

Evangelos D. Protopapadakis

Environmental Ethics and Linkola's Ecofascism: An Ethics Beyond Humanism

Abstract Ecofascism as a tradition in Environmental Ethics seems to be burgeoning with potential. The roots of Ecofascism can be traced back to the German Romantic School, to the Wagnerian narration of the Nibelungen saga, to the works of Fichte and Herder and, finally, to the so-called *völkisch* movement. Those who take pride in describing themselves as ecofascists *grosso modo* tend to prioritize the moral value of the ecosphere, while, at the same time, they almost entirely devalue species and individuals. Additionally, these ecofascists are eager to reject democracy, the idea of progress in its entirety, as well as industrialization and urbanization. They also seem to be hostile towards individual autonomy and free will. In this short essay I will present and discuss Kaarlo Pentti Linkola's approach to environmental ethics, one that could be well described as the epitome of Ecofascism. I will argue that his arguments are neither sound nor documented, and I will conclude that Linkola's overall approach is, in my view, contrary to the purpose as well as to the very essence of morality.

Keywords ecofascism, anthropocentrism, ecocentrism, environmental crisis, depopulation, ethical holism, environmental ethics

“We recognize that separating humanity from nature, from the whole of life, leads to humankind's own destruction and to the death of nations. Only through a re-integration of humanity into the whole of nature can our people be made stronger. That is the fundamental point of the biological tasks of our age. Humankind alone is no longer the focus of thought, but rather life as a whole.

Received August 15, 2013

Evangelos D. Protopapadakis (✉)

Department of Philosophy, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Athens 15703, Greece

E-mail: eprotopa@ppp.uoa.gr

This striving toward connectedness with the totality of life, with nature itself, a nature into which we are born, this is the deepest meaning and the true essence of National Socialist thought” (Lehmann 1934, 10–11). This was set forth in 1934 by Ernst Lehman, a professor of Botany, who is best known for arguing that National Socialism is “politically applied biology” (Staudenmaier 1995, 26). This statement, albeit nearly a century old, nevertheless it still is a precise description of today's ecofascism.

1

Ecofascism is not just a form of ecology with declared fascist tendencies, nor is it fascism with ecological sentiments. It is rather a self-standing ideology and a vibrant tendency in contemporary environmental ethics, one with increasing momentum—in Northern Europe mostly, but in many other places in the world as well. Ecofascism rests on the backbone of fascism, and is fully armored with gear borrowed from the arsenal of ethical holism; however, it claims its ideological independence, strongly renouncing its kinship with fascism and, less strongly, with ethical holism. Ecofascism is not a sign of our times; on the contrary, it has a long and complicated history. Neither is it the brainchild of some elite philosophical sect; rather, it meets the actual demands of life today and motivates small but active groups of ordinary people—environmental activists included. The declared purpose of ecofascism is to establish the alleged duty of moral agents to subordinate themselves to the best interests of the ecosphere. The cosmology of the Stoics; Baruch Spinoza's metaphysical ethics; Martin Heidegger's views concerning industrialism; mysticism; a good portion of esotericism and anti-humanism combined with an impulsive hostility towards progress and liberal democracy and loud cries in favor of the restoration of an allegedly long-gone glorious—though poverty-stricken—golden age—these are the most distinctive among the ingredients that produce the exotic and highly explosive mixture known as ecofascism.

The roots of ecofascism can be traced back to the *völkisch* movement (Protopapadakis 2009a, 111ff), which flourished among the Germanic nations during the late nineteenth/early twentieth century (Mosse 1964, 4), and even earlier. It can also be linked to the Prussian romanticism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, especially in the precocious awakening of the long-suppressed Germanic national consciousness, as is manifest in the writings of Johann Gottfried von Herder and Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1922, 130). In this context the blood purity of the race was assumed to be directly connected to German soil, a view that view soon developed into the infamous *Blut und Boden* doctrine (Darre 1936). The *Blut und Boden* theory suggests that any particular

race abolishes its genuine *Geist* and its true essence if it is disconnected from its natural surroundings; in this case the Aryan race could not have survived while alienated from the unique environment that had forged the race into what it is (Lehmann 1934, 10–11). Furthermore, according to such views, every civilization can only emerge due to the unique connection between a specific race and the environment; therefore any civilization can only be local (Krügel 1914, 18). As a reaction to the Enlightenment and its declared tendency to objectify and *disenchant* nature (Adorno 2002), as well as to Marxism in its tendency to perceive nature as an instrument, the *völkisch* movement turned to the natural world in order to locate the creative forces that shape mankind; since each individual detached from its natural environment simply ceases to exist as it used to—or never becomes the individual it was meant to be—it is only a simple step further to assume that nature is ontologically prior to the species *Homo sapiens* (Riehl 1857, 52). Humanity's anguish and environmental deterioration are thus seen to be only due to alienation from nature, which, in turn, has been the most abominable offspring of the celebrated rationalism of the Enlightenment. At the end of the day, the fruits of the Enlightenment prove to be poisonous to both humanity and nature. According to *völkisch* views, the most dangerous among these fruits are the emergence and establishment of democracy—a system totally contrary to natural order, reliant on mass urbanization, and above all dependent on uncontrolled industrialization and technological progress (Bergmann 1970, 38). Only by returning to the *golden era*—when man and nature coexisted in harmony—will mankind see its wounds healed and its true essence restored.

These and similar views served as the fertile soil for the emergence of Ecofascism sometime during the last half of the twentieth century. It was a time when “traditional” ethics seemed either unable or reluctant to meet the demands of rapidly growing environmental concern and awareness. The situation then seemed to call for a new brand of ethics, an environmental ethics (Routley 1973, 205). At this time, the Golden Fleece for such an ethics was assumed to be the establishment of some irrefutable *moral imperative*, due to which moral agents would indisputably become morally bound to the sustenance, preservation and flourishing of the natural environment. In some environmental ethicists' views this purpose is best sought by means of attributing some kind of moral value to the environment, either intrinsic or instrumental. Seeing instrumental value in nature is the cardinal feature of anthropocentrism; this view, however, has never been unanimously accepted as a safe ground for environmental ethics (Protopapadakis 2009b, 70ff). Biocentrism, on the other hand, the approach that focuses on the moral significance of the very property of life—irrespective of *whose* life may be at issue—has been seen as equally inadequate and has been criticized for arising from the so-called *naturalistic fallacy*: from the fact alone

that something or someone *is* alive it doesn't necessarily follow that one has the moral right *to be*—or remain—alive. The obtuseness of both anthropocentrism and biocentrism triggered the quest for a more promising terrain through alternative and less-traveled routes. Now it was the ecosphere's turn to come into focus as the original *locus* of moral value (Elliot 1997, 68). According to the views of ecocentrism, any natural being may count as the bearer of moral value, not because it may provide humans with services or goods, but solely due to the fact that it exists as a part of the whole, the ecosphere (Katz 1997, 99). A forest that is being exploited as a source of timber is neither *more of* a forest, nor *a better one* compared to virgin and untouched ones. The non-human parts of the creation are neither destined nor purposed to be the means to human ends; meeting the demands of the species *Homo sapiens* is not some kind of Aristotelian *entelecheia* for non-human beings (Brennan 1984). The moral value of each particular natural being is totally independent of the existence of humans (Routley 1973, 207ff); the value of natural beings and entities would not diminish even if humans became extinct, since such a value is only due to the fact that all natural beings or entities participate in the whole of the ecosphere. In short, the ecosphere was assumed to be the only bearer of absolute moral value; *sequitur*, single species and individual entities were allowed only relative value, as far as they partake of the whole (Protopapadakis 2006, 47). These, of course, are not at all ecofascism. However, in my view, the prelude to ecofascism sounds somewhat like this.

2

Ecofascism *grosso modo* rests on a simple concept: since the ecosphere *per se* is the only bearer of absolute moral value, *it follows* that the species *Homo sapiens*—just like any other species—can only be ascribed relative moral value, a value that is totally dependent on the participation of the species in the whole (Callicott 1989, 15–38). Moral significance is only ascribed in terms of the well-being of the ecosphere (Leopold 1968, 224–25). The best interests of any single species cannot take moral priority over those of the whole. If any particular species interacts with its environment in a way that is detrimental to the ecosphere, the situation needs to be altered in such a way so as to allow the reestablishment of proper equilibrium—even if this would call for the destruction of the harmful species. All these apply *par excellence*—if not exclusively—to the species *Homo sapiens*, since only this species has the power to jeopardize the well-being—as well as the very existence—of the ecosphere.

In my view, from this general concept ecofascists seem to draw the following key premises: [i] Humans propagate without any control, and this seriously

threatens natural equilibrium. Therefore, human population should be promptly and drastically reduced, no matter what form this would take; every means to this end is *in principle* just and fair (Linkola 2009, 192; see also Greer 2010, 331). [ii] Even the mere presence of humans blemishes and spoils the beauty and purity of the environment. Therefore, humans ought to render large areas entirely human-free (Elliot 1997, 74ff). [iii] Technological progress and urbanization bring high resource demands and thus have become enduring threats to the environment. Therefore, moral agents ought to reject all cultural and technological achievements to any degree necessary for the reestablishment of a proper environmental equilibrium, even if this would mean that humans might have to live without electricity, communication, transportation etc. [iv] All of what is described above, although necessary and urgent, is unlikely to come to fruition in a liberal democratic state, mainly for two reasons: on the one hand environmental degradation seems to be the systemic aftermath of the emergence and establishment of liberal democratic states; on the other, humans would never willingly consent to measures such as these (Linkola 2009, 205). What the situation would call for is some kind of a *green coup d' état* (Bahro 1994, 278), or a *green Adolf* (Kratz 1994, 197).

Finnish philosopher Kaarlo Pentti Linkola is the most typical—as well as the most fervent—champion of these views; he is also the epitome as well as the *guru* of a manifestly militant tendency in environmental ethics, adherents of which are not at all reluctant to describe themselves as *ecofascists*. Linkola believes that the ultimate moral achievement for humans would be to safeguard the preservation of life on earth until a distant future (Linkola 2009, 19); that is, *not human life only*, nor that of any other species in particular, but *life in general*. Since traditional moral values have already been proven incompatible with such a purpose, they need to be rejected and replaced. After all, it is nonsensical for any society to unquestionably abide by moral norms and values that are only intended to bring about its doom (Linkola 2009, 138). According to Linkola, the key tenet that needs to be rejected is the one that assumes the moral supremacy of the species *Homo sapiens*. In Linkola's view humans are nothing more than *one more* species among the millions that inhabit the planet; the interests of humans can only be of equal importance to every other species' interests, and the same applies to their well-being and flourishing. The prosperity of the species *Homo sapiens* enjoys no moral priority over the well-being of the ecosphere. To assume that mankind, although only a small cluster of the creation, is morally justified in behaving as the owner or the steward of the planet, is, to Linkola, simply outrageous (Linkola 2009, 61).

Linkola outwardly rejects progress, technology, and economic growth. He argues that the most irrational faith among people is that in technology. The priests of technology, he explains, believe until their death that material

prosperity brings enjoyment and happiness—even though the study of human history shows that it is only want and struggle that make human life worthwhile and that, on the contrary, material prosperity brings about only despair. These advocates of technology, according to Linkola, will continue to believe in technology even when they choke in their gas masks (penttilinkola.com 2006). But what exactly is progress? Most of us, argues Linkola, have to work much more than our forefathers did; we occupy ourselves with trivial duties such as plugging and unplugging jacks, keeping income and expense accounts, or trying to convince a complete stranger to buy a brand new washing machine. If we had the chance to choose, we would prefer to do something totally different. Technology, Linkola goes on, is not only useless, but also detrimental: technological advances weaken our species and allow us to develop an utterly crooked understanding of the actual human condition. The seemingly irrefutable key argument in favor of technology, namely the one that stresses the alleged improvement of human life in the everyday, seems, to Linkola, to be unsound and fake. Technological advances, he claims, are nothing but the means to take away all true meaning in life. Our species, he believes, would lack every good quality it has if it were not for the countless misfortunes, calamities, and hardships with which it had to struggle throughout its evolutionary history. Nowadays, however, many humans need not care for hardships: when it rains they can remain dry; it is highly unlikely that they will have to starve to death; predators cannot harm them, since humans have become the dominant predator on the planet. Linkola argues that there is nothing wrong with hunger, with freezing, with uncertainty, with the possibility of unexpected death (Linkola 2009, 145; Protopapadakis 2010, 84). On the contrary, fleeing such natural conditions necessarily brings about a sense of homelessness, confusion, and despair, together with a lack of any true meaning in life. The extremely high suicide rates in developed countries stand as good proof of this.

Linkola claims that overpopulation is the most disastrous among the fruits of technological progress. According to him all species are naturally endowed with self-regulating systems for controlling reproduction through which their population remains stable, thus safeguarding not only the survival of the species itself, but also the stability of the environment. Each time a maximum population quota is reached, Linkola argues, a safety valve is activated and triggers natural procedures that will eventually lead to the restoration of the proper equilibrium by means either of famine or disease. However, humans, due to technological progress, have managed to override any safety valve, and this is the reason why the human population has increased dramatically, with the upshot being that our species has become an unbearable burden to the ecosphere. *Any means* to decreasing human population would be welcomed with relief by Linkola; even war, genocide, and disease, as long as any of these would be massively

destructive for the species *Homo sapiens*. Individual human existence is of no moral value when it comes to the survival of the species; the survival of the species, in turn, is only trivial compared to the survival of life on earth in general. The whole is morally superior to the part; every time a particular species becomes a threat to the whole, it is reasonable as well as morally justifiable to wish that the ecosphere will somehow—*some way*—be relieved of its presence.

What to do, when a ship carrying a hundred passengers suddenly capsizes and only one lifeboat, with room for only ten people, has been launched? When the lifeboat is full, those who hate life will try to load it with more people and sink the lot. Those who love and respect life will take the axe and sever the extra hands that cling to the sides of the boat. (Linkola 2000, 447)

War and genocide can be as useful towards this end, like an axe in the rescue boat. Echoing Malthus, Linkola asks:

Who misses all those who died in the Second World War? Who misses the twenty million executed by Stalin? Who misses Hitler's six million Jews? Israel creaks with over-crowdedness; in Asia Minor, overpopulation creates struggles for mere square meters of dirt. The cities throughout the world were rebuilt and filled to the brim with people long ago, their churches and monuments restored so that acid rain would have something to eat through. Who misses the unused procreation potential of those killed in the Second World War? Is the world lacking another hundred million people at the moment? Is there a shortage of books, songs, movies, porcelain dogs, vases? Are one billion embodiments of motherly love and one billion sweet silver-haired grandmothers not enough? (Linkola 2000, 447)

War, in Linkola's view, far from being a disaster, is actually a blessing to the ecosphere, with the qualification that it be properly targeted:

It would spark hope only if the nature of wars would morph so that deductions of persons would noticeably target the actual breeding potential: young females as well as children, of which a half is girls. If this doesn't happen, waging war is mostly waste of time or even harmful. (Linkola 2009, 173)

To Linkola, our species is nothing more than a kind of cancer on the planet (Veith 1994, 74):

If there were a button I could press, I would sacrifice myself without hesitating if it meant millions of people would die. (Milbank 1994, A4)

From this point of view, any holocaust—such as victimization of millions of Jews, Gypsies and various others during World War II—would be welcomed by Linkola:

We even have to be able to re-evaluate the fascism and confess the service that that philosophy made 30 years ago when it freed the earth from the weight of tens of millions of over-nourished Europeans, 6 million of them by ideally painless means, without any damage to the environment. (Linkola 1979)

Depopulation and the disruption of progress, however, will never become a popular goal of the masses; people would never vote for anyone who would promise such things; they will never be achieved in a democratic state. If the voice of the people is obeyed, Linkola argues, there is no hope. Democracy, he declares, is the religion of death. According to him, a small fragment of hope could lie only in the establishment of an aware and responsible government:

Democracy is the most miserable of all known societal systems, the heavy building block of doom. Therein the unmanageable freedom of production and consumption and the passions of the people is not only allowed, but also elevated as the highest of values. The most incomparably grave environmental disasters prevail in democracies. Any kind of dictatorship is always superior to democracy, leading to utter destruction more tardily, because there the individual is always chained, one way or other. When individual freedom reigns, human is both the killer and the victim. (Linkola 2009, 174)

Despite the fact that democracy seems to be the dominant form of government in our times, in Linkola's view no one but a fool would opt for such a disastrous regime:

Democracy and public right to vote guarantee that no others than sycophants of the people can rise to the government—of a people who never clamor for anything else than bread and circuses, regardless of the costs and consequences. Even the only possibility comparable to a lottery jackpot that some intelligent exception would rise to the positions of power is lost with democracy. (Linkola 2009, 159–60)

Democracy is based on individual decision-making, which is not necessarily in accordance with the best interests of either the individual or the environment (Linkola 2009, 204–05). Take, for instance, procreation. In all democratic states parents are free to decide how many children they wish to have. In Linkola's

view, however, an issue so crucial for the well-being of the ecosphere should be determined by a central authority in such a way so as to ensure that human population will gradually decrease, at least up to ten per cent of its current numbers, for starters (Linkola 2009, 139). This would mean, for example, that for one out of ten couples, procreation would be banned, while the remaining nine out of ten would be allowed to have no more than two children each. There is no doubt that a democratic society would not willingly accept such a regulation; therefore, a global totalitarian authority consisting of a few dedicated “mutant visionaries,” as Linkola calls them, whose aim would be to save people from their very self (Linkola 2009, 205), should be established. These mutant visionaries would already have somehow managed to overcome the biological restrictions of mankind that prevent the majority of people from facing the truth. Such individuals, so far out of the mainstream, however, would never be given power by the majority of people in free elections. Therefore, a *coup d'état* seems to be the only way out.

Linkola's views concerning overpopulation, technological progress, democracy and the direct action that is required for the restoration of the proper equilibrium have been summarized by Olli Tammilehto, an eminent Finnish scholar and an expert on Ecofascism:

(1) There is a threat for the survival of mankind, i.e. a chance of man's extinction exists. (2) This threat is caused by the pollution of the environment, the destruction of ecosystems and the acceleration of these processes. (3) The devastation of nature is caused by the growth of population and technological change. (4) Besides natural conditions, population growth and technological change are determined by man's biological character. (5) The extinction of man is an extremely bad thing. A bad thing is by definition something that everyone tries to avoid. So why do people not try to avoid their own extinction? Linkola has the explanation ready: “Man's psychic structure is such that most people repress these facts” (premises no. 1 and 2). “Without any doubt irrational faith is a key part of man's biological character—and a solid part of man's mechanism of self destruction.” These claims actually follow from the premise (4), because when everything is explained by biological causes, nothing in the realm of cognition, if such even exists, can have any effect in reality. The consequence of the premise (4) is: People do not realize the threat caused by the growth of population and the technological change, or if they do, this does not lead to any action. So is all hope lost? In spite of everything stated earlier, Linkola gives us a tiny bit of hope: “the chance of one in a million.” He knows that there are not just ordinary people but also “a number of clear-sighted individuals,” who “lack the irrational faith; they are some kind of mutations.” They are freaks of nature, the product of some random biological process, and

surprisingly the above biological laws are not valid for them in full measure. (6) In the item (4) "man" equals "normal man," the majority of men. In addition to these there are a small number of exceptional men, "visionary mutants," who can become conscious of the above premises and begin the actions that these call for. (7) A minority has any weight only if it has the support of the majority. (8) A minority can gain the support of the majority only through a coup d'état where they violently take over the government. (9) The power of the state can be wielded in such a way that the threat of man's extinction will vanish. 10. Man's duty is to strive for the prevention of extremely bad things, even if this would mean resorting to ethically reprehensible conduct (Tammilehto 1985, 8ff).

3

In my view, Linkola's theoretical approach, as Olli Tammilehto outlines it, suffers from the *petitio principii* fallacy, which is to say, explicitly assuming in the premises what is actually to be proven in the conclusion. In particular, the major premise of Linkola's argument, namely the one focusing on the alleged threat of human extinction, is nothing but an undocumented claim, more of a personal belief than a view based on scientific evidence. In general, Linkola's approach seems to be based more on speculation than on fact. For instance, the assumption that it is highly possible that the human race may become extinct in the near future due to overpopulation is neither self-evident nor a documented scientific truth: although the human population has been steadily growing for many decades now, the overall living conditions for people on earth have been constantly improving. Actually, according to the statistics—and very much unlike Linkola's account—our species, instead of being threatened with extinction, seems instead to prosper. Smallpox and measles are no longer major causes of premature death during childhood; electricity has improved the life of millions; communication is much easier and information is accessible almost to everyone. Could these advances—and other similar ones—indicate an overall deterioration of the human condition in comparison to conditions in the Middle Ages, for example, when the estimated life expectancy ranged from 30 to 40 years (Scott 2010, 9ff), or even to the first half of the nineteenth century, when slavery as well as forms of color and gender discrimination were still widely accepted and practiced?

On the other hand, environmental degradation is an undeniable fact. Nevertheless, it is a matter of dispute whether it is due to overpopulation and technological progress, issues I will engage with later. Equally disputable is Linkola's argument that the negative impact that our species seems to have on the

natural equilibrium is due only to the human biological condition, together with his view that there are actually some “mutant visionaries” who have unexpectedly managed somehow to overcome this condition. Does this imply that those mutant visionaries’ genome is different to that of the majority of “normal” people? Are these extraordinary individuals the product of evolution? As far as I know, Linkola is not a geneticist, and if such an unusual genetic mutation actually existed, however, it would have already been spotted by geneticists. But the only testimony for this is Linkola’s claim, and no evidence of such a mutation has yet come from the lab.

Even if we assumed—for the sake of the discussion—that Linkola is right in all his other views, his claim that “the extinction of man is an extremely bad thing” can still only cause confusion. Apart from the reasonable objection one could put forth, namely that the extinction of a species whose existence is detrimental to the whole can never be bad in a holistic context like the one Linkola seems to accept, there is also excessive ambiguity in the way Linkola makes use of the term *bad*. Every change in a given situation or in the course of events *per se* is just an *incident*. If examined *in vacuum* or *in abstracto*, an incident cannot be attributed any quality, goodness and badness included; something can be (morally) good or (morally) bad only in relation to an evaluator. Therefore, the extinction of the species *Homo sapiens* would be “an extremely bad thing” either for the very species that would become extinct, or for the ecosphere. If the human species vanishes, however, *there would be no one* for whom the extinction of the species would be a bad thing. Therefore, we have to assume that what Linkola means is that the extinction of mankind would be bad for the ecosphere; this, of course, is immensely contradictive with Linkola’s aphorism that humans are the “cancer of the planet,” as well as with his claim that—given the situation—the proper thing to do is to press a button in order to annihilate the human race.

Furthermore, the cornerstone of Linkola’s overall theory, namely his categorical imperative that “man’s duty is to strive for the prevention of extremely bad things, even if this would mean resorting to ethically reprehensible conduct,” in my view, is equally unsound. Any particular conduct can either be imposed on a moral agent by necessity or by another agent, or be due to—or, at least, in accordance with—an agent’s own free will. In the case of a specific conduct being imposed, of course, it can be neither reprehensible nor praiseworthy, since the agent has no alternatives to choose from, as when one kills another person in self defense: killing is always a bad thing, but it is not morally blameworthy—though it may still be lamentable—in cases where one has no other choice. Moral assessment requires alternatives on a par with the ability of a moral agent to choose among them according to that agent’s own free will. Now, if we examine Linkola’s argument just a bit more closely, we will notice

that the "ethically reprehensible conduct" he mentions, namely violently reducing the human population or, even, totally annihilating the species *Homo sapiens*, in Linkola's view, is *not just one of the options* that are open to a reasonable, sensitive, and aware moral agent, but *the only one*. However, if this is so, it cannot be morally reprehensible. Reversely, if any given conduct actually *is* morally reprehensible, it surely *isn't* the only way out. For each morally blameworthy choice, there is at least another choice available to the agent that is morally praiseworthy, and this is the only reason why an agent is considered to be morally accountable; the agent could act otherwise, but instead acted the way he did. Let us again return to Linkola's argument: if the extinction of our species is the only choice available to a reasonable, sensitive and aware moral agent, *it cannot be morally reprehensible*; if it is morally reprehensible, *it cannot be the only choice*. Therefore, Linkola is either wrong in claiming that humans are a cancer on the planet, or he is wrong in arguing that their annihilation would constitute ethically reprehensible—though necessary—conduct. Either way, Linkola's imperative seems unsound; far from having the power to establish a fair moral argument, it is more or less an unsupported as well as an inconsistent personal view.

Linkola's arguments with regard to technology, especially his claim that technology should be rejected altogether, also seem to be unsupported as well as unsound. To start with, by *technology* we refer to all the means any being (and not only humans) uses instead of one's limbs, the primitive wooden spear no less than the thermal core of a nuclear plant. Linkola himself takes pride in being an apt fisherman; fishing, however, is impossible without the use of some achievements of technology, such as the spear, water-traps, and the fishing rod, unless, of course, one has the ability to catch fish with one's bare hands. Given all of this, we have to assume that Linkola is not hostile towards *simple technologies* such as his fishing rod, but only towards advanced and sophisticated ones. If this is so, Linkola has to make clear where exactly he has decided to draw the line between *simple* and *advanced*, which is to say between *good* and *bad* technology—and this alone seems to be quite challenging a task. However, even if Linkola manages to do so, I believe it will be quite difficult for him to support his view that *every* sophisticated technology is detrimental to the ecosphere. A sailplane, for example, has minimal environmental impact; electronic communication is much more environmentally-friendly compared to traditional modes, since neither paper nor transportation is needed. Nuclear energy, on the other hand, is much cleaner than coal, and in the future it may become quite as safe, when anticipated advances in nuclear technology will have rendered power plants accident-proof (Taylor 1989, 319 ff.; Deutch 2009, 10). It is true that, *by definition*, technology makes some use of natural resources. From this, however, we cannot infer that technology is *by definition* threatening or

detrimental to the environment. Moreover, the fact that environmental degradation is mostly due to advances in technology does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that technology should be rejected entirely. Whenever something has some unwanted effects, we can decide between either altogether abandoning it or improving it, i.e., by minimizing or eliminating its negative effects—and I think we mostly tend to prefer the latter. It is for the same reason that we usually try to modify unfit behavior instead of putting a bullet in a person's head. In my view, technology can be environmentally-friendly, and this is not just wishful thinking; the advances in solar-, wind- and sea-power-technology stand as good evidence of this. Contrary to what Linkola argues, I believe that technology can be of neutral environmental impact and, at the same time, equally effective in preserving the quality of life.

As for Linkola's outward hostility towards liberal democracy, in my view, it is not only unjustifiable, but also historically unsupported. History shows that authoritarian regimes are equally—if not more—responsible for environmental degradation. The Chernobyl disaster and the manner in which the Soviet government handled the situation at the time is an eloquent example. Again in Kozloduy, Bulgaria: although Reactors 1 and 2 were officially included among the ten most dangerous worldwide for decades, they were decommissioned only in 1993 after Bulgaria's transition to parliamentary democracy, and this was mostly due to the pressure exercised by the European Union. It seems that public opinion in liberal democracies is usually sensitive concerning the environment, and often opposes policies that have a negative impact on it; in totalitarian regimes such as Linkola advocates, however, public opinion has no power at all. Furthermore, Linkola's assumption that minorities in liberal democracies have no power to alter any given situation contradicts common experience. Liberal democracies have proven to be the proper ground for determined minorities to exercise their will successfully on the usually inert mass of people. A small spirited group of activists fighting for a good cause can easily gain support and even turn into a majority, as it happened with Gandhi and his famous Salt March in 1930 (Parekh 2001, 20ff), or as is happening today with environmental non-government-organizations such as Greenpeace; there are many environmental activists who bear witness to this as well. The task of preserving the natural environment does not necessarily call for a green coup. Increased awareness and education are an equally effective means, and surely a much more temperate one. On the other hand, the appeal to an elite caste of "visionary mutants," in my opinion, foreshadows nothing other than a *green Führer* or, even worse, a group of such people.

As to Linkola's views concerning overpopulation and its enormous impact on the environment, in my view he seems to be begging the question. First of all, one can never tell what exactly the precise meaning of *overpopulation* is, unless,

of course, one has some insight concerning the *maximum* or the *ideal* population of the planet. Take Paul Ehrlich's case, for example: during the last quarter of the previous century he gained his reputation for arguing that there was a *population bomb* about to explode (Ehrlich 1995, 3ff); human population at the time was less than four billion people. Today our species has reached a population of more than seven billion, but no bomb has yet exploded. Certainly our planet is neither vast, nor are its resources limitless; there has to be a ceiling for human population. But exactly how high it is, no one as of yet has claimed to know with certainty; unless, of course, one belongs to these visionary mutants to whom Linkola so readily appeals. Besides, it seems that the degradation of the environment is not only due to overpopulation, if this is a factor at all; rather, in many cases it seems to be the outcome of policies usually having nothing to do with excessive numbers of people: soil erosion and consequent desertification, for example, seems to be primarily due to inappropriate land use practices and farming techniques, such as over-farming and over-grazing, as in the Sahel zone. India is being rapidly deforested by locals who burn forests in order to create more land to cultivate. They seem to be doing this, however, not in order to feed more of their own, but actually in order to earn more money to buy seeds for next season, since the use of genetically engineered seeds in farming reduces their income. On the other hand, the melting of the polar ice caps—and the consequent rise of the sea level—is mostly due to uncontrolled industrial activity not intended to meet the needs of a constantly increasing population, but rather the demands of a restricted social and economic elite. The gradual deforestation of the rainforest is not the aftermath of overpopulation, since the rainforest and its vast surrounding territory is scarcely inhabited; it is rather due to the increasing need for wood in developed countries—mainly the European North—where the population, instead of growing, either remains steady or is constantly declining.

In this paper I have tried to discuss ecofascism in general, as well as to provide the most precise and unbiased critical analysis possible, focusing on Linkola's version of ecofascism; I tried to prove my view that Linkola's arguments are unsound and unsupported, and that his theory is generally inconsistent.

To add to this, I think that for the most part what makes ecofascism unsound is that it seems to be in conflict with what ethics is actually about, at least as I see it. In my—as well as in many others'—view, ethics has been developed *by* humans *for* humans: it is a covenant concluded by moral agents, by means of which humans seek to secure their well-being and promote their best interests through mutual agreement, as well as to make arrangements that would render their lives worth living (Abbott 1978, 327). Therefore, an ethics such as Linkola's, one that deprives humans of any moral value in favor of the ecosphere and subordinates individual well-being to the flourishing of the whole, does not seem to me to be an ethics at all. Furthermore, the neutral point of view that Linkola—and

ecofascism in general—adopts when it comes to the moral status of our species and of the human condition in general, in my opinion is alien as well as hostile to ethics. This is because, if I may rephrase Kant, Linkola’s declared lack of concern for the well-being of humans “dulls [one’s] shared feeling of [...] pain and so weakens and gradually uproots a natural predisposition that is very serviceable to morality” (Kant 1991, 238).

Acknowledgments I am deeply indebted to Dr. Olli Tammilehto for sharing his views with me, for clarifying important aspects of Linkola’s moral theory, as well as for helping me with various passages in Finnish.

References

- Abbott, Philip. 1978. “Philosophers and the Abortion Question.” *Political Theory* 6: 313–35.
- Adorno, Theodore, and Max Horkheimer. 2002. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, translated by Edmund Jephcott. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Bahro, Rudolf. 1994. *Avoiding Social and Ecological Disaster: The Politics of World Transformation*, translated by David Clarke. Cambridgeshire: Gateway.
- Bergmann, Klaus. 1970. *Agrarromantik und Großstadtfeindschaft*. Meisenheim: Hain.
- Brennan, Andrew. 1984. “The Moral Standing of Natural Objects.” *Environmental Ethics* 6:35–56.
- Callicott, J. Baird. 1989. *In Defense of the Land Ethic: Essays in Environmental Philosophy*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Darre, Walther R. 1936. “Blut und Boden, ein Grundgedanke des Nationalsozialismus.” *Odal*. Berlin: Reichsdruckerei.
- Deutch, John, et al. 2009. *Update of the MIT 2003 Future of Nuclear Power*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Ehrlich, Paul. 1995. *The Population Bomb*. New York, NY: Buccaneer Books.
- Elliot, Robert. 1997. *Faking Nature: The Ethics of Environmental Restoration*. London: Routledge.
- Fichte, J. G. 1922. *Addresses to the German Nation*, translated by R. F. Jones and G. H. Turnbull. London: The Open Court Publishing Company.
- Greer, J. C. 2010. “Pentti Linkola: Can Life Prevail? A Radical Approach to the Environmental Crisis.” *Environmental Ethics* 32: 331–34.
- Kant, Immanuel. 1991. *The Metaphysics of Morals*, translated by Mary Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Katz, Eric. 1997. *Nature as Subject*. New York: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Kratz, Peter. 1994. *Faschismus und Romantik*. Berlin: Elefanten Verlag.
- Krügel, Rudolf. 1914. *Der Begriff des Volksgeistes in Ernst Moritz Arndts Geschichtsanschauung*. Langensalza: H. Beyer.
- Lehmann, Ernst. 1934. *Biologischer Wille. Wege und Ziele biologischer Arbeit im neuen Reich*. Munich: J. F. Lehmann.

- Leopold, Aldo. 1968. *A Sand County Almanac, and Sketches Here and There*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Linkola, Kaarlo Pentti. 1979. *Toisinajattelijan päiväkirjasta*. Porvoo: WSOY.
- Linkola, Kaarlo Pentti. 2009. *Can Life Prevail? A Radical Approach to the Environmental Crisis*, edited by Sergio Knipe, translated by Eetou Rautio. London: Integral Tradition Publishing.
- Linkola, Kaarlo Pentti. 2000. "Humanflood," in *Apocalypse Culture II*. Edited by Adam Parfrey, 436–51. Port Townsend: Feral House.
- Milbank, Dana. 1994. "In His Solitude, a Finnish Thinker Posits Cataclysms; What the World Needs Now, Pentti Linkola Believes, Is Famine and a Good War." *Wall Street Journal*, May 20.
- Mosse, G. L. 1964. *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich*. New York, NY: Grosset and Dunlap.
- Parekh, Bhikhu. 2001. *Gandhi: A Very Short Introduction*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Penttilinkola.com. 2006. "Pentti Linkola: Ideas." Accessed October 10, 2011. http://www.penttilinkola.com/pentti_linkola/ecofascism/
- Protopapadakis, Evangelos. 2006. *Ecoethics*. Athens: Sakkoulas.
- Protopapadakis, Evangelos. 2009a. *Environmental Ethics: Arne Naess's Deep Ecology*. Athens: Sakkoulas.
- Protopapadakis, Evangelos. 2009b. "From Anthropocentric to Ecocentric Ethics: Animal Rights," in *Humans, Animals, Nature: Proceedings of the 1st International Meeting for Environmental Ethics in Athens*, 51–75. Athens: Aeiforia.
- Protopapadakis, Evangelos. 2010. "Ecofascism: The Case of Kaarlo Pentti Linkola," in *Environment, Society, Ethics*, edited by Elena Papanikolaou, 74–97. Athens: Aeiforia.
- Riehl, Heinrich. 1857. *Feld und Wald*. Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta.
- Routley, Richard. 1973. "Is There a Need for a New, an Environmental, Ethic?" in *Proceedings of the 15th World Congress of Philosophy*. Volume 1, 205–10. Sofia: Sofia Press.
- Scott, Robert. 2010. *Miracle Cures: Saints, Pilgrimage, and the Healing Powers of Belief*. Berkeley-Los Angeles-London: University of California Press.
- Staudenmaier, Peter. 1995. "Fascist Ideology: The Green Wing of the Nazi Party and Its Historical Antecedents," in *Ecofascism: Lessons from the German Experience*, edited by Janet Biehl and Peter Staudenmaier, 5–31. Edinburgh: AK Press.
- Tammilehto, Olli. 1985. "Linkolan sokeat pisteet." *Suomi* 6–7: 8–11.
- Taylor, John. 1989. "Improved and Safer Nuclear Power." *Science* 244: 318–25.
- Veith, Gene Edward. 1994. *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture*. Wheaton: Crossway Books.