



Orangutan

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The Takeaway

CAE generally considers our books to be works of art—textual performances—as much as we consider them critical reflections. We try to ignore academic conventions and fashions, look for orphaned issues, and attempt to illustrate our ideas and opinions with unexpected sources that rarely harmonize. We aim to keep our texts moving fast, often at the expense of the full explanation that a topic might deserve. Yet, however trim a book might be, it can always be reduced to its basics—in this case, to twelve theses.

1.

Complexity is disruptive to the production of conservationist environmental policy.

2.

As complexity increases, predictability decreases, because all causal variables are not known, let alone accounted for. Because ecological systems are among the most complex and varied systems in the known universe, hypotheses become educated guesses, and the struggle begins simply to establish some modest baseline knowledge through trial and error. Under these circumstances, it is impossible to know all of the consequences of an activated hypothesis in the laboratory of an ecosystem. Science does not know if it has helped more than it has harmed until after the event, and

even then only within the great specificity of its objective. Environmental sciences—like art and politics—are full of gambles.

3.

Environmentalism tends to be an aesthetic and/or economic discourse in terms of its objectives, rather than a scientific one.

4.

Necropolitics is a necessary part of environmental discourse and action, as there can be no life without death. Currently, it is explicitly absent, but it is always hauntingly present either as a subtext or as an undercurrent.

5.

Necropolitics, at present, overwhelmingly tends not to be a part of democratic process in Western society (which is not always a bad thing). Even so, we may still be able to produce forms that reduce the extreme economic and social prejudices inherent in capitalism.

6.

Evolution and environmentalism are incompatible because the former makes the latter absurd.

7.

In the face of evolution, humanism and anthropocentrism make pragmatic environmentalism sensible.

8.

Asking “What is best for humans?” in regard to the environment typically yields more environmentally friendly answers than does asking “What is best for the individual?”

9.

Individualism and posthumanism are forms of antihumanism. Antihumanism is a dangerous philosophical position for humans and the environment.

10.

Rationalized environmentalist policy creation and democracy are probably incompatible processes.

11.

Humans are rarely rational actors when it comes to the environment.

12.

Art is potentially an excellent device for communication at the nonrational level in a manner beyond propaganda, and can thus be of great service in the primarily nonrational conversations about the environment. In addition, art can create proof-of-concept models for postnatural assemblages that can serve conservationist efforts.