**Human Sacrifice on the Altar of Gaia**

**June 2008By Anne Barbeau Gardiner**

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**The Revenge of Gaia: Why the Earth Is Fighting Back -- and How We Can Still Save Humanity.**  By James Lovelock. *Penguin Books. 222 pages. $15.95.*

In the past thirty years, scientist James Lovelock, Fellow of the Royal Society in England and originator of the Gaia Theory, has published several books on Gaia. It was around 1970 that Lovelock first came up with the name "Gaia" for the Earth (he usually puts a capital E on Earth). In his latest outing, *The Revenge of Gaia: Why the Earth is Fighting Back -- and How We Can Still Save Humanity,* he assures us several times that he uses the name as a metaphor. But it turns out that for him a metaphor is not just a rhetorical device: He finds Gaia a "useful metaphor" because the present ecological crisis "requires us to know the true nature of the Earth and imagine it as the largest living thing in the solar system." Here the metaphor Gaia turns out to be the way to know the *true nature* of the planet. Then Lovelock invites us to a change of "heart and mind" so that we may "instinctively sense" Gaia as a living planet. How can we *instinctively sense* a metaphor? Evidently, Gaia is for him far more than a trope. While he admits that the name offends the "scientifically correct," he declares that he is "unrepentant" about using it because this metaphor is a "path to the primitive feelings of the unconscious part of our minds." That's the part he thinks we can use to contact Gaia.

Lovelock speaks of our planet's evolution as the story of a female who has grown "old and has not very long to live." In the last century, she was "enlightened" in her "seniority" when human beings let her see herself from outer space "while she was still beautiful." The implication here is that our planet is alive and self-aware, and that she sees herself through our eyes. Lovelock remarks that when New Agers first took up his concept of Gaia and applied it to the "mythic goddess" he was surprised, but now he thinks they were "more prescient than the scientists" who objected to the name. For Gaia behaves just like those goddesses "Khali and Nemesis" in that she can be both "nurturing" and "ruthlessly cruel towards transgressors, even when they are her progeny." Evidently, we are those transgressors, since Lovelock tells us that Gaia has turned into our "greatest enemy" and requires a "sacrifice" from us far greater than sustainable development and renewable energy -- "as if these feeble offerings would be accepted by Gaia as an appropriate and affordable sacrifice." Rather, she now requires a huge drop in our population. This comes as no surprise, for whereas in antiquity the God of Israel accepted animal sacrifices, the so-called goddess Earth required human sacrifice, often on a large scale.

Lovelock admits he is Gaia's disciple: "There is a deep need in all of us for trust in something larger than ourselves, and I put my trust in Gaia." A metaphor, a verbal construct, is not something "larger" than us. Nor do we place "our trust" in a mere metaphor. Lovelock is disingenuous when he repeats that Gaia is a metaphor, for he treats her as his ultimate reality.

In the same way that a "metaphor" turns out to be the "true nature" of the planet, so Lovelock's "possibility" of ecological disaster turns out to be a horrifying "certainty." Here and there he repeats that as "a scientist," he thinks "in terms of probabilities, not certainties," and cautiously hedges his statements. To wit: Even if "a tolerable future is probable, it is still unwise to ignore the possibility of disaster." He even concedes that the current scientific understanding of the "Earth system" is on a par with a "nineteenth-century physician's understanding of a patient." That's pretty low. He also warns that scientific forecasts of future calamities are only "provisional," since there could be "sudden and wholly unpredicted discontinuities." As a scientist he advises us not to over-interpret "unexpected warmth and cold as evidence for or against global heating." So far, this is reasonable. But then Lovelock turns into Gaia's prophet, and he pushes the panic button. He declares that we have found out "too late" that "the Earth system was fast approaching the critical state that puts all life on it in danger." Now there is "almost no time left" to opt for visionary solutions like renewable energy and sustainable development, because evidence is coming in from around the world that the imminent climate shift can only be "described as Hell: so hot, so deadly that only a handful of the teeming billions now alive will survive." As Gaia's prophet, Lovelock sees us as passengers on a boat above Niagara Falls who don't have a clue that the "engines are about to fail," and as prisoners on a "cosmic death row" awaiting execution. The few who may survive will endure another Stone Age in which warlords battle endlessly in a torrid world. An ecological catastrophe is certain and irreversible in human time, for he tells us that 55 million years ago Gaia had a "fever" like this one, and it took her 200,000 years to recover.

As the "party goes on," Love­lock laments, "how much longer before reality enters our minds?" Yes, *reality*, not a scientific probability. Throughout his work, Lovelock keeps switching between the calm, dispassionate tones of a scientist and the frenzied shrieks of a seer. But why does he need to act as Gaia's prophet? Because he has embraced Deep Ecology.

Deep Ecology is a worldview that rejects the Christian belief that man, made in the image of God and redeemed by Him, is the center of value in this world. Founded by the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess in 1972, Deep Ecology claims to be a major paradigm shift in civilization, for it makes the ecosystem the new center of all value. Henceforth, morality is to be determined by what is good for the ecosystem, and man is to aim at "noninterference" with the Earth, even if we have to change our entire way of being -- economics, politics, education, morality, religion -- from top to bottom. In the platform Naess devised for Deep Ecology, we find this controversial statement in the fifth place -- a call for the "substantial decrease of the human population" because the "flourishing of non-human life requires such a decrease." Yes, *requires.* Like the eugenics juggernaut of a century ago, there is now a deep ecological juggernaut facing us with the same evil program: population control.

One might be tempted to think that Deep Ecology is a relatively small movement, a fringe group. Think again. J.E. DeSteiguer, in *The Origins of Modern Environmental Thought,* observes that "since the 1970s, a number of national green political parties have been formed in the developed world with Arne Naess' Deep Ecology as their foundation." Such a party was formed first in Great Britain in 1973, and then in Belgium, Australia, France, Italy, Sweden, Switzerland, Austria, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and the former West Germany. (Note that the legalization of abortion and the drop in Western population growth coincided with the spread of this mentality.) Even Greenpeace has adopted the philosophy of Arne Naess. This is a pretty large fringe.

Not surprisingly, then, Love­lock urges us to turn to Deep Ecology for guidance on the environmental crisis: "If it should be that we have already passed the threshold of irreversible heating, then perhaps we should listen to the deep ecologists and let them be our guide." He reveres them as wise beyond all others: "This small band of deep ecologists," with their total "allegiance" to the ecosystem, fully grasps the "magnitude of the change of mind needed to bring us back to peace within Gaia, the living Earth." And he sees them as Gaia's saints: "Like the holy men and women who make their whole lives a testament to their faith, the deep ecologists try to live as a Gaian example for us all to follow." Lovelock fantasizes how these "brave deep ecologists with trust in Gaia" will someday keep civilization alive in the Stone Age to come. But wait -- what civilization? Surely not the one we know, since Deep Ecology repudiates Christianity for putting too much value on the individual person and for regarding us as stewards of creation. In a sentence that deep ecologists will applaud wildly, Lovelock declares, "We are no more qualified to be the stewards or developers of the Earth than are goats to be gardeners." What a low regard for human nature! Fortunately for us, God demonstrated a higher esteem for man with His Incarnation, and by opening for us the door of eternal life.

Lovelock notes that he learned from deep ecologist Edward Goldsmith that we should always "think of Gaia first," not of man, and that this will not make us "inhuman" since the "survival of our species" depends on our accepting Gaia's "discipline." Not inhuman? Inhumanity in fact consists precisely in sacrificing individuals to a compelling ideology. It lies precisely in this kind of justifying the means by the end. In essays published in *Deep Ecology and World Religions*, Michael Zimmerman and Cecile Jackson point out that Americans generally ignore the Nazi connection with the radical green movement, yet Hitler was a vegetarian for whom animals had intrinsic value, so much so that he wanted to send to concentration camps anyone who mistreated them. Other leading Nazis, too, were committed to protecting the wilderness and embraced a neo-paganism much like that of Deep Ecology and Gaia Theory.

Echoing a long line of neo-Malthusians, Lovelock states that population growth is the "root of our problem." Just as Nietzsche once called man a "disease" on the Earth's "skin," so likewise Lovelock speaks of us as "Earth's disease, the fever brought on by a plague of people." We are not very "special," he says, as "individual animals," but are more like a "planetary disease." He yearns for the world of 1800 "when we were only one billion," and announces that our present numbers are "unsustainable" and require a "retreat" or drastic reduction. This is also the mindset of Deep Ecology, since Arne Naess saw the environmental crisis as chiefly one of overpopulation. At the heart of Naess's program, observed Jonathan Maskit in an essay published in *Beneath the Surface*, is the requirement for coercive collective action in the form of "policies that act as an externalized will" in bringing about the reduction of population. Note well that the Culture of Death offers us, on the one hand, unlimited recreational sex (since it does not recognize the capacity for moral restraint), and on the other, plans coercive measures to prevent children arising from sexual intercourse.

Lovelock assures us that he does not agree with the "totalitarian greens, sometimes called eco­fascists," who want to see most of the human race "eliminated" by genocide so as to leave a "perfect Earth for them alone." That's a relief. But wait -- he then tells us that if we survive the current crisis, our next goal must be to forcibly reduce our numbers: "If we are to continue as a civilization that successfully avoids natural catastrophes, we have to make our own constraints on growth and make them strong and make them now." As it is, we are unintentionally at war with Gaia and must agree to "wartime" rationing and temporary "loss of freedom." *Strong constraints? Loss of freedom?* What's the difference between this and ecofascism? And how far down will our population have to plummet to satisfy Gaia? Actually, Lovelock states that something like nine-tenths of our population must vanish: "Personally I think we would be wise to aim at a stabilized population of about half to one billion." To accomplish this goal, both the birth rate and death rate would have to be "regulated" as "part of population control." So we are to be bred, managed, and put down just like a herd of animals on a farm. If this isn't totalitarianism, what is?

Another feature of Deep Ecology found in Lovelock’s Gaia Theory is hostility toward farming and the domestication of plants and animals. Deep ecologists, who love all things wild, trace our problems back to the beginning of agriculture 12,000 years ago. Like them, Lovelock wants us to stop seeing the Earth as the commons we "own and share," and to start realizing that farming "abrades the living tissue" of Gaia's "skin" and hampers her "ability to regulate the Earth's climate." It is our "duty" to "put Gaia first" and act "with the health of the Earth, not the health of people, in mind." He's not complaining here only about agribusiness, but also about organic farming, which he says has low productivity and represents a near "obsession with personal human problems." Our "primary obligation is to the living Earth. Humankind comes second."

So how are we to "stop using the land surface" without starving to death? Lovelock proposes two things: the increased use of nuclear energy and the synthesizing of food "by the chemical and biochemical industries from carbon dioxide, water and nitrogen." By eating such man-made food, we could release farmland "back to Gaia," uncouple ourselves from the "metabolism of the planet," and give Earth "a rest." Land would now be used once again for "its proper purpose, the regulation of the climate and chemistry of the Earth." Note that the *proper purpose* of land has nothing to do with us. Besides eating artificial food, we would be confined to "dense cities" to free the land. Lovelock concedes that the "rich" would still follow the "fashion" of "eating real food: vegetables grown in soil and cooked with meat and fish," but they too would be limited by biocentric laws: "Vigilance would be needed to constrain the growth of luxuries that threaten Gaia."

In suggesting that man should be fed on a large scale with synthesized food, Lovelock goes way beyond the radical philosopher Peter Singer, who merely wants to make vegetarianism "obligatory" on moral grounds and ban the use of animals for agriculture, science, and commerce. Such vegetarianism seems *passé* now, as Lovelock jests about how we once thought that plant life had been created "solely for us to eat."

In Deep Ecology a person is supposed to merge so completely with the Earth as his greater "Self" that the identification turns into a spontaneous self-defense whenever the environment is in danger. Lovelock sees a "need" for such "instinctive environmentalism." He asks how one might acquire such an "instinct" and answers that we can "make Gaia an instinctive belief by exposing our children to the natural world, telling them how and why it is Gaia in action, and showing that they belong to it." This shows how ideology distorts one's sense of human nature. An "instinct" is by definition an inherited and unalterable natural impulse, yet Lovelock wants one to be inculcated into children by indoctrination -- not to mention that such children would be trained thereby to serve as Gaia's janissaries against the human race. One cannot help but recall De­Steiguer's observation that Arne Naess thought "the best fit for ‘green' was ‘red,' that is, either communism or socialism." In other words, he realized the green movement needed a regime like that of Orwell's *Animal Farm.*

How could such a misanthropic ecofascism have spread so far, so fast? Very likely the decline of Christianity in the West has led to the rise of this neo-pagan abjection before the material world. Lovelock believes that all the traditional religions of the world are out of date, for they were all founded when we were few in number and when we "lived in a way that was no burden to the Earth." Past teachings on morality no longer apply now that we have become "six billion hungry and greedy individuals." He reserves a special animus for Christianity, where man is seen as the steward of creation: "The idea that humans are yet intelligent enough to serve as stewards of the Earth is among the most hubristic ever." What Christians need, he sneers, is "a new Sermon on the Mount" to tell us how to live "decently with the Earth." He finds fault with "secular humanists," too, for he thinks they need to turn to Gaia and "recognize that human rights and needs are not enough."

Gaia Theory and Deep Ecology are two handmaids of the Culture of Death. Their precursor was the eugenics movement of a century ago that imposed birth control and forced sterilization on the supposedly "unfit." Today an artificially created panic about ecological catastrophe, derived from Gaia Theory and Deep Ecology, lies behind a seemingly unstoppable movement for sterile sex by way of birth control, sterilization, chemical and surgical abortions, homosexuality, and the infanticide of newborns (called "infant euthanasia"). Deep ecologists and Gaia theorists try to terrify us with environmental degradation in order to pursue their main program -- population control. For even when their prophecies of doom prove to be false or exaggerated, these zealots immediately point to another imminent disaster and call for man to reduce his numbers.

We should understand that when the leaders of the Culture of Death look at us, they don't see so many individuals with immortal souls and eternal destinies, each one having an incalculable value in the eyes of God, since the divine Word saved us with His own blood. Rather they see a plague of alien creatures infesting an imagined divinity. History shows that none are more fanatical than those on the march to Utopia. The Gaia theorists and the Deep Ecology zealots are certainly marching lockstep right now toward their imagined paradise. The mirage they have in view is one with so few people left on the planet that their great goal will finally be achieved -- the total "noninterference" of man with the wilderness of the Earth. What a dismal, misanthropic idea of paradise!

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