

BARNHILL'S BASES
For what its worth ...

Bases: "Implicit factors or unsupported beliefs that shape and support explicit positions and arguments."

Assertions: "Beliefs that are explicitly stated but are not supported or questioned."

Contemporary situation

- The environmental situation is dire and will likely get worse
- Around the world, social justice and well-being is limited and getting worse.
- Multiple causes: industrialism, global capitalism, the nation-state, cultural worldviews

Primary concerns: how will an idea of policy impact

- the community of life (nature)
- the poor
- future generations

Philosophy of nature

- nature is an integrated set of interrelationships and processes
- much of nature is symbiotic, but much of it is not
- high moral and spiritual value of nature, with a tendency to emphasize wholes (e.g., populations, species, ecosystems) rather than individuals
- relational (dialectical) holism
- anti-anthropocentric (for the most part)

Philosophical anthropology, human philosophy

- human nature is flexible, capable of great good; in simple societies tends to be largely good, in larger societies not so good because easily impacted by social and economic structures and ideologies
- we are fully a part of nature, but also unique within nature (as is every species). We need to think in terms of a dialectic between humans and the rest of the natural world.

Social philosophy

- we are inherently interrelated with intrinsic responsibility for all humans everywhere, including the future
- the economy exists within society, which exists within the natural world:
- economic goals
 - economic security and justice for all
 - development of quality of life and equality (for whom?)
- "capital": we need to think in terms of ecosocial capital
- how the economy works best
 - corporations are inherently greedy, and need strong government oversight and regulation to reduce inequality.
 - to have an economy that works well, we need to make a radical change
- perspective on economic inequality
 - system-based: those who succeed are the ones whom the economic system benefits, and the poor are those who the economic system leaves out. "Privilege."
- Given our current situation (the nation-state & capitalism), the government should play an active role in directing the economy, in particular the development of certain forms of energy, alternative transportation, etc. On the other hand, the ideal is small societies with little government
- true "progress" and "development" concerns psychological, social, and spiritual well-being, which are often degraded by capitalist "progress"
- land partially belongs to the owner, but the owners may not degrade their land, or their neighbors

Epistemology (philosophy of knowledge)

- reason and science are highly valuable but need to be complemented by intuition & emotion & bodily awareness
- critical thinking is essential in political and environmental thought, including looking for the strengths of the “opponent’s” view and the problems in your own, always remaining open to change.
- some knowledge is universal, but much of it is contextual
- “both-and” & “dialectical” thinking, rather than categorical/binary thinking.

Time frame

- For environmental issues, usually 50-100 years.
- For nuclear power, 10,000+ years
- For human culture, 40,000 years in the past, and thousands of years in the future

Faith or lack of it

- in science & technology: these give us great tools and cause immense problems
- in experts: depends
- in the capitalist “free” market: unless closely regulated, it benefits some, screws other, and degrades the environment
- in nature’s bounty: greater than we often realize, and more limited than most people recognize
- in most cases, decentralized control is preferable, but some problems require broader control, including planetary
- Western civilization is remarkably rich, greatly benefits certain aspects of our lives, is highly destructive, and degrades certain aspects of our lives.

Reaction to uncertainty

- Precautionary principle: should be applied much more often and more strongly

Choice of terms:

- “sufficiency,” but sometimes efficiency if it pertains to the environment
- common good, more than (individual) benefit
- rights AND responsibility
- quality of life, not standard of living

Authority

- Scientists over pundits
- Academic scientists over corporate scientists
- Certain scientific organizations, e.g., Union of Concerned Scientists.
- Policy