

# Characteristic Strategies of an Environmentalist

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## Abstract

This paper is an experimental portrait of characteristics that animate environmentalists. Its intent is to illuminate the present situation and explore some possibilities within it. It is a response to some questions I asked myself about the relationships of environmentalists to the natural world and the sphere of public discourse. What is it about environmentalists and their personal engagement in the world that distinctively identifies them? Identifying a common set of family resemblances among environmentalists helps us to understand the strategic nature of the various relationships they engage in with the natural world. How we react to the claims, beliefs, arguments and positions put forward by environmentalists depends on what we know about their background situation. As an on-going project, this experimental vision should provide us with some illuminating reflections on how to understand, discuss, ponder, argue with or agree with the positions and arguments of environmentalists. Informed about the dynamic background situation of environmentalists, we can better understand how to structure our relations and beliefs about the natural world, engaging ourselves in a revised *sensus communis*.

**Keywords:** Orientation; *sensus communis*; engagement; public discourse; natural world.

## Résumé

Cet article est un portrait expérimental des caractéristiques qui animent les écologistes. Sa visée est d'éclairer la situation actuelle et d'explorer quelques-unes des directions possibles qui s'en dégagent. C'est la réponse à des questions que je me suis posées à propos des rapports des écologistes au monde naturel et à la sphère des discours publics. Quels sont les traits et le mode d'engagement au monde spécifiques qui permettent d'identifier les écologistes? Identifier des traits communs, des ressemblances familiales si l'on peut dire, nous aide à comprendre la nature stratégique des rapports dans lesquels ils/elles s'engagent avec le monde naturel. La manière dont nous réagissons aux affirmations, aux croyances, aux arguments et aux positions développées par les écologistes dépend de la connaissance que nous avons de leur histoire et de leur situation. Cette vision expérimentale, conçue comme un projet en cours devrait apporter des éclairages sur la manière dont on peut comprendre, discuter, approfondir les positions et les arguments des écologistes, s'y ranger ou s'y opposer... Une connaissance de la situation dynamique des écologistes nous permet de mieux structurer notre propre situation et nos croyances au sein du monde naturel et de nous engager dans un *sensu communis* repensé.

**Mots-clefs :** Orientation ; *sensus communis* ; engagement ; discours public ; monde naturel.

## Strategy-Based Engagements in the World of an Environmentalist

In telling the critical story of an environmentalist, it is important to participate in this community's natural orientation. A brief response to the question, "what is an environmentalist?" will open some avenues of inquiry as well as identify a fluid foundation of core beliefs. We need to be self-critical of our projects when we describe some of the common strategies employed by this diverse group, understanding the unique character of an avowed environmentalist<sup>1</sup> and how this character fits into the narrative and voice of environmentalism.<sup>2</sup> After we put together a list of characteristics and strategies more or less common to this loosely designated group, the question is: How do we sort through the list, to identify important commonalities and contingent connections? There is a name for the group and a changing set of identified characteristics, a list which may have no central, essentialist foundational core (Gaonkar 13-16) to constitute it nor any singular goal—other than the vague concern for the natural world (Gough, *The Psychological Parameters of Argumentation*).

First, we could simply throw up our hands and proclaim that since the list is made up of *contingent characteristics* accumulated over time with no apparent deliberate or intentional motivations, then sorting through the list becomes simply impossible, an exercise in futility. Trying to identify either kinship or constitutionally essential conditions is bound to be inadequate (Robinson 82). Chaos theorists could, of course, argue that out of the apparent disorder there is a kind of non-human, contingent pseudo-order in this apparent chaos (Derry 241-51). My avowedly optimistic outlook makes this project contingently possible.

Second, we need to be aware that unlike opponents of environmentalists and their characteristics and strategies, there is no hint of an *underlying ideological commitment*. While some environmentalists may be accused of pursuing a political agenda, it is only a means or device to achieve the other ends of environmentalism, while for ideologues the end is the maximization of the ideology's goals. Truth is contingent on ideological perspectives.

Third, *reductive-eliminativists* attempt to take the characteristics and strategies from the list and reduce them to what are taken to be successful free-market strategies, relegating those not consistent with this prevailing free-market relationship to the periphery, at best, of any set (Gough, *Economic Reasoning and the Environment*). Such free-market moves, however, inevitably involve short-term goals at the expense of long-term consequences and allow for overshoot and crash situations, as part of inherent free-market transaction strategies, which no environmentalist can accept (Volti 113).

Fourth, we could look for an infrastructural organization underlying the list, perhaps even an emergent structure. This would allow us to see why some potential new members of the list seem to fit the overall set, while other attempted additions fail to fit. So, for example, characteristics of free-market environmentalists don't seem to fit because of their overriding focus on individualism and the attendant ideology. Yet feminist orientations are more likely to

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<sup>1</sup> Although it is subtle, it is important to identify what I am attempting with what Douglas Walton calls the arguer's position in *The Arguers Position: A Pragmatic Study of Ad Hominem Attack, Criticism, Refutation, and Fallacy* Greenwood Press, Westport CT, 1985, 219-39.

<sup>2</sup> These descriptions are done without prejudice and in an attempt to avoid *ad hominem*, *pro hominem* or character-based fallacies.

fit with an environmentalist list (Gough, *Mary Wollstonecraft's Rhetorical Strategy*; Gould and Hosey 8-10).

Fifth, a more promising sortal approach could focus not on structural organization, ideological imperatives, or constitutional identities, but rather on something much more attuned to the nature of an environmentalist's relationship to the natural world: *enduring orientation*. This is both individual and communal (Alfred 260-70). It gives us a sense of the direction environmentalists commonly take, their inherent *transformational dispositions*.

Scientists orient themselves towards the accumulation of factual information to provide evidential support for initially speculative theories about the natural world. Fiction writers can look to our sympathetic abilities to identify ourselves with the situations of others so that "there is no limit to the extent to which we can think ourselves into the being of another . . . [T]here is no bounds to the sympathetic imagination" (Coetzee 35). The set of characteristics and strategies identified as enduring orientation provide (1) openings for new ideas and strategies (Hyde 142); (2) "a dwelling place for collaborative deliberation" (Hyde 140); and (3) on-going considered acknowledgement that the natural world cannot be taken for granted or even ignored (Hyde 145). This engaged and shared *enduring orientation* helps us to understand the stability of any environmentalist's projects and meaningful relationships over time.

This orientation involves a two-part informative conversation between the deliberative environmentalists and the general public (Bitzer 228) engaged in an informal reflexive discussion between both groups. This takes place within the practices of contingent, specific, circumstantial public discourse with shared social knowledge (Farrell 1-6). Because of the open nature of both interconnected discussions, "[a] rhetor must confront such a situation in the midst of 'perishable circumstances, incomplete knowledge, and fallible human action'"(Gaonkar16).

The shared assumptions of the in-group present an obstacle to the argumentation effectiveness of the critics and agnostics from outside. The combined wider audience needs to understand the pre-knowledge conventional boundaries of unstated information of environmentalists who are conversing more or less successfully with themselves (Jost and Olmstead 268). The initially insulated *sensus communis* possessed by one community needs to be developmentally expanded into wider communities' appreciation and understanding (Shaeffer 278-84).

There is an intersection of philosophy and rhetoric here as the grounds of judgment are opened up for the possibility of cogent argumentation to proceed along with attendant shared sense impressions (Jost and Olmstead 285-86). The impractical and negative alternative is a factoring effect preventing the disclosure of any meaningful communication and possible argumentation between both groups and attendant audiences (Gough, *Defective Arguments Denying an Inconvenient Truth*). A good knowledge of one's audience helps choose the appropriate persuasive rhetorical style (Corbett and Connors 73) and sets the stage for the appropriate tone and dispositional stance (Corbett and Connors 84), which in our case should work in conjunction with the combined appeal to the three modes of persuasion—reason, emotion, and character (Corbett and Connors 85).

## 1. Models of an Environmentalist

An environmentalist uses a model or process description of his or her relationship with the natural world to capture *the need for action* based on intelligent decisions, not just our need for intelligent knowledge, which may or may not have its own reward. By contrast, McKibben describes non-environmentalists as those who “look for almost any reason not to change attitudes; the inertia of the established order is powerful”, so that “[i]f we can think of a plausible, or even implausible, reason to discount environmental warnings, we will” (McKibben 197). However there is often not a consensus model or approach for environmentalists within which to take action. For example, there is the *wilderness vision* of the natural world and our relationship to it that is contrasted with the *garden vision*, each of which makes different predictions about the fate of the earth.<sup>3</sup>

The first pessimistically predicts a *wasteland scenario* as human activity destroys the earth, while the second anticipates a *garden scenario*, in which humans interact with the natural world to preserve and manage it for its survival (Chisholm 379-88). So, if we think about any particular environmentalist, then he or she may generally have either a wilderness vision or a garden vision of the natural environment. Most environmentalists challenge an uncritical model or approach to our relationship with the natural world that relies on appeals to the authority of tradition, the needs of civilization or economics (Gough, *Economic Reasoning and the Environment*), religious ideals of a God-given resource, a place to advance the causes and goals of science, or a place to maximize our desires for an opulent or elaborate lifestyle. As McKibben notes, “[a] voluntary simplification of lifestyles is not beyond our abilities, but it is probably outside our desires. Nothing is necessarily going to force us to live humbly; we are free to chance the other, defiant route and see what happens” (McKibben 192).

Environmentalists find in scientific knowledge the basis for making sound decisions about the environment and taking action against negative consequences, consequences sometimes brought about by those who prioritize political gains against potentially positive environmental results. The cultural coherence of environmentalists is encapsulated in their use of comparisons: less is better, smaller is better, the future has the same status as the present in present considerations (Lakoff and Johnson 22-4). Knowing what is right seems to require anyone to act on this knowledge (Honderich 683). This is why the mandate for an environmentalist is different from that of a scientist whose profession and its goods may take priority over his environment. As David Suzuki puts it, “science remains an activity that is highly competitive, macho and exclusive.” Its practitioners often wear blinders to questions about social responsibility, the negative effects of science and technology, ends and means, and possible limits to the scientific enterprise, so that people in most professions are similarly oblivious to such questions, but few areas have consequences as immense for society and its future as does science” (Suzuki, *Metamorphosis: Stages in a Life* 149).

## 2. Changing our Relationship to the natural world

Environmentalists are often pragmatically motivated by an overarching ideal of conscious change or more accurately a life-world change in our relationship to the natural

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<sup>3</sup> This classification is not question-begging nor does it exhaust all possibilities. See the rest of this paper.

world.<sup>4</sup> Environmentalists seek knowledge to inform and motivate social or political actions to care for the natural world. One such environmentalist puts it this way: “Ecological philosophy, if it is to provide a solid basis for alliance building, must be a social ecology that critiques and challenges all forms of hierarchy and domination. It must set as its overarching goal, the creation of a non-hierarchical society if we are to live in harmony with nature” (Chase 97; Bookchin 11-29).<sup>5</sup>

There are two basic strategies that environmentalists use for making this change: from the top down and from the bottom up. The top down strategy involves bringing about change on an international political level, above state or national sovereignty, getting agreements from individual states to follow contractually agreed obligations at their state’s level, bringing ecological justice to individual relationships within communities from the top down (Conca). This is basically the rationale behind the United Nations. This characteristic environmental/political top down response emphasizes cooperation rather than confrontation within the international community, enhancing the *sensus communis*. No nation can meet the challenges of global change on its own. Nor can any nation protect itself from the actions—or inactions—of others. It postulates as big a change for the nation-state as any since the emergence of the nation state four hundred years ago (Conca 259).

The bottom up strategy involves getting individual citizens to mobilize elected governments to pay attention to particular environmental concerns through protests, letter writing, and pin-wearing demonstrations. Bill McKibben argues bottom up, as do others who are concerned with protecting traditional individual rights to freedom, dissent and electing responsive representatives of their interests (xxiii). This provides a window into the shape of the shared narrative identifying the orientation of environmentalists.

### 3. Science and the Environmentalist

Following the previously explained strategies 1 and 2, above, we need to ask: Where does the exactness of *scientific thought* alone get one? As Suzuki claims, “Modern science confirms and reenacts . . . reality, examining and exploring nature piece by piece, in the hopes of reassembling it into an intelligible, rational abstract system that contains everything-that-is.” (*The Sacred Balance* 194). The scientist’s existence is characterized by what Kierkegaard calls *approximation*: “whereas objective knowledge goes on leisurely on the long road of approximation” (Luper84). This misses existence that involves an authentic participation in life.

The environmentalist is a participating advocate, as suggested by Farley Mowat, who says in his book *Sea of Slaughter*: “If, in making myself their [natural creatures other than humankind] advocate, I appear somewhat misanthropic, I offer no apologies except to say that it is not my business to offer even token exculpation or justification for the biocidal course that modern man has steered . . . is steering still (13). He continues with the position

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<sup>4</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein’s use of “lifeworld” (*Philosophical Investigations*) is similar in the respects used here to Martin Heidegger’s use of the phrase “lived space” in *Being and Time*.

<sup>5</sup> There is an ongoing debate between the views and values expressed by what is known as Deep Ecology and the responses from Social Ecology that might suggest some incompatibility between a social conscience and an environmental conscience, but this is mediated by a common priority ranking of interests and values that is not one-sided. It is also argued that it is possible to move from a social conscience to an environmental conscience in a cumulative not divisive strategy of mutual agreements. (Bookchin, 1988)

that “this record of our outrageous behaviour in and around the Sea of Slaughter will help us comprehend the consequences of unbridled greed unleashed against animate creation” (14).

Environmentalists are *organic holists* for whom scientific information is not the only relevant information required in making decisions. One also needs to be *aware of the planet as a person or the subject of an organic life* whose ailment requires sympathetic but also deliberate action on a holistic level of response. James Lovelock, for example, argues that the planet needs the *care and concern* that a medical practitioner would show a patient. He says:

I am not saying that we do not need organized science; only that we need to recognize its frailty as a human institution that it is slow, and its record in handling immediate environmental problems is far from good. It tends to do only those things that scientists find easy to do and want to do anyway. It concentrates, almost obsessively, on minor matters that happen to worry the public (15).

Gaia, according to Lovelock, is a living organism whose life matters to those who care for it.<sup>6</sup>

By contrast, the non-environmentalist’s relationship to the natural world is such that

instead of seeing ourselves as physically and spiritually connected to family, clan and land, we now live chiefly by the mind, as separate individuals acting on and relating to other separate individuals and on a lifeless, dumb world beyond the body,” making us “strangers in the world; where we no longer belong. Because it is separate from us we can dispassionately act on it, abstract from it, use it, take it apart; we can wreck it, because it is another, it is alien. (Suzuki and McConnell 194)<sup>7</sup>

The environmentalist’s commitment is to a world of caring both for the human inhabitants of the earth and their living space. Commitment is to meaningful change, not just a politically acceptable process for change. When personal commitments are the norm, there can be a sliding from science to socio-political action. Environmentalists often defy social or traditional categories of existence making them transform as science and community politics marry in the strategic environmentalists’ decisions.

Idealized science as a detached and separate pursuit of knowledge, devoid of political or ideological commitments is taken to be the isolated laboratory ideal of any scientific discipline, despite sociological arguments to the contrary (Kuhn). However, science as the means towards a better understanding of the natural is not independent of some purpose (Resnik). It has a purpose beyond itself. The disciplined scientist’s loyalty is to doing “good science”: improving, developing and perfecting an approach or a methodology rather than putting the application towards another goal, namely improving the environment. The intrinsic value is the methodology. Both David Suzuki and John Muir share this transformation from scientist to environmentalist.

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<sup>6</sup> This idea of empathetic reciprocity is pursued throughout this paper.

<sup>7</sup> There seems to be a sense that the egoistic adventurer is fighting as much against the weakness of civilized life and the natural world is simply a means to prove that civilized life has not weakened his or her strengths.

Environmentalists are distinguished as *pragmatic activists* who, in deference to prior policy decisions, *favour actions*, as some politicians do, waiting on more or better ‘science’ to solve a problem subject to scientific rules and policies. Sometimes prudential politics dictates a conservative, wait-and-see attitude of distance and detachment until the picture becomes clearer, the strategy better defined, and the goals more attainable. Global warming critics (not deniers) can take this agnostic’s stance (McKittrick).<sup>8</sup> In the case of disciplined science, the goal is to achieve the best science, not necessarily the best planet Earth. In the second case of deniers, the goal is often to get a political party re-elected in order to govern, not to create the best independent political conditions to ensure the best planet, Earth. Environmental concerns can be deferred for either of these alternate goals of good science or successful politics (Gough, *Defective Arguments Denying an Inconvenient Truth*).

Alternatively, some radicalized environmentalists are not necessarily driven by positive community values and have been disparaged as *eco-terrorists* (Nikiforuk).<sup>9</sup>

When we engage in successful practices of persuasion with an opponent, then the first consideration should be one of deciding which of two or more possibilities will be communicatively effective. If you know your opponent’s value system, those things which are given value-priority over alternatives, then this knowledge is initially useful in framing your argument. If, for example, you know your opponent values material well-being over a life of spiritual or immaterial existence, then you know how to frame one of two possible strategies in your argument. You could frame your argument in materialist/utilitarian terms, focussing on the greatest overall gain of material goods, which will not be as effective to your opponents as another equally viable approach. This is not a dumbing down of your argument, an unethical appeal to stereotyping or a fallacious strategy of either *ad-hominem* or *pro-homine*. It is a communicative strategy of trying to ensure that your opponent will be most open to your proposal. Understanding orientation produces effective argumentation and counter argumentation.

#### 4. The Existential Nature of an Environmentalist

The environmentalist is sometimes a kind of *existentialist critic*. Søren Kierkegaard claims *we are what we are because of the decisions we make* and not because of any internal or external test of the reasoning behind them. Character is a measure of one’s involvement in the world. We are who we are because of how we choose to define our unique existence, which is “the extraordinary ability of living things to seize a chance and build on it” (Suzuki and McConnell 114). Deciding to act is courageous, while not deciding is lacking in courage and conviction. Existential environmentalists define individual existence within their situationally relational existence in the natural world. They exist through their decisions in the natural world, not as a player, spectator, or stranger, but as a member of the natural family or community. Paradoxically, we are constantly defining who we are, so that our decisions always make a difference to who we are in our chosen environment. Who we are and where we are become indistinguishable in the determined existence of an existential environmentalist. As one historical anthropologist puts it, we are always achieving an

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<sup>8</sup> Typical of some global warming “critics”, Ross McKittrick is a University of Guelph (not a natural scientist) economist who “questions the unquestioned certainty of climate change or what he calls “the doctrine of certainty.”

<sup>9</sup> I question the use of this term since it doesn’t seem to have any well-defined borders to separate its accurate designation from any media misuse of it.

equilibrium point between the environment and human culture, since “the instability of human relations with the environment can be used to explain both culture and environmental transformations” (Cronon 13).

The environmentalist uniquely melds science with a *spiritual, aesthetic or artistic appreciation of the natural world* in a posture of determined acceptance. This person gets as much pleasure from leisurely walks in the woods, as from analyzing the rate of deforestation or species extinction. It is the love of the art and the object of the art of sauntering that moves the science. John Muir, founder of the Sierra Club and David Thoreau, walking in the woods by Walden Pond or through the Sierra mountains, exemplify the aesthetic appreciation of *sauntering, like a meandering river*, following a natural path through an environment, where the terrain dictates direction, not the expediency to get from one place to another, as quickly as possible. Travelling quickly is a *use of the environment as a means* to get somewhere from somewhere else. The traveler isn't changed by the trip. The end is not the trip. The trip is an annoyance to be overcome; it is the *means* to the end of getting somewhere. The environment of the trip is incidental. This is in opposition to an orientation to *natural travelling*, as sauntering. Moving attentively and creatively within the art of the natural world, the traveler becomes part of the natural art landscape.

One can easily find stirrings of such spiritual awakenings in the writings of John Muir, David Suzuki, Aldo Leopold, and David Thoreau (Cronon 15). Their texts and diaries disclose narratives of an individual's spiritual relationship with the natural world encompassing them and changing them (Thoreau 41-6; Muir 138-44). Mixed with spiritual, aesthetic appreciation of the natural world, *non-invasive, peaceful stalking* is identified by one environmentalist who transformed his personal spiritual awakening into a new awareness of the natural world. This takes an anti-intellectual strategy, mixing folk science from experiences in the natural world to dispel fear of the wilderness and embrace it as oneself, so that “thought is a hindrance and when it is quiet, a greater intelligence takes over . . . ; your feet will move by themselves. You will be free from the inhibitions of thought, free from psychological fear” (Rezendes 47). A communications ethicist puts it this way: “Beauty needs an opening in order to be experienced and appreciated. The spatial and temporal structure of our existence is, at the very least, an opening act for beauty” (Hyde 148).

## 5. The Common Community of the Environmentalist

Environmentalists have a strong and pronounced sense of the public, which includes and integrates as *the common Earth community* or Earth-environmental cultural identity rooted in the natural world that is home: when it is threatened with being fenced-in by private interests, they often take action to counter the threat of restricted access and use (Klein 2014). They know that a well-informed and active public ensures that exclusive use does not result in the abuse of the natural world or part of it. If the general public recognizes its stake in the natural world and acts in its interest, there is more likelihood that our environment will improve, than if there is an economic incentive to do so. A natural *traveller* sees more than a speed traveler and recognizes changes to both her life and the lives of all her people in present and future generations. She is a caring observer on her saunters through her home and a witness to threats to its health. Holmes Rolston III identifies an environmentalist's relationship with the natural world as the recognition of *environmental reciprocals*, as the natural world presents humans with both *natural resistance* and *natural conductance*, life



affirming and life-threatening in a community *ethos* of respect for difference and ambiguity (Rolston III 48-9).

## 6. Environmental Activists in the Natural World

Where there is a strong suspicion of harm to the environment and the public good, the environmentalist acts even though *the presumptive action may not lie soundly based on verifiable evidence or within the confines of the scientific method*. This can be both a fault and a virtue. Like the parent who always presumes that his child is innocent and that others coerced him into doing wrong, it is not always accurate but it is always a reaction (whether misplaced or otherwise) based on love and loyalty. This attitude is borne by a fear of pausing, inaction, debilitating deliberation, consultation and divergent stakeholder conversations, which make work but not action, create words but not reactions, and construct talk but not informed walks for those who want to saunter, meander and not tamper. Alfred North Whitehead identified *the mistake of misplaced concreteness* when we try to abstract from the lived in experienced concrete actual world, taking a single approach to it, in isolation from all other possibilities. The *sensus communis* constitutes an audience that is not static, fixed, or abstracted but situated, lived, and engaged in the natural world from a meandering conversation to a re-active conversion of the one to the many.

Finally, environmentalists sometimes seem *driven by feelings first, using reasoning later* to mold attitudes in a form of unflinching commitment over dispassionate, disinterested deliberation. At the basic level, “feeling means to be involved in something guiding us in the preservation and extension of self” engaging us in the most personal way with our environment (Heller 56). It is a feature of value-determined decisions that the first, and sometimes the most powerful, instinct is driven by passion directed towards concern for the other, the natural world (Kastely 228-9). Without feelings of care or concern, where is the motivation triggering the feeling that something is wrong? The emotions of care and concern are needed to initiate change, to bring it back to a state where it is right. Eco-feminists have identified the need for a focused emotional response, replacing a relationship of conquest to achieve domination with a relationship of caring to achieve a relationship to “the other”, retaining differences with oneself in a structural, conceptual and attitudinal shift from traditional approaches to ethical decision-making (Warren 125-46).

## 7. What can be concluded from environmentalist engagement strategies?

There are several ideas that can be identified in the development of this picture of an environmentalist’s strategies and the complex character that emerges from them. These are not exhaustive, but suggestive of what may be a useful base for determining the background considerations, in the arguments and negotiations between non-environmentalists and environmentalists’ orientation.

*A. Contextual Relevance in finding our Place in the Natural World:* An audience determines the argument or at least what kind of argumentative appeal will work to be persuasive (in contrast to propositional, sentential, syllogistic or formal logic). The descriptions listed are informative, not formative, of what it is to be an environmentalist. These characterizations are tentative and open to reasonable challenges. This is the nature of a conversation established as a dialogue among those who continue as engaged inquirers and learners. For non-environmentalists to learn from environmentalists, the mentorship

process requires a basic understanding of the context that makes his focus relevant to improving our understanding of the natural world and our relationship to it. For environmentalists to understand and persuade non-environmentalists, the arguments need to start with the background considerations of the environmentalist's contextualized situation.

*B. Process not Product in Environmental Engagement:* As indicated in A, an appeal to a process is not an appeal to a product that is independent of the process. The identification of environmental processes is prior to and foundational for the identification of any individual product or member of them. Natural change, and interference with it, is the basis for many of the problems an environmentalist finds in the natural world. The environmentalist understands the world is being formed by the non-deliberative actions of natural processes and by the deliberate actions of people in it. We humans may have a duty to protect the interests of the processes which inform the life of the natural world, but there is no reciprocity<sup>10</sup> on the part of the natural world having any correlative duty to us.<sup>11</sup> Only we can realize our need to accept the claims of the natural order as paramount over the smaller, less central and less significant claims of ourselves. There is no conceptual infrastructure within which to situate the leadership role that can be taken only by the members of one species. On the basis of an understanding of the lifeworld of the environmentalist, common engagements in the natural world, the process of change can take place—on an ongoing basis—in the non-environmentalist and the environmentalist alike in a *negotiated space of deliberative compromise*.

*C. Consistency and Negotiating with Strategies:* If we use the strategies listed above, do we necessarily find an environmentalist? What if we find only *some* of the features or characteristic relationships of an environmentalist but not all of them? Do we then suppose a family resemblance notion of environmentalists, that they are only loosely connected together not by any singular purpose or even agreed process but by a family of shared similarities (Honderich)? What if there is no consistency? What do we do? First, we don't confuse "consensus" with "consistency" since it is possible to achieve the goal of consensual agreement on the basis of significantly different claims, all of which may be inconsistent with each other, but not consistent with the same conclusion. This is the basis for democracy. Second, we don't confuse "accuracy" with "consistency" so that if the picture drawn demonstrates there is inconsistency, it doesn't follow that our portrait is inaccurate. Consistency is a human ideal and not a matter of what, in fact, exists in the natural world or our relationship with it. The basis for negotiations between environmentalists and non-environmentalists should not be considered essentially a consistent characterization of one's opponent but rather differing characters with the same focus.

*D. Themes or Family Resemblances:* The best we seem to have accomplished is to identify some common themes and possible family "resemblances" within and between environmentalists (Honderich 269). This provides a weak basis for a strict determined identification but it nonetheless is not a bad outcome, since it may seem to affirm the continuing ongoing development and inherent individuality of environmentalists. The strategies vary from the *optimistic* position that "weaning ourselves away from fossil fuels will

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<sup>10</sup> This use of "reciprocity" is not identical to Holmes Ralston III's term "environmental reciprocals" which is restricted to a physical action and reaction process set.

<sup>11</sup> Correlative to any espoused ethical duty is an ethical right and conversely but these require conscious, deliberative agents who can be held responsible for their decisions, which is not the case with the amorphous natural world.

in fact trigger an economic boom or that the transition to benign sources of energy will spur the next great technical revolution” to the *pessimistic* view that “the consequences of global warming will become so unmistakable and terrifying that we will be roused from our consumer enchantment and moved to take action” (McKibben xxiii; Klein 2014). Whatever the case, the outcome is the same. Both strategies for an environmentalist should end in a fundamental change in our current potentially defective relationship in the natural world that places that world above human desires for an opulent lifestyle (Gough, *Understanding, Communication and Argumentation about the Environment*).

*E. Predominance for Action over Inaction:* A default, *wait and see* conservative strategy is often favoured by anti-environmentalists but rarely by environmentalists. Letting any outcome be determined by fate or the circumstances of the problem itself is a distraction to the action-based decision-making characteristic of environmentalists. Instead, their approach is rooted in an appreciation of engagement in the natural world, employing rhetorical approaches of *sensus communis*. Their common fund of values and relationships to the natural world, along with their community-based common faculty of judgment and memories, makes inaction and a *wait-and-see* approach unacceptable to an audience of environmentalists. There is an on-going, often unrecognized, attempt to “reconcile or synthesize these (two) meanings” (Schaeffer 279). Characterizing more conservative from liberal or radical environmentalists is not based on the *content* of their beliefs or even the *conceptual structure* of their belief set which remain surprisingly similar, but on the basis of what actions are most appropriately and effectively dictated by the situation at hand.

*F. Personal Relationships and Detached Commitments:* For environmentalists, their situation in the world is a *personal relationship*, not a detached, distanced position of objective observer (Rensendes109). The subject is an irreducible part in the process of both discovery and commitment to action. We should expect and welcome passion in their speech and actions.

This composite picture tells us much about some of the factors that motivate, some of the beliefs that animate, and some of the principles that self-reflectively regulate the ideas and actions of environmentalists. It tells us that *environmentalism* is activated by people, not disembodied theories or principles, and that our rejection of the ideas of the environmentalist must take account of the character’s belief set and their relationship to the natural world. If we want to become an environmentalist, then our decision will involve a transformation of our relationship to the natural world and to the social world of our neighbors, a transformation that is not easy but possible for all—as well as open to many different individual variations and critical challenges. This has been called a *fundamental shift in consciousness* about the natural world, our situation in it and the nature of our society (Marshall 5). Characteristics motivate and instigate strategies of the environmentalist and his or her opponents. For this reason, it is important to take a considered look at natural orientation. These characteristics of environmentalists enable us to understand, even minimally, a *shared viewpoint* among members of the group. Identifying this *shared viewpoint* acquaints us with how inputs of information and outputs of beliefs, based on this information, influence what is opened up to environmentalists about a way of experiencing the natural world. Understanding the rhetorical position of the environmentalist is a major step forward for supporters and critics alike.

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