



Narratives in the Anthropocene era

Charles Travis, Vittorio Valentino (Eds.)

All my earthothers: Levinasian tools for deep ecology

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Abstract

The work of Emmanuel Levinas has been both abundantly recognized and criticized in moral philosophy. This Janus-faced attitude is also present in ecological theories, which find fertile ground in Levinas' thought without being able to explain its apparent anthropocentrism. Opposing hermeneutical paths tend to focus either on otherness as an absolute alterity, implying a potentially unlimited responsibility for all alterities, or on otherness as a re-foundation of humanism, leading to the conclusion that responsibility is unlimited only among humans. Here I seek to disentangle Levinas from these two extreme interpretations, first by reviewing ecological readings of his philosophy, in both the Francophone and Anglophone spheres, and second by analyzing specific Levinasian terms that might be particularly helpful for a non-anthropocentric or deep ecology. The main results of this investigation are a distinction between the ethics of responsibility and the ethics of vulnerability, an explanation of Levinasian compulsory or methodological humanism, and a schematic model of sensibility as enjoyment/vulnerability capable of supporting deep ecology without the traditional notions of free will, rights, or values.

Keywords: Emmanuel Levinas, deep ecology, paganism, enjoyment, vulnerability

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