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Environmentalism's bum steers

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The dictionary definition of **sacred cow** is — *n informal* a person, institution, custom, etc., unreasonably held to be beyond criticism.

Ill-founded beliefs which would fail to pass critical examination are prone to seek shelter as sacred cows. The quasi-religious movement known as environmentalism maintains a virtual herd of such beasts in the lush pastures of their delusions.

If one dares to look beyond the nonsense taboo, it quickly becomes apparent that the whole herd is heavily infected with quite obvious contradictions, misrepresentations and intellectual vacuity.

Desire dressed up as *Concern*

One of the leaders in this herd is a professed *Concern* so often and so piously expressed by environmentalists about purported threats to the environment. However, the immediate reaction of environmentalists to any suggestion a purported threat may not actually be as serious as feared, is revealing. Instead of the hopeful interest one would expect from anyone who genuinely cares, their response is invariably argument and even angry rejection. It is obvious their true commitment is to the threat itself, not to the environment.

The *Principle* that negates itself

The *Precautionary Principle* is another revered member of the eco-herd. As originally formulated, the concept was that in circumstances where there is an apparent risk of severe or irreversible environmental damage, preventative measures should not be withheld because of a lack of scientific certainty. Environmentalism has twisted this reasonable approach to uncertainty into an imperative demanding protection against any hypothetical risk with the burden of proof for no harm demanded from anyone who objects. However, as every student of Logic 101 learns, proof of a negative is not possible. In practice this means that even the most dubious hypothetical concern must be acted upon and no acceptable objection is possible.

The muddled logic of the environmentalist formulation of the precautionary principal actually forbids doing anything. This includes precautionary measures themselves, as everything entails a possibility of risk. That this vacuous and pernicious bit of intellectual swill has even been written in the enabling legislation of government bodies charged with

environmental management, speaks loudly of the corrosive influence of environmentalism on rational thinking.

Love of an idea but not the reality

A professed *Love of Nature* is an especially dewy eyed member of this herd; but, like the others, a closer look finds it really isn't what it is pretending to be. The demographics of green voters reveal their preferred habitat is overwhelmingly not the remote regions where nature still prevails or rural areas where it remains prominent amidst a modest population of humans. It isn't even the outer suburban areas where at least fragments of nature still provide a green flavour. Despite their love of nature, the habitat where the majority of Greens chose to live is the tiny fraction of the planet where nature has been virtually annihilated, the inner urban heart of large cities.

Removing themselves so completely from their true love must be the eco-equivalent of the hair shirts of early Christian ascetics. No wonder they seem so irritable.

Ecology as a house of cards

The *Fragile Delicate Balance of Nature* is still another appropriately bovine idea revered by environmentalists. This concept of ecology is one of a house of cards, susceptible to collapse at the slightest "unnatural" disturbance. Unnatural in this context is code for human at any societal level above Stone Age hunter gathering. The reality of a constant struggle for survival in a dynamic, ever changing, often harsh natural world has been replaced by a romantic notion of nature in a blissful state of harmony and balance, something pure and perfect where any detectable human influence is by definition a desecration.

Somehow in all this, ecology itself has also been transmuted from a scientific discipline involving a study of the interrelations of organisms and their environment into something they call *The Ecology*. This appears to be some kind of undefined but implied spiritual force more or less synonymous with the one they also refer to as *Gaia*.

This view of ecology seems to have a special appeal for those who produce nothing themselves but who enjoy having their sense of moral superiority over those who provide their needs untainted by any tinge of gratitude or guilt.

Heifers named *Sustainable and Threatened*

These non-identical twins are often found together where they serve as Judas goats in assisting the eco-saviours to get the human mob moving in a direction they want. *Sustainable* promises rich grazing there but fails to mention that it will only be in her paddock not yours. *Threatened* plays the bad cop role with frequent reminders and scares about severe consequences if we don't do as our eco-masters wish.

Sustainable likes the management of fisheries on the Great Barrier Reef because they are limited to a harvest rate of only 9 Kg *per* square Km *per* year when even the conservation

NGOs claim that well managed reef fisheries can produce about 15,000 Kg *per square Km per year*. Restricting the catch to less than 1% of what it could produce is certainly sustainable for the fish and marvellously precautionary as well. Unfortunately for the environment fishing has the least impact on nature of any means of food production so unneeded restrictions there become even greater impacts elsewhere on land.

As for the fishermen and the lives of the people who would enjoy the substantial health benefits of greater seafood consumption, they are only humans and thus by definition are unnatural, so they aren't really a consideration.

Agriculture, however, is where *Sustainable* shows its true colours. Of course, sustainable agriculture couldn't use any chemical fertilisers, herbicides, pesticides or fossil fuel. Productivity would be only a fraction that of modern farms. All remaining arable land would need to be used for agriculture and most of the urban population would have to become farm labour. Even then, many people would probably starve; but, for the urban greens who want *Sustainable* so much, that should be only be an opportunity not a burden. They could then make their own most valuable contribution to sustainability, as compost.

Threatened also attracted a lot of good publicity recently with a widely reported news item about how over 10,000 species had become extinct over the past decade due to climate change. The environmentalists know this because it was determined by computer modelling. Somehow they forgot to mention that the actual figure for documented extinctions over the same period of time was actually just one. Presumably, in view of the precautionary principle, the known number is not that important. It's the hypothetically possible number that we must heed at any cost.

The mother of all environmental threats has, of course, been Anthropogenic Global Warming (a.k.a. Climate Change). AGW has become the most revered of all the sacred cows. To doubt it is equivalent to denying the holocaust. Accepting it and giving up the sin of fossil fuel consumption promises to save the world, punish unbelievers and bring about a fair, harmonious, balanced, sustainable restoration of Eden.

The perfect track record of failure for all such dreams of utopia is not even a consideration. As always, this time is different. The facts that every prediction of the climate "experts" has also failed and climate, if anything, is cooling must not be permitted to sway one's faith. This is a necessary test of faith to be passed before becoming worthy of Gaia's beneficence.

Impact, the bullock in the eco-shop

In the environmentalist lexicon the consequences of natural events, no matter how devastating, are referred to with neutral sounding terms such "influence" or "effect". However, any detectable change attributable to humans, no matter how slight, is referred to as an *Impact*. Storms, floods, droughts, wildfires and epidemics including mass mortalities of wildlife are merely natural occurrences. They are not impacts.

If you drive down a beach in your SUV a few of the tiny creatures who live among the sand grains might presumably be affected. This is an impact and should be prohibited. On the other hand, if a hurricane washes away the entire beach, that is only a natural ecological realignment. However, if the same storm might be attributed to AGW it would become a terrible tragedy and an unspeakable crime against nature.

Stakeholder, the bum steer

Stakeholder is another term which has been domesticated to serve as a milk cow for environmentalism. Before the rise of environmentalism a stakeholder was someone with something invested or with something to lose. Environmentalists expanded this to include themselves on the basis of their “concern” providing them a proprietary interest. With nothing invested and no experience or special knowledge they are now deemed to be “*stakeholders*” with equal standing to those whose property and way of life are at stake.

A diseased herd

Behind the carefully contrived appearance of piety and righteousness the whole herd of environmentalism’s sacred cows is heavily infected with suppurating dishonesty, delusion and perversity. It’s the kind of maladaptive behaviour that animal behaviourists have found may arise when strong instinctual drives are blocked. In this regard it may be a consequence of the biologically impoverished urban environment compounded by the boredom of a non-productive parasitic lifestyle which affords little purpose or meaning. It’s not unlike the obsessive compulsive neuroticism often observed in animals living in sterile cages.

In most developed nations a large majority of the population now dwell in cities and only a minority toil to produce the goods and services which support us all. For many urbanites in particular, the natural environment has acquired a distant, romantic, somewhat sacred, status. Though themselves voracious consumers, they are removed from the production which supplies their demands. Those who provide their needs tend to be seen as greedy exploiters and defilers of nature. Even more ironically, their own lifestyle has virtually annihilated the natural world in a small portion of the environment yet that is where they choose to live.

Ecology is above all holistic -

Every organism must have effects in order to exist. Like all species the effect of our own can be either harmful or beneficial depending upon whether the net result is to decrease or to enhance the diversity, abundance and condition of life. The observable reality of natural ecosystems is that they are far less delicate, fragile and balanced than is popularly imagined. They are in fact much more robust, dynamic and fluctuating with every organism impacting on others. Aiming to maximise our beneficial effects and minimise the detrimental ones requires trade-offs and adjustments whereby we seek to spread our demands across our whole resource base. Every resource we lock-up puts more pressure on others and makes

for less rather than greater sustainability. An unnecessary restriction in one place becomes an increased impact somewhere else.

The future of environmentalism

All over the Western World economies are in trouble with productive activity struggling under a growing burden of bloated government and stifling bureaucracy for which environmentalism has provided a major impetus. In developing nations it has been estimated that as many as 30 million native people have been driven into landless poverty as conservation refugees. In the US, UK, Germany and Australia power grids are approaching the threshold of major blackouts as a consequence of decades long failure to invest in new capacity because of uncertainty and barriers imposed by environmental regulations. Meanwhile hundreds of billions of dollars have been wasted on costly, inefficient and unreliable wind and solar farms which produce only trivial amounts of power and no measurable reduction in CO₂ emissions.

Without a radical change in direction it appears that declining productivity and competitiveness in the global marketplace may soon make it impossible to maintain vast urban resource sinks populated by large numbers of non-producers. This modern society, which the environmentalists seem to regard with such contempt, may in reality prove to be far more fragile and delicate than the reefs and forests about which they are so obsessed. Ironically, the sustainability they are so concerned with imposing may ultimately render they themselves and their way of life unsustainable. Perhaps they see it as just their own little sacrifice to *Gaia*.

Of course, events don't have to go that way. People do have a remarkable ability to abandon a strongly held belief if it becomes obvious it is costing themselves and not just others. That would be a real test of faith.