Trajectories of ecologism

Revue Projet 375 (2020)

Eurozine Review
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French journal ‘Revue Projet’ publishes a dossier on ecological thinking. Including articles on why catastrophism won’t save the planet, and how decolonization recasts the environmentalist project.

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Syn og Segn 1/2020
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Revue Projet publishes a dossier exploring ecological thinking — its past mistakes, the complex present, and some possible futures. Climatologist Hervé Le Treut argues that ecologists need to ‘move on from the teacher-pupil relationship’ with the public. Ecology’s frequent abstractions and standard ‘danger narrative’ have led to anxiety and fatalism, something Le Treut observes even among his own students. Alongside improved public education messaging, he insists on the importance of consensus-building around key ethical issues such as personal freedom, rights and values, and looks ahead to international cooperation over the management of planetary resources.

Collapsology: In a brief summary of the long history of the end of the world, Pierre-Éric Sutter and Loïc Steffan discuss ‘collapsology’ — a growing area of ecological debate on catastrophism, widespread despair and the ‘prepper’ reaction. These compare with various ‘laboratories of civil society’ in which like-minded individuals, families and groups ‘get to grips with the earth’, adopting low-tech lifestyles predicated on ‘visions of a coming collapse of society and of worsening shortages’. Considering these different responses to ecological crisis, Sutter and Steffan argue for optimistic activism, outlining why a ‘change of world-view’ or moment of *metanoia* (reorientation of one’s way of life; spiritual conversion) may be the best path.

Decolonizing ecology: The decolonization agenda also applies to ecologism and environmentalism. In interview, political scientist Malcom Ferdinand explains the relationships between racism, colonialism and exploitative capitalism. By remodelling our collective colonial past, he argues, we can decolonize our misconceived — ‘doubly fractured’ — notion of what ecologism is, and fundamentally recast the environmentalist project.

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