsible for the *Wandervögel* movement." (This was a neo-romantic, back-to-nature and back-to-the-old-German-past movement of mostly middle-class German youth.) She sees no "abrupt increase in industrialization, urbanisation or technology at that time," though in the late 19th century Germany was in the midst of an intense, and, to many, distasteful process of urbanization and industralization.

Bramwell's tendency to make questionable statements or generalizations with no supportive evidence can also be seen in matters of detail, as when she identifies the vitalist philosopher Henri Bergson as an "existentialist" (p. 217).

There is a surprising factual error. On p. 52, Bramwell mentions that the Swiss entomologist and physician Auguste Forel, an active member of the Monist League, "was

drowned with Ludwig of Bavaria." Ludwig II, the quite mad inveterate castle-builder and patron of Wagner, drowned himself in 1886. His attending physician, Bernhard von Gudden, died with him. Auguste Forel died in 1931, and in 1886 the birth of the Monist League was 20 years in the future. One has the feeling that some words have been left out here.

Occasionally, Bramwell overlooks rather important connections. Her chapter "The Steiner connection" is concerned with the fascinating topic of how Rudolf Steiner, probably best known as the founder of Anthroposophy, strongly influenced many members of the National Socialist Party which, when in power, would persecute his followers (Steiner himself died in 1925). Steiner was directly influenced by Haeckel, with whom he had been in correspondence in the 1890s. Bramwell does not mention this.

Some of Bramwell's criticisms, in the opinion of this reviewer, are very much on the mark, and the book often evidences solid research and analytical shrewdness. Yet throughout the book it appears that she is concerned with settling scores of some sort, with the left, with feminism, with liberal or left-liberal interpretations of the Nazi phenomenon (a concern prominent in her earlier book on Darré), and, of course, with the modern ecology movement. In any event, *Ecology in the Twentieth Century*, for all its erudition and the fine style in which this is articulated, must be read with caution.

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The Hominin Clade

A Theory of Human and Primate Evolution. COLIN P. GROVES. Clarendon (Oxford University Press), New York, 1989. xii, 375 pp., illus. $75.

This is a somewhat idiosyncratic work by a scholar very knowledgeable about primate morphology and systematics. It will certainly be of use to biologists and anthropologists for its presentation and analysis of the traits that appear to define clades among the primates.

Yet it is surprisingly difficult to locate just what the "theory" promised by the title is. Indeed, this is principally a book about what to name things. It centers on the question, How would we name the various groups of primates, assuming cladistic classifications were really desirable in biology? Cladism is the school of thought that maintains that classifications must be based solely on recency of common ancestry (synapomorphy), and not on any consideration of divergence (autapomorphy). Thus the category fish cannot exist, since some of them are more closely related to tetrapods than they are to other fish.

Yet if a classification is a communicative device and a phylogeny is a hypothesis, then the general purpose of classifying can easily be defeated. The hypotheses are constantly being tested, rejected, and amended. Do we rename things every time we revise our phylogenies? This would spell trouble for a phylogenetically volatile field, like biological anthropology.

In the case of primates, the perceived need for a strictly cladistic classification of the apes and humans has systematics in a pretty thorough state of confusion. Traditionally, we have recognized the great apes (chimpanzee, gorilla, orang-utan) at the family level (family Pongidae) and humans and their close fossil relatives at the same level (family Hominidae)—thus we talk about "hominid evolution." An alternative cladistic classification, however, calls the orangs the Pongidae, humans, chimps, and gorillas the Hominidae, and the human fossil record the subfamily Homininae—thus, hominine evolution. Groves, advocating another cladistic approach, calls humans, chimps, gorillas, and orangs the Hominidae, humans, chimps, and gorillas the Homininae, and the human fossil record the tribe Hominini—thus, hominin evolution.

Can't we just keep the great apes, keep the hominids, and leave the chimp-gorilla-human clade as a sniglet? Even Groves continues to write of the "australopithecines," though they are neither a clade nor a hominid subfamily here.

The evolutionary theory, at the beginning and end of the work, is principally a collage of various broad ideas, some of which have enjoyed a brief recent vogue (such as those of Goldschmidt) and some of which have never enjoyed a vogue (Løvtrup, Krassilov). Groves, adopting some of the more eccentric views of others, appears to advocate in this work an essentially macromutational (here synonymized with punctuational) and orthogenetic (here referring to hypothetical directed mutations) view of the evolutionary processes.

Groves also sees more taxa than do most other workers. For example, in the evolution of the hominids, or hominines, or hominins—well, in the genus *Homo*—most workers recognize three species: *Homo sapiens, Homo erectus*, and *Homo habilis*. They also grumble about elevating neanderthals to species status and a second *Homo* species in East Africa alongside *H. habilis*. Groves gives no fewer than eight species in this genus: an unnamed species found at Hadar; *H. aethiopicus* (based on ER-1482); *H. rudolfensis* (based on ER-1470, 1590, and 3732); *H. habilis* from Olduvai; *H. ergaster* (based on ER-992 and ER-1813); another unnamed species (based on ER-3733 and 3883); *H. erectus*; and *H. sapiens*—without even reckoning the neanderthals to be a separate species. This is not to say that the classification is "right" or "wrong"—only radical.

The great strengths of the book are the high level of expertise the author brings to the morphology, the comprehensive references to the fossil literature, and the explicit diagnosis of each taxon. There are also a lot of data and critical thought about interpretations of the fossil material—a welcome contrast to the all-too-common practice of simply reporting the conclusions of other studies. The book is significantly underillustrated, however, and the illustrations are not of particularly high quality. The discussion of genetic processes and patterns is weak, and there is a considerable amount of anatomical (especially dental) jargon. Nevertheless, in conjunction with a sound fundamental textbook of primate biology, such as Fleagle's *Primate Adaptation and Evolution*, Groves's book should prove to be a useful and certainly provocative contribution to the library of any scientist interested in human evolution.

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Halophiles and Their Milieu

Hypersaline Environments. Microbiology and Biogeochemistry. BARBARA JAVOR. Springer-Verlag, New York, 1989. viii, 328 pp., illus. $59. Brock/Springer Series in Contemporary Bioscience.

No one doubts the importance of past and present interactions between microorganisms and the lithosphere. The disciplines of microbiology and geochemistry have only recently begun to be integrated in environmental studies, however. This book is a laudable and generally successful attempt to fuse aspects of the two in the consideration of one particular class of microbial environment. Having a background in microbiology and geochemistry, Javor is equipped to comment authoritatively in both areas.

The book opens with introductory chapters on general geochemical and biological aspects, followed by a couple of chapters on the interactions between carbon and sulfur and evaporites, including a necessarily speculative account of the presumed importance