

Feral Faun

**Beyond Earth First!
Toward a Feral Revolution
of Desire**

1988

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Last year, *Fifth Estate* published a critique of Deep Ecology which included criticisms of certain people who use the slogan “Earth First!”. This has led to a fairly intense dialogue. As I have read this dialogue it has become clear to me that most people — including those who call themselves EF!ers — aren’t really sure what EF! is.

A number of letters and one article (“‘Live Wild or Die’ — The Other Earth First!,” *Fifth Estate*, Vol.23, #3) attempted to show that EF! was not monolithic, that it was a movement rather than an organization. Yet the writers of these pieces spoke of “what EF! actually does” and, in the article, of EF!’s “split personality” — as though EF! were indeed a single entity, a monolithic organization. To clear this up, it is necessary to figure out just what EF! is.

There is an EF! that is an organization. This is what Mikal called the “centralized personality” of Earth First! in his *FE* article. This EF! consists of the editorial staff of the national paper and the “stars” of EF! They create a major portion of the public image of what EF! is all about. And their recent right-wing Malthusian ravings have not helped that image one bit.

There is another Earth First! — however that EF! is not a movement. The real movement is an anti-authoritarian, anti-industrial-civilization, pro-wilderness movement, and people of *Fifth Estate* are as much a part of that movement as anyone else who chooses to use the slogan “Earth First!” To claim that a slogan creates a separate movement with an inside and an outside defined by the use of the slogan is a mystification. As Mikal said in his article, the defining quality of a movement is that it moves. Everyone who is active in any way in opposing civilization and striving to expand wildness is participating in that movement and needs to criticize any part of that movement that is stifling the liberation of wildness.

So what do I think Earth First! is? It is a slogan around which some people rally. Just what this slogan means and why people need it as a rallying point needs to be examined.

“Earth First!,” the slogan is a simple, two word proclamation of biocentrism. Biocentrism is an ideology, an attempt to claim that we can act from a basis other than our own needs, desires and experiences. We cannot put earth first. When we claim to do so, we are only putting our concept of the earth first. Robert Anton Wilson and Timothy Leary have both claimed to have connected with the consciousness of the universe and have used this claim to justify their vision of paradise as a horrendous, sterile techno-topia, saying that is the “natural course of evolution.” I share a vision similar to many EF!ers, but their claim to know the earth’s will is false consciousness, ideology, and all ideology is a threat to wildness.

Why do people so distrust their own instincts and desires that they have to create false consciousness to justify themselves? Why do they need to claim that they are doing what they are doing because they put “Earth First!”? Civilization, with its need to suppress whatever is wild, has taught us to distrust our instincts and desires. It needs to do this in order to channel our wild energies into the domesticated activities of work and commodity consumption — the activities that are destroying wildness everywhere. So the best thing we can do for wilderness is to let our own wildness break free by trusting and acting on our own instincts and desires. To be trapped in the ideology of a slogan is to chain our radical consciousness and to stifle our movement.

By equating the slogan with a movement, speaking of the movement as a

monolithic being that acts on its own, defining participation in the movement in terms of use of the slogan rather than people's activities, the image of EF! as an organization is created whether such an organization actually exists or not. The Tucson crew reinforces this image by creating a visible bureaucracy, but even without them- the image would exist because EF! is spoken of in organizational terms even by those who claim it is not one. So an image has been created which the media can use to create a good guy / bad guy scenario. And thanks to Foreman, Abbey and other EF! stars, the image of a monolithic organization of crackpot, racist eco-terrorists is becoming dominant. Give the press a name and claim that it represents a single movement and they will see an organization there. And when even those who claim that Earth First! is not a monolithic organization speak of it in monolithic, organizational terms, can anything else be expected?

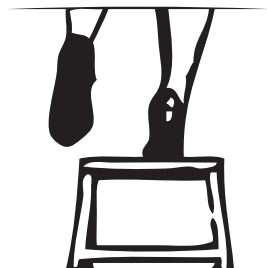
To summarize my thoughts:

1. The slogan, "Earth First!" needs to be left behind because it reflects false consciousness. We always act from our own needs, desires and experiences. When we recognize that in terms of our radical activity, we free that activity from any ideological constraints.
2. The slogan needs to be left behind because it has created an image that allows the media to manipulate the public's conception of those who act in the slogan's name.
3. The slogan needs to be left behind because it is associated with the redneck, macho, racist posturings of Abbey, Foreman and others.
4. The slogan needs to be left behind because it creates the image of a movement whose only basis is the use of that slogan, creating an insider/outsider dichotomy that allows "insiders" to write off the criticisms of "outsiders" without giving them much thought.
5. It needs to be recognized that the actual movement, of which those who use the slogan, "EF!" are part, is a movement to save what is wild from civilization. Many of us who have criticized the ideology that has been associated with EF! are active participants in that movement, so our criticisms are not those of outsiders.
6. It needs to be recognized that "Earth First!" is merely a slogan, a rallying cry. It does nothing concrete. Individual people, acting separately or together, are the ones doing things of actual significance. In order to avoid the image of being a monolithic organization, we have to be careful to make this clear.

We need to go beyond the false consciousness of the idea, Earth First! and recognize that only by setting our own wild instincts and desires free can wilderness be saved. Ours is a revolution of desire, a feral revolution. We do not do it for anything supposedly greater than ourselves; we do it for ourselves. So, come on, anarchic adventurers, let's go wild!

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