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Are We at War with Nature?

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ABSTRACT

A number of people, from William James to Dave Foreman and Vandana Shiva, have suggested that humans are at war with nature. Moreover, the analogy with warfare figures in at least one important argument for strategic monkeywrenching. In general, an analogy can be used for purposes of (1) justification; (2) persuasion; or (3) as a tool for generating novel hypotheses and recommendations. This paper argues that the analogy with warfare should not be used for justificatory or rhetorical purposes, but that it may nevertheless have a legitimate heuristic role to play in environmental philosophy.

KEYWORDS

Monkeywrenching, ecosabotage, war, analogy, metaphor

1. INTRODUCTION

In his 1910 essay, 'The Moral Equivalent of War', William James argues that instead of waging war against one another, we should conscript young people to serve in the ongoing war against nature:

If now – and this is my idea – there were, instead of military conscription a conscription of the whole youthful population to form for a certain number of years a part of the army enlisted against *Nature*, the injustice would tend to be evened out, and numerous other goods to the commonwealth would follow (1910/1977, p. 669).

The injustice to which James refers is *social* injustice. Why should working class people experience toil and pain while the young people of the leisure class take it easy?

To coal and iron mines, to freight trains, to fishing fleets in December, to dish-washing, clothes-washing, and window-washing, to road-building and tunnel-making, to foundries and stoke-holes, and to the frames of sky-scrappers, would our gilded youths be drafted off, according to their choice, to get the childishness knocked out of them, and to come back into society with healthier sympathies and soberer ideas. They would have paid their blood-tax, done their own part in the immemorial human warfare against nature; they would tread the earth more proudly, the women would value them more highly, they would be better fathers and teachers of the following generation (1910/1977, p. 669).

James argues that pacifists must propose ways of cultivating the traditional military virtues: courage, discipline, loyalty, fortitude, obedience, hardihood, and so on. He characterises them as ‘absolute and permanent human goods’ (1910/1977, p. 668). By conscripting the youth to wage a war against nature, we can continue to foster the martial virtues without the destructiveness of real war. Humans, he thinks, have been engaged in a war with nature for a very long time, but in a haphazard, undisciplined, and disorganised way. Like the general who is glad when the war ends on one front so that he can divert troops and equipment to another front, James seems to think that we could finally transform nature into an instrument of human flourishing if only we stopped fighting other nations and transferred all of our equipment and personnel to the environmental theatre.

Nowadays the people who argue that our relationship to the environment resembles open warfare – or in areas where the wilderness has been conquered, a state of armed occupation – are writers and activists who wish to recruit others to the cause of environmental defence. Occasionally resorting to the language of the just war tradition, they argue that non-human nature is the victim of unjust aggression by humans. Derrick Jensen and George Draffan, in a popular book on deforestation entitled *Strangely Like War*, write that forests are ‘under attack’ (2003, p. 4) and that the destruction of forests is an ‘atrocious’ (2003, p. 142). In her preface to that book, Vandana Shiva agrees that our forests are becoming ‘victims of war’ (Jensen and Draffan 2003, p. ix). If the forests are under attack, if they are innocent victims, it would seem to follow that someone ought to defend them. Thus Jensen and Draffan argue that ‘They will not leave the forests, and leave the forests alone, until either the forests are gone, or until those of us who love the land force them out of the forests’ (2003, p. 141). Who ‘they’ are is left somewhat vague. In his influential novel, *Ishmael*, Daniel Quinn’s title character tells us that

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I no longer think of what we're doing as a blunder. We're not destroying the world because we're clumsy. We're destroying the world because we are, in a very literal and deliberate way, at war with it (1992, p. 130).

Environmentalists such as Quinn and Shiva take the injustice of our war against non-human nature for granted.

The proposition that humans are at war with nature sometimes figures as a premise in the arguments used to justify monkeywrenching and ecosabotage. Dave Foreman, the founder of *Earth First!*, predicted in 1987 that 'in half a decade, the saw, 'dozer, and drill will devastate most of what is unprotected. The battle for wilderness will be over' (1987, p. 14). He describes monkeywrenchers as 'eco-defenders', 'Earth defenders', and 'warriors'. And he concludes with something resembling a call to arms:

John Muir said that if it ever came to a war between the races, he would side with the bears. That day has arrived (1987, p. 17).

Like James, Foreman claims to reject the use of violence. He conceives of ecosabotage as a form of nonviolent resistance on behalf of non-human nature. In his view, there is nothing violent about destroying the weapons – saws, 'dozers, and drills – that people are using in their war against the environment, so long as the saboteur takes care not to injure any people. There are serious problems here concerning the definitions of terms such as 'violence' and 'injury'. It is by no means obvious that we cannot injure people by destroying their property. Nor is it obvious that arson is non-violent.

On the one hand, we have William James arguing that what is needed in order to make pacifism an attractive and realistic alternative to war is to re-deploy the bulk of our military force in the immemorial war against nature. On the other hand, we have Dave Foreman and others arguing that the war that humans are waging against the environment is unjust, and that the earth must be defended. However, both Foreman and James share a commitment to non-violence, although they may disagree about what counts as violence. In both cases, the pacifism is laudable, but the idea that humans are at war with nature is a bad one.

In this paper, I begin (in section 2) by distinguishing three different roles that analogies, such as the war analogy, might play in environmental philosophy and environmental policy making: a rhetorical function, a justificatory function, and a heuristic function. I also show how the war analogy might figure in an argument for ecosabotage. I then proceed to show (in section 3) that relevant differences between war and our relationship to the environment, not to mention counteranalogies, severely weaken the positive argument for ecosabotage. In section 4, I argue that pacifists and activists ostensibly committed to the use of non-violent tactics, such as James and Foreman, respectively, have very good reasons *not* to invoke the war analogy for purposes of justification or persuasion. In the concluding section 5, I show how the war analogy might nevertheless have an interesting and fruitful, if limited role to play in environmental philosophy,

as a source of novel moral claims and insights. Although I recommend the war analogy for limited, heuristic purposes, I do not think that it should be used for purposes of justification, persuasion, or recruitment.

2. THE ROLE OF ANALOGY IN ENVIRONMENTAL PHILOSOPHY: SOME GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Let's begin with some further examples of the ways in which analogy and metaphor shape our thinking about the environment.

- (1) Species resemble rivets in an airplane. If you remove just one rivet, nothing will happen. However, if you remove enough rivets, the plane will malfunction. If we want to avoid a plane crash – or ecosystemic collapse – we had better stop popping rivets (Ehrlich and Ehrlich 1981, pp. xi-xiv).
- (2) Ecosystems, like organisms, can fall ill and even die. The science of ecology is a normative science, like medicine. Just as medicine has the goal of promoting the health of individual people, ecology has the goal of promoting the health of ecosystems. The ecologist's relation to the natural world resembles the doctor-patient relation (See, e.g. Norton 1988; as well as Leopold 1949).
- (3) Rare plants and animals are artistic masterpieces. Our duty to protect endangered species derives from our more general duty to protect great works of art (Russow 1981; Slobodkin 2003, p. 139).
- (4) Causing the extinction of a species is like killing a person. Both mean destroying something that is unique and irreplaceable. Extinction by natural causes resembles death by natural causes; anthropogenic extinction is analogous to murder (Rolston 1989).
- (5) Causing the extinction of a species that scientists have not yet had a chance to study is like ripping out a page from the book of nature before anyone has had a chance to read it (Slobodkin 2003, pp. 139–40).
- (6) Human beings are like parasites, and we are gradually killing our host – the earth.
- (7) The goal of restoration ecology is to restore our relationship to the environment. That relationship has positive value of its own, much like a relationship between people – e.g. between siblings. Ecological restoration is like trying to re-establish contact with a sibling or an old friend with whom you have fallen out of touch (Light 2000).
- (8) Our relationship to the environment is an oppressive one, rather like the relationship between men and women in a patriarchal society (Warren 1990).

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- (9) The human population on earth is like a bomb. Population growth during the last century has been explosive (Ehrlich 1968).

This list is by no means intended to be exhaustive. In some cases, the metaphors (e.g. population explosion) are so familiar that we may not even notice them. In other cases, such as (3) and (4), the analogies figure in important ethical arguments. In at least one case, (8), the analogy is central to an important philosophical movement, ecofeminism.

These examples of analogical thinking about the environment fall neatly into three groups. (1), (3), (5), and (9) all involve some sort of comparison between non-human nature and human artifacts – bombs, books, rivets, airplanes, and artworks. We can call these *artifactual analogies*. (2), (4), (7), and (8), on the other hand, involve comparisons of the human-environment relationship to various human-human relationships – between doctors and patients, killers and victims, friends, and between oppressors and oppressed. The proposition that our relationship to the environment is one of warfare, conquest, and armed occupation also falls in this group of *social analogies*. Finally, both (2) and (6) are *biological analogies*. In (2), ecosystems are compared to organisms, while in (6) the human-environment relationship is compared to the parasite-host relationship. It is ironic, to say the least, that we should find it so natural to use social and artifactual analogies to help us to think about our relationship to nature.

We could, in principle, call upon these analogies to serve any of three distinct functions: a rhetorical function, a justificatory function, and a heuristic function. I will briefly discuss each of these in turn, before proceeding to inquire which of these roles, if any, analogy *ought* to play in environmental philosophy. For purposes of this paper, I will not distinguish between analogy and metaphor; that distinction will not matter much, since both analogies and metaphors can serve these three functions.

First, we might want to use these analogies for purposes of persuasion. For example, if we wanted to persuade legislators to enact stricter laws protecting endangered species, or to provide funding for ecological restoration projects, we might do well to compare species to artistic treasures, or to compare attempts to restore our relationship to nature to attempts to re-establish ties with long lost friends. The analogies have persuasive power in part because they are so vivid. Of course, we could avoid the colourful language and just say that species are valuable, and that ecological restoration is important, but environmentalists are less likely to persuade people if they use such drab language. When Derrick Jensen and George Draffan decided to give their book about deforestation the title, *Strangely Like War*, their intent can only have been rhetorical.

Second, we might want to form analogical arguments in the strict philosophical sense, rather like the traditional argument from design. Here is an example of an analogical argument for strategic monkeywrenching:

- P1. Human beings' relationship to the environment is like an armed occupation. And in the few places where untainted wilderness remains, that relationship is like war.
- P2. In this conflict, humans are the aggressors, while the environment is the innocent victim. (I.e, humans are to the environment as Iraq was to Kuwait in 1990.)
- P3. In war, it is morally permissible for a third party to offer military assistance to an innocent victim of aggression.
- C. Therefore, it is morally permissible for monkeywrenchers and eco-saboteurs to take measures to protect the environment, including the destruction of property.

Young (2001) suggests that the best argument for monkeywrenching is a utilitarian one. However, proponents of monkeywrenching themselves seem to prefer the appeal to the analogy with war.

Edward Abbey gives a slightly different argument in his 'Foreword!' to Dave Foreman's manual for monkeywrenchers:

If a stranger batters your door down with an axe, threatens your family and yourself with deadly weapons, and proceeds to loot your home of whatever he wants, he is committing what is universally recognized – by law and morality – as a crime. In such a situation the householder has both the right and the obligation to defend himself, his family, and his property by whatever means are necessary. This right and this obligation is universally recognized, justified, and even praised by all civilized human communities. Self-defense against attack is one of the basic laws not only of human society but of life itself, not only of human life but of all life.

The American wilderness, what little remains, is now undergoing exactly such an assault (1987, p. 7).

Here Abbey draws an analogy not with war but with home invasion. Rather than saying that humans are at war with nature, he suggests that humans are breaking, entering, threatening, and looting. The crucial premise of Abbey's argument is very similar to P3 above: Not only do people have a right to defend their homes, loved ones, and property against attack, but third parties may also intervene to protect the innocent victims. Is Abbey's argument any more or less promising than the argument based on the analogy with war? In section 4, I discuss some specific problems with the war analogy that do not apply to Abbey's analogy with home invasion. For that reason, Abbey's argument seems more promising. On the other hand, in section 3 I raise some general problems with the evaluation of analogical arguments that apply with equal force to the war analogy and the home invasion analogy. The trouble is that there are some relevant differences between our relationship to the natural environment and home invasion. For example, one cannot, strictly speaking, invade a home that one has lived in all

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along. Moreover, one important reason why it is wrong for someone to enter my home and loot it is that doing so violates my property rights. It is not clear, however, that humans are violating anyone else's property rights when they 'loot' the non-human environment. Anyone wishing to defend Abbey's argument would need to explain why these disanalogies are less important than the similarities between home invasion and our relationship to the environment. In the remainder of the paper, I will focus mainly on the war analogy, with the understanding that the home invasion analogy, though perhaps a bit more promising, raises many of the same difficulties.

If the above argument by analogy with war were any good, it might enable monkeywrenchers to answer some of the standard objections to what they do. 'It is simply wrong to destroy other people's property'. But there is a war going on, and everyone concedes that it is permissible to attack and destroy the aggressor's weapons and munitions, so as to make it more difficult for the other side to prosecute the war. 'It is wrong to break the law'. But the laws themselves are implements of war that facilitate destruction and conquest of the environment. I will discuss some of the problems with this kind of argument in a moment; for now, the point is just that in addition to serving a rhetorical function, analogies can also be used with the aim of justifying moral claims and policy recommendations.

Third and finally, philosophers of science have traditionally distinguished between the context of discovery and the context of justification. Historians and some philosophers of science have questioned the usefulness of this distinction. In practice – that is, when we look at a particular bit of reasoning, or at a particular episode in the history of science – it can be extraordinarily difficult, if not impossible, to discern whether that reasoning belongs to the context of discovery or justification. Yet in principle, the distinction makes sense: when we draw a conclusion from a set of premises, we may be trying to justify that conclusion, or we may be discovering that conclusion – i.e. formulating it for the first time, without worrying yet whether there are any good reasons for believing it. Now there might well be certain moral judgments and policy recommendations that *would never have occurred to anyone* but for their consideration of one of the analogies listed above. For example, the monkeywrenchers' proposition that we are entitled to take certain measures (including destroying property) in order to defend the environment against humans might never have occurred to anyone but for their consideration of the analogy with war, or perhaps the analogy with home invasion. In other words, in one context P1, P2, and P3 might be offered as reasons for believing C; in another context, we might discover C by inferring it from P1, P2, and P3. Insofar as we use an analogy as a source of novel insights, hypotheses, and recommendations, the analogy serves a heuristic function.

To sum up: Any of the analogies considered thus far may serve one or more of three distinct functions: (1) persuasion; (2) justification; and (3) discovery. Which, if any, of these functions *should* analogies play in environmental phi-

losophy? Here we may be able to make some progress by looking at the history of science.

One of the most striking things about the history of science is the prevalence of analogical thinking. One of the earliest theories of vision, for example (one that we may owe to Empedocles) depended upon a comparison of sight to touch. According to this theory, the eye sends out visual rays which ‘touch’ the objects in the visual field and communicate information about them back to the eye (Park 1997, p. 35). Scientists frequently use analogies in either of two situations: (a) something poorly understood, such as eyesight, is compared to something that is better understood, such as touch; and (b) something unobservable is compared to something observable. As an example of (b), consider the analogy between the origin of the universe and an explosion. Perhaps nothing like the big bang theory could have occurred to anyone if gunpowder had never been invented. Or to take an example from the life sciences, the cranial crests of some dinosaurs puzzled scientists for many years, but today the consensus view is that the hollow crests were adaptations for making hooting and honking noises. This hypothesis was first arrived at by a German scientist who noticed similarities between the structure of one specimen’s skull and a medieval musical instrument called a krumhorne (Turner 2000). It would be easy to multiply the examples.

In science, there may well be no consensus view about the proper role of analogy. Indeed, scientists may well use different analogies for different purposes. A good example of this is Darwin: There is good reason to think that Darwin discovered the principle of natural selection by drawing an analogy between the economic realm (as described by Malthus) and the biological realm. Most commentators agree that Darwin uses the analogy between artificial and natural selection as part of the justification for his conclusion that existing species have descended, with modification, from common ancestors. No doubt Darwin also uses this analogy for rhetorical purposes. The problem of figuring out just when a particular scientist is using a particular analogy for a particular purpose poses difficult challenges to historians.

Nevertheless, there are good methodological reasons why scientists should adhere to the following maxims:

- M1. Use analogies liberally in order to help formulate novel hypotheses about either (a) especially complex and challenging phenomena, or (b) things that we cannot observe.
- M2. Rather than trying to justify one’s theory or hypothesis by making an argument by analogy, it is always better to try to derive predictions from the hypothesis or theory and test those predictions against the observational and/or experimental evidence.
- M3. Do not use analogies to persuade others in the scientific community to accept a theory or hypothesis. Ideally, we should want others to accept the

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hypothesis in question on the basis of the experimental and/or observational evidence.

I take it that these maxims are fairly uncontroversial. One way to justify M1 would be to point to all of the historical successes – all the theories that were inspired by analogies and later survived rigorous observational and experimental testing. M2 just reflects scientists' basic commitment to empiricism, and to the idea that observation and experiment are (or should be) the final arbiter of theory choice. Finally, M3 reflects scientists' commitment to rationality, and to the idea that the scientific community ought to be swayed by evidence rather than by rhetoric. More could be said in defence of all three of these maxims, but since I assume that most readers will find them to be plausible, I will not take time to defend them here. What I want to do, rather, is to use this analogy with science to help generate a novel claim about environmental philosophy: Perhaps environmental philosophers, and environmentalists more broadly, should treat analogies in roughly the same way that scientists do: We might think that analogies do have an appropriate role to play in environmental philosophy, but that this role has to do with the context of discovery rather than the context of justification. The suggestion, in other words, is that in environmental philosophy, analogies should perform the function of discovery, but *not* the functions of persuasion and justification. This proposal applies to the analogy with war: there may be nothing wrong with using the analogy to generate novel moral claims and/or policy recommendations that we then submit for further consideration. But as in science, it may be a bad idea to use that analogy either to justify or to persuade.

3. WHY THE WAR ANALOGY FAILS TO JUSTIFY ECOSABOTAGE

Consider once again the earlier argument in favour of strategic monkeywrenching. Whether that argument is any good depends upon the first premise:

P1. Human beings' relationship to the environment is like an armed occupation.
And in the few places where untainted wilderness remains, that relationship is like war.

In order to evaluate this or any other argument by analogy, we need to ask: How similar are the primary subject (in this case, our relationship to the environment) and the analogue (war, conquest, and/or armed occupation)? Assuming that we can arrive at a substantive agreement about what the similarities and differences between the primary subject and the analogue *are*, then we must pose the further question whether the agreed-upon similarities are the ones that matter. With this in mind, let's look more carefully at the warfare analogy, beginning with the similarities and then moving on to consider the differences.

Our relationship to the environment does resemble a state of war in a number of interesting ways: (1) Our relationship to the environment is a destructive one, and the level of destructiveness has risen with the development of new technologies – including everything from chemical pesticides to automobiles. Indeed, some of the technologies that have had a destructive impact on the environment, from rifles to nuclear weapons, are themselves military technologies. (2) Just as we distinguish between combatants and noncombatants in war, so we also distinguish wilderness areas that may be developed and certain protected areas that we deem ‘off limits’. In the United States, for example, National Parks, National Wildlife Refuges, and other protected areas enjoy a status resembling non-combatant immunity. (3) Human civilisation began in a number of geographically restricted areas, such as the Nile and Indus valleys, China, the Eastern Mediterranean, and Mesoamerica, and it has been gradually expanding ever since. This encroachment of human civilisation against wilderness areas resembles a war of imperial conquest and territorial expansion. (4) Finally, some of the features of human agriculture – especially the large-scale industrial agriculture that emerged in the second half of the twentieth century – resemble warfare. Humans make it a policy to exterminate their competitors, including everything from wolves and other animals that prey upon our livestock, to weeds that compete with our crops for sunlight and nutrients. Similarly, many wars are conducted with the aim of eliminating competition for land, natural resources, and so forth (for a more detailed discussion of the similarities and differences between agriculture and war, see Surgey 1989). In short, just about anyone can agree that our relationship to non-human nature bears *some* degree of resemblance to war. This is hardly surprising, since any two items taken at random will be found to resemble each other in some respects. The question is whether these similarities are important enough to support any interesting conclusions.

Our relationship to the environment also differs from war in some important and obvious ways: (1) The relation of being at war is, fundamentally, a relation that holds between human social groups. Thus, we might say that two countries are at war, or that a government is embroiled in a war with a guerilla organisation. The point is that war is a social phenomenon. But our relationship to the environment is not a social relationship, for the obvious reason that the environment is not a person or a social group. (2) War is symmetrical. If *X* is at war with *Y*, then *Y* is at war with *X*. (i.e. it is impossible for the United States to be at war with Iraq, unless Iraq is also at war with the U.S.) Yet many of those who seem to think that humans are at war with the environment do *not* think that the environment is at war with us. Environments, planets, species, and ecosystems are not the sorts of things that can wage war. (3) In war, people typically do not cross over into enemy territory for recreational purposes. Yet large numbers of people visit wilderness areas in order to relax, enjoy themselves, and engage in recreational activities. (4) Typically, we would want to say that if *X* is at war with *Y*, then *X*

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could exist even if *Y* did not. With reference to the recent U.S. invasion of Iraq, we would want to say that the United States could exist even if Iraq did not. But no such claim is true of our relationship to the environment. Humans could not exist at all unless the environment existed. Proponents of the war analogy would surely acknowledge the existence of these and other differences. The question, once again, is: How important are they? Are these differences important enough to undermine the argument for strategic monkeywrenching?

Suppose, for the sake of argument, that we arrive at a substantive agreement concerning the similarities and differences between our relationship to the environment and war. A disagreement of emphasis persists. Proponents of strategic monkeywrenching argue that the similarities outweigh the differences, while the critics insist that the differences are such as to render P1 implausible. It seems that we are at an impasse. However, in order to justify strategic monkeywrenching, the proponent of ecosabotage must break this impasse. If the earlier argument for monkeywrenching is to be any good at all, it must be possible to explain why the similarities are more important than the differences. The explanation must not be circular. It would not help to argue that the similarities between war and our relationship to the environment matter more than the differences because those similarities have interesting ethical consequences. To do so would be to beg the question against anyone who doubts that the similarities have any interesting ethical consequences because the differences matter more.

How then, might one go about trying to show that the similarities between the primary subject (our relationship to the environment) and the analogue (war between human groups) matter more than the differences? One strategy might be to argue that war has an essence. Suppose we could discover the essential features of war, so that we could say, 'Having features *F1*, *F2*, ..., *F_n* is both necessary and sufficient for something's counting as war'. For the moment, we need not worry about what those features might be, or about the metaphysical problem of what accounts for the distinction between essential and merely accidental features. The point is that if we knew the essence of war, then we would be in a position to say whether the similarities or differences between the primary subject and the analogue matter more, because the essential features of war would be the ones that matter. If our relationship to the environment had these essential features, then we could reasonably conclude that we *are* at war with nature, and that the differences – in this case, the differences between our relationship to the environment and wars, such as the U.S. invasion of Iraq – are merely accidental.

This essentialist manoeuvre is one way to argue, in a non-circular fashion, that the similarities outweigh the differences. Yet even if we could agree that war has an essence at all, it is hard to see how we could ever resolve disagreements about which features are the essential ones. Some disputants will argue that we are *not* at war with nature, because *F* is essential to war, and our relationship to the environment lacks this feature. Others who think that we *are* at war with

nature will grant that our relationship to the environment lacks feature *F* while denying that feature *F* is essential to war. But notice what has happened: The debate about whether the similarities or the differences are most important will show up all over again, though in slightly different terms, as a debate about whether certain features are essential to war. The essentialist move transmutes the initial disagreement without actually settling anything. While there may be other ways of explaining why the similarities between the primary subject and the analogue are more important than the differences, this essentialist move is not too promising.

Of course, there might be other ways of justifying monkeywrenching that make no appeal to the war analogy. For instance, Young (2001) shows how a number of objections to monkeywrenching can be answered from a utilitarian perspective. All I want to claim here is that the war analogy does not add anything to the justification of monkeywrenching.

4. WHY THOSE WHO OPPOSE WAR AND/OR VIOLENCE SHOULD NOT USE THE WAR ANALOGY FOR RHETORICAL OR JUSTIFICATORY PURPOSES

It is awfully tempting to use the war analogy in order to recruit people to the cause. Groups such as *Earth First!* and the Earth Liberation Front rely heavily on this analogy. For example, in one Primer on *Earth First!* that can be found online,¹ we learn that ‘over the last several hundred years, human civilization has declared war on large mammals ...’ and that humans are conducting a ‘blitzkrieg against the natural world ...’ Although more mainstream environmental organisations tend to use less inflammatory rhetoric, they do frequently invite people to become ‘defenders’ of wilderness, the environment, or endangered species. Yet the analogy with warfare poses some dangers that other analogies (e.g. that between ecology and medicine) do not. There are three dangers in particular that we should worry about. It is on account of these three dangers that we should avoid using the war analogy for rhetorical or justificatory purposes. A pacifist like James, and a person who, like Foreman, claims to be committed to nonviolence, ought to appreciate these dangers most of all.

First, each one of us is involved in a host of relationships – with other people, with institutions, with our local environments, and so on. If we wanted to, we could think of many of those relationships in terms of warfare. To give an example: If I wanted to, I could proceed on the assumption that the college where I teach is at war with its peer institutions. Or I could proceed on the assumption that my department is at war with other departments on campus. Or I could conceive of a philosophical dispute with colleagues as a kind of war. In many of these cases, it would probably be easy to find *some* small similarity between the relationship in question and warfare, just as one can do in the case

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of the relationship between humans and the environment. However, there are two very good reasons to resist the temptation to think of any of these relationships in terms of war. To begin with, we must try to avoid getting used to thinking of ourselves as being at war. Someone who is too ready to think of himself as being involved in a war (whether a war on drugs, a war with other departments on campus, or whatever) is someone who is *warlike*. One need not be a pacifist at all in order to recognise that being warlike is a vice. The reason why being warlike is properly thought of as a vice is that the warlike person is someone who will not be reluctant enough to support a war. Even if a war is rationally and legally justifiable, people's support for it should be reluctant, simply because it is a war. The warlike person, however, will have a more difficult time thinking of war as a last resort. Those who have gotten in the habit of using the analogy with warfare to think about the various relationships in which they are involved are liable to find it more difficult to think about real wars in a critical and detached way.

A second reason why we should avoid using the analogy with war to think about any of the relationships in which we are involved is that doing so will have the effect of making those relationships more like war. If the analytic philosophers within a department were to begin thinking of themselves as being at war with their colleagues who do continental philosophy, or vice versa, then relations between the two groups would become more and more acrimonious and less collegial over time. When an analogy plays the justificatory and rhetorical roles, it inevitably influences behaviour; people who think of themselves as being at war will tend to behave at times as if they were at war. In other words, they will become more warlike, and their relationships will become more like war.

The third major problem with the war analogy, as it figures in some contemporary environmental thought, is that it promotes what Lisa Gerber calls the vice of *misanthropy*. Any environmentalist who supposes that humans are at war with nature will naturally be tempted to think of humans as the enemy. One's enemy is the proper object of hatred if anyone is, and Gerber defines *misanthropy* as a 'mistrust, hatred, and disgust of humankind' (2002, p. 41). One minor shortcoming of Gerber's illuminating discussion of *misanthropy* in the environmental movement is that she does not notice the conceptual connection between *misanthropy* and the war analogy. She draws a useful distinction between self-righteous *misanthropy* and self-hating *misanthropy*. Foreman, surely, is a good example of the self-righteous *misanthrope*. Humans are involved in an unjust war against nature, but it is possible to become righteous by resisting on behalf of non-human nature. Gerber argues that *misanthropy* is a vice, first because it tends to produce hopelessness and despair, and second because the *misanthrope* sees humans 'as a despicable mass' rather than as 'individuals capable of moral and social change' (2002, p. 42). The goal toward which environmentalists should direct all their efforts is something like this: We want humans to flourish, and to live good lives, but not at the expense of future generations or other forms

of life on earth. How can we make any progress toward achieving this goal if we proceed on the assumption that humans are the enemy?

5. CONCLUSION: MAKING PEACE WITH NON-HUMAN NATURE

I have argued that it is a bad idea to think of ourselves as being at war with nature, but I want to suggest in closing that the war analogy may not be all that bad, because it may have a useful heuristic role to play. It is fashionable and fruitful to compare ecology to medicine. Perhaps we could also learn something by comparing restoration ecology to peace and conflict resolution. We might think of restoration ecology as part of a broader attempt to establish peace between humans and the environment. Environmental legislation and policy decisions could also be thought of as part of this larger 'peace process'. The thought that we are presently at war with non-human nature could well lead us to think about what it might mean to make peace with the natural world.

Notice that making peace with nature would not mean leaving it alone to develop on its own, untouched by humans. When two countries make peace with one another in the international arena, this usually means that they continue to interact with one another, but in a different way. If anything, they seek to strengthen the cultural, political, and economic ties that bind them together, so that over time, each becomes more dependent on the other. Here, then, is just one example of an ethical claim that owes its inspiration to the war analogy: making peace with the environment does not mean leaving the environment alone, as preservationists recommend, but rather cultivating and strengthening all of the various ties between ourselves and the environment (analogous to the cultural, political, and economic ties between countries). I will leave it to others to pursue these leads. The point is simply that there is nothing wrong with using the war analogy as a tool for generating novel moral claims. If we think of ecological science and environmental policymaking as part of a larger project of bringing about peace between humans and nature, we avoid the pitfalls discussed in section 4: There is no danger here of promoting vices such as warlikeness and misanthropy. Furthermore, there is far less danger of arousing people's passions in ways that do not contribute to the goals of the environmental movement. Moreover, if we do not try to use the analogy for justificatory purposes, then the significant differences between war and our relationship to the environment will not be a problem. Those obvious differences should not prevent us from using the analogy as a source of novel ethical insights and policy recommendations.

ARE WE AT WAR WITH NATURE?

NOTES

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¹ Available online at www.earthfirstjournal.org/efj/primer/.

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