

CENTER FOR REFLECTION ON THE SECOND LAW  
 8420 Camellia Drive, Raleigh, North Carolina 27612  
 (919) 847-5819

Affiliated with  
 The Riverdale Center for Religious Research  
 5801 Palisade Avenue, Bronx, New York 10471

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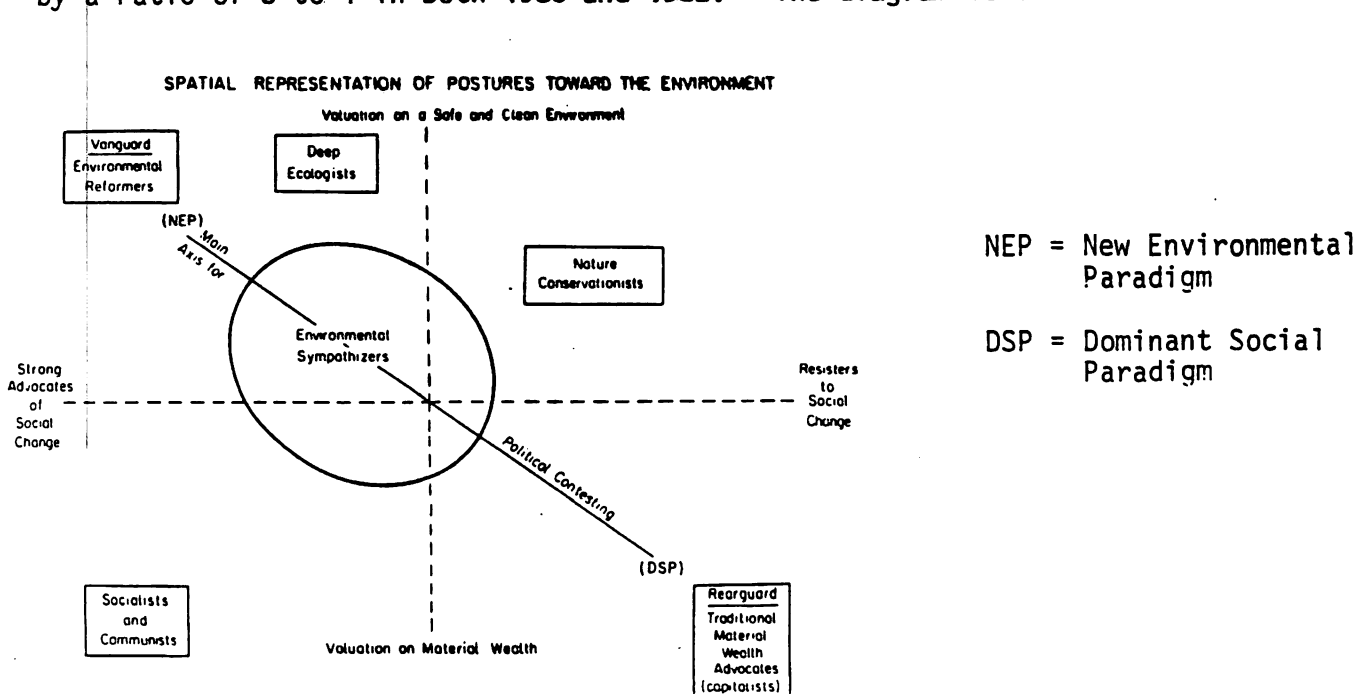
April 24, 1985

Circular No. 62

The concluding paragraph in a new book, Environmentalists: Vanguard for a New Society, written by Lester W. Milbrath and published by State University of New York Press at Albany reads:

In modern society, we have developed a socio-technical-economic system that can dominate and destroy nature. Alongside it, we have retained a normative and ethical system based on 2000 year old religions. The lack of congruence between these two systems threatens the continued existence of our civilization. Our science tells us how our earth works physically but provides no moral guidance for our behaviour within it. The normative prescriptions from inherited religions do not address the power and exuberance of modern human activities. The environmental modern day prophets are trying to unite a sophisticated understanding of how the world works with a new normative/ethical system that recognizes and addresses these realities. Only time will tell whether they will be listened to as they try to lead society in a new direction.

The content of that paragraph is familiar enough. Many of the books reviewed in these letters have spoken of an emerging new paradigm, of new values and new assumptions. What is interesting to us about Milbrath's book is that he bases his findings on analysis of data gathered in several surveys over four years in the US, the UK and Germany. His own Environmental Studies Center at State University of New York, Buffalo, joined with agencies in the other two countries in discovering the beliefs and opinions of every segment of society. If his interpretations are correct, there is already a considerable acceptance of the environmentalist doctrine. "The data from the three nation survey show . . . that people in the United States chose environmental protection over economic growth by a ratio of 3 to 1 in both 1980 and 1982." The diagram below is indicative.



The diagram is almost a complete condensation of the message of the book. The political location of the mass of respondents to the questionnaires is found within the oval, near the middle, slightly left of center on the need-for-social-change line, and slightly above center on the valuation-of-a-safe-and-clean-environment line. This reflects a society with a growing recognition of the critical nature of clean air and water, of soil and wilderness conservation. The environmentalist vanguard pulls against the traditional-establishment rear-guard toward the NEP, the new environmental paradigm, aimed at a long range sustainable political and economic arrangement.

Milbrath also makes the point that the real burden of the environmentalist's message is morality. Moral behaviour, says the environmentalist, requires compassion for all creatures, for all of the natural world. The excess which brings about the terrible wastes of forest and soil and life forms is deeply wrong, and the punishments attendant on it are not alone the loss of resources and beauty and divine presence but a loss of essential humanness. The failure of existing moral systems to address this wrong effectively is the failure of the modern age, the failure of the dominant social paradigm (DSP), and the principal energizer of the environmental movement.

I would have been glad if Milbrath had taken note of the bioregional movement. Bioregionalism recognizes the human place in "the way the world works" and offers a morality based on justice to the natural world. It recognizes the "right" of creation to exist and be unharmed and takes away the "right" of the human to dominate and exploit. The bioregionalist is the environmentalist seeking to define the emergent NEP in terms of the human role in the earth's journey; in terms of place; in terms of the human interaction with nature's endowment at the local level. It would be a good thing if someone like Peter Berg or Thomas Berry were to write an annex or a companion to Milbrath's book bringing out those aspects. As it is the book is an important addition to the literature, giving considerable statistical support to a general sensing of the widespread acceptance of changing perspectives. It moves us one step closer to saving the earth.

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Remember that the first North American Bioregional Congress (NABC I) was held last May at Camp Doniphan, near Kansas City, Missouri. It was reported on in Circular 52. That meeting brought together over 200 bioregionalists from all over the US and from other parts of the world. It really launched a national network of organizations devoted to a healthy ecology through living in cooperation with the natural world. Now NABC II is being planned for some time in 1986. NABC I was such a huge success that I suppose that II will be very well attended. Write the Bioregional Project, Box 129, Drury, MO 65638 for information. NABC I Proceedings is said to be well worth the \$10 it costs. Same address.

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May 9                    Discussion of bioregionalism, summing up all the papers on that  
7:30 P.M.                subject here, followed by a discussion of the role of bioregionalism  
At the                    might play in NC.  
Center  
                              This is a rescheduling of the previously announced May 2nd meeting.

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We thank people who have sent in donations. They are welcome and needed.