PHILOSOPHY 329

Environmental Ethics
Spring 2020
Term Paper Assignment
Due Wednesday, May 13

Write a 7-10 page (double-spaced) paper in which you reflect on any of the topics we have covered in this course. You may come up with your own term paper topic, but it must be approved. Here are some term-paper topic suggestions:

Deep Ecology and the Hawaiian notion of Mālama Honua
Explain what is meant by “Deep Ecology.” How did Arne Naess explain the difference between the shallow and deep ecology movements? What are the principles of Deep Ecology? How might the Hawaiian notion of Mālama Honua be compared with Deep Ecology?

Environmental Ethics and Asian Philosophy
Towards the end of his essay, “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis,” Lynn White Jr. suggests that the “beatniks, who are the basic revolutionaries of our time, show a sound instinct for their affinity for Zen Buddhism.” Zen Buddhism developed in China and Japan with the coming together of Mahāyāna Buddhism from India with Daoism from China. What is it about these Asian philosophies that provides a different understanding of the relationship between human beings and nature from the dominant Western tradition? How might these Asian traditions of philosophy be helpful in overcoming the environmental crisis today?

Nietzsche and Environmental Philosophy
How did Nietzsche's critique of Christianity in Thus Spoke Zarathustra and The Antichrist anticipate in some ways Lynn White's thesis in, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," that Christianity bears a significant responsibility for the environmental crisis today? How does Nietzsche's view of nature challenge the traditional conception of nature as origin? If Nietzsche was right in the ‘hard truth’ that life is will to power, how can we possibly “remain loyal to the earth” as he implores us to do in Thus Spoke Zarathustra?

The Problem of Technology
What does Heidegger, in “The Question Concerning Technology,” consider to be the main problem with the development of modern technology, and how does he trace this problem back to a way of thinking that began with the ancient Greeks? What does Heidegger mean by the “enframing” (Ge-Stell) that makes overcoming the problem of technology so difficult? Toward the end of the essay, Heidegger turns to a line in a poem by the Romantic poet Hölderlin, “poetically man dwells on this earth,” to suggest a different way of being-in-the-world than that determined by the “enframing” determined by the history of Western thought. How might the examples Heidegger considers, the contrast, for example between an old wooden bridge and a modern hydroelectric powerplant, suggest about a more poetic dwelling upon the earth that may save us from the dangers of modern technology?

Food and the Ecological Crisis
Why is the ecological crisis a crisis of agriculture as Wendell Berry observes? How does the eating of animals contribute to the ecological crisis? What are the implications that result from the ecological crisis upon the ethics of what we eat?
Population Growth
To what extent is there a problem with human overpopulation? Does the Earth have a finite carrying capacity for human population growth or is it just a matter of more efficient food production and distribution? How can the problem of human overpopulation be addressed in a way that is consistent with respect for human rights?

Capitalism and Climate Change
In her book *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs the Climate*, Naomi Klein contends that the problem of climate change cannot be solved without transitioning from the global economy based on deregulated capitalism. What evidence does she provide to make this case and to what extent do you find her argument convincing? Can the problem of climate change be met without challenging the economic system based on perpetual growth? What suggestions for a sustainable economy are offered by Paul Hawken and Herman Daly?

Climate Change
There is very strong scientific evidence that the average global temperature of the Earth is significantly increasing due to the burning of fossil fuels and that this global warming is changing the climate of the Earth. The only real remaining scientific debate concerns just how serious this problem will be. Explain why scientists are so sure that the problem of climate change is real and that it is caused by human activity. What is Project Drawdown, initiated by Paul Hawken, and what does it suggest about how we might meet the challenge posed by climate change.