

DOSSIER



ECOLOGY: A NEW CONCEPTION OF THE WORLD

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Ecology, in its modern contemporary form, is a way of seeing and understanding life. But not just that; it's also a new way of living in this world. Subsequently, ecology condemns modern systems for the production, distribution and promotion of goods and necessities as grossly irrational and anti-ecological. It sets out to find a form of progress which gives human beings the freedom to choose for themselves what their needs are and discover the way to satisfy them.

Ecology aims to create a society in harmony with nature, in which each individual is able to take part directly in shaping day-to-day policies.

In contrast, so-called "environmentalism" looks on nature as a passive habitat made up of animals, plants and minerals—that is, everything that can be of use to man. Environmentalism fails to question the basic premise of industrialism, according to which "mankind must dominate nature", but facilitates this domination, developing technologies that reduce the impact caused by the pillage of natural systems. In fact, environmentalism tries to answer the ecological and environmental problems of our society, but without seriously changing the chief contradictions and suppositions of the dominant world concept today.

This spirit of confusion is behind the attempts to water down the dissident aspect of the ecological message.

Ecology has arisen in response to the ravages and disorder that industrialism has spread about on behalf of so-called "progress". In other words, it has emerged as a reaction against mankind's thirst for dominion over nature, in the same way

that trade-unionism arose at the beginning of the industrial age as a reaction against the exploitation of the workers by the capitalists.

Though at the time of its birth ecology had a lot in common with environmentalism, as it has grown up it has developed a whole corpus of ideas and of action that goes much further than mere environmentalist reformism.

Ecology is therefore a new concept of the world that questions the dominant conception today.

The new conception of the world as exemplified by the ecological movement is based on the science of ecology but without the constraints of either scientific fundamentalism or a view of nature as a collection of data manipulable by humans. The new conception of the world as illustrated by the ecological movement (with contributions from social ecology and profound ecology, from bioregionalism and ecofeminism) provides a coherent philosophical framework for the best of the answers of environmentalist reformism (whether philosophical: *The Limits to Growth*, *Global 2000*, *The Brundtland Report*; or political: environmental regu-

lations, ministries of the environment and environmental agencies).

This conception of the world is at once rational and spiritual. It centres on ways of cultivating ecological awareness and on the principles for its political development.

Ecology is a new way of understanding and living life, a new way of thinking and finally a new social movement that questions the very roots of the perpetual environmental crisis provoked by the urban industrial society.

In a word, it is a new conception of the world that does away with the anthropocentric nightmare characterizing human societies in recent times and that returns to the biocentric/cosmocentric vision, upheld by thousands of years of history of harmonious relations between humanity and nature.

This conception speaks of the destruction of the old, simple and natural unity between human beings and nature and the emergence of the present conception of the world, with its ever-growing thirst for dominion over ancestral cultures and natural systems.

It also explains how the goddess Gaia—the Mother Earth—has been supplanted by the goddess science/technology, how the new high priests celebrate all manner of rituals so as to control, manipulate and plunder nature and, finally, how its worshippers live immersed in a constant debauchery which endangers their own survival as a species.

Ecology, seen this way, has links with those conceptions of the world which many non-industrialist cultures had or have. You might say that ecology is the recovery of humanity's ancestral memory. ■