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The Bipolarity of Modern 'Man' in the Anthropocene: Ecomodernist Mania as Case for Unmanning Anthropocene Discourse

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Article abstract

This paper examines Shellenberger and Nordhaus' "Evolve: The Case for Modernization as the Road to Salvation" from the perspective of psychopathology. "Evolve" articulates an all too common denial about the severe implications of the Anthropocene. This denial, I suggest, derives from modern humanity's wish to save itself from the threats of ecocide and apocalypse without having to change its modernist ways. Upon considering this understandable inclination towards denial, the paper unveils the resultant manic-depressive opposition between ecomodernism and deep ecology. Modern humanity's respective manic and depressive reactions to these two poles fosters a manic, escapist denial that promotes modernist expansion and limits our capacity to reform Anthropocene discourse and avoid environmental crisis. The analogy between bipolar disorder and the ecomodernism / deep ecology opposition draws from Darian Leader's Lacanian psychoanalytic account, as well as his phenomenological-psychiatric influences.

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The Bipolarity of Modern 'Man' in the Anthropocene: Ecomodernist Mania as Case for Unmanning Anthropocene Discourse

Philip Douglas Kupferschmidt

§1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 DENIAL IN THE ANTHROPOCENE

Efforts to avoid environmental crisis are continually hindered by the common human capacity for denial. Oftentimes, this denial takes the form of optimistic modernists reacting against the catastrophic claims and predictions of apocalyptic rhetoric. In light of the Anthropocene, however, we see that the broader issue of ecocide is not limited to the possibility of a predictable crisis event, nor even to a point of no return. In ecocide, something concrete really is coming to an end, in that much biodiversity already has. However, because apocalyptic rhetoric always coincides with predictions, people in denial of the severity of the ecocide often justify their denial by invoking the inaccuracy of environmentalists' sometimes pessimistic predictions.[1] Meanwhile, the seemingly more optimistic ecomodernist writers can base their ideas upon equally misinformed predictions.[2] Both sides' difficulties with evidence only exacerbate another problem, however. In addition to finding new ways of portraying the apocalypse, we should also investigate into why so many writers seem unable to offer productive perspectives; ones that are neither too optimistic, nor too pessimistic. Therefore, in addition to critiquing papers' arguments and use of evidence, we must also investigate the political, economic, social and even psychological dynamics behind the denial. In this paper, I approach the problem of denial using relevant notions from psychopathology. Anthropocene discourse proves to be bipolar in its structure, and not simply in the sense of opposing mood states or exaggerations of optimism and pessimism. The current opposition between ecomodernism and deep ecology manifests as a manic-depressive response to the contradictions and revelations of the Anthropocene. When we treat these responses as manic

[1] Frederick Buell, "A Short History of Environmental Apocalypse," in *Future Ethics: Climate Change and Apocalyptic Imagination*, ed. Stefan Skrimshire (London: Continuum, 2010), 13–36.

[2] Peter Kareiva, Robert Lalasz, and Michelle Marvier, "Conservation in the Anthropocene: Beyond Solitude and Fragility," in *Love Your Monsters: Postenvironmentalism and the Anthropocene*, ed. Michael Shellenberger and Ted Nordhaus (Breakthrough Institute, 2011), 26–35; Bruno Latour, "Love Your Monsters: Why We Must Care for Our Technologies as We Do Our Children," in *Love Your Monsters*, 17–25; Michael Shellenberger and Ted Nordhaus, "Evolve: The Case for Modernization as the Road to Salvation," in *Love Your Monsters*, 8–16.

and depressive poles of a bipolar psychopathological structure, we see that the destructive human capacity for denial can only be remedied by avoiding the polar structure altogether. The necessary therapy of this particular pathology, I contend, is to end our identification with the modern Anthropos altogether and thus remove ourselves from this pathology.

1.2 Plan of Development

This paper develops as follows. First, I introduce the manner in which the Anthropocene triggers denial about ecocide and explore the manifestation of this denial in ecomodernist rhetoric (§2). To do so, I focus upon Shellenberger and Nordhaus' "Evolve: The Case for Modernization as the Road to Salvation." I identify this text's denial as a pathology and therefore treat the text in terms of its structure of reasoning rather than the legitimacy of its claims. Having identified the serious threat that such literature poses to environmental discourse and thus also to the maintenance and preservation of the environment, I then turn to bipolar disorder, summarizing Darian Leader's account of the manic-depressive structure (§3). I then demonstrate the strong parallel between clinical and ecomodernist manias, showing that Shellenberger and Nordhaus' denial follows a logic of manic self-affirmation (§4). [3] This parallel then clarifies the pathological relationship between ecomodernism and deep ecology, demonstrating the need for new approaches to Anthropocene discourse (§5).

1.3 Unmanning the Delusion

While the manic and depressive poles of bipolar disorder are both important to a rigorous account of the clinical expression, this paper focuses more upon the manic pole. As is common also in the clinic, the mania of ecomodernism is in a sense responsible for the depression. As I will show, the apparently depressive character of deep ecology is only a function of the modernity-conditioned response to its claims. The problem is therefore not simply ecomodernist reasoning, but our embeddedness in the modern project, as self-identifying modern people. This point serves as grounds to suggest that reforming Anthropocene discourse depends upon an *unmanning*. This *unmanning* refers in no way to a political stance on the role of males or females in the history of modernity, and neither does it comment on gender in general. Rather, to include the root 'man' in *unmanning* denotes a most basic commonality between ecomodernist and manic thought. The self-identifications at stake in these pathological orientations are in both cases highly personal, regardless of the apparent roles of ideology and delusion. My proposed *unmanning* therefore means to address the very personal sense of mission that coincides with our rigid self-identification with the modernist Anthropos.

[3] This criticism is solely academic and thus concerns the thinking implied in the text, rather than the personal attitudes of the writers taken as a case study. The author has no intention to pathologize or denigrate the writers themselves.

In this way, unmanning serves as a therapeutic response to some very human implications of the modern project.

§2 Shellenberger and Nordhaus' Anthropocene-Embrace as Denial

2.1 Anthropocene as Existential Conflict

The Anthropocene confronts us with a conflict of existential and anthropological proportions; a contradiction in which we as humans find ourselves personally embedded. The revelation of the Anthropocene can be interpreted either as a failure of the modern project, or as a sign of its potency. We have produced a new geological era. Instead of being a mere species like all of the rest, *Homo sapiens sapiens* has elevated itself to the level of geological force. We now live in a geological era named after humans. Our quest for dominion over the earth and emancipation from nature has made of us not only a measurable geological force, but perhaps the chief operative force. Our influence over the Earth is of an undeniably large scale, but is this influence to be celebrated or regretted? The modern project of self affirmation, emancipation and creativity has led us to substantial environmental destruction. Humanity faces a grave contradiction upon recognizing the Anthropocene's grave impact. We cannot laud ourselves as at once creators and destroyers, can we? People have a tendency therefore to respond to the Anthropocene in one of two ways. They can either affirm it or mourn it, and in doing so they either praise or castigate themselves. As people conditioned by the modern project and taught to identify as modern Anthropos, we cannot always claim a safe, theoretical distance. The conflicts and arguments found in Anthropocene discourse therefore resemble on some level the inner dialogue of a conflicted individual: "Did I really do that?" "Was it really that bad?" "But I am still a good person, right?" The most tempting response to this conflict of conscience is one of denial.[4]

2.2 Shellenberger and Nordhaus' Ecomodernist Denial

2.2.1 The Logic of Denial

When Shellenberger and Nordhaus argue for an ecomodernist Anthropocene-embrace, their work follows a distinctive logic of denial. In the context of this debate, denial is not limited to direct refusals or deflections of responsibility. The paper follows a pattern of vilifying its opponents and oversimplifying the issues at stake. These tactics allow Shellenberger and Nordhaus to distract from the ambition of their own claims by reframing the key issues in terms

[4] Kingsnorth and Hine describe this denial aptly: "the inability of people to hear things which did not fit with the way they saw themselves and the world. We put ourselves through all kinds of inner contortions, rather than look plainly at those things which challenge our fundamental understanding of the world."

Paul Kingsnorth and Dougald Hine, "The Manifesto | The Dark Mountain Project," accessed August 11, 2015, http://dark-mountain.net/about/manifesto/.

of misleading notions and sensational rhetoric. The logic of their ecomodernist denial is easily explicated by a summary of their bold attempt to shift the blame away from modernism and onto traditional environmentalism (2.2.2-2.2.4), their oversimplification of humankind's creative heritage (2.2.5) and their portrayal of the relationship between technology and evolution (2.2.6). This summary allows us to reflect upon the bigger problem that this logic of denial poses for environmental discourse (2.3).

2.2.2. SHIFTING BLAME

Shellenberger and Nordhaus' paper "Evolve" attempts, and fails, to execute a rather bold reversal of the traditional environmentalist narrative against modernism: that the modern mission of self-creation and emancipation from nature serves to steadily destroy an ecosphere that should instead be treated as somehow sacred. Their closing words: "the term 'ecological hubris' should not be used to describe the human desire to remake the world, but rather the faith that we can end the cycle of creation and destruction."[5] The writers argue that traditional environmentalism has been developed by hypocrites and that their message is naïve at best. [6] These hypocrites, they argue, would preach against the modernization of underdeveloped nations while enjoying the comforts already established in their own countries by centuries of hard-won modernist industrial growth.[7] These traditional environmentalists supposedly bring their doom-saying to the discourse not out of an authentic desire for environmental progress, but because rapid technological advancement has left them feeling personally alienated. Oversaturated with media, they long for and therefore praise the ideal of a sacred, welcoming nature; a personal nature against whom we have transgressed and to whom we can and should return. The paper's sweeping criticism of the admittedly widespread hypocrisy is not very insightful, and should not warrant much reflection. Unfortunately, their accusations of hypocrisy are crucial to their argument and therefore demand some critique.

2.2.3 WELL-MEANING HYPOCRISY AS DENIAL, ACCUSATION AS DISTRACTION

Philosophically speaking, the manner in which the authors of "Evolve" refer to some environmentalists' hypocrisy is highly problematic, and actually hurts Shellenberger and Nordaus' argument. What they treat as hypocrisy among anti-modernist environmentalists is really just another manifestation of an underlying modernist denial. Some people seem to believe that by buying green products while overconsuming capitalist comforts, they have somehow done their duty for the environment. These people want to criticize capitalism while still enjoying its perks. However, though their behaviour expresses outwardly as a sort of

[5] Shellenberger and Nordhaus, "Evolve," 16.

[6] Ibid., 10–13.

[7] Ibid.

hypocrisy, we need not question these people's intentions or criticize their values. If anything, the underlying pathology for these people is not an exaggerated sense of alienation from nature, so much as an underlying modernist denial. Any such well-meaning hypocrite actually *wants* to believe that his/her efforts suffice, that he/she is indeed serving the cause. In this way, they cannot just enjoy capitalism's comforts, but can do so with a clear conscience. This is less a crude hypocrisy, and more so a denial about the real demands of living out their ideals. Nonetheless, regardless of these individuals' actions or intentions, we should not distract ourselves from the persuasive weakness of the ecomodernist's accusations. Pointing out environmentalists' personal failures is just blame-shifting, another example of the denial that is so clearly evident in Shellenberger and Nordhaus' rhetoric. No legitimate philosophical defense of capitalist growth benefits from demonizing individuals for perpetuating said consumerist growth. Their point therefore has little substance and only serves the ecomodernist agenda by shifting blame, keeping readers from noticing the problems inherent to modernism itself. Shellenberger and Nordaus' accusations are therefore rather unpersuasive, as modernism's problems reach far beyond the actions of particular adherents.

2.2.4 VISIBILITY OF COUNTERCULTURE

Some environmentalists really do live up to their anti-capitalist ideals, and the manner in which thinkers like Shellenberger and Nordhaus avoid discussing these more radical environmentalists points to further problems in their ecomodernist rhetoric of denial. Despite what Shellenberger and Nordhaus would have us believe, we do not yet live in a "post-environmental world," as environmentalism is not *dead*. [8] Some of the people who see the economic and environmental risks of modernist, global capitalism are actively engaged in finding solutions.[9] However, given that these people's initiatives oppose modernist, global capitalism, said initiatives remain countercultural, growing only slowly and upon society's fringes. As such they go conveniently unmentioned in this argumentation for the same reasons that they often go unnoticed in the market: they are not backed by the political power or venture capitalism necessary to make a significant difference in this over-modernized economy. Interestingly, the problem of counter-cultural progress going unnoticed is central to the weakness of ecomodernist thought in

[8] Michael Shellenberger and Ted Nordhaus, "The Death of Environmentalism: Global Warming Politics in a Post-Environmental World," *The Breakthrough Institute*, accessed March 13, 2017, https://www.thebreakthrough.org/images/Death_of_Environmentalism.pdf; Ted Nordaus and Michael Shellenberger, *Break Through: From the Death of Environmentalism to the Politics of Possibility* (Houghton Miflin, 2007).

[9] The New Work, New Culture movement is a particularly compelling example, in that it strives to re-envision productivity not simply on the levels of economy and technology, but even in terms of each person's work, or personal productivity.

"New Work, New Culture," *Context Institute*, September 16, 2011, http://www.context.org/iclib/ic37/bergmann/.

general. These initiatives, working on a small scale, do not get great publicity outside circles already sympathetic to counter-culture initiatives. As such, these groups' successes are not as visible as the failings of the hypocrites. Nonetheless, this problem of visibility serves the paper's rhetoric of denial, and not just on the level of competing evidence. This problem also serves the oversimplifying narratives that we will explore in the next section. As ecomodernists, Shellenberger and Nordhaus subtly use examples of hypocrisy to replace the traditional environmentalist narrative of 'technology has unforeseen negative consequences' with 'traditional environmentalism has had unforeseen negative consequences—in the form of human failure.' Such an alternate narrative aims to persuade readers to turn any accusing fingers away from modern technological expansion and towards a subset of the people who benefit from it—particularly those who speak against it. Admittedly, the hypocritical behaviour of benefiting while protesting is very much real, while many of these individuals' apocalyptic prophecies have not come true (yet). Unfortunately for Shellenberger and Nordhaus, the personal failures of environmentalists over the last fifty years do not outweigh the environmental destruction done by centuries of modernist expansion. There is insufficient guilt among modernity's opponents to actually turn the tables when the time comes for accountability. Their accusation of hypocrisy only seems legitimate insofar as the achievements of grassroots environmentalism go unnoticed, such that environmentalists' failings are not put in perspective with their successes. Meanwhile, Shellenberger and Nordhaus focus on redeeming capitalism by way of its scientific achievements. If anything, the narrative that these authors fail to confront is 'capitalism has even more unforeseen consequences: complacency amongst environmentalists who resist leaving capitalism.' Insofar as the paper's oversimplifying narratives rely upon blame-shifting and straw-man criticism of modernism's opponents, the paper fails and ultimately reveals itself as an exercise in denial.

2.2.5 OVERSIMPLIFYING "CREATION"

Shellenberger and Nordhaus's ecomodernist denial extends into their rather optimistic account of modern man's potential and future on Earth, stressing humanity's capacity for creativity and growth in the face of great threats. Unfortunately, that optimism seems misinformed, as their writings employ striking oversimplifications of important issues.[10] This oversimplification is particularly prominent particularly in the guiding analogy of their essay "Evolve."[11] The writers relate humanity's creative capacity for progress to the continual re-creation that has been necessary to keep Venice from sinking. Like the civilization that produced it, Venice began as a rebellious creation and should persist in this manner:

[10] Nordaus and Shellenberger, *Break Through: From the Death of Environmentalism to the Politics of Possibility*; Shellenberger and Nordhaus, "Evolve"

[11] Shellenberger and Nordhaus, "Evolve"

> Saving Venice has meant creating Venice, not once, but many times since its founding. And that is why her rescue from the rising seas serves as an apt metaphor for solving this century's formidable environmental problems. Each new act of salvation will result in new unintended consequences, positive and negative, which will in turn require new acts of salvation. What we call "saving the Earth" will, in practice, require creating and re-creating it again and again for as long as humans inhabit it.[12]

Here the authors use an analogy to shrink the scale of the apparent problem and thereby distract readers from the global, economic and environmental cost of "'saving the Earth.'" [13] In doing so, they shrink the ambition of their broader ecomodernist claim and oppose themselves instead to a smaller group of environmentalists: namely those who believe that saving Venice is perhaps not worth the never-ending production of these temporary solutions. Their message: creativity always has a cost, but there is always room for more creativity. We should keep creating, simply because we always have, such that finding solutions is what we as humans do best. Of course, this line of reason totally sidesteps the real question, which actually concerns what sorts of creativity can justify what sorts of accompanying destruction. The question of whether to keep Venice afloat was never about the power of human creativity. What is at stake there is a cost-benefit analysis, something that the writers sidestep altogether by reducing the scale of their claim drastically, from the fate of a planet to that of a city. The deeper issue, perhaps, is whether or not it is even possible to do such an analysis of re-creation on a global scale. After all, does not the Anthropocene indicate that we have grown beyond the metric of scale and entered that of era? Writing as Anthropocene-embracers, Shellenberger and Nordhaus purport to be fully aware of this issue, and yet do not adequately address it.

2.2.6 OVERSIMPLIFYING TECHNOLOGY, EVOLUTION

The writers of "Evolve" attempt to oversimplify the issues brought up by technological innovation even further by oversimplifying their understanding of technology itself. They frame technology as a crucial elaboration upon, and vehicle for, our evolution as a species. We evolved according to which traits best enabled us to advance our tools and manipulations of our environment. Technology helped to create us, and itself came from the resources of nature. Technology created us, just as we natural beings played some role in creating it.[14] The creativity and destructive potential of technology thus become reconciled with the volatile creativity of nature. We continually save ourselves from new crises, including environmental ones, precisely because we are engaged in evolution, like all life forms. Admittedly, though this claim

[12] Ibid., 9.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid., 9–10.

oversimplifies the issues, it is in a certain sense legitimate, regardless of the cost-benefit analyses avoided and the tough questions left unanswered. However, as we shall see, and as is always the case with denial, this claim's legitimacy serves primarily to distract from yet another, far more problematic oversimplification.

2.2.7 OVERSIMPLIFYING HUMANKIND'S IMPACT

Shellenberger and Nordhaus' assertion that the continual advancement of technology is legitimized by its role in our evolution prepares the ground for the following statement: "The difference between the new ecological crises and the ways in which humans and even prehumans have shaped non-human nature for tens of thousands of years is one of scope and scale, not kind."[15] This claim presupposes that *Homo sapiens*' means of creation and destruction have always taken the same forms and followed the same patterns. Only then can we think of our current situation simply as the product of a quantitative acceleration, and not also a qualitative shift. The authors of "Evolve" do not actually compare the social and economic structures of nomadic and tribal life to those that follow after the industrial revolution. Instead, they simply state that these are essentially the same, in virtue of their shared relation to the evolution of the human race. However, there remains one important difference that the writers stress: we are far greater now, thanks to our evolution alongside our technologies, which will continue to improve alongside us and serve our needs in the next crisis. Whether or not the species ever reaches a point where its technology cannot save it is unimportant to my critique. The problem with their argument is precisely that they take this last claim for granted. They argue for hope based solely upon our potency, the future sufficiency of which cannot be accurately tested until the next crisis arrives. Regardless of one's capacity for hope, we cannot know ahead of time whether that next crisis is utter apocalypse, or just another step in the steady progression of ecocide. All species evolve, but as the rising extinction rates unfortunately testify, not all survive forever.[16] In a peculiarly self-affirmative sort of denial, the modern Anthropos makes the issue about what we *can* do rather than what we *should* do, only to avoid admitting that we cannot actually know our future capacities with any certainty. It is precisely in this vagueness that the writers come closest to acknowledging our ambiguous dual status as both species and geological force. Their emphasis upon creativity treats us as a force rather than a species, despite their emphasis upon our evolutionary heritage. However, if we take the force/species duality seriously, we see that its implications are not so romantic. What really makes us special in the face of the Anthropocene is that we may have produced a problem of such scale that it could soon end in our extinction. Here, those who have identified themselves with modern man are in denial not only about their own

[15] Ibid., 10.

[16] Buell, "A Short History of Environmental Apocalypse."

culpability, but even about the scope of the uncertainty that they themselves face in the Anthropocene.

2.3 "EVOLVE" AS SIGN OF BROADER PROBLEM

The broader problem posed by writings like "Evolve" is their role in contemporary discourse and society. Shellenberger and Nordhaus are professionally successful as writers and also work as leaders in the ecomodernist movement, being co-founders of the Breakthrough Institute and contributors to the *Ecomodernist Manifesto*.[17] These thinkers and their peers are having an undeniable societal impact. In order to give environmental discourse the reform it deserves, we must first accept the seriousness of the far-reaching modernist denial implied in their success. The broader problem is not just with what a few people are saying, but rather the simple reality that many people *want* to believe this. They want to believe that they can continue to maintain the status quo and yet somehow evolve, transforming into great, wonderful self- and world-saviours. The ecomodernist rhetoric of Shellenberger, Nordhaus and their colleagues confronts us with a far-reaching problem. In the face of the Anthropocene, the modern Anthropos' will to pursue dominion now *requires* a pathological combination of denial and self-affirmation. The modern individual can no longer simply deny his/her complicity in modernist expansion. One must either affirm or abandon it. This denial is actually a causal factor in the hypocrisy that "Evolve" harshly blames on traditional environmentalism. We have identified here a pathology much worse than mere hypocrisy, and much bigger than a few writers, and reaching much further than the publications of a single think tank. In order to confront this denial and its implications for our discourse, we must first understand how it develops from the emergence of an existential contradiction. To this end, we now turn to Darian Leader and bipolar disorder.

§3 CONTRADICTION AS CORE OF BIPOLAR DISORDER

3.1 MANIC EXPRESSION

Darian Leader accounts for bipolar disorder's characteristic thought-patterns and clinical expressions in terms of a contradiction between two competing pathological perspectives. For Leader, the mania and depression that characterize bipolar disorder develop out of an "effort to separate, to maintain an elementary differentiation in the place of a more confusing and more painful set of contradictions." [18] A Lacanian by training, Leader also draws from phenomenological psychiatry to examine the condition:

[17] "A Manifesto for a Good Anthropocene," *An Ecomodernist Manifesto*, accessed March 13, 2017, http://www.ecomodernism.org/; Nordaus and Shellenberger, *Break Through: From the Death of Environmentalism to the Politics of Possibility*; Shellenberger and Nordhaus, "The Death of Environmentalism: Global Warming Politics in a Post-Environmental World."

[18] Darian Leader, *Strictly Bipolar* (London: Penguin Books, 2013), 64.

> Several motifs seem ubiquitous here: the sense of connectedness with other people and with the world; the spending of money, which the person usually does not have; the large appetite, be it for food, sex or words; the reinvention of oneself, the creation of a new persona as if one were someone else; the verbal dexterity and sudden penchant for wit and punning; the movement towards paranoid thoughts, so apparently absent at the beginning of the manic curve.[19]

For Leader, these clinical phenomena point not merely to an abnormal, exaggerated emotion, but to a peculiar escapism. Mania's content and course within the person's mental life together suggest a "suffering subject" expending great energy to "try to survive".[20] The mania is a direct response to an underlying suffering that precedes and motivates the mania. Subjects suffer because they have over time come to identify themselves with a profound contradiction, in terms of he/she being 'good' or 'bad'.[21] This distress about his/her own value coincides with a distorted sense of responsibility.[22] To be good, he/she must correct not only what is wrong with him or her, but must also remove all ambiguity between goodness and badness.[23] Unfortunately, the subject has identified itself so intimately with the conflict that it is unable to simply make a rational plan for self-improvement. Madness takes over to do the work that reason cannot.[24] The person needs a new state of mind, as the sense of responsibility is paralyzing. He/she therefore produces a manic mental state in which he/she is not consciously aware of any such responsibility. However, underlying this elation and inhibition is a deeper *need* to affirm. As such, the subject exhibits "abnormally and persistently increased goal-directed activity or energy."[25] For Leader, the production of the manic state thus indicates perhaps the exact opposite of a "general inhibition."[26] Instead, these suggest a deeper

[19] Leader, *Strictly Bipolar*, 15.

[20] Leader's approach to mania proves consistent not only with his clinical work, but also his account's references to phenomenological-psychiatric notions. This consistency has been explicated in an interview with questions specifically about his project, and is thus not just demonstrated in his books and articles.

Darian Leader, Cardinal Mercier Chair 2015: An interview with Darian Leader, interview by Philip D. Kupferschmidt, *The Leuven Philosophy Newsletter* vol 23 (2015-16), p.46-53, November 18, 2015, http://hiw.kuleuven.be/eng/alumni/newsletter1516.pdf.

[21] Ibid., 64–65.

[22] Ibid., 49.

[23] Ibid., 64.

[24] Darian Leader, *What Is Madness?* (London: Penguin, 2012), 64.

[25] American Psychiatric Association, ed., *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-5*, 5th ed. (Washington, D.C: American Psychiatric Association, 2013), 124.

[26] Leader, *Strictly Bipolar*, 55.

compulsion to perform certain acts, in order to unbind one's energy from "barriers of guilt."[27] As one patient suggests, "Mania doesn't just give you the desire for extremes, it gives you the energy to pursue them."[28]

3.2 Manic Language and Motivation

In order to properly appropriate Leader's Lacanian approach to our Anthropocene context, we should stress the role that language plays in manic motivation. The manic needs a new, special place in language in order to relate to the Other and the world as fits his/her manic pursuits. With the transition into mania, one's relationship to language changes intuitively. Subjects manifest with:

> The initial sense that 'the right words are there,' that one has a position from which to speak, the necessity of an addressee, the intense feeling of a connection to the world, the conviction that supplies won't run out, the oscillation of a fault, and the rigid separation of binaries, most frequently "good" and "bad."[29]

Through language, the manic individual thus proves both to him/herself and to the surrounding audience that he/she really is profoundly "ambitious, expansive and powerful."[30] By manifesting this potency both to him/herself and before others, the manic creates a more welcoming world. Unfortunately, just as for the modernist, the world cannot remain so welcoming forever.

3.3 Defeat in Paranoia and Depression

For Leader, the failure of mania and the descent into depression both result from an exhaustion of the body and mind's collective resources. Subjects develop paranoid ideas toward the end of their manic phase because their speech, thinking and behaviour are no longer sufficient to keep the good 'in here' and the bad 'out there.' The subject gradually loses its power for self-affirmation and thus asserts itself over the now re-emerging evil by producing delusional ideas that affirm his/her goodness and cover-over the looming contradiction.[31] Thus, as he/she reaches his/her limits, the bipolar subject's delusions reveal the real motive behind the mania.

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[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid., 64. Terri Cheney, *Manic: A Memoir* (New York: Harper, 2009), 160, quoted in Darian Leader, *Strictly Bipolar*, 55.

[29] Darian Leader, "The Specificity of Manic-Depressive Psychosis," in *Lacan on Madness: Madness, Yes You Can't*, by Patricia Gherovici and Manya Steinkoler (New York: Routledge, 2015), 133.

[30] Susan Lanzoni, "The Enigma of Subjectivity: Ludwig Binswanger's Existential Anthropology of Mania," *History of the Human Sciences* 18, no. 2 (May 1, 2005): 31.

[31] Leader, *Strictly Bipolar*, 68.

When the subject has taxed him/herself even further, he/she falls into a depression not of crude sadness or loss, but of utter failure, defeatism and self-reproach. [32] One no longer sees any point in even trying, as one has proved oneself and all of reality to be incapable of the necessary change. The manic mission is a failure, and the felt depression is actually the revelation of its "impossibility," of defeat.[33]

§4 PSYCHIATRIC AND ECOMODERNIST BIPOLARITY

4.1 MANIA AS DIAGNOSTIC KEY

Diagnosis of psychiatric bipolarity depends upon observation of the distinctive manic phase, thus differentiating it from unipolar depression.[34] Likewise, we must begin our analysis of environmental bipolarity with observations of the manic structure of ecomodernism. We can then reveal the depressive implications of deep ecology by way of contrast. However, before we can pursue these lines meaningfully we must draw a basic parallel: delusion.

4.2 MANIC DELUSION

In order to explicate the manic, delusional character of ecomodernism, we must focus upon the way in which delusions motivate one's personal thinking and behaviour in a social context. Delusion is commonly misconceived simply as false belief. Leader observes that the falsity of delusional beliefs is merely an extension of a more fundamental feature. For Leader, the predictive, diagnostic red flag of psychosis is not the false content of the delusion, but an exaggerated and absolute certainty, particularly regarding the subject's place in the delusion. The content of the belief is *intimately* true, bound to the subject's state of well-being such that he/she is seemingly "too in touch with reality."[35] The delusion is first and foremost a belief that makes the subject somehow special, structuring his/her whole life. Whether the delusion is simple or elaborate, it serves as the basis of one's self-understanding. The delusion goes unnoticed by the public until the subject's defense and pursuit of it pushes him/her beyond what is socially acceptable or in step with common consensus.[36] For example: A manic-depressive who bases all of her value and self-understanding upon her status as 'the good

[32] "If responsibility departs in the mania, it returns in the depression."

Ibid., 54.

[33] Darian Leader, *The New Black: Mourning, Melancholia and Depression*, 2009, 187.

[34] This is held both in psychoanalytic and mainstream psychiatric approaches to diagnosis.

Leader, *Strictly Bipolar*; Leader, *What Is Madness?*; American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 123–54.

[35] Leader, *What Is Madness?*, 64, 82.

[36] Leader, *Strictly Bipolar*, 82.

daughter' strives to live a noble life. She may have much success to this end. However, she is many things other than a daughter, and her sense of self would be far less vulnerable to mania if the rest of her experience were not so dependent upon this identification. The manic-depressive structure of this 'good daughter' reveals itself when her manipulative brother denigrates her publicly, thus aggravating her self-understanding. This rebuke is quite upsetting for her, as she has oriented her whole life around the idea of being a good daughter. If she is not the good daughter, then what is she? [37] "Everyone must see that *I* am the *good* one!" To maintain her place in reality she desperately declares her brother to be not only bad, but also *evil*. She defames him, accusing him of things for which he cannot reasonably be held accountable. With manic intensity, she goes through whatever court battles are necessary to vindicate her name, whether or not she succeeds. She may eventually return to her peaceful life as 'the good daughter' when her brother has removed himself from her life (perhaps out of fear). Alternatively, if the process lasts so long that her mental resources are drained, she cannot complete her mission of self-affirmation. She loses her privileged place in language and in the world, and ultimately enters a depressive phase. But otherwise, she simply returns to a societally-accepted norm. So, how does this parallel with ecomodernism?

4.3 ECOMODERNISM'S MANIC DELUSION

The basic parallel of mania with ecomodernist delusion is simple. While the blame-shifting in "Evolve" brings the good/bad duality crudely to the fore, it need not be so explicit across Anthropocene literature. Whether or not any given ecomodernist names a guilty party, they all affirm in one way or another the purported goodness of humanity's most romantic idea: that the species can emancipate itself from nature. The prospect of modernity's environmental self-destruction motivates writers to defend the goodness and legitimacy of a continuation of this project. The delusion goes relatively unnoticed precisely because the affirmation of modernism remains relatively common. Ecomodernism's status as a delusion therefore finds its basis in its structure, regardless of the truth or falsity of its separate claims. Like Leader, I am not concerned with interpreting scientific evidence *per se*, but with identifying the structure of a root pathology. Regardless of any legitimate disputes about the evidence against his privileged status as 'modern,' the modernist Anthropos has a demonstrably pathological dependency upon this modernist self-understanding. This parallel confronts us with a great burden. If, as I argue, this delusion goes unnoticed due to a sort of shared denial, then how are we to identify it with mania? The key is to identify in ecomodernist writings the perspective and reasoning

[37] "When things are going badly, there may be an effort to appeal to this ideal, which could take the form of a perfect man or woman or, at times, the 'perfection' of a home or some object."

Ibid., 68.

that is so distinctively manic: a self-affirming "flight of ideas."[38] As we will now see, this flight of ideas indicates the structure of the delusion by way of its peculiarly grandiose way of leaping across distinctions with combinatory thinking, always for the sake of confidently avoiding rebukes from the Other.

4.4 ECOMODERNIST FLIGHT OF IDEAS

4.4.1 PLAN

The flight of ideas in "Evolve" presents in the form of combinatory leaps of reasoning that serve the production of grandiose, self-affirmative ideas. Admittedly, such features are present in many forms of writing. What sets "Evolve" apart as distinctively manic is the manner in which these particular leaps (4.4.2) and self-affirmations foster a manic perspective in which one can defend oneself against the Other while also claiming to embrace him/her (4.4.3-4.5). As we develop further the clear parallel between this affirmative consumption and the modernist project, we see that the ecomodernist reasoning not only promotes, but actually follows the same patterns as modernist growth in general (4.6). These revelations together make clear that such ecomodernist rhetoric is quite pathological, in the sense that its form fosters the continued expansion of his mania into others' minds, and even into industry. Ecomodernism's rejection of deep ecology's message thus threatens environmental discourse (**§**5) and demands new solutions.

4.4.2 COMBINATORY, LEAPING REASONING AND MANIC ORIENTATION

The self-affirmation found in the manic flight of ideas involves an "extravagantly combinatory" line of reasoning whose grandiosity promotes the manic subject's independence while also covering over his/her faults and dependencies. [39] Unlike those of other psychoses, manic ideation has an exaggerated freedom of movement in which distinctions are leveled with extravagance and "flippancy."[40] This uninhibited reasoning exhibits a "choppiness, or leaping over one idea to the next" which is manic ideation's "sine qua non."[41] This notion of a flight of

[38] Ibid., 19–20; Lanzoni, "The Enigma of Subjectivity," 32.

[39] Solovay, M.R.; Shenton, M.E.; and Holzman, P.S. "Comparative Studies of Thought Disorder: Mania and Schizophrenia," *Archives of General Psychiatry* 44, 13-20, 1987, quoted in Louis A. Sass and Josef Parnas, "Schizophrenia, Consciousness, and the Self," *Schizophrenia Bulletin* 29, no. 3 (January 2003): 435.

Sass and Parnas, referencing Solovay et al. to stress an important difference between manic and schizophrenic speech: while schizophrenic thought disorder presents with confusion, "formal thought disorder in manic patients is 'extravagantly combinatory, usually with humor, flippancy, and playfulness,' suggesting acceleration of thought processes and easing of inhibitions."

[40] Ibid.

[41] "From the clinical perspective, this choppiness, or leaping over one idea to the next, was the sine qua non of the manic flight of ideas."

ideas sheds new light on those ideas that we treated earlier as mere 'oversimplifications.' Recall that Shellenberger and Nordhaus claim that we indeed must evolve to meet the challenges of the Anthropocene. However, this evolution does not, they argue, demand an adaptive change in our ways so much as an acceleration of them. We need even more growth, through science, industry, and creativity. Even concrete creative intervention is not enough. We must valorize creativity itself, becoming our own creators and saviours, and indeed the saviours of all life.[42] We are not really dependent upon the Earth, because its continuation in our manic thinking is dependent upon our co-creation along with it. Instead of being responsible to and dependent upon an Other, we care for it by first glorifying ourselves. The Other somehow already belongs to us because we have taken him/her up into our manic thinking. Caught up in the manic delusion, we interact only with an Earth that we can take up into our disjointed manic stream of consciousness. But what does it mean to consume the Other in this way?

4.4.3 CONSUMING THE OTHER?

The manic's effort to consume the Other is not necessarily malicious or domineering. Both in mania and ecomodernism we have less of a hunger for power, and more of a romantic aspiration to something greater. As with the ecomodernist, manic aspiration oftentimes carries reference to an Other, someone to whom one is responsible or even indebted. While in the clinic that may be an unconscious sense of debt to one's family, in ecomodernism that may be an underlying sense of responsibility to one's environment. [43] In this way, both manic and ecomodernist seem to hold their origins in some esteem. Nonetheless, the destructive implications of mania and ecomodernism cannot be ignored. This is particularly so when one reaches one's limits and desperate thinking takes over. As with Leader's mania, in the "act of 'reinvention' […] we find an echo of the formula 'if I can't be them, I'll take from them.'" [44]

4.4.4. FLIGHT AS SELF-DEFENSE

At this point in our explication of the combinatory flight of ideas, we must recall that regardless of its clinical content, manic grandiosity always serves the manic's underlying defense against losing the mania. Like the ecomodernists and the capitalist industries they support, the manic subject, too, convinces him/herself that the continuance of this ever-more expansive growth is necessary to survival. The reason is simple: manic subjects can only accept themselves as 'good' as the manic version of themselves. A sustainable, moderate lifestyle is no extreme, being ambiguous and therefore unimaginable: "There is thus a real dilemma in mania of balancing

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Lanzoni, "The Enigma of Subjectivity," 31; cf. ibid., 32.

[42] Shellenberger and Nordhaus, "Evolve" 14.

[43] Leader, *Strictly Bipolar*, 66–69.

[44] Ibid., 61.

preservation and destruction."[45] The ecomodernist reasoning strives to keep this balance by redeeming the destruction, as creation, combining the two and in so doing making this manic persistence into a mission value: "Human development, wealth, and technology liberated us from hunger, deprivation, and insecurity; now they must be considered essential to overcoming ecological risks."[46] Like the manic, the modernist seems oblivious to his/her role in creating these risks, among many others. The ecomodernist's account of the relationship between science and prosperity for this reason echoes the "myth of progress." [47] The writers seem to ignore that much science furthers warfare rather than the peaceful advancement of our species. Given that we are gathering evidence of a modernist mania, one should also recall that war often coincides with the adoption of similarly radical affirmations of a particular group's power. Sadly, these historical human failings are just as relevant to a realistic debate about the environment as are our accomplishments. Regardless, modernity's failures have no place in ecomodernism's manic reasoning. The manic skips over these through the choppiness of his/her reasoning. In a sense, failure does have a place, residing just beyond the outer edge of the modernist's self-understanding. Meanwhile, the manic and modernist alike continually attach to themselves all things good while also excluding all failures, combining themselves with all things good and thus making of themselves the ultimate good. Shellenberger and Nordhaus' bold and defensive affirmation of modernity will now clarify for us how the notions of "nature" and "Creation" that we find in their ecomodernism coincide with the manic subject's orientation towards the Other.

4.5 Otherness in Ecomodernism

4.5.1 Ecomodernist Creation: Affirming 'Self' as Natural

In the writers' notions of self, nature, and Creation, we find a peculiarly layered expression of a manic orientation towards the otherness of nature. If at all possible, the manic wishes to embrace the goodness of the Other, rather than oppose it. We see this clearly in Shellenberger and Nordhaus' notion of Creation. Nature is not something sacred that we are violating. Nature is everything, including ourselves and everything we have done to the environment, insofar as we have done it to advance our species. We are simply evolving, say these ecomodernists, and our relationship to the environment changes naturally, according to the state of our own evolution. Indeed, as in our earlier coverage, if there is such a thing as "nature," it has produced us (2.2.6). Also as above, nature's value does not necessarily ensure that everything we do is automatically redeemed by our natural origins (2.2.7). We can recognize this because we as

[45] Ibid., 62.

[46] Shellenberger and Nordhaus, "Evolve" 13.

[47] Kingsnorth and Hine, "The Manifesto | The Dark Mountain Project."

readers have a safer distance than the manic subject has from its experience. The only way that the manic can affirm him/herself, or anything else, is to affirm his/her own activity and the goals that it serves.[48] Therefore, as modernist action reaches its limit, the manic's grandiose, self-creative ideas must take over. He/she therefore must believe that all of his/her actions have salvific value and that he/she, as a saviour, is therefore somehow always already affirming nature:

> Modernization theology should thus be grounded in a sense of profound gratitude to Creation—human and nonhuman. It should celebrate, not desecrate, the technologies that led our prehuman ancestors to evolve. Our experience of transcendence in the outdoors should translate into the desire for all humans to benefit from the fruits of modernization and be able to experience similar transcendence. Our valorization of creativity should lead us to care for our cocreation of the planet.[49]

This most bizarre and equivocal self-affirmation is just as clinically demonstrative as it is conceptually confused. The writers set out to affirm man by identifying him with nature, by consuming both categories under the activity of "Creation." The writers affirm the human/nature distinction and therefore maintain the notion that nature is transcendent to humans, but only in such a way as can serve human interests. Though our actions in the name of survival are valorized and taken up into Creation in general, our creation is nonetheless different from what happens *in the outdoors*. This ecomodernism strives to reconcile humankind with nature, but can only do so from within the anthropocentric, modernist perspective. This equivocating reasoning clearly has nothing to do with affirming either nature or Creativity in themselves. Instead, the reasoning affirms by combining the terms in such a way as to cover over questions of responsibility and culpability for action. However, up to this point we have been critiquing ecomodernist denial in terms of the modern project's legacy of harm. Now the above passage can inform an analysis of the manic ecomodernist's orientation towards the victim of said harm. To accept one's responsibility for the harm done in Anthropocene is to accept responsibility to nature as Other. The role of the Other is from the perspective of the manic the most problematic aspect of his responsibility, and as we see next, the ecomodernist responds to the problem of otherness exactly as does the clinically manic.

4.5.2 Nature and Reader as Others

The text's manic character derives not just from the form and content of affirmation, but the manner in which that affirmation is presented to the Other. The grandiosity is more provocative than that of a magnanimous individual listing his virtues. Instead of only praising specific

[48] American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 124.

[49] Shellenberger and Nordhaus, "Evolve" 14.

talents, the ecomodernist praises our capacity for self-creation. The ecomodernist thus invents new forms of gratitude and self-reverence so as to properly affirm his virtue. And that virtue must be greater than himself, as great as the nature to which he somehow belongs, even as he commands it. Most importantly, this virtue must be *seen* as great. Ecomodernists need an all-encompassing, overly romantic idea of Creation because they need the idea to be romantic not only for themselves, but for the Other. Instead of just creating a new sense of self, the manic ecomodernist explicitly says to his/her addressee, "watch how gloriously I can recreate both myself, and nature. Come join me … us!" This is precisely what Leader has in mind when he says, "the manic-depressive has not given up their belief in the Other." [50] Unlike with other psychoses, the manic-depressive's self-affirmation must be public, not private. It is not sufficient that the manic ecomodernists believe that they have taken up nature's Otherness into themselves. Rather, they use us readers as stand-in Others who can be persuaded to accept and affirm the collective ecomodernist self, on behalf of the Otherness of nature. If any of my readers still prefer to see "Evolve" simply as rhetoric, and not as mania, we can at least agree on the following: the text's manic expression stems not simply from its words, but from its rhetorical *presentation* – both in its style, and its orientation towards the addressee.

4.6 Manic Consumption and Ecomodernist Worldview

Having demonstrated that the "Evolve" article reflects manic thinking and expression point by point, we are now ready to identify in mania a worldview that coincides well with modernist capitalist consumption. For this point, we turn to an insight of Ludwig Binswanger, a phenomenological psychiatrist whom Leader references concerning the flight of ideas. [51] Binswanger noticed that his manic patients' reasoning produced "an existential space or 'world' that contained no perceived obstacles, was brightly lit, suffered from a flattening or leveling of social distinctions, and where movement occurred in jumps and starts."[52] This worldview is in turn responsible for the subject's exaggerated freedom of movement, such that for her all things really do seem possible: "From the patient's vantage point, there were fewer intervening objects in her world, so that the abrupt transitions seen as leaps by the psychiatrist were experienced as smoother connections by the patient." [53] In this way, the manic reasoning directly encourages modernist growth by portraying the world as overly accessible. All things of the world are ready to be consumed not only materially, but in terms of their meaning. The world is ripe and ready for us to assimilate it to our manic will. As the subject expands, "her

[50] Leader, *Strictly Bipolar*, 67.

[51] Ibid., 19–20; Ludwig Binswanger, *Über Ideenflucht* (Zürich: Füssli, 1933); Ludwig Binswanger, *Melancholie Und Manie: Phänomenologische Studien* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1950).

[52] Lanzoni, "The Enigma of Subjectivity," 31; Leader, *Strictly Bipolar*, 19–20.

[53] Lanzoni, "The Enigma of Subjectivity," 32.

world [becomes] smaller than the normal; in her experience, things, people and thoughts [are] closer to hand, or nearer to her in space."[54] As the leaping, combinatory reasoning of the manic allows him to consume and expand, likewise the ecomodernist reasoning produces a worldview in which we not only conquer nature, but in doing so claim to fulfill its own aims. In all things we see signs of our own potency, our continual and glorious growth that *should* not, and therefore *will* not ever end. Instead of just conquering physical nature, the ecomodernist strives to conquer and consume the *idea* of nature. The expansiveness of his manic perspective relative to the conceptual world perfectly parallels the expansiveness of the modernist project relative to material reality. Just as with the psychiatrically manic, we find here a pathological unity of thought and action that not only perpetuates denial, but actively encourages future assimilation and destruction in the name of growth. The ecomodernist reasoning and the modern project both follow a volatile, manic logic.

§5 Embracing the Deep Ecological, Depressive Pole

5.1 The Necessity to Avoid Manic Discourse

We have now seen that the manic character of ecomodernism makes it not only naïve, but also dangerous for our minds, our discourse, and for society in general. The style and perspective of the ecomodernist project is not just persuading us to support further modernism. Rather, it serves to produce in us a delusionally self-affirmative and expansive state of mind that accelerates our move into crisis (be it one of gradual ecocide, or an apocalypse event). Ecomodernism thus feeds into and even exaggerates our own tendency towards denial. This observation assures that we can point out ecomodernist writers' mania without vilifying them as willingly malicious propagandists. Admittedly, there has likely been no conscious effort to produce this mania in readers. By thinking in favor of modernism, the writers most likely adopt the manic perspective by accident.[55] The implications for future environmental discourse are clear. Readers should avoid ecomodernist rhetoric like that of Shellenberger and Nordhaus, regardless of both its noble intentions, as well as the potential legitimacy of its future claims. Otherwise, we are complicit in any consequent decreases in our own level-headedness and increases in our tendency towards denial. Unfortunately, however, our tendency towards denial proves so deep that abandoning ecomodernism is not sufficient to correct it. As with bipolar disorder, mania has an opposing, depressive pole that we must also avoid.

[54] Ibid., 31–32.

[55] Nonetheless, the accident reminds us further of the strong relationship between capitalism and mania. Leader notes that contemporary business models in sales and marketing often favor manic tendencies in their workers due to the temporary and ultimately costly increase in productivity, creativity and persuasiveness.

Leader, *Strictly Bipolar*, 1–3.

5.2 DEEP ECOLOGY'S DEPRESSIVE POTENTIAL

The movement most clearly implicated in the depressive environmental pole is that of deep ecology. However, the apparently depressive nature of deep ecology has very little to do with the movement itself, and everything to do with the modern perspectival bias. George Sessions quotes Gary Snyder's words as a poignant summary of deep ecology's general message:

> If man is to remain on earth he must transform the five-millennia-long urbanizing civilization tradition into a new ecologically-sensitive harmony-oriented wild-minded scientific-spiritual culture.... To achieve the changes we must change the very foundations of our society and our minds...economics must be seen as a small sub-branch of ecology...nothing short of total transformation will do much good.[56]

From the perspective of "'mastery over nature' worldviews," deep ecology really does represent a threat to our well-being, to the legitimacy of modernist humans.[57] This perspectivally-biased reaction is responsible for the decades-long criticism that deep ecologists are all "doom and gloom." [58] When ecomodernists, ecopragmatists, and their allies describe themselves in recent years as "Bright Green" environmentalists and deep ecologists as "Dark Green,"[59] their criticism comes from the manic, self-affirmative perspective. To suggest that such radical change is necessary means to negate their self-affirmation, which is their only hope. As Snyder (quoted by Sessions) continues, they have already closed their ears: "What we envision is a planet on which the human population lives harmoniously and dynamically by employing various sophisticated and unobtrusive technologies in a world environment which is 'left natural.'"[60] While the mania of ecomodernism is present in its argumentation, the apparently depressive nature of deep ecology is only a function of its threatening contrast to the manic worldview. Hence, deep ecology confronts modern humans at once with both our impotence and our accountability to an as of yet all-too-forgiving biosphere. Modern humanity's only honest response to deep ecology is therefore one of depression.[61] Any attack against deep ecology is simply a desperate act of denial, well-funded as it may be by capitalists (well-meaning and self-serving alike). So how do we humans escape our modernist bipolarity and avoid the cycle of denial and despair? Can we reclaim Anthropocene discourse, or must we

[56] Gary Snyder, "Four Changes," in *The Environmental Handbook*, ed. Garrett De Bell (New York: Ballantine, 1970), quoted in George Sessions, "Deep Ecology, New Conservation, and the Anthropocene Worldview," *The Trumpeter* 30, no. 2 (2014): 108.

[57] Sessions, 113.

[58] Ibid., 111, 114.

[59] Ibid., 110.

[60] Ibid., 108.

[61] Leader, *Strictly Bipolar*, 51, 54.

somehow move past it? How can we dis-embed ourselves from this predicament, so as to discuss the issues more productively?

5.3 UNMANNING: CAN DEEP ECOLOGISTS BREAK THE CYCLE?

Our pathological embeddedness in the Anthropocene greatly hinders efforts to avoid apocalypse or even just minimize future ecocide. Those who spread the deep ecology message are in a sense doomed to be thought of as doom-sayers, regardless of the legitimacy of their claims. This predicament only worsens as the ecocide gets worse and therefore harder for others to accept. [62] The revelation of the Anthropocene acts as an exaggerating trigger for the depression, both as a notion and even as a term. In *Anthropo*cene, modern *man* is literally and symbolically conjoined to what would otherwise seem to be an impossibly grandiose manifestation of his self-centeredness. How is the deep ecologist to respond to the denial that this term triggers? How can she resist the now all-too-understandable tendency for environmentalists to embrace the Anthropocene by way of the "new conservation" movement?[63] Perhaps the key is to reach even deeper and thus re-affirm the significance of the *depth* of deep ecology.[64] Advocating for the necessary social and economic change is not going deep enough. The manic-depressive structure of the human response to crisis reveals to us that we must not only abandon our modern ways; we must abandon our personal identifications with modern Anthropos altogether. This imperative demands that we reject what is already modern in ourselves and replace it somehow. How can one do this? Admittedly, one cannot in an instant simply choose not to identify oneself with modernity. The environmental problem is parallel to the ideological one, in that modernity has penetrated both the Earth and our own thinking. One cannot simply cut one's credit cards and move into the woods, only to treat nature as a separate entity, an Other.[65] We must somehow *unman* ourselves, each of us living

[62] George Sessions expresses upset at this burdensome aspect of promoting deep ecology: "But some environmentalists are now claiming that we have waited too long and it is already too late. Oh no! Here comes the 'doom and gloom' again. I personally think that as responsible human beings we should do everything in our power to turn things around and save ourselves, the ecological integrity of the Earth, and other species. But to what extent have most people lost the capacity to 'seek the truth,' face reality, and 'do the right thing?'"

Sessions, "Deep Ecology, New Conservation, and the Anthropocene Worldview," 114.

[63] Ibid., 106.

[64] "Deep Ecology, as a movement and a way of thinking, has generally been contrasted to conventional environmentalism, and especially to approaches that focus only on alleviating the most obvious symptoms of ecological disarray without reflecting upon, and seeking to transform, the more deep-seated cultural assumptions and practices that have given rise to those problems. Rather than applying various band-aid solutions to environmental problems, adherents of deep ecology ostensibly ask 'deeper' questions, and aim at deeper, more long range solutions."

David Abram, "On Depth Ecology," *The Trumpeter* 30, no. 2 (2014): 101.

[65] Recall: "The manic-depressive has not given up their belief in the Other."

through a personal transition from a human-focused self-understanding to one beginning from our membership in the biotic community.[66] If we can learn to think and live outside the limits of modernity, then we need not give ourselves over to the Anthropocene, either through embrace or defeat. Acknowledging the role of psychopathology as above implies that we could develop therapeutic measures. The development of such therapies might directly focus upon creating alternate forms of "inhuman" thinking, in the hopes of becoming "uncivilized" and thinking "like a mountain."[67] Alternately, one might also expand my above approach by researching and parsing-out in further detail the pathologies of modernity, be they cultural, sociological, or economic in origin. Just as in psychotherapy, the aim of unmanning is to reach deep into the pathologies of our thought and life and to thus find new ways to move forward. Any work that serves this end in turn serves our necessary unmanning.

Leader, *Strictly Bipolar*, 67.

[66] Sessions, "Deep Ecology, New Conservation, and the Anthropocene Worldview," 107.

[67] Paul Kingsnorth, Dougald Hine, and Dark Mountain Project, *Uncivilisation: The Dark Mountain Manifesto*, 2014; Kingsnorth and Hine, "The Manifesto | The Dark Mountain Project."

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