

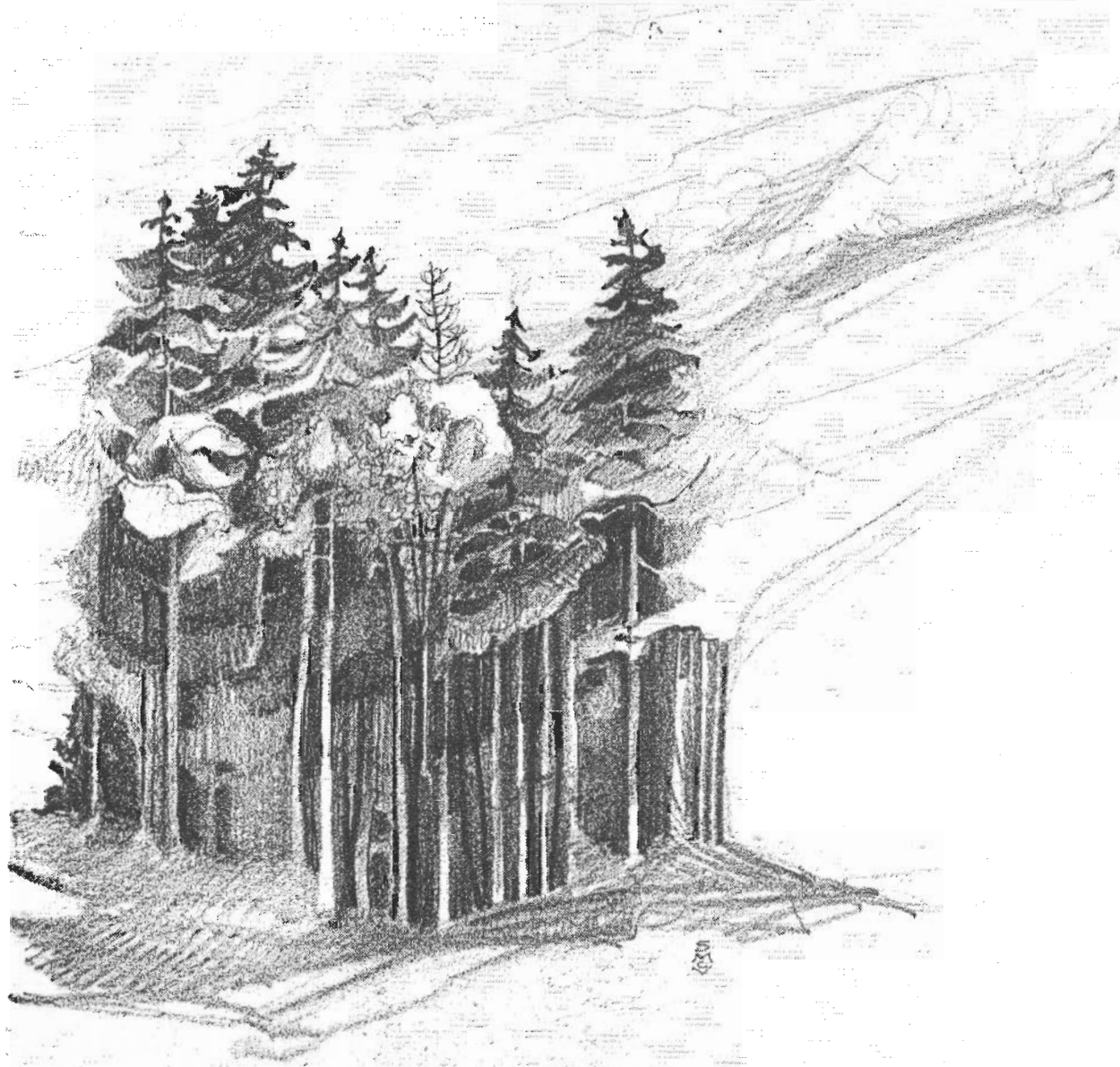
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MEANING, MAGIC, SPIRITUALITY, MYTH, AND ECOFEMINISM

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# THE TRUMPETER

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### Table of Contents

MEANING, ECOCENTRISM AND ECOSOPHY . . . . .	Alan R. Drengson, Editor . . . . .	41
<i>MEANING, MAGIC, SPIRITUALITY AND MYTH</i>		
THE CREATION OF MEANING . . . . .	William H. Davis . . . . .	43
RE-EXAMINING THE MAGICAL WORLDVIEW: TOWARDS AN ECOLOGY OF PSYCHE AND WORLD . . . . .	Adrian Ivakhiv . . . . .	51
REFLECTIONS ON SPIRITUALITY AND MYTH . . . . .	Jim Cheney . . . . .	58
<i>ECOFEMINISM</i>		
ECOFEMINISM AND DEEP ECOLOGY: REFLECTIONS ON IDENTITY AND DIFFERENCE . . . . .	Marti Kheel . . . . .	62
AN ECOFEMINIST CRITIQUE OF MANSTREAM PLANNING . . . . .	Janis Birkeland . . . . .	72
ECOLOGICAL FEMINISM: DRAWING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE OPPRESSION OF WOMEN, ANIMALS, AND NATURE . . . . .	Susan Yeich . . . . .	84
ECOFEMINISM, PATRIARCHAL CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS, AND OLD MEMORIES . . . . .	Molly Baer Kramer . . . . .	88
ECOFEMINISM AND ITS DISCONTENTS: NOTES TOWARD A POLITICS OF DIVERSITY . . . . .	Kate Sandilands . . . . .	90

## MEANING, ECOCENTRISM AND ECOSOPHY

Alan R. Drengson, Editor

Two central themes run through this issue of *The Trumpeter*. The first is the meaning of life and meaningful action. The second is the role which sexual identification plays in interfering with or promoting a sense of meaning which is ecocentric, and therefore ecosophic. Ecosophy is ecological wisdom characterized by harmonious dwelling in our places which include all of our relationships, both human and non-human.

The question of meaning has been considered by followers of the deep ecology movement in relation to ecosophy realized through the widest possible extension of identification. As Arne Naess has said, if we do not hate ourselves, i.e. are free from pathologies of incomplete self-development, we are able to expand our sense of identification to include all of our ecological relationships. This involves discovering and exploring the larger ecological Self. The followers of deep ecology have not explored in depth the forms of sexual identification which characterize contemporary Western society. Social ecologists have explored our culture's forms of hierarchy and domination, but

ecofeminists have explored and criticized the patriarchy inherent in these domination hierarchies.

While deep ecology, social ecology and ecofeminism share the same aspiration, to move to ecocentric, nondestructive life styles which are ecosophic and sustainable, there are, as mentioned above, differences between them with respect to emphasis. It is assumed in all of these that the most meaningful, satisfying and satisfactory forms of life are ecosophic; but what, in more detail, is ecosophy, and how is such a meaningful condition realized?

Ecofeminist analyses make clear the extent to which current practices are imbalanced in our social and cultural structures. These structures are characterized by strong emphasis upon definitions of masculinity which deny, ignore, and attempt to suppress the values of the feminine. Its definitions of masculinity and personhood are based on enculturated gender distinctions. These do not have an adequate equal appreciation of the negative and positive aspects of both the masculine and feminine principles. At a basic level male and female refer to the biology of

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sexual differentiation of mammalian life. However, gender is a culturally defined category, and is often confused with biological differentiation.

In cultures like ours, which have domination hierarchies (in contrast to primal cultures), gender definitions often exalt being male as embodying masculine principles, while the feminine ones are treated as inferior and are oppressed. Hence, if one is born a biological female, one will likely have a diminished sense of participation and worth in this society. And, if one is born male one might not accept and acknowledge one's own feminine aspects, since they are excluded from the definition of manhood. "Man" is here defined as the essence of full human realized by adult males. Full human-ness is identified with being male, where this sets off the masculine in opposition to the feminine. Masculine and feminine are thus seen as opposites, rather than complementaries. Under these conditions, the forms of identification and development of sense of self will proceed to stress strong differentiation based on gender, and membership in gender will carry privileges based on sexual identity.

The process of developing a sense of self (individuation) in such cultures as ours involves separation from the original matrix, the mother, in ways which are extreme for the male. The reason is that the female child does not have to establish a sense of self radically different from her mother, since both are female. The male child does, because he must develop a masculine, oppositional, gender identification. Ecofeminists claim that our culture is dominated by forms of gender bias which tilt strongly to a patriarchal, masculine definition of what is a worthy human. What is feminine is repressed by the male child and adult, and then projected onto what is seen as other, i.e. women and Nature. Male children and adults derive their sense of worth and meaning through a process of separation emphasizing the heroic, which goes away from Nature toward rational-cognitive forms of power. It is these which modern technological society uses to subdue and control all which is other than those valued by patriarchy, that is, all of our affective and intuitive powers as well as wild Nature.

The desire of the boy to become a man is a natural one. However, our culture provides males with a definition of manhood which requires that they deny their gentle and affective sides. Hunting provides a clear example of this process. When I was a boy, most of the men and older boys I knew were hunters and fishermen. When I was quite young, my father took me hunting and fishing in the company of other men and boys. I recall being horrified at the violence and cruelty of both activities. The fish in the water were so beautiful, the ducks and birds so mysterious and glorious in their flight and feathers, the deer so soft and gentle. As a child I was not allowed to express my nurturing or caring feelings, either by playing with dolls or stuffed animals, or by refusing to hunt and fish. All forms of "weakness" such as crying or expressing tender feelings were considered unworthy of a man. The dominant masculine culture led me to repress my grief, pain and affection, and I reached adulthood with divided energies and a numbed psyche. My personal history as a male is not idiosyncratic in our society. This process of repression, I later realized, is a pathological one. It was only through reclaiming the buried aspects of myself that I was able to move toward wholeness. Integrated human wholeness is not characterized by alienation and denial, or by creation and projection of a shadow (the repressed, internalized hurts, distresses and denied aspects of self) onto others.

If we do not reach adulthood as fully integrated, whole persons, then we will likely identify with a sense of personal self sharply differentiated along sexual lines as dictated by our culture. If we then attempt to extend our sense of identification, we risk falling into the pathologies of identification about which ecofeminists warn. To extend our ego identifications to other humans and Nature will then involve us in delusions, for the "oneness" we attain will be merely the fantasies of the ego wrestling with the denial of its own repressed shadow. The result will be that we will not be able to come closely into relationships with others in all their unique subjectness. These others will remain objects for us; we will continue to manipulate them and to deny our own larger Self so as to carry out the ego's projects. Most adults and children in our culture carry heavy loads of pain and anger. The internalization of childhood injury, pain and distress, accumulates as an unconscious burden which weighs down our lives, saps our energies, divides our efforts, and makes meaningful, total participation in a spontaneous, open and creative life almost impossible.

The world is endlessly rich in possibilities for creating meaningful and fulfilling lives. But to be able to enter the ecosophic dimensions of full participation with the whole world -- co-creation of meaningful stories as part of larger cosmological tales -- we must first recover our own wholeness. So we must work to heal ourselves, our relationships to other humans and to Nature. This work must go forward on all dimensions. The healing process is a therapeutic one which we share with other aware persons who give us their full attention, as we in turn give them ours.

Taking up spiritual disciplines involves moving from the personal to the transpersonal. It is in the transpersonal domain -- when free of the pathologies of self identity -- that the fullest creation of meaning becomes possible. The articles on meaning, magic and spiritual discipline speak to the transpersonal dimensions. The articles on ecofeminism call us to heal and rid ourselves of repression and gender bias so that we can create new cultural practices free of patriarchy and all other forms of domination. Ecofeminist literature shows, as noted above, that we cannot take up authentic spiritual paths without attending to the unfinished business of what it is to be a self in our society. This unfinished business is part of our legacy. The environmental crisis is a crisis of culture and character precisely because it is created by the pathologies of character and culture which are mutually supporting and interacting, and which flow across generations. The pathologies of self are karmic burdens from the past; to free ourselves of these burdens requires participating in therapeutic processes which engage our whole being.

Our actions and creations are reflections of who and what we are. Our practices and technologies are destructive because they accurately reflect the pathologies and confused sense of meaning inherited and perpetuated day by day. The wholesome and integrated character and culture is ecocentric. Such a culture and person can learn from the wisdom of all beings, can care for and respect them, and so can create activities, processes and appropriate practices which are fully ecosophic. Ecosophic persons and cultures are balanced between the masculine and the feminine principles and are neither patriarchal nor matriarchal. Because they are balanced, integrated and whole, they have no need to control and repress their own feelings, nor to control and oppress other humans and Nature. They are able to "let beings be."

## THE CREATION OF MEANING

William H. Davis

### The World as Indeterminate

Is life a pointless, fruitless exercise in which we come into the world, stir around for a while, bring others into the world that they may also stir around, and then all vanish without a trace? Or is it part of a vast cosmic drama in which what happens in each life is of eternal significance? Or is it something between these two extremes, with no eternal significance but with meaning and point of sufficient psychological weight to make each life seem worthwhile to the subject? Since we have no sure knowledge of the ultimate nature of things, all positions on the question of the real meaning of life must necessarily be pretty much a matter of faith. Since it is a matter of faith, and since each of us is entitled to his own, I would like to set forward a possible approach to the issue which has some appeal. In short, that approach is: there is no one answer to the question of the meaning of life, but meaning is created by individual faiths and come true for the individual to the extent of molding and making even the objective world around him to some degree. Meaning is created and creates its own world and its own fulfillment.

Many people, not willing to go that far, take a somewhat agnostic position which makes a good deal of sense, at least initially. They say we do not know whether the world has some grand design behind it which gives it transcendent meaning, and we can probably never know this, certainly not soon. But it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter because living intensely and well here and now is our plain duty as well as our joy. A human who does this has fulfilled his duty to this life and has at the very same time prepared himself for any afterlife and any grand developments on the other side, if there are to be such. Living well here is the best preparation for living well hereafter. That being the case, we may remain agnostic on difficult religious and metaphysical issues, confident that if we do well here we will enjoy the present satisfaction of conscience and we will have nothing to dread hereafter. As I gather, this is something like Confucius's view, and it makes sense to many people. Christians are reluctant to accept this compromise position because they believe it is vitally important to establish by faith a personal relationship with the Creator here, and that it may be too late to attempt to do so on the other side. But even Christians would gladly endorse the idea that everyone should live as integrally and conscientiously as possible in this life and should avoid evil as much as possible. This is true for many reasons, not the least of which is the general Christian faith that people who sincerely follow conscience are on a road which will finally lead to their becoming Christians. Beyond that, of course, Christianity is not so foreign to all normal human ways of thinking (Calvinism apart) as not to value goodness and disvalue evil just as do most all other major religions and philosophies. In any case most

everyone would agree upon the application of certain basic moral values to this life, regardless of what may come after this life. Almost everyone would agree that human's ought to live with intensity, with a strong devotion to the basic values of kindness, helpfulness, sincerity, openness to apparent truth, etc. Hardly anyone would approve a life given over to self-deception, cruelty, pettiness, animal sensuality, etc. Whatever man's cosmic situation may be, certain approaches to life are almost universally approved and others disapproved. The strength, depth, and universality of this agreement is noteworthy and is itself an important clue as to the nature of man. But that is another story.

Our own view is also a sort of intermediate view on the question of the meaning of life. It is a somewhat mystical view hinted at by many philosophers, but fully developed by none. It is the position that human faith is to some large extent creative of reality. According to this view, what a man believes about his life, including its meaning, tends to become true for him. I would elaborate in a general and non-technical way upon this view, and propose it as a deeper and more sensible approach to the problem of the meaning of life than its competitors. To elaborate and defend it in detail would be a life's work. It is an approach originated by William James and F.C.S. Schiller and some existentialists, but they seldom make it clear how far they are willing to go along these lines. At the minimum we all recognize that a man who is fully persuaded of some view of life and who orders his life with complete commitment around his view makes that view subjectively true for himself. He interprets everything according to his perspective, and that perspective becomes true for him. We know moreover that seldom can anything happen which will conclusively refute any human's overview of the world. Every specific thing that happens can be fit into any interpretation of the overall scheme of things. Even scientific theories of any great generality are not always abandoned because of apparently disconfirming experience. All the more so are metaphysical and cosmological speculations able to accommodate specific experiences. The world gladly endures any interpretation which is placed upon it. Even the interpretations of madmen can be rigged by a series of ad hoc hypotheses to fit any experience. Pragmatists mistakenly believe that pain is the world's sure signal that we are on the wrong track. That oversimplifies their case somewhat, but that is the essence of their position. Unfortunately there are different types of pain: physical, emotional, intellectual, moral. There are corresponding types of "workings", and some ideas may work in some respects and not in others. The pragmatist supposes that we can tell the "false" by what does not "work", and of course we can only tell what does not work by the signal of either pain or the absence of the relief or pleasure we were hoping for. But no kind

of pain (except moral "pain") is an infallible signal of falsity. No interpretation of the world is conclusively refuted by its failure to "work" or by its production of pain. Some pains are growing pains. Some pains have to be pushed through till the goal is finally achieved. If all pain was forthwith taken as a sign of error, hardly anything long-term could be accomplished. So there is no sure signal of a wrong interpretation of the world (except the signal of moral discomfort--a theme for another discussion). So the world remains intrinsically vague and subject to almost any interpretation. If a human wholly commits himself to some interpretation, then the world may take on that aspect to him so vividly that for him it becomes as true as true can be, even if the world is not "really" that way--a thing impossible to prove in any case.

The impossibility, however, of speaking intelligibly of what the world is "really" like leaves open a final possibility. The world might not be "really like" anything. It might be intrinsically vague. At the extreme, we might find that faith could be creative of the "objective" situation. We might find that what we believe to be true really does tend to become true. One could argue for example that all human works, whether cities, artistic and intellectual creations, personal relations, etc., are the objective manifestations of prior human faiths. At the very maximum, it is even conceivable that people survive death if they believe they will, meet God if they believe they will, find themselves in a grand new life if they believe they will, etc., and not otherwise. "As is your faith, so be it unto you", said Jesus--perhaps the first and most notable advocate of the creative power of the believing attitude. Conceivably what people earnestly commit themselves to may become true for them, or at least tend to, not merely subjectively, but "objectively"--whatever that word might finally be determined to mean.

If anything like this is true, it would mean the failure of many philosophical presuppositions. In particular it would mean the failure of the idea that reality is some one thing, some one way, waiting patiently to be uncovered, discovered, and passively examined. On the pragmatic and existentialist and process view, reality is more to be made than to be discovered. Truth is not one, but many. Man participates in the creation of the universe and of himself and even possibly God. Plainly, the thesis would also mean that the philosophers' preoccupation with knowing, with proof, with reservation of judgment, would be a misplaced emphasis. There would, of course, remain a place for such things in math, in technology, etc., but as an approach to the major issues of life, it would be misplaced. Rather, the meaning of life and the primary effort of life, on this view, is to participate in the creation of the universe, to create a world with meaning and significance or lacking them. No more vast or more challenging or more morally appropriate meaning, I dare say, can be imagined. It is a view worth considering on the basis of its uniqueness and boldness alone.

Besides the pragmatists, the existentialists go a long way down this road. Their doctrine that man may be characterized by his pure freedom of choice has radical consequences not unlike those I affirm. For the existentialists man simply is what he chooses to be. There is no given truth about man; that truth is not to be found but created. Created by man. Not only man, but also man's world is exactly what man chooses for it to be, within certain possible limits of unknown extent. The existentialists are not concerned with alleged objective evidence bearing upon the supposed actual constitution of the world since they correctly

understand that our standards of evidence and probability are themselves freely chosen and must necessarily be so. A full appreciation of this latter fact, manifest once understood, has devastating consequences for all objectivist philosophies.

For the existentialists, therefore, we human beings choose our view of life, the world, ourselves, others. We choose in the absence of any standard of choice, and all choices are essentially arbitrary. I would wish sometime to elaborate on the notion of arbitrariness since I believe we are saved from arbitrariness by an authoritative inner conviction of right and wrong which serves as our final criterion. But that would be a controversial thesis, and for the present I will let it pass. In general, however, our freedom of choice about how we view life and the nature of man is of supreme importance.

But the existentialists, as radical as they are, do not go so far as to say that what men believe to be so tends actually to become so--literally, objectively so. It was James who suggested this alarming possibility. James suggested that belief tends to create reality, not just subjective reality, but objective or at least inter-subjective reality. The existentialists go so far as to say that men are interpreters of the world, but typically draw back from saying men are creators of the world, though they are not far from saying that since for them, objective reality is pretty much swallowed up in subjectivity.

The relevance of the existentialist theme for our present topic is plain. By free choice men create a perspective on the world. This perspective then becomes true for the individual. Thus, the meaning of life becomes the exact meaning that a human believes it has. If a human believes life has no meaning, then it may finally have none. If a human holds to a limited meaning, such as the accumulation of wealth, then he gets that significance, but no other or more significance. We see all around us limited examples of this principle at work. It is tempting to extrapolate from these limited samples.

We cannot deny the moral appropriateness and even the aesthetic neatness of the notion that men finally lie in the bed they have made. To what extent this power of making, of creation goes beyond the creation of a purely subjective world and may extend to the alteration of "objective" reality--if indeed that distinction is defensible<sup>1</sup>--I cannot say. The extent to which our beliefs may be efficacious in the creation of the world is at present unknown, but belief is creatively efficacious to some extent. It is almost certainly the greater as it is believed to be greater, and may go beyond what anyone has ever imagined. Once the principle is admitted that faith creates reality, the question of degree is of secondary importance since even a small degree can, with leverage, have powerful repercussions. The deepest study of themes related to those suggested here can be found in Owen Barfield's *Saving the Appearances*:

[W]e saw at the beginning of this book how, in order that the world of appearances may arise, it is not enough for the sense alone to be added to the unrepresented. That world depends no less on man's figuration; and, with that, also on his imagination. It is because imagination participates the creative activity in this way that it has itself been dimly felt to be, and described as, 'creative.' We saw...how this means that the future of the phenomenal world can no longer be regarded as entirely independent of man's volition.<sup>2</sup>



## Men as Gods

The reason we have so much trouble understanding the world or understanding the nature of man is that at the bottom level there is no determinate, formed, finished thing there to be understood. If the world or if man is something to be made, then it is not primarily something to be understood, and we have been misconstruing our task. Consider this example. Imagine a highly talented songwriter who is known for not repeating himself but for taking off in new directions. Now let us set ourselves the task of "understanding" how this human composes. Let us attempt to understand so well how he does what he does that we can predict his new direction, and may be even predict the melody of his next song. For scientists, the proof of understanding is supposed to be prediction, so we will follow their lead here. But clearly, if I could understand the writer's mind and workings to the extent of anticipating his next tune, then I could write and publish that tune myself. In such a case, to understand would be the equivalent of creating. The reason I cannot understand a writer to the extent postulated is simply that there is nothing antecedently there to be understood. What the human will write next does not exist and one can neither understand what does not exist nor fully understand the processes now at work which will eventually yield novel results. The results would not be novel in that case.

If the world is a determined mechanism, as probably most philosophers suppose it is, then of course they are right in aspiring to understand it. Machines are understandable. If people are basically machines, they are also understandable. But if people are embodiments of the creative process, then their job is more to create than to investigate. Suppose Mozart had spent his life trying to understand himself, or even trying to understand his creative powers? If the world is a machine, then we may strive to comprehend it. On the other hand, if the universe is at bottom more like a blank canvas, then our job is something else entirely.<sup>3</sup> Our job is to strive by thought, word, deed, and imagination to create the best world possible. By best I mean a world we feel ought to exist, not necessarily what we might most want. (I don't therefore mean a world in which I were king, but rather, for example, a world in which justice were sure to triumph.) We would then act in faith as if the world were indefinitely improvable, or as if it were in some sense already perfect, properly interpreted.

The position we are here contemplating, although obviously sympathetic to all forms of Christianity, must demur from some of the more mechanical, legalistic, wooden interpretations which are prevalent. It was Jesus himself who reiterated from the Old Testament a powerful saying which is in effect the theme of this discussion. Speaking of men, Jesus says, "You are gods".<sup>4</sup> This passage, quoted by Jesus without any qualification, is obviously meant to go even beyond the description of man as "in the image of God". It says in effect that man's place in the universe is all but that of God and can hardly be exaggerated. This view of man is obviously incompatible with notions of man as an agent meant to do little more than keep rules on pain of punishment and in hope of a happy reward for successfully negotiating all the instructions. This position, far from making man a worm abjectly cowering before a tyrannical God, represents a true humanism far beyond the dreams of the "secular humanist". The humanist insofar as he exalts man is right, but his doing so is utterly devoid of theoretical foundation. His doing so rests upon a (correct) primitive instinct of man's transcendent value. This instinct

quite overcomes the (incorrect) logic of his position otherwise.

Furthermore, Christianity is criticized for supposing the world to have a preestablished destiny. But to say that there is a design behind the world, that there are pre-given purposes, to have a teleological world-view, is not automatically to have a simple-minded view of such purpose and design. The purpose and design may involve at least in part the further creation of the purpose and design of the universe. To say that there is a pre-given purpose and design does not mean things are planned out to the extent of a predestination the equivalent of mechanical determinism. As Bergson pointed out, teleology can easily be the mere functional equivalent of determinism. Hazel Barnes, criticizing Christianity on this score, writes,

... if the belief in any such authority and plan is sufficiently specific to be more than a proud hope, it must be restrictive as well. [Man] is not free to bring anything new into the world. His possibilities are those of a slave or a well bred child. ... Man in the theological framework of the medieval man-centered Universe has only the dignity of the child, who must regulate his life by the rule laid down by adults. The human adventure becomes a conducted tour.<sup>5</sup>

I cannot say that this line of thought does any great credit to the critic's power of imagination. True, one can perversely plan every sentence of a conversation or every move one will make in another person's company. But one can also plan to have a good, creative spontaneous visit. One can plan to write a great symphony in advance of all details. The plan and purpose for man may be to live in creative, developing, challenging communion with God and other creatures. The plan and design may be for man to be a god-like creator, using the powers of imagination and choice, the sense of better and worse, to make and inhabit by faith the best of all possible worlds. Even unlearned Christians are hardly guilty of such a dull interpretation of Christianity as the critic imagines.

Christianity, although expressing nothing in philosophical terms, plainly conceives of God in part as the power behind things which makes for freedom, possibility and opportunity. Opportunity for what? For whatever is chosen. He is Himself opportunity, no more definable than any individual human is definable. Just as men are "walking contradictions, partly truth and partly fiction", indeterminate, filled with potential, partly made by themselves, partly made by the actions and beliefs of those around them, partly really what they believe themselves to be, so God Himself can best be conceived as pure freedom, wholly indeterminate, always making, never made, in creative intercourse with every individual in the universe. God, like human, is what He chooses to be. "Behold the goodness and the severity of God", said Paul, meaning that God has different aspects in different circumstances. "As you have judged, so you will be judged", said Jesus, which I take to mean we are in the process of making not only ourselves but we are also making the judge of our work. When asked His name, God cryptically replied, "I Am that I Am". I interpret this phrase to mean, what I am told the original Hebrew allows, "I am whatever the occasion calls for", or better yet, "I am whatever the occasion calls out". Just as the lowly electron is changed by being observed so that its reality is utterly perceiver-dependent and cannot be grasped independent of that relation, and just as we ourselves are changed and made in our dealings with others, so

also God's nature and reality is partly in the eye of each beholder, and cannot be defined in terms universally applicable, except possibly in the term "freedom". God responds to us and is partly made by us in terms of our approach to Him, our beliefs about Him, or in other words, in terms of our faith.

The Bible may or may not be a true revelation. What the priests and preachers commonly say and believe may or may not be on the right track. The esoteric speculations of the theologians and philosophers on the subject of God and related issues may or may not prove helpful or accurate. But what is important, what is central to the human condition, what will preoccupy men's minds as long as the earth stands, is this question, May we hope for the Best? I capitalize the word Best because at its core its central meaning is synonymous with the term God. This is why the question of the existence of God is so central to philosophy. What will fascinate men always is the possibility, if only the bare possibility, that everything is somehow for the best, that when all is understood, this is the best of all possible worlds. For most people a positive answer to that question is equivalent to the affirmation of God's existence. The reason is plain. By God we refer to a supposed free, creative, personal, loving Spirit behind the visible universe, a Spirit devoted without reservation to love, goodness, mercy and justice, and powerful enough to insure the final triumph of these maximum goods. Human curiosity is so strong, human hopes are so high, the human imagination is so powerful, that man will always contemplate with fascination and longing the possibility that the absolute extreme of the Best might be true or might become true. The hypothesis of God is an inevitable extrapolation from all the partial goods in our experience to the idea of all these goods combined and maximized. (The idea of God is also the outgrowth of certain fundamental logical conceptions, in particular the idea of logical necessity, as Charles Hartshorne has extensively argued.<sup>6</sup>) "What may we hope for?" is one of three fundamental questions of philosophy which Kant correctly identified. May we hope for the Best? Kant thought so, as do I. It is widely considered manly and strong to believe the worst; silly and delusional to believe the best. As is often the case, however, in matters of human opinion, a contrary approach is in order.

Many readers will be shocked to see the phrase, "the best of all possible worlds". Voltaire, angry at happy people, mocked human hopes in his ironic use of this phrase. Though few now have the nerve to use the phrase, all who believe in God are implicitly affirming some variation on the theme of best of all possible worlds. To believe in God is to believe that things are for the best. Now the grotesque sufferings and injustices of the visible world are hidden from no one. What is in question is whether the suffering may serve a purpose, may be somehow redeemed, whether some sense may be found in it all or made out of it all, whether some grand scheme is being worked out in which we would rejoice with amazement if we could see it. The idea of "best" in the phrase "best world" has many possible meanings. If it must mean, "excluding all pain and injustice", then of course this cannot be counted as the best world--barely a good one in fact. But if it means, "where all evils are redeemable", or if it means, "where indefinite improvement is possible", or better yet if it were to mean, "where each agent has the option of choosing and making the best", then the world may actually be the best possible one. Voltaire assumed a simple-minded interpretation of the word "best". His interpretation is of

course preposterous, but has proven to be a strangely effective straw man.

### The Failure of Objectivity

One need not be an enemy of the views I have outlined here to wonder if there is any proof for them beyond my mere assertion, if there is any evidence whatever that a position so . . . so . . . unmechanical might be true. Of course there are many examples of the creative power of faith that could be taken from common experience. Several such have been adduced long ago by James and others. Admittedly, however, our thesis, as a metaphysical principle of great generality, extrapolates far beyond easy cases of businessmen with faith who thus saved their enterprises. But rather than argue here in detail for the thesis--not that I despair of doing so--I would offer some counter questions. The following questions bear significantly upon any request for proof of any cosmology. Where exactly do our standards of proof come from? How are those standards themselves justified? What relation exists between our broadest interpretation of the world and our idea of what constitutes proof? Is there any proof, any evidence at all that any alternative position to the one I suggest might be true, even the most pedestrian of the alternative positions? Are there policy or methodological considerations which might incline us to act as if some overview were true, even in admitted ignorance of its truth? What constraints on our beliefs do we feel ourselves morally obliged to respect, and why? If moral obligation presses standards of belief upon us, may it not press upon us also specific beliefs not at the level of standards? Are not our standards of proof part and parcel of our overview of the nature of the world and hence hypothetical postulations, not themselves subject to proof nor proper criteria for judging of overviews, such as the one of which they are a part? Deliberate consideration of these hard questions will go a long way toward opening the door to interpretations of the universe less mechanical and less wooden than those now popular among intellectuals.

Even existentialists, who are supposed to accept the idea that all human standards of thought are chosen, are caught up in current intellectual trends to the extent of thinking some situations are objectively likely or not. Hazel Barnes makes it plain that she thinks it "unlikely that man will be remembered", as if our freedom of interpretation is bounded by some objective, non-chosen measure of likelihood. More critically, concerning man's many interpretations of the world, she accepts the all-important premise that "an impersonal Universe cannot sustain these subjective structures".<sup>7</sup> She is dedicated to a naturalistic interpretation of the world (though she makes an obvious and strange exception in favor of human freedom), and she does not recognize that her commitment to these premises is a free choice, not based on scientific proofs or anything of the kind. I would ask with all urgency, "Who has any "objective" measure of the likelihood or unlikelihood that this is an "impersonal Universe" which cannot sustain our "subjective structures"? Many choose to believe as she does; many choose to believe the evidence favors that view. But these are all themselves freely chosen views and freely chosen views of what the evidence indicates and freely chosen views of what constitutes evidence. When existentialists begin to talk of likelihood, probability, and evidence they betray a none too firm grasp of their own premise of human freedom, according to which all such criteria are



chosen. Whether the universe can sustain man's subjective structures is a fundamental question involving an overall interpretation of things that goes beyond standards of evidence and other alleged props for objectivity which themselves derive from other, competing, chosen interpretations of the world.

So we have existentialists, whose official position is that all human beliefs, perspectives, standards of evidence--everything whatsoever, is a matter of pure free choice, talking as if it were somehow a proven objective fact that the universe is a purposeless machine and human life finite. Exercising his pure freedom of choice, Albert Camus chose to believe that "men secrete the inhuman", and that "at the heart of all beauty lies something inhuman", that when we sometimes see people as pure machines, those are our particular "moments of lucidity".<sup>8</sup> What a clever choice of perspectives! What an imaginative exercise of one's freedom of choice! "The worm is in man's heart", is the solemn interpretation of the human situation by this famous man.

I have more sympathy for naturalists who at least believe they are following the best available "objective" evidence when they conclude the world is at the mercy of its mechanical aspects, ignoring that on that hypothesis their own thoughts are also. Richard Taylor, for example, at least believes he is leaning on science when he writes, "This life of the world thus presents itself to our eyes as a vast machine, feeding on itself, running on and on forever to nothing. And we are part of that life".<sup>9</sup> Taylor knows that men differ somewhat from the other animals, but he believes that most of the alleged differences are simply "invented". If he only knew it, our standards of evidence, our current scientific theories, our philosophical, and scientific generalizations are all equally human productions, got up for certain practical, intellectual, emotional, cultural, moral purposes. The view of man as an accident and a monkey, a part of the vast machine of nature, is also "invented". Few philosophers of science nowadays believe man has a handle on objectivity, but many intellectuals persist in assuming a mechanical universe based on presumed objective results of science.

Similarly, the notion has gained wide currency that science has made impossible any view of the universe which involves purpose. Somehow from the fact that the physical world and the human body are mechanical in nature or have mechanical aspects, the conclusion is supposed to follow that the universe can not involve any grand design, that things that happen happen only because they have mechanical causes and can not have any purpose, and even--in extreme cases--that human activity is mechanically conditioned and does not and cannot involve genuine purpose. This is of course a hopeless non sequitur. That the world has a mechanical aspect is apparent and denied by no one. What is at question is whether there are purposes being worked out in, through, and behind the mechanism of the world as there are in, through and behind the mechanism of our bodies. Nothing in science bears upon this question. Besides, every new advance in physics reveals matter to be less "mechanical" than had been imagined previously. It has become notoriously hard to distinguish the philosophical reflections of physicists from those of Oriental mystics. In any case, science has not revealed anything and probably can not in principle reveal anything which would make it either more or less likely that the world serves some purpose or aims at some grand end. Science studies the material framework of the universe. As such it does not look up to see if a drama is being performed on the material stage. The idea that science has discredited the notion of a drama being

worked out is a totally elementary mistake, but by being made so often has apparently convinced many people.

## Problems

The most pressing and telling objection against the view advocated here is simply that on the face of it the world does not mold itself in conformity with human hopes and dreams. On the whole the world is a hard, indifferent thing. No doubt there are limited areas where human faith exercises a making function. In matters of health, of personal achievement, of interpersonal relations, etc., what men really are convinced of does tend to become true. But even in those cases faith is frustrated more often than not by unyielding realities. Also, while admitting that faith is a necessary ingredient in human's efforts to understand the world and manipulate the world, that does not mean faith is creating the world in any interesting sense. It means only that faith, or really rational hope, is necessary to find ways to deal with and use a world that insists upon being met on its own terms and does not yield to human faiths except on its own terms. The suggestion that the world is somehow "plastic" to human faiths, to use James' and Schiller's word, is not justified by the facts. To the contrary, the only faith that has proved profitable is to give up hope of magic and submit ourselves scrupulously to the hard laws of nature and govern our lives in accord with those laws, looking for no mercy, no yielding by nature.

I am not blind to the plausibility of this speech. But it derives its plausibility by concentrating on the material world. It admits much truth to my position in the psychological realm-- though even there it concentrates on presumed and heretofore limits-- but it rejects altogether the notion that human faith might have a molding power on the physical world or the non-psychological realm. Regarding the physical world, I would make two points. The physical world can be as hard as hard can be. The physical world is not our primary consideration. Part and parcel of any overview like mine is that matter is little more than a stage upon which the play is being performed. Understanding matter and manipulating it are not activities of high priority when the human condition is properly understood. When people say that we lie on the bed we make, no one but philosophers would think immediately of material beds. It is heaven and hell that we are creating by the stance we take toward the issues of life. To put the issue in its broadest outline, it is something like this: we create heaven for ourselves, both here and hereafter, by learning the positive virtues--learning to appreciate and take joy in what is at hand, learning to give and to love, learning to rejoice in the joy of others, learning to be fascinated and curious, learning to live with zest, in short, by moving toward God. We create hell by going in the other direction. When I said we make even God by our faiths, I meant, at a minimum, that the evil person retreats so far from light and love and life that God becomes as non-existent for him. But it is not God who is disappearing. As people retreat from life and light they approach a vanishing point and may even achieve the complete annihilation that so many already devoutly believe in. A contrary direction has the contrary effects. As one partakes more deeply of life, it becomes eternal, God grows larger and more real as the prime Source.

When Jesus said if we had faith as a grain of mustard seed, we could cause mountains to leap into the sea, no sensible person has rejected the statement on the ground that all known mountains have remained in place. But even regarding matter, we do

not know enough about the fundamental inner nature of matter to be sure it is not psychical in nature and subject to mental influences. It is evidently so in the brain. So although my thesis pertains to what I take to be ultimate, i.e., spiritual reality, it may and I suspect does relate also to some unknown extent to material reality. And as Schiller has pointed out, our working assumption should be that the extent is enormous. It is methodologically sound to suppose that we have not yet found quite the key to making mountains leap into the sea rather than to suppose it is impossible. When we suppose things to be impossible, we bar the door to investigation and potential discovery. Even naturalists hope for anti-gravity devices.

A second major problem with the "creation of reality" thesis is that it seems to leave the door open for wishful and self-deceptive thinking at their worst. Philosophers are traumatized by the very idea of wishful thinking. It is their unforgivable sin. They see it as the chief barrier to man's advancement-- intellectual, practical, and probably even moral advancement. If man's logic is corrupted, how can man hope for movement toward truth? In this line of thought are several questionable assumptions--two chiefly: that truth is discovered and not created, and that truth is achieved by reasoning instead of by prayer, moral development, spiritual growth, or on some other way. Yet, rather than pursuing those ideas, I think it is obvious that some clear distinction must be made between a faith that hopes for and helps create the best and a mere self-indulgent thinking. This is a problem that would require some considerable thought, more than can be undertaken here. But I can indicate briefly what I take to be the key to the solution of the problem. The difference between faith and self-deception hinges upon the approval of conscience. It is a moral distinction, and usually clear. Positive hopes are not things we merely want regardless of all else, but are things we may rightly want. We entertain positive hopes with a clear conscience. If a human has signs of a bad disease, he may lie to himself about those signs in a cowardly fashion. The moral unworthiness of this approach can be discerned in the man's own moral awareness if he chooses to listen. A person with identical signs, facing them straight forwardly, but hoping for the best, and dealing with the signs in whatever way he conscientiously deems best--even if that involved "faith healing" or whatever--that would be free of the opprobrium of "self-deception" or even of "wishful thinking" in any noxious sense. Everyone is entitled to hope, but no one is entitled to lie to himself.

Actually, the main obstacle to my thesis, apart from the apparent hardness of the world, is probably no argument at all but a strong feeling based upon current cultural pressures that the view is simply fantastic and intrinsically implausible. What strikes people as intrinsically plausible nowadays--and none more so than that great number of the intelligentsia who are always bringing up the rear following outdated scientific conceptions, is the idea of a mechanical world, churning out accidental events, going nowhere except possibly downhill, coming from . . . well, we haven't the faintest idea where, except that it surely does not derive from a creative Spirit. I am not so foreign to my culture and time that I cannot feel the attractiveness, if one may refer to it so, of such a view. But I have read a few books on modern developments in physics. What I read there takes my breath away. The basic structure of the material world, upon close examination, appears fantastic in a way that sends the imagination reeling. Complexity piled upon complexity, paradox upon paradox, wonder upon wonder, layer upon layer

of the unexpected. No fiction writer could have made such a weird projection of these results of science, nor would he have been taken seriously, even aesthetically, had he done so. An important doctrine of modern quantum mechanical theory is this. The whole of the perceived universe is indeterminate regarding its position in space-time until it is observed. At the time of its observation it "condenses out" and takes on definiteness. The act of observation is the precipitating factor causing the physical world to collapse from mere waves of probability into an actual, determinate world. So far as we now understand physics, this is literally true. The potential physical and philosophical ramifications of this doctrine are enormous and largely unexplored. It makes more plausible the various forms of philosophical idealism. And it gives us some hesitation about dismissing conceptions as "fantastic". And I would say, therefore, that the "creation" hypothesis we have been discussing does not go all that far beyond what the most sober of modern physicists are saying.

There have always been people, even from ancient times, who viewed the world as a purposeless machine. Such a view is not new. But it has gained a stronghold in modern times primarily among intellectuals. In reality, however, the material world at its lower depths goes, in its subtlety and complexity, to the edge of human ability to understand. We have physics itself to thank for opening our eyes to the breathtaking subtlety of "matter", to the intimate connection between the observer and the observed, to the creative, changing, making effects of our probing of nature. When physicists become reflective, they seldom speak in the dull, unimaginative language of the typical Anglo-American philosopher. Simply put, there is nothing whatever in modern science to hinder in the least any metaphysic, even the strangest and most bizarre of such. I would welcome a serious effort by someone to show the contrary, especially an effort showing some awareness of the actual results of modern science and showing some sympathetic feel for the real scientific enterprise. Only people who read nothing from the scientists and have no sympathetic feel for the real scientific enterprise, as contrasted to the shallow popularized versions of it, can be unaware of the freedom modern science gives to the metaphysician, but that unfortunately includes many people.

In any case, we simply do not have any objective criteria for judging between alternative interpretations of the world. Any such criteria which might be proposed would themselves be a central part of our interpretation of things. It is futile to decry one interpretation as less rational than another without an understanding of why one accepts rationality as a criterion or exactly what one means by it. To the extent that we accept the criterion of rationality we must recognize that that cannot be because we judge such an acceptance to be rational. Such a rationale would be circular and is plainly vetoed by rationality itself. Nor, contrary to common opinion, can the criterion of rationality be judged on pragmatic grounds. Technical success can be had with fundamentally flawed theory. Besides, the phrase "pragmatic success" is terribly vague and subject to many different interpretations. I have already commented that "failure", i.e., "pain" is unnecessary criterion of an unacceptable conception. No, to the extent we accept rationality as a criterion for judging between world-views, we do so really because we feel a moral obligation to do so. For myself, I have far less doubt of our moral obligation to do so. For myself, I have far less doubt of our moral obligation to do so. For myself, I have far less doubt of our moral obligation to do so. Solipsism is wonderfully rational. No one is more maddeningly

consistent than the intelligent madman, as G. K. Chesterton long ago observed. Nor are these general reflections on rationality to be taken as an admission that the cosmology I accept is any less "rational" than any alternative position might be. These reflections are only meant to highlight the presuppositional nature of our standards of reason and their derivation from our prior general interpretation of the world.

### Concluding Points/Compromise

The posit I wish to make, namely, that the Best may be or may come to be true, although itself a free act and technically speaking arbitrary, has behind it several considerations. It is as well supported by our usual standards of justification as are alternative views--in fact, much more supported than competing views if one takes into account all relevant elements of justification. It is justified first by our daily experience with the creative power of faith. It is justified by scientific and philosophical considerations showing that the world is partly if not wholly made by human observation and interpretation. It is justified in terms of its self-consistency, as contrasted to naturalistic views which finally must declare themselves to be the purely accidental disorgements of mechanical forces at work in the brain. It is justified in terms of its conformity to a powerful natural optimism about human destiny which makes it psychologically all but impossible for naturalists to accept fully the nihilism to which their premises clearly point. It is justified methodologically in that if we assume life to be pointless and accidental and temporal we will fail to act in the ways necessary to give our lives eternal significance and transcendent meaning if such are available. It is justified finally and most urgently by moral considerations: it is an interpretation of the world in accord with our deepest moral intuitions, putting justice at the heart of things, conforming with a deep-seated, powerful, intuitive conviction that each man's life is of enormous value and significance, and that the choices men make have transcendent importance, and that the world is a moral theater in which great issues are being made and worked out. Our thesis is therefore not lacking for support. These points and others are subject to intensive development. A cosmology must of course commend itself to our normal standards of judgment because those standards are ours, even if they themselves are chosen and are only aspects of a vague but presupposed cosmology already held in the back of our minds.

We have already seen that believers in a cosmology such as ours, and for that matter, all believers in God and in human transcendence--such believers are commonly reproached for licentious thinking, and self-deception. This reproach is of course *ad hominem* and unworthy. But if a believer were to hear this sort of reproach too often, he might well lose patience and respond unworthily himself with a speech along these lines:

"Really, nothing can be done for a man who deliberately chooses to believe the world will all come to nothing, or, what is the same thing, chooses to believe that the evidence points toward the conclusion that the world will come to nothing (for at bottom that is all it can be--a choice). I respect of course those people who conscientiously stick to what they believe to be high standards of evidence and who are honestly convinced that those standards have an origin On High and fail to see the presuppositional nature of those standards. I respect too their conscientious

conviction that hard and unpleasant conclusions follow from an allegiance to those standards, notwithstanding that I and many others see to our own full satisfaction that even granting normal standards of evidence, a good case can be made for a far more hopeful interpretation of the universe than they allow. But in writers of a skeptical turn I sometimes detect a different undertone. I see sometimes a barely controlled rage. It is a rage at happy people and at a world that fails to meet on its surface the wants and needs of mankind. I am naturally unable and unwilling to abandon my own hopeful view of the world. I cannot replace it with a dismal interpretation merely to placate the large number of sulkers and pouters and congenital pessimists who have, deliberately or not, misunderstood both the evidence and the standards of evidence and who have not mastered the full implications of the problem of the criterion. I cannot let my own views be dictated by the lowest common denominator of cognitive risk or by the many philosophers who are sulking in a corner, rationalizing their anger in the disguise of a love of wisdom, i.e., philosophy. It is perfectly obvious from common experience that there are many people of a peculiar cast of mind who cannot and will not be pleased under hardly any circumstances, who interpret all aspects of life in the least hopeful fashion, who habitually and chronically think the worst. It is bad enough to have to endure these people in daily life, much less to see philosophy half-dominated by clever and inventive people of this cast of mind. They occupy themselves with pretentious and jargon-filled essays on formal logic and standards of proof in which the hidden message, not hard to detect, is one of loathing of ordinary people and rage at people who live with joy and have faith in the goodness of the world. The preoccupation with standards of proof, the scientific method, formal logic, etc., notably devoid of results, is really by way of implied criticism of ordinary people and their hopes--notwithstanding the philosophers' complete inability to make any sense of their subject, to get beyond Hume or Sextus Empiricus or to draw lines that exclude the interpretations of happy people without excluding the few positive faiths that they themselves indulge: the validity of inductive and deductive reason, the morality of objectivity, etc."

Naturally I myself would not wish to make such a speech as this since it would show an attitude not markedly superior to the people inveighed against. But a man would be less than human if such thoughts did not cross his mind.

Finally, I would observe that the statement, "Whatever a man believes to be true, inclines to become true for him", which on my view is the key to understanding the meaning of life, need not be given quite as mystical an interpretation as I give it. There is available a much more naturalistic interpretation which is nearly the functional equivalent of my own interpretation. First I would comment that the line between a natural and a supernatural view of the world is not as clear as some suppose. Even on the supernatural view there are supposed to be certain "laws", certain principles of how things work, which, for whatever reason, are assumed to be unbreakable even if they are spiritual rather than mechanical in nature. Technically in that sense a miracle as a violation of the fundamental structure of things is never possible. On this view, what men call miracles are no violation of the fundamental structure of things, but mere manipulations of the physical world. On the naturalist view, similarly, there is at least a realization that we do not yet know

all the laws of nature and their full interrelationships. Things may be possible which seem to us now impossible. The realms of life, mind, "spirit"-- whatever they may prove to be exactly, are only feebly understood now, and a full understanding of them might well narrow the gap between the so-called naturalist and supernaturalist. There are philosophers such as Whitehead who are best described as naturalists, but whose understanding of the physical world is not "mechanical", and whose interpretation of the cosmos is broad enough to include much, if not all, that the supernaturalist claims is real. What this means is that our key conception, the notion that our faiths to some extent mold objective reality, which sounds supernaturalistic, could turn out to be true in ways that give little offense to the "naturalist", but are yet dramatic and fundamental in their repercussions.

In addition I would emphasize the following consideration. Many naturalists already believe something about the world which is, as I said, nearly the functional equivalent of what I mean when I say that even the most extravagant of faiths tend to create their own fulfillment. Many naturalists already believe that the world, although having no "supernatural" elements, is still complex beyond words and because of its complexity it is for practical purposes **infinitely manipulable**. The world is so complex and so full of potential combinations and recombinations of things, so amenable to arrangement and invention that there is absolutely no telling what may yet be invented, what may yet be possible. Science fiction reveals this naturalistic faith in its most exposed form. Consider a simple example. No naturalist is much pleased with the story of Jesus walking on the water. But practically all of them are intrigued with the idea of an anti-gravity device and would be highly reluctant to declare flatly and for eternity that nothing like that could ever be built. Many naturalists are intrigued with the idea of visiting extraterrestrials, and take seriously the idea of sending messages into outer space for any possible resident intelligences. So long as these are not called angels, the naturalists are very happy in their speculations. So long as gravity is defeated by a "device" rather than by "faith" they are willing to dream and hope along with the best of them. One observes that they dream even of conquering death. The anti-religious cast of the naturalist does not suffice fully to kill in him the same spring of hope and confidence in the future which lie behind religion. He might be alarmed and chagrined at my statement that belief creates reality to some degree, that faith is a fundamental ingredient in the making of the cosmos, but when we examine what he really thinks, we see his belief that the world is subject to arrangement and manipulation to such a vast extent that for all we can now tell everything is possible. So the most expansive of human hopes are justified. Most, I realize, would draw the line at survival of death and related matters. I would not therefore blur the lines completely between the naturalist and the supernaturalist. The naturalist supposes that the powers at work behind the universe which have yielded man are much less than man and are blind and mechani-

cal in nature. We call those powers God and posit creative freedom at the heart of things. We interpret the world in terms of its highest manifestations and take those as our clue to the fundamental nature of things rather than interpreting it in terms of its components. Still, I would draw attention to the considerable fundamental agreement in principle between the two views. A scheme like Whitehead's, for example, shows us how close naturalism and supernaturalism can be brought together, and makes considerable room for the creative power of human faith. The creation of meaning is a concept more neglected than refuted and more unwelcome in our culture than unlikely.

#### NOTES

1. For a recent, technical discussion of the making, creative power of the human mind at a level below even the subject-object distinction, see Colin Falck, "The Process of Meaning-Creation: A Transcendent Argument", *The Review of Metaphysics*, March 1985, Vol. XXXVIII, No. 3, pp. 503-528. "For all these reasons, and setting aside the passively-received-data prejudices of empiricism and the logical-organizing-of-passively-received-data prejudices of the **Critique of Pure Reason**, we have no alternative but to accept that there are in fact no neutral 'sensations' in the special philosophical sense of that word but only a pre-objective experience which is already imbued with (infused with, soaked with, animated by) latent meanings, and which (though in a less than conscious way) is already pre-subjectively structured as a result of our pre-conscious and pre-experiential embodiedness in the world which we perceive". (p. 512) "On this pre-articulate level, which is a level below subjectivity and objectivity, the way in which we articulate our experience may be governed by qualities in our disposition--such as spiritual authenticity, or the relative lack of it--which cannot themselves be explained in terms of such categories as 'passive experience' or 'will'." (p. 511)
2. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., n.d.), pp. 159f.
3. I do not mean to deny that the world is a machine at some level. Men are machines at some level with valves, tubes, levers, and complex bio-chemical structures. But the world may as much transcend its superficial mechanical aspects as a man does his.
4. John 10:34f. See Psalm 82:6.
5. **An Existentialist Ethic** (N.Y.: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1967), quoted in **The Meaning of Life**, Steven Sanders and David R. Cheney, eds. (EnglewoodCliffs, N.J., 1980), p. 109.
6. See Charles Hartshorne, **The Divine Relativity** (New Haven: Yale-University Press, 1948). "I am confident that the theistic question will be rationally settled when, if ever, it becomes really clear to educated persons what are the possible consistent meanings, if any, of "supreme being," "absolute," "perfect," "necessary being," and the like." p. xvi.
7. Op. cit., p. 111.
8. **The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays**, translated by Justin O'Brien (N.Y.: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1955), quoted in Sanders and Cheney, op. cit., pp. 66ff.
9. **Good and Evil** (N.Y.: Macmillan Pub. Co.), quoted in Sanders and Cheney, op. cit., p. 81.

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# RE-EXAMINING THE MAGICAL WORLDVIEW: TOWARDS AN ECOLOGY OF PSYCHE AND WORLD

Adrian Ivakhiv

Any human society is held together, consciously or otherwise, by more or less common assumptions and ideas. Invisible boundaries or margins divide that society from what does not belong to it; similar invisible forces maintain a tension between the core of that society - its mainstream - and its peripheries.

German anthropologist Hans Peter Duerr, in a book entitled **Dreamtime**, posits a boundary that separates wilderness from civilization, a boundary that since time immemorial, or at least since the emergence of human societies, has been straddled, bridged, and crossed (temporarily and periodically) by certain people; these have usually been specialists - shamans, sorcerers, witches, and the like - though sometimes their numbers have included a wider cross-section of a given society, in individual "vision quests" and rites of passage or in collective ritual activities.<sup>1</sup> In a healthy society, this boundary is usually found somewhere towards the peripheries, but still within the reaches, of the society itself. When it gets shifted out **beyond** the society's margins - as it did during the Christian Inquisition - these specialists become social outcasts, and the guardians of the status quo project "evil" traits onto them. In times like these, the society reveals an inability or unwillingness to speak to the wilderness; its members are afraid of the "dark" side of human nature, of its "evilness" and bestiality, and they cannot accept the half-human, half-animal. When the lines of communication are cut between ourselves (or our self-images) and others (for instance, between Nazis and Jews, and concomitantly, between Nazis **as they see themselves** and the purportedly "Jewish" aspects of their own nature), these unconscious projections initiate a vicious circle of aggression and destruction.

The lines of communication are cut; we lose the ability to talk to certain parts of our own selves, potentials present within our own nature; we project what we see as the "evil" in these aspects onto others. The ecology of our psyches, the ecology of story, myth, archetype, that relates us to the world, with its diversity of balances and interrelationships, is broken.

The way to regain this balance is by learning to **address** this diversity of manifestation, this archetypal pantheon of images and possibilities present within ourselves and in the world around us. We address it by speaking to it and identifying with it - through the conscious use of our imagination, our feelings and our will. This is precisely the meaning of the word "magic" as it is used by certain practitioners of the Western magical or occult tradition.<sup>2</sup> In traditional societies, myth, storytelling and ritual activities performed a similar function, and served to maintain a sustainable relationship between the different structural elements of the cosmos: human society and "the gods," conscious ego and unconscious "underworld."

## Life Before Mechanistic Science

1. Like all animals, we naturally perceive the world around us in terms analogous to how we perceive ourselves: we "morphize" the world, personify and personalize it; we give it a body, and do the same for all of its diverse expressions, providing them with forms that we can relate to and communicate with. Specifically, we humans **anthropomorphize** the world.
2. Because of our linguistic abilities, we communicate not merely through unrelated images, but by telling **stories**, weaving complex narratives out of the images, metaphors, and "morphisms" we perceive.
3. From a depth psychological point of view, the myths, dreams, and stories that make up a social group's more or less common imaginary reality - the inner worlds, "dreamtimes," "other-worlds," and "underworlds" of the imagination, with their anthropomorphized or otherwise - morphized inhabitants, beasts and half-beasts, giants and dwarves, elves and angels, heroes and mentors, attractive and repulsive mythic personages, as well as the various experiences they undergo - heroic journeys, battles, quests, and so on - are compensatory functions of the human biopsychic organism interacting with its environment (including its social and cultural environment). The human organism, writes Jungian analyst Anthony Stevens, contains an "archetypal endowment" that

presupposes the natural life-cycle of our species - being mothered, exploring the environment, playing in the peer group, adolescence, being initiated, establishing a place in the social hierarchy, courting, marrying, childrearing, hunting, gathering, fighting, participating in religious rituals, assuming the social responsibilities of advanced maturity, and preparation for death.<sup>3</sup>

There is an ecology of symbols, an ecology of culture (revealing itself in the myths, beliefs, stories and rituals of a given socio-cultural group) that corresponds to the psychodynamic ecology of the human person, as well as to the bioecology of the environment within which the cultural group lives. The correspondence is never exact; it varies along a continuum from the well-adapted or "healthy" to the maladapted or "diseased." Anthropologist Roy Rappaport makes the point that humans are as much at the service of the conceptions and meanings they or their ancestors have constructed, as those conceptions are parts of their adaptations to their environment. In other words, culture "possesses" the human species: "The symbolic capacity that is central to human adaptation produces concepts that come to possess those who thought them into being." He continues:

When the world is constructed, in part, out of symbols, enormous variation becomes possible. This makes for adaptive flexibility, but at the same time multiplies possibilities



for disorder. It becomes necessary for every society, therefore, to canonize or sanctify certain versions of order, and to deny, reject, forbid, or anathematize conceivable alternatives...*In all societies* [italics his] such arbitrary orders have become sacred. They become unquestionable by being established on religious grounds although they're neither verifiable nor falsifiable. Ultimate sacred postulates, postulates about gods and the like, are the ground upon which human social and cultural orders have always been built.<sup>4</sup>

In modern times, however, we have seen the emergence of a science that attempts to liberate us from the constraints of religion. "[T]he epistemologies through which modern science discovers physical law are inimical to the symbolic processes through which humanity constructs its guided meanings. The concept of the sacred is, as a consequence, in deep trouble and we yet have nothing adequate with which to replace it as a ground for social life."<sup>5</sup>

This is the dilemma we find ourselves in today: as a culture, we have lost the sense of "sacredness" in our relationship with the world about us. The world we live in is a "disenchanted" one, a world made up of discrete, disconnected (or at least, not **meaningfully** connected) objects, amongst which we are free to do what we please; but we don't know what it is we should do or what our rightful place amidst it all is meant to be. I find myself in agreement with those, like Rappaport, Morris Berman, and Gregory Bateson, who see this as a gap that needs to be filled, but at the same time are aware of the dangers of attempting to plainly and uncritically fill it by reverting to older, once - "enchanted" cosmologies.<sup>6</sup> The solution we seek is a paradoxical one: on the one hand, to maintain our self-consciousness, our critical distance; on the other, to regain our intimate involvement with the world, our participatory relatedness, wonder, and innocence in the face of the world. The paradox, however, is perhaps at the very root of our human nature: like our bihemispheric neocortical brain structure, one half of which apparently specializes in logical and analytic functioning, while the other perceives holistically, imagistically, synthetically and intuitively, we need to conceive of ourselves as a unified body with a complementary set of "hands" - one for intuition, empathy and "faith"; the other for skepticism and critical reason.

### The Separation: Mechanism vs. Organism

The past couple of millennia of Western civilization have been accompanied by an undercurrent of magical, hermetic and occult thought and practice that occasionally surfaced in broad movements, but for the most part remained hidden and esoteric (except to the degree that it fit into the dominant ideology, e.g. medieval Christianity). This occult heritage includes, for instance, the Greco-Roman mystery schools, the various Gnostic sects and movements, Sufis, Medieval and Renaissance alchemists and magicians, Kabbalistic mystics, Neoplatonists, Freemasons, Rosicrucians, and various occult revivalists of the 19th century. In our own time there has been a tremendous upsurge of interest in Native spirituality and shamanism, neo-paganism and "Goddess spirituality," several varieties of occultist magic, astrology, Eastern philosophies, and so on.

In the more distant past, however, the magical usually went hand-in-hand with the rational. It was only around the early 17th century, according to a number of writers (including Berman and Bateson) that the Western world's dominant intellectual focus

shifted from a more-or-less organic, relational view to a mechanistic, instrumental view. Bateson singles out Descartes' dualist separation of "mind" from "matter" as establishing bad, "perhaps ultimately lethal premises" for the epistemology of science.<sup>7</sup> Michel Foucault similarly sees a change occurring around this time, from a pre-Classical world in which meaning is seen to be embedded in the "resemblance" structures of the world, to a Classical age, an age of representation, in which the world has been separated from the language describing it (this separation ultimately leads into the Modern age).<sup>8</sup> The shift can be noticed in writings of the time: one can see a kind of tug-of-war going on between the "mechanists" (Descartes, Kepler, later Newton, et al.) and the "organicists" (Robert Fludd, Athanasius Kircher, the Cambridge Platonists, and others), almost **all** of whom, however, either were firm religious believers or actually studied and practiced the occult arts, such as astrology and alchemy.<sup>9</sup> Out of the "clash" between the two worldviews, influenced by political and other processes of the day, mechanistic science emerged victorious, while the "magical," organic, resemblance - and correspondence - based view of the world was largely left behind.

What can be said about the magical worldview that had its last major stand in this formative era at the beginnings of "modernity"?

### "Magic": The Western Tradition

Contemporary practitioners of occultist magic define the term to mean something like "the science and art of the human imagination" (Gareth Knight), "a set of methods arranging consciousness to patterns," (R.J. Stewart), or "the Science and Art of causing change to occur in conformity with Will" (Aleister Crowley).<sup>10</sup> Francis King distinguishes between the magic of the stage illusionist (which the others don't consider "magic" at all), the magic of the anthropologist (superstition, fertility rites, etc.), black magic, and the magic of the Western occultist, "a highly sophisticated system whose origins are to be sought [...] in the Hermetica and the Gnostic literature of the Roman Empire"<sup>11</sup> (it is the latter, of course, that concerns us, though at its origins it blends into the anthropological variant).

Whichever definition one favours, it is clear that magic has something to do with the **imagination** (a word that shares etymological roots with "magic"), with **patterns** (of images, symbols; correspondences between the human, natural and macrocosmic worlds), and with some sort of **efficacy**. The modern-day "witch" Starhawk writes, "Magical systems are highly elaborate metaphors, not truths. When we say 'There are twelve signs in the zodiac,' what we really mean is 'we will view the infinite variety of human characteristics through this mental screen, because with it we can gain insights'.... The value of magical metaphors is that through them we identify ourselves and connect with larger forces; we partake of the elements, the cosmic process, the movements of the stars."<sup>12</sup>

The traditional magical worldview reflects a cosmology of pre-"Enlightenment" Europe: the theory of the **four elements** (earth, air, fire, and water, with their corresponding humours, and so on); the **geocentric cosmos** with several (frequently seven) planes corresponding to the planets, each of which corresponds further to certain qualities, colours, etc.; the **twelve zodiacal signs**; hierarchies of entities or energies including elementals, angels, demons, gods, or whatever else. Unifying all of this was



a doctrine - or, rather, an underlying, unquestioned assumption - of **correspondence**, the recognition of resemblances.

The world was seen as a vast assemblage of correspondences. All things have relationships with all other things, and these relations are ones of sympathy and antipathy.... Things are also analogous to man in the famous alchemical concept of the microcosm and the macrocosm: the rocks of the earth are its bones, the rivers its veins, the forests its hair and the cicadas its dandruff. The world duplicates and reflects itself in an endless network of similarity and dissimilarity.<sup>13</sup>

This body analogy is often found among non-literate or "primitive" peoples. In the Ecuadoran and Peruvian Andes, for instance, as Joseph Bastien documents in **The Mountain of the Condor**, the mountains are thought of as being human bodies - the upper-most level makes up the "head," the mid-section is the "belly," the rivers are "legs"; through their ritual and ceremonial activities the Indian communities of each of three distinct altitude - levels maintain the mountain's body in harmony, socially (e.g. through intergroup marriage), economically (e.g. the agriculturalists in the valleys exchange goods with the herding communities in the highlands), and spiritually (relating themselves mythically to the mountain).<sup>14</sup>

Along with the recognition of universal correspondences, the European magical worldview encompassed a "doctrine of signatures," illustrated by the Renaissance magician Agrippa:

All stars have their peculiar natures, properties, and conditions, the Seals and Characters whereof they produce, through their rays, even in these inferior things, viz., in elements, in stones, in plants, in animals, and their members; whence every natural thing receives, from a harmonious disposition and from its star shining upon it, some particular Seal, or character, stamped upon it; which seal or character is the signifier of that star, or harmonious disposition, containing within it a peculiar Virtue, differing from other virtues of the same matter, both generically, specifically, and numerically. Every thing, therefore, hath its character pressed upon it by its star for some particular effect, especially by that star which doth principally govern it.<sup>15</sup>

These signatures or signs can be deciphered through **divination**, which Berman takes to mean "finding the Divine, participating in the Mind that stands behind the appearances."<sup>16</sup> Thus, coupled with a seemingly static view of the cosmos is the idea that one could come into greater "sympathy" with things, learn to read the signs and, in a Taoist manner, to "flow" better with the energies of the universe, or - and here the instrumentalism enters in, which I later takes over in the scientific enterprise - to manipulate these signs for one's own or others' advantage (or disadvantage).

It has become commonplace to distinguish between "black magic" and "white magic"; one could say that to the extent that magic is meant to extend the "profane" realm of instrumental control over things for one's personal benefit or at the expense of others, it can be considered "black magic," while to the extent that it attempts to bring the practitioner into alignment or sympathy with a larger, Divine or cosmic will, and to encounter the world in a caring, "I-Thou" relationship, it is "white magic." In reality, though, magic is best considered a neutral collection of techniques meant to facilitate closing the apparent gap between mind and matter, and psychologically speaking, between conscious and unconscious.

There is, in any case, a distinctive organic, developmental, process-oriented current in the magical worldview that manifests clearly in alchemical philosophy: this is the idea that human beings are "incomplete," "unfinished" creations, and that, like the transmutation of base metals into gold that alchemists attempted to effect, so the human individuality can undergo such a transmutation and refinement. The alchemists saw the metals gold and silver as the "earthly reflections of sun and moon, and thus of all the realities of spirit and soul which are related to the heavenly pair."<sup>17</sup>

This "self-developmental" thread within the magical cosmology, together with the holistic worldview of correspondences of elements and qualities, is characteristic of the entire European magical subculture - an underground current that included such specialized phenomena as Kabbalism (Jewish and Christian and other variants), Alchemy and Neoplatonism, but also popular phenomena like the Arthurian cycle of myths and legends, and the use of card decks, such as the Tarot, for divination. All of these reveal a reaching out from within the boundaries of conventional, institutionalized worldviews (nominally Christian or Judaic) towards "inner ecologies" of greater diversity, mystery, and richness.

A brief consideration of the Kabbalah and the Tarot can be used to illustrate this. The "Kabbalah" (also spelled "Cabala" and "Qabalah"), refers to the "received teaching" of Judaic mysticism. Although its roots go much further back, a widespread movement of Kabbalistic speculation and mysticism emerged around the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in Spain and Italy. Its influence spread throughout the European world, becoming an important component within the general Christian-Hermetic philosophy of the Renaissance (as found in, e.g., Agrippa, Pico della Mirandola, Edmund Spenser, John Dee, and later echoing through the Rosicrucian movement and even Shakespeare<sup>18</sup>). The central symbol of Kabbalism is a system of correspondences represented as the Tree of Life, a portrayal of the (variously interpreted) emanations of God, or states of being, traditionally called the **sephiroth**, all of which correspond to certain divine names and attributes, angels and archangels, spiritual experiences, virtues (and vices), colours, symbols, precious stones, plants, animals, perfumes, and so on. The Tree of Life, furthermore, contains within itself twenty-two "paths" connecting the ten **sephiroth**, which themselves correspond to the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet (and which later were correlated to the twenty-two trumps of the traditional Tarot deck, among other things). The goal of the Kabbalistic magician was to "ascend" up the "ladder" of **sephiroth**, by coming to incorporate the divine energies within himself, through an inner understanding of and an identification with them.<sup>19</sup>

In the case of the Tarot, the twenty-two trumps represent stages or experiences on the "path of life" (or the more esoterically understood path of spiritual development). A standard deck contains cards such as The Fool (or Trickster), The Magician, The Lovers, The Sun, The Moon, Justice, The Hermit, The Wheel of Fortune, The Hanged Man, Death, The Devil, The Tower, and Judgement. The "Minor Arcana" includes the court cards (usually four per suit) and ten numbered cards (corresponding to the ten **sephiroth**) of each of four suits; the suits themselves correspond to the four elements of the traditional Medieval worldview (air = swords; fire = wands or rods; water = cups; earth = disks, pentacles or shields). Thus, we have a complete, systematic representation of the known (and unknown) universe.

Both the Kabbalistic Tree of Life and the Tarot Major Arcana (the trumps) constitute schematic diagrams of what Carl Jung would call the path of "individuation" - the process of becoming an "undivided" (in-dividual), self-actualized, integrated, whole person, in whom the various parts of the "self" are harmoniously interrelated. At the same time, both of these complementary "diagrams" are contained within (and contain within themselves) the worldview of correspondences that is integral to the "magical" cosmology of the Middle Ages and Renaissance.<sup>20</sup>

Seeking the roots of the Renaissance magical cosmology one is inevitably led back to the Classical world of the pagan Greeks and Romans. These, together with the civilizations of the Middle East, are nominally considered to be located at the sources of "Western civilization"; however, it is only in our century that an increasing number of scholars have been studying the roots of these civilizations in relation to the more recently discovered civilizations of pre-Hellenic Minoan Crete and of the much earlier "Old European civilization" (of the 7th to 4th millennia BCE). The mythologies of these two cultures exhibited a very prominent recognition of female goddess figures, related to fertility, and of various animal and nature figures (cow, bull, snake, moon).<sup>21</sup> Classical Greek culture can be seen as a "humanized" development from these earlier, more nature-embedded cultures. Many of the Classical Greek gods had originally been represented as animal - or as part-human, part-animal figures.<sup>22</sup> Egyptian gods and goddesses were usually portrayed as being part-animals (hawk-headed Horus, god-headed Anubis, jackal-headed Set, ibis-headed Thoth). The polytheistic mythologies at the sources of Western culture can thus be seen to have developed from beginnings not too different from the nature-embedded shamanism and animism of indigenous cultures the world over. Druidic practices among the Celts have been traced back to shamanic roots that resemble some of the shamanistic practices of North American Indians, with their totemic animals and "animal helpers."<sup>23</sup> Robert Graves, in his "historical grammar of poetic myth," **The White Goddess**, showed that at the roots of much of European culture is a poetic, intimate familiarity with the vegetable and animal worlds<sup>24</sup>; and Sir James George Frazer's **The Golden Bough**, an encyclopedic, 20-volume study of seasonal rites and festivals of European peoples (which still existed as late as the turn of the century, in "fossilized" form perhaps, in peasant culture throughout Europe), documented the many rites associated with fertility, with the movements of the sun and the moon, the passing of the seasons, the yearly agricultural cycle, and so on.<sup>25</sup>

I have listed these points, almost at random, in order to suggest that there is, underlying Western culture, a stratum of nature-embedded magical thinking that sees the world as an ecology of fertile diversity and correspondence, and that this stratum is not as far away from us as we moderns might think. The correspondences between the various "elements" and "qualities" that make up the natural world need not be abstract: our understanding of them can be rooted in a sense of wonder and empathy with the powers of nature.

A number of contemporary depth psychologists, such as James Hillman and David Miller, taking their cue from Carl Jung, have been calling for a "polytheistic psychology" that would revive the plurality and diversity of "gods" within us, as an antidote to the "disenchantment" brought on by centuries of a rigid and "mythically-poor" monotheism and by (still "poorer," perhaps) utilitarian scientific rationalism. The depth psychological

processes they propose are analogous to the processes undergone by initiates of the Classical-era "Mysteries": descents into the "Underworld" (of the unconscious), the death of the Ego (the personality-construct we imagine into existence for the purposes of differentiating ourselves from whatever is "other"), confrontation with the Shadow, meetings with various gods, rebirth of the Self, and so on. (I am mixing terminology here - Jungian psychological concepts with traditional mythological terms - to highlight their interchangeability.)<sup>26</sup> The "journeys" undertaken by shamans are more-or-less analogous: they are attempts to address the diversity of powers, spirits, inner potentialities within and outside of ourselves, in order to keep alive the proper relationship between the human and natural worlds.

### Myth in Perspective: The Work of Joseph Campbell

The work of the late Joseph Campbell is, perhaps, the foremost popular example of the endeavour to place the myths and rites of the world's peoples into a perspective that links them to their surrounding environments. In his (unfinished) magnum opus **A Historical Atlas of World Mythology**, Campbell categorizes human societies' mythical, religious, and ritual activities into a series of "paideumatic models."<sup>27</sup> The first of these - "the Way of the Animal Powers" - is the model followed by hunting-gathering peoples, whose mythical and religious symbols are the earliest of any human societies we have evidence of. Of these, Campbell differentiates between those social groups who lived in the open plains, and those of the equatorial forest: both features a veneration of animals as life-sustainers and as teachers, and (especially for the forest dwellers) of the earth (or the forest) as a bountiful mother.

The second "paideumatic model" he calls the "Way of the Seeded Earth." This is the way of planting cultures, for whom the prime symbol is that of "the sacrifice," the recurrent death - and renewal of life. This motif recurs in most of the seasonal festivities documented by Sir James G. Frazer in **The Golden Bough**; it is, of course, a prominent feature of Christian mythology (the death and resurrection of the redeemer who sacrifices himself for the world). Next, Campbell posits the "Way of the Celestial Lights" to describe the model characterizing the "high civilizations" (of the Middle East, Mesoamerica, etc.) - their knowledge of the skies, writing and mathematical skills, institutions of kingship and priestly orders (thus, articulations of divinely-inspired hierarchies and pantheons), temple forms, and so on, all combining into a "revelation of a cosmic order mathematically determined."

Campbell's fourth model is "the Way of Man," a way in which the attention is turned from the outside world to the world within, i.e., the world of the self. Articulated in the Vedic Upanishads, this "way" becomes a prominent feature in the teachings of the Buddha, Confucius and others from about the middle of the first millennium BCE. A variation of it, a radical dualism first announced by the Persian prophet Zarathustra, marks the "historic threshold of the modern separation of West from East"; this variant posits a moral worldly order, a sharp distinction between a "good" and an "evil" that are locked into a universal combat, and it calls for a programmatic reform of the universe leading to some ultimate historical end-point (usually, the hoped-for victory of the "good"). This variant is later taken up by Christianity, Islam, and the more modern secular "religions" (such as doctrinaire Marxism).

Finally, Campbell elucidates a fifth **paideumatic** "influence," a questing, rational, scientific impulse that took charge of the European imagination some five centuries ago and that has since transformed the planet. It is, perhaps, only now emerging as a full-fledged "model," one that is appropriate to a global, mass-communications-linked civilization - for which neither of the earlier models suffice to represent the "seed-idea" of the age. The core of this model is a holism, a holographic kind of synthesis or summing up of where we have come from as a species - progressing through the various stages of hunter-gatherer, agriculturalist, industrialist and democratic individualist - combined with an understanding of where this has all led us, i.e., to the current crisis stage, where we have transformed the entire planet, and where the planet's future hangs in the balance

powers of Mars, the martial virtues of bravery, loyalty, discipline, justice, etc. According to the laws of correspondence, red robes would be worn, a ruby placed on one's finger, incense corresponding to Mars would be burned (perhaps pepper or tobacco), the number of Mars (five, in the Tree of Life system) would surround the magician (five lights illuminating a five-sided altar standing in the center of a five-pointed star), the corresponding prayers or invocations would be spoken, and so on. When the ritualist's mind was sufficiently concentrated on these activities and their meanings, he would become capable of participating in the essence of the qualities of, in this case, "Mars" (or whatever that may represent).

The Golden Dawn system, in effect, constituted a training programme for expanding the capacity to identify with and

chetype today), or in a destructive, "demonic" form resulting from having been actively suppressed and projected onto others (like the Nazi purification of the "dark" and "evil" races). Conscious and deliberate magical practice thus offers a way of attuning oneself to the energies and archetypal forces that dwell deep within our "souls" whether we acknowledge them or not.

The emergence of Goddess imagery in our day is an example of a healthy realignment in collective archetypes. The dominant Western religious symbology of the past two millennia has stressed a divinity composed of "Father," "Son" and "Holy Spirit," with no explicitly female element (except to the extent that the Virgin Mary represented a goddess). In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the Christian Marian cult arose in southern Europe to modify this unbalanced pantheon (according to Morris Berman, this was the Roman Catholic Church's accommodation of developments associated with the "courtly love tradition," with knightly chivalry, and with heretic movements of the time).<sup>31</sup> Today, when Mother Earth is perceived as being under attack by an industrial order, the archetype of the Goddess and other spirits is reappearing both in pop-environmentalist imagery, and in the more esoteric practices of Goddess worshippers, witches, neo-pagans, aspiring shamans and others that make up a broad movement of "earth-centered spirituality." The common thread weaving its way through this movement is a dedication to the earth and to the "God(dess)" who is not somewhere "out there," transcendent and separated from the earth and its life, but who is immanent, dwelling within the life around us and within ourselves.<sup>32</sup>

At the same time, comparative mythology (e.g. Joseph Campbell), anthropology, the study of the history of religions (Mircea Eliade, Marija Gimbutas), and archetypal and consciousness psychology (post-Jungians like Hillman and Miller, Edward Whitmont, Jean Houston, and others), are converging around the perceived need to enrich our "psychic ecology" by re-mythicizing and re-"storying" our world and the living beings that make it up.<sup>33</sup> A revived understanding of the magical worldview, as it has been set out above, can play a vital role in this effort, an effort whose ultimate goal is to end the divorce between conscious and unconscious, psyche and techné, culture and nature, empathetic identification and critical distance, faith and skepticism.

## Notes

1. Hans Peter Duerr, **Dreamtime: Concerning the Boundary Between Wilderness and Civilization**, F. Goodman, trans., (N.Y.: Basil Blackwell, 1985).
2. I use the words "magical" and "occult" with caution, aware that under their rubric falls a diversity of ideas and practices, including some very strange, distorted and unbalanced ones, and that these are, as everything, subject to the influences of commercialization, faddism, cultism, hunger for the bizarre, and the like.
3. Anthony Stevens, **Archetypes: A Natural History of the Self** (New York: William Morrow, 1982).
4. Roy Rappaport, Interview in **Whole Earth Review**, No. 61 (Winter, 1988; Sausalito: Point Foundation). See also his "Sanctity and Adaptation," in Grossinger, Ed., **Ecology and Consciousness** (Richmond: North Atlantic, 1978), and especially **Ecology, Meaning, and Religion** (Richmond, Calif.: North Atlantic, 1979). Rappaport calls ritual "the basic social act," whose very structure contains inherent meanings and effects. Ritual and liturgical orders, according to Rappaport, perform a multitude of functions: they demarcate distinctions, but also join them into significant wholes: they give form to inchoate matter; they bind together, unite and reunite the psychic, social, natural and cosmic orders which language (by making distinctions) and the exigencies of life pull apart; they provide the quality of "sanctity," "unquestionableness," "the sacred,"

the "numinous," as well as moral norms, to which the performer publicly binds himself. "The unfalsifiable supported by the undeniable yields the unquestionable, which transforms the dubious, the arbitrary, and the conventional into the correct, the necessary, and the natural."

5. *Ibid.*

6. See Morris Berman's classic **The Reenchantment of the World** (Cornell U. Press, 1981), and his **Coming to Our Senses: Mind and Body in the History of Western Culture** (N.Y.: Simon and Schuster, 1989); also Gregory Bateson, **Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity** (N.Y.: Bantam, 1980), and Gregory and Mary Catherine Bateson, **Angles Fear: Towards an Epistemology of the Sacred** (N.Y.: Bantam, 1988). Both Berman and Bateson attempt to lay the epistemological foundations for an alternative, empathetic and participatory science. Berman's later effort explores Western culture's "somatic history," tracing a heretical or "countercultural" semi-underground tradition that is rooted in bodily experience, and that aims at undoing the alienation that has been with us since the emergence of "ego-consciousness" and especially since the development of an agriculturally-based "binary logic" (wild vs. tame, self vs. other). He carefully analyzes four historical "breakthroughs to interiority," as he calls them, along with their ultimate outcomes: (1) the rich cultural diversity of the Mediterranean basin at the beginnings of the Christian era (Greek philosophy, Jewish ethics and magic, oriental Gnostic practices, etc.) from which emerged a victorious, ultimately monolithic world religion - Christianity; (2) heretical religious movements in southern France, Spain and Italy (Cathars, Albigensians, etc.) in the 11th to 13th centuries, which eventually resulted in the co-optation of romantic love by the Catholic Church into the Marian cult, in a secular, more acceptable form in the courtly love tradition, and ultimately in the institutionalization of "thought crime" and the administrative persecution of it via the Inquisition; (3) the rejection of Church Aristotelianism and academic Scholasticism in the 16th and 17th centuries, resulting in the creation of a new **Weltanschauung** that institutionalized the experience of magical "ascent" into the purely exterior, abstract, mechanized form of modern science; (4) finally, the Nazi phenomenon, representing the re-emergence of the same "energy" (towards transcendence and the eradication of the split or "basic fault" in consciousness) into a new form combining a paranoid, dualist, racist cosmology with a nationalist political programme to accomplish racial purity. Berman sees in today's "New Age" phenomenon a movement in danger of being co-opted into a "cybernetic holism" by the present-day "Church" - the scientific, industrial, corporate establishment. His solution is that we, once and for all, reject the "binary mode" with its concomitant need for "redemption" from some "evil" world, and substitute it with a "kaleidoscopic" mode (closer to the worldview of hunter-gatherers than to "binary" agriculturalists), a meeting of the world "in a spirit of aliveness and curiosity rather than one of need or desperation." We need to cultivate balance and "reflexivity" - the capacity to **see ourselves** in a state of need or commitment; we need to develop a new code that is itself about coding.

7. Bateson, **Angles Fear** (see 6. above); Bateson's attempt to establish an alternative epistemology draws on Carl Jung's distinction between **Pleroma** ("the unliving world described by physics which in itself contains and makes no distinctions") and **Creatura** (that world of explanation in which the very phenomena to be described are among themselves governed and determined by difference, distinction, and information"). The book explores those activities - art, poetry, and the sacred - which take place at the interface between **Creatura** and **Pleroma**, activities that necessarily involve metaphor ("the main characteristic and organizing glue of this world of mental process").

8. Michel Foucault, **The Order of Things** (N.Y.: Pantheon, 1973).

9. See Frances Yates, **Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition** (Random House, 1964); **The Rosicrucian Enlightenment** (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972); **The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Era** (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979).

10. Gareth Knight, **A History of White Magic** (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1989), p. 9; R.J. Stewart, **Living Magical Arts** (Poole, U.K.: Blandford Press, 1987), p. 1; Aleister Crowley quoted in Adler, **Drawing Down the Moon** (see 30. below), p. 82. Useful introductions to the history of magic include Francis King, **Magic: The Western Tradition** (London: Thames and Hudson, 1975), Caitlin and John Matthews, **The Western Way** (Volumes 1 and 2; London: Arkana, 1985/6); Manly Palmer Hall, **The Secret Teachings of All Ages: An Encyclopedic Outline of Masonic, Hermetic, Qabbalistic and Rosicrucian Symbolical Philosophy** (Los Angeles: Philosophical Research Society, 1977; orig. publ. 1928); and Joseph Versluis' **The Philosophy of Magic** (Boston: Arkana, 1986).

11. Francis King, **Magic: The Western Tradition**, p. 8.

12. Starhawk (Miriam Simos), **The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess** (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979), p. 192.
13. Berman, **The Reenchantment of the World**, p. 62.
14. Joseph Bastien, **Mountain of the Condor: Metaphor and Ritual in an Andean Ayllu** (St. Paul: West, 1985).
15. Berman, **Reenchantment**, p. 63.
16. op. cit.
17. Titus Burckhardt, **Alchemy: Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul** (Baltimore: Penguin, 1960), p. 11. Burckhardt, unlike most Medieval historians, sees alchemy as a genuine spiritual tradition, with an organic and consistent doctrine of teachings and practices, based on the reciprocal correspondence of the universe and man (i.e. the Hermetic axiom, "As above, so below"). For two other views on the subject, see Carl Jung's **Psychology and Alchemy (Collected Works)**, volume 12; Princeton University Press, 1968) and Richard Grossinger's **The Alchemical Tradition** (Berkeley: North Atlantic, 1983).
18. See Frances Yates (9. above).
19. Gershom Scholem is frequently considered to be the foremost historical authority on Kabbalistic mysticism; see his **Kabbalah** (NAL/Mentor, 1974) and **Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism** (N.Y.: Schocken, 1974/orig. 1941). Z'ev ben Shimon Halevi, **Kabbalah: Tradition of Hidden Knowledge** (London: Thames and Hudson, 1979) is a useful introduction. The most highly touted manuals of practical "Qabalism" (the preferred modern spelling) among contemporary occultists are Dion Fortune, **The Mystical Qabalah** (N.Y.: Ibis, 1979, orig. publ. 1935) and Gareth Knight, **A Practical Guide to Qabalistic Symbolism** (one-volume edition; York Beach, Maine: Samuel Weiser, 1978); these authors present the Qabalistic system as a workable "yoga of the west."
20. Richard Cavendish, **The Tarot** (N.Y.: Crescent, 1975) is an excellent general introduction to the Tarot cards, their history, symbolism and usage (for divination and for mediation), and their relationship to the Cabala. Sallie Nichols, **Jung and Tarot: An Archetypal Journey** (York Beach, Maine: Samuel Weiser, 1980) is a Jungian analysis of the twenty-two trumps of the Greater Arcana.
21. The foremost archaeologist of the "Old European civilization" is Marija Gimbutas; see her **The Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe, 6500-3500 B.C.: Myths and Cult Images** (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1982) and **The Language of the Goddess** (N.Y.: Harper and Row, 1989). On Goddess and animal imagery in ancient myth in general see Boffie Johnson, **Lady of the Beasts: Ancient Images of the Goddess and Her Sacred Animals** (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988), and Elinor Gadon's **Once and Future Goddess** (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989).
22. Dolores LaChapelle, **Sacred Land, Sacred Sex, Rapture of the Deep: Concerning Deep Ecology and Celebrating Life** (Silverton, Colo.: Finn Hill Arts, 1988), p. 120. This book by "deep ecologist" and "eco-ritualist" LaChapelle is probably one of the most important, broad overviews of how human society has been "uprooted" from the natural world and how it can be re-rooted: she discusses ethology, the relationship between people and animals, archetypal depth psychology, primitive cultures, Taoism, the psychology of perception, the role of ritual and of "the sacred", and finally offers a manual of activities, ranging from children's play rituals, rites of passage, land rituals, seasonal ceremonies, and the usage (as close to universal as anything can be) of such elements as chanting, drumming, the gourd, the burning of sage, dance, etc. See also her **Earth Festivals** and **Earth Wisdom** (Silverton: Finn Hill Arts, 1976 and 1978, respectively).
23. See, for instance, Ward Rutherford, **The Druids: Magicians of the West** (Wellingborough, U.K.: Aquarian, 1978).
24. Robert Graves, **The White Goddess: A Historical Grammar of Poetic Myth** (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1966/orig. 1948).
25. James G. Frazer, **The Golden Bough** (Abridged version; London: Macmillan, 1978; orig. 20-volume edition published in 1922).
26. On archetypal psychology, see James Hillman, Ed., **Facing the Gods** (Dallas: Spring, 1980), **The Myth of Analysis** (Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1972), and **Re-Visioning Psychology** (New York: Harper and Row, 1975); David Miller, **The New Polytheism** (Dallas: Spring, 1981); Peter Lemesurier, **The Healing of the Gods: The Magic of Symbols and the Practice of Theotherapy** (Longmead, U.K.: Element, 1988); Robert Avens, **The New Gnosis: Heidegger, Hillman, and Angels** (Dallas: Spring, 1984); and of course, the writings of Carl Jung, e.g. **Collected Works** v.9, pt. 1: "The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious," and v.12, pt. 2: "Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self" (Princeton Univ. Press); or Jung, et al., **Man and His Symbols** (N.Y.: Dell, 1965).
27. Campbell, Joseph, **A Historical Atlas of World Mythology**, Volume 1: "The Way of the Animal Powers" and Volume 2: "The Way of the Seeded Earth" (N.Y.: Harper and Row, 1988). Most of what was left out (because Campbell died before completing the above project) can be found in the four-volume **Masks of God** (N.Y.: Viking, 1968) or in his various other writings. Another interesting attempt to synthesize a mythic overview of "where we have come from and where we are going" is Ken Wilber's **Up From Eden: A Transpersonal View of Human Evolution** (Boulder: Shambhala, 1983).
28. Ellic Howe, **The Magicians of the Golden Dawn** (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972) is a good historical overview of the Golden Dawn; Israel Regardie, **The Complete Golden Dawn System of Magic** (Phoenix: Falcon, 1984) presents the bulk of its practices. See also: Francis King, **Magic: The Western Tradition** (London: Thames and Hudson, 1975); Israel Regardie, **The Golden Dawn** (Chicago: Aries, 1937) and **The Tree of Life** (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1969); and Nevill Drury, **Don Juan, Mescalito, and Modern Magic: The Mythology of Inner Space** (London: Arkana, 1986). Ithell Colquhoun's **Sword of Wisdom: MacGregor Mathers and the Golden Dawn** (London: Neville Spearman, 1975) is a somewhat more subjective account.
29. Drury, **Don Juan, Mescalito, and Modern Magic**, p. 97.
30. Francis King, **Magic: The Western Tradition**, p. 24. See also King's **Rites of Modern Occult Magic** (New York: Macmillan, 1971). One of the most interesting currents to develop out of Golden Dawn - related sources ("genetically" related to the GD mainly via Dion Fortune) is a school of writers allied around the idea of a "Western," and specifically "British Mystery Tradition" - a fusion of "native" lore (e.g. Arthurian and Grail cycles, the Welsh Mabinogion, Irish sagas, fairy lore and general Celtic myths, folksongs, etc.) and the more abstract, Hermetic traditions of esoteric occultism, alchemy, ritual and ceremonial magic. Their work is paving the way to a broader appreciation of the experiential dimensions of story and myth, and their relation to the geographical-ecological environment. See John and Caitlin Matthews, **The Western Way** (Volumes 1 and 2; London: Arkana, 1985/1986), John Matthews, Ed., **At the Table of the Grail: Magic and the Use of the Imagination** (London: Arkana, 1987), Caitlin Matthews, **Mabon and the Mysteries of Britain: An Exploration of the Mabinogion** (London: Arkana, 1987); Robert J. Stewart, **The UnderWorld Initiation** (Wellingborough, U.K.: Aquarian Press, 1985), **The Mystic Life of Merlin and The Prophetic Vision of Merlin** (both, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986); and Gareth Knight, **The Secret Tradition in Arthurian Legend** (Wellingborough, Aquarian, 1984).
31. Berman, **Coming to Our Senses** (6. above).
32. The best overview of neo-paganism and "earth spirituality" is Margot Adler, **Drawing the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess-Worshippers, and Other Pagans in America Today** (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986). See also Jungian analyst Edward C. Whitmont's **Return of the Goddess** (London: Arkana, 1987), and Charlene Spretnak's collection of feminist writings **The Politics of Women's Spirituality: Essays on the Rise of Spiritual Power Within the Feminist Movement** (Garden City: Anchor/Doubleday, 1982). A recent issue of **Gnosis: A Journal of the Western Inner Traditions** (an excellent source of up-to-date writing on all of the topics discussed in this paper) was devoted to "The Goddess" (Gnosis, P.O. Box 14217, San Francisco, CA 94114). **Woman of Power: A Magazine of Feminism, Spirituality, and Politics** deals regularly with related topics (P.O. Box 827, Cambridge, MA 02238). A very interesting anthropological account on ritual magic in contemporary England is T.M. Luhrmann, **Persuasions of the Witch's Craft** (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1989). On neo-shamanism, see, for instance, Michael Harner, **The Way of the Shaman** (N.Y.: Harper and Row, 1980), Nevill Drury, **The Shaman and the Magician: Journeys Between the Worlds** (London: Arkana, 1987), or the journal **Shaman's Drum**.
33. Mircea Eliade's immense body of work could best be approached via **Myths, Rites, Symbols: A Mircea Eliade Reader** (N.Y.: Harper and Row, 1975), or his **Patterns in Comparative Religion** (Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1958); for Gimbutas, see 21. above; for Hillman and Miller, 26. above; for Whitmont, 31. above. Very useful and effective ("magical") approaches to the experiential use of story and myth are found in Jean Houston, **The Search for the Beloved: Journeys in Mythology and Sacred Psychology** (Los Angeles: Tarcher, 1987), and any of the writings of occultist Dolores Ashcroft-Nowicki, for instance, **Highways of the Mind: The Art and History of Pathworking** (Wellingborough, U.K.: Aquarian, 1987).

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# REFLECTIONS ON SPIRITUALITY AND MYTH

Jim Cheney

## Introduction

I define "spirituality" as a particular kind of epistemological relationship to the world. I locate the **epistemological despiritualization** of the world with Kant and his view of knowledge as a human construction, which lends itself to an understanding of knowledge as an instrument of domination and control. With constructionism comes a reduced understanding of the epistemic function of myth. I do not reject constructionism altogether; rather, I urge a non-"solipsistic" version of constructionism, one in which the world itself is an active agent, or subject, in the construction of knowledge. Such a conception is what I understand by a spiritual relationship to the world. It is in this context that I reevaluate the epistemic function of myth. Because I believe that environmental ethics should be conducted with this conception in mind, I think of it as fundamentally a religious or spiritual discipline.

## I

I begin with an attempt to define "spirituality," first by way of contrast with modernist despiritualized relationships with the world and, second, by discussing more positive attributes of spirituality.

Modern conceptions of the world and our epistemological relationship to it have often been depicted as despiritualized. Although this despiritualization has often been characterized from an ontological perspective as a universe without God or as a mechanistic world, the **epistemological despiritualization** of the world is more revealing.<sup>1</sup>

Characteristic of the epistemological despiritualization of the world is a colonizing relationship to it implicitly or explicitly present in our epistemological relationship to it. This is perhaps most obvious in the interiorization of value within human subjectivity that came about with the advent of modern metaphysical empiricism. The objectivism inherent in empiricism makes it less obvious, perhaps, that the same interiorization was taking place with respect to our understanding of epistemic relations to the natural world. The correspondence theory of truth adopted by early empiricists located the direct objects of human knowledge within human consciousness, making our knowledge of that world a matter of inference. Correspondence between idea and reality (mediated by a causal relationship between the two) was the objectivist bridge linking subjective experience to the real world. With empiricism, however, we are no longer present to the world, or it to us, and it was but a short (Kantian) step to the view that knowledge is not conformity of the understanding to the world so much as it is conformity of knowledge claims to the subjective conditions of knowledge within us.

With the Kantian turn towards epistemology and the specification of knowledge as a **human construction** came the full despiritualization of the world. It was not so much the mechanistic philosophy of the early modern period that brought this about

as it was the fact that both knowledge and value were "solipsistically" conceived as being, as it were, the result of conversations with ourselves. Logical Positivism registered this in its claim that the very meaningfulness of an assertion consists in, and is determined by, either its analyticity or its logical linkage with subjective experience. Contemporary social constructionist views of knowledge have, by and large, abandoned Kantian claims that the "categories" of the understanding are fixed while retaining the broad outlines of the Kantian epistemological turn. Missing in modernist epistemology is a sense of active and reciprocal **communication** with the world.

In tandem with this Kantian epistemological turn comes an understanding of language and knowledge as instruments of domination and control. It is Kantian epistemology which reduces the object of knowledge to an object **for** human manipulation. With knowledge and value both loaded on the side of mind--the **human mind**--humans become the self-constituted be-all and end-all of knowledge and value.

The desire to control did not, of course, begin with modernism. Even in cultures which resonate with spirituality the desire (or even the need) to control is often prominent. It has been observed, for example, that with the rise of agricultural states ceremonies of celebration for the gifts given to humans by nature were transformed into ritual sacrifices, the function of which was the manipulation and control of spiritual forces.<sup>2</sup> What the despiritualization of nature does is to abet, as well as provide powerful conceptual/instrumental tools for the satisfaction of, this long-standing desire for control.

With the despiritualization of the world in modernism came a reduced understanding of the epistemic function of myth, one of the powerful conveyors of spiritual sensibility. Whatever is not simply rejected or dropped is reduced to the status of metaphor (or analogy). Metaphor is itself understood as a device of conceptual transformation **within** a constructionist framework. It is understood, that is, as essentially a **literary** device. Current understandings of science as metaphor simply make the Kantian turn--dropping empiricist conceptions of correspondence-- and understand metaphor as a pivotal tool in the human retextualization of nature. Little wonder, then, that modernism has ushered in a set of understandings of spirituality each member of which can be understood by its particular response to a literalism deeply ingrained in modernism since, at least, the advent of empiricism. Religious believers who hold out for the literal truth of scripture, for example, can be understood as responding to the turning of scripture into literature which comes about when myth is reduced to metaphor, analogy and parable. Theological demythologizers have done the same thing, except that they prefer that a **different** text (the demythologized one) be marked as the literally true one.

My point is not to reject any and all forms of social constructionism; I have, indeed, argued in favor of such an understanding of knowledge and objectivity in other places. Rather, I am urging a non-"solipsistic" version of social constructionism, one in which the world itself is an active agent, or subject, in the



construction of knowledge. Such a conception is what I understand by a spiritual conception of, or relationship to, the world; it locates knowledge in the world, as an intersection of world and self or society--the result of "noninnocent conversations"<sup>3</sup> with the world.

The problem faced by postmodern, social constructionist conceptions of knowledge, as Donna Haraway puts it, is "how to have **simultaneously** an account of radical historical contingency for all knowledge claims and knowing subjects...and a non-nonsense commitment to faithful accounts of a 'real' world." Just as Haraway would insist upon an ethical and political basis for the objectivity of knowledge, so she would add the idea of the "object" of knowledge as an **active** agent in the construction of knowledge. She rightly points out that feminists have been suspicious of accounts of objectivity which portray the object of knowledge as passive and inert. Haraway's view in response to this passive understanding of the object of inquiry is that

Situated knowledges require that the object of knowledge be pictured as an actor and agent, not as a screen or a ground or a resource, never finally as slave to the master that closes off the dialectic in his unique agency and his authorship of "objective" knowledge.

If we understand the objects of inquiry as actors and agents (and insist upon an ethical and political basis for objectivity), accounts of the world based "on a logic of 'discovery'" give way to "a power-charged social relation of 'conversation.'" The world neither speaks itself nor disappears in favor of a master decoder" (1988, pp. 579, 592, 593).

In this regard, Haraway calls attention to the promise of ecofeminism:

Ecofeminists have perhaps been most insistent on some version of the world as active subject... Acknowledging the agency of the world in knowledge makes room for some unsettling possibilities, including a sense of the world's independent sense of humor.... There are...richly evocative figures to promote feminist visualizations of the world as witty agent. We need not lapse into appeals to a primal mother resisting her translation into resource. The Coyote or Trickster...suggests the situation we are in when we give up mastery but keep searching for fidelity, knowing all the while that we will be hoodwinked....[W]e are not in charge of the world. We just live here and try to strike up noninnocent conversations....

I agree with her concluding words, that "Perhaps our hopes for accountability, for politics...turn on revisioning the world as coding trickster with whom we must learn to converse" (1988, pp. 593-94, 596). It is this conception of objectivity and knowledge which I understand by a spiritual conception of, or relationship to, the world. Because I believe that environmental ethics should be conducted with this conception in mind, I think of it as fundamentally a **religious** or **spiritual** discipline.

## II

What, then, characterizes spirituality in its positive aspect? I would first of all characterize it as openness to mystery. Analogous to Kant's beliefs that respect for persons is an expression of the understanding that in persons we witness noumenal

agency breaking through, as it were, into the phenomenal realm and that the noumenal is not intelligible within the framework of the categories that make the phenomenal realm intelligible (for the reason that these categories **constitute** the intelligible aspects of the phenomenal), analogous to this is my sense that nonhuman nature might engage us as active agent in the construction of knowledge and the discovery of value. In responding to persons we are responding to **subjects** who are **active** (moral) **agents**. What Donna Haraway suggests is that we engage the world in the same way--which is **not** to say that we should treat nonhuman nature as **human**--or as sentient, or as conscious, or as having a telos of its own, or as.... (Yet, at the same time, this analogy perhaps helps us understand why it is that American Indians so often treat other animals and plants as belonging to other **nations**, as members of societies one is to respect and approach with a certain etiquette.<sup>4</sup>)

This openness to mystery can be characterized in a different way, making use of thoughts developed in a recent paper by Tom Birch. Birch has argued the undesirability of attempting to draw up criteria that constitute necessary and sufficient conditions for moral considerability, urging that we take considerability "all the way down" to "deontic experience," which is "the point of origination in our experience of our obligations, of the deontic urge."

Deontic experiences are things we confess, things of which we testify, things to which we bear witness in our ethical practice, and things about which we tell the stories/narratives that constitute our personal and cultural mythologies, or worlds. We turn to our deontic experiences and speak of them when we are pressed to explain and justify, and prove to others our ethical judgments and practices.

Our moral world and practice, in other words, is not determined by an a priori determination of which objects are to count as members of the moral club and what are the rules of the road. Rather, it is given shape and texture by a practice of universal consideration that allows the world to participate as active agent in the discovery of value and the determination of practical necessity. Such a practice is to "walk in a sacred manner"; it is a religious or spiritual practice. As Birch puts it, noting parallels with the Zen Buddhist notion of mindfulness,

[w]hetted to the point of the Ideal, the practice of giving consideration would be the continuous realization of the epiphany of every moment. (1990, pp. 14, 17-18)<sup>5</sup>

(If Birch's notions sound more secular than religious, I suggest that this is because we have lost an older and richer notion of spirituality in the literalization of the Word, of which I have spoken above.)

Such a relationship to the nonhuman world provides us with a wider sense of what it is permissible to bring under the sway of one's will; it initiates a letting go, a responsiveness to the grace and gifts this world affords, and a presence to the world as subject, all of which have been associated with spirituality.

In the context of my discussion of a contrast between spiritual and despiritualized epistemic relationships to the nonhuman world, the notion of myth takes on new meaning and significance. At best reduced to the status of metaphor or analogy with the advent of the literalist despiritualization of the world, myth seemed replaceable with psychology (and psychological

therapy), sociology (and social engineering), environmentalism (and either wise conservation or mainstream environmental ethics), etc. Treated as "wild language," the result of "noninnocent conversations" with nonhuman nature, myth is (or can be) a powerful conveyor of spiritual presence. There are no guarantees, of course. Our conversations are not innocent. And what they convey is not the world "as it is." What they can achieve, when the practice of universal considerability is a constant and steady practice in our lives and in the lives of our culture, is the **idiographic** presence of the world to us.<sup>6</sup>

Mythical discourse is revelatory--in contrast to the tendency towards totalization inherent in modernist discourse, in which conformity or reduction to a privileged discourse or set of discourses is the norm. When myth is discussed by contemporary Western people it is almost without exception discussed from the outside, as an object of inquiry, even by those (such as the anthropologist Richard Nelson [1989, 1983]) who are strongly tempted to live in the cultural ambience of myth. A recent exception to this is Gary Snyder's commentary "On 'The Woman Who Married a Bear'" in his **The Practice of the Wild** (1990, pp. 159- 65). After relating the tale as told by Maria Johns, Snyder provides a "commentary" which in fact amounts to a retelling of the story **in his own voice but within the ambience of the myth**; that is, he tells the story as Maria Johns told it, not pretending to be her; **he** tells it as one who has led his own particular life (and therefore with his particular idiographic twist) and yet as Maria Johns presumably told it-- within the ambience of the myth, not as an artifact to be appreciated in a certain way or understood from the point of view of a privileged (truth- conveying) discourse. The difference between Snyder's telling and Maria John's is the difference between two distinct idiographic routes through the world, not the distinction between the telling of the story by a "believer" and the appropriation or colonizing of that story into, or by, a privileged discourse. One senses, in savoring Snyder's telling of the story, just how easy it might after all be to become again a mythic people. (And also how hard it would be: the resistance wells up, the desire, no matter how sympathetic one might be, to tell the story "objectively," to relate it as a story told by other and **wiser-- because innocent--**people and to **extract** lessons from it, lessons told in the language of **Truth**.)

Even mythical conversations, as I have noted, are noninnocent and there are certain precautions every culture must take to protect against their own particular proclivities toward oppression, destruction, ill health, and socially dysfunctional modes of understanding.<sup>7</sup> Our particular liabilities (as a Western, colonizing and male-dominated culture) include (1) a tendency toward privileging some particular Language of Truth, some particular totalizing and colonizing language, for the sake of mastery and at the expense of understanding,<sup>8</sup> for the sake of unity at the risk of loss of telling nuance and acknowledgment of otherness, diversity, and spiritual presence; (2), as a special case of (1), a tendency toward thinking of what are in fact Western masculine forms of spirituality as spirituality per se.

The spirituality of high, Western culture, for example, tends to be a spirituality born of a sense of alienation; it is a spirituality of **return**. It also tends to be a spirituality set against the sin of **hubris**; it is a spirituality of **humility**. Western, masculine spirituality tends to address problems which are often peculiar to, or accentuated in, the lives of Western, white men. In certain cases the developed spiritual disciplines do seem to address these

problems in satisfactory ways; in other cases they seem to perpetuate these problems in subtle and not so subtle ways (See Cheney, 1990b, 1989b, 1987).

An example of the problems this can pose for **feminist** spirituality in particular is a recent emphasis on self- realization through identification with nature in the "ecosophical" literature. This form of nature spirituality has been seductive to many ecofeminist writers, while others have been wary of it, sensing masculinist undercurrents.

Judith Plaskow (1980) notes that several female authors--she focusses on Doris Lessing--have observed that women trapped by patriarchal definitions of what they are, or what they should be, feel free only in natural surroundings. This freedom is spoken of as a merging with nature, a feeling of unity or oneness. Is this an instance of an attitude of identification with the divine logos of the universe depicted in some ecosophical literature? I don't think so. These women are not alienated males longing for either the disappearance of the masculine ego or the self- aggrandizement of the ego made possible by identification with the ecosystem. They are women in bondage longing for **release** from the endless oppression of culturally imposed self-sacrifice. The oneness with nature that they feel is not to be understood, I think, as either self-immolation or self-expansion but, rather, as the recognition of a context which affords not **debilitating** dependence but **facilitating** dependence, a dependence which opens out onto health and well-being--that is, dependence which makes possible the realization, the actualization, of a self, a self which, nonetheless, stands in defining relations to various elements of the human and nonhuman world and conceives of itself in that way. This sense of facilitating dependence is made possible by extending our sense of contextual embeddedness to include nature, by ceasing to regard nature as merely a background against which we play out our lives.

While the conceptions of self-realization and identification can be extremely useful in developing a sound ecosophy, we must be cautious in our articulations of these notions--they are susceptible to highly problematic (as well as highly laudable) readings (See Cheney, 1991).

### III

Both the difficulties of immersing oneself in the ambience of myth for those acculturated to Western thought and the importance and necessity of doing so are depicted in Margaret Atwood's novel, **Surfacing**.

The protagonist, in the course of seeking "redemption" (1976, p. 156) from false understandings of herself--which can be understood as colonizing overlays on her felt sense of herself and the world around her, overlays abetted by her own self- deception--discovers the necessity of mythical connection when she finds a heron hanging from a tree by a length of nylon rope, killed by "Americans"<sup>9</sup>

[t]o prove they could do it, they had the power to kill. Otherwise it was valueless; beautiful from a distance but it couldn't be tamed or cooked or trained to talk, the only relation they could have to a thing like that was to destroy it. Food, slave or corpse, limited choices....

...there is nothing inside the happy killers to restrain them, no conscience or piety; for them the only things worthy of life were human, their own kind of human, framed in the proper

clothes and gimmicks, laminated. It would have been different in those countries where an animal is the soul of an ancestor or the child of a god, at least they would have felt guilt. (1976, pp. 138, 151)<sup>10</sup>

The connection is made explicit in this passage:

Whether it [the heron] died willingly, consented, whether Christ died willingly, anything that suffers and dies instead of us is Christ; if they didn't kill birds and fish they would have killed us. The animals die that we may live, they are substitute people, hunters in the fall killing the deer, that is Christ also. And we eat them, out of cans or otherwise; we are eaters of death, dead Christ-flesh resurrected inside us, granting us life. Canned Spam, canned Jesus, even the plants must be Christ. But we refuse to worship; the body worships with blood and muscle but the thing in the knob head will not, wills not to, the head is greedy, it consumes but does not give thanks. (1976, pp. 164- 65)

In one sense, Atwood's immersion in the ambience of myth can be understood simply as the rejection of positivist conceptions of meaning and the availability of mythical understanding to us. But this letting go and this immersion are, in another sense, not simple and have their very real dangers<sup>11</sup>:

That was what the pictures had meant then but their first meaning was lost now....I had to read their new meaning with the help of the power [deontic experience<sup>12</sup>]. The gods, their likenesses: to see them in their true shape is fatal. While you are human; but after the transformation they could be reached. First I had to immerse myself in the other language. (1976, p. 185)

Eventually, for the protagonist, mythical understanding serves its purpose and is done with:

When I wake in the morning I know they have gone finally, back into the earth, the air, the water, wherever they were when I summoned them. The rules [bracketing her pre-mythical modes of understanding] are over. I can go anywhere now, into the cabin, into the garden, I can walk on the paths.... (1976, pp. 219-20)

She reenters her own time (1976, p. 223) and the gods become

...questionable once more, theoretical as Jesus...; from now on I'll have to define them in the usual way, defining them by their absence; and love by its failures, power by its loss, its renunciation. I regret them; but they give only one kind of truth, one hand. (1976, p. 221)

This loss is a failure not of myth but **our** (or Western culture's) failure. Tribal cultures suggest another possibility, as the following commentary by Robin Ridington on the Athapaskan- speaking Beaver Indians suggests:

...Japasa gave...me two stories....One was about how Indian people from far and wide used to gather in the prairie country near the Peace River to dry saskatoon berries. They came down the rivers in canoes full of drymeat, bear tallow, and berries. They sang and danced and played the hand game in which teams of men bet against one another in guessing which hand conceals a small stone or bone. The other story was about frogs because he once lived with them on the bottom of the lake. The old man's stories recalled times that we would

think of as being very different from one another. One we would call history; the other, myth....In our thoughtworld myth and reality are opposites. Unless we can find some way to understand the reality of mythic thinking we remain prisoners of our own language, our own thoughtworlds....In the Indian way of thinking both stories are true because they describe personal experience.... Both of Japasa's stories were true to his experience. When he was a boy Japasa knew frogs and foxes and wind. He knew their songs. He entered the myths that are told about them. He obtained power by joining his own life force to theirs. He knew them in the bush ways from the society of other humans. He knew them in the searing transformation of his vision quest. He became their child, one of their kind.... ....I can be a frog or a fox and still be a person. I can know them as I know myself. If I am an Indian I can be led toward a place where this knowledge will come naturally. The foxes that came to Japasa before he died were the same as the foxes he knew as a boy. The wind came to him as a person, the foxes wore clothes and spoke in a language he could understand, the frogs gathered to drum and gamble. They gave this boy their songs as guides to the powers he would have as a man....His powers were forces within him as well as forces of nature. (1987, pp. 133-34)

Ridington points out that for nomadic people such as this, their survival "depends upon artifice rather than artifact. They live by knowing how to integrate their own activities with those of the sentient beings around them." It is what we call **mythic thinking** which carries this knowledge. "Their dreaming provides them access to a wealth of information. Their vision quests and their myths integrate the qualities of autonomy and community that are necessary for successful adaptation to the northern forest environment" (1987, p. 134).

As Ridington points out, "the true history<sup>13</sup> of these people will have to be written in a mythic language" (1987, p. 135).<sup>14</sup>

## Notes

1. It is worth pointing out that depiction of spirituality from an epistemological rather than ontological perspective has much in common with Kierkegaard's strategy in **Concluding Unscientific Postscript**. The fact that this strategy is employed by Johannes Climacus (the pseudonymous author of the **Postscript**) rather than by Kierkegaard himself indicates something of the limitations of such an approach. I take this approach because I do not wish to speak as an advocate of any particular form of spirituality, but wish instead to characterize them from the outside, as it were- precisely the reason Kierkegaard wrote the **Postscript** under a pseudonym.

2. See, for example, Shepard (1989). Tom Birch urges caution here, particularly with respect to any tendency to project such a desire to manipulate and control onto all so-called "primitive" societies, and with respect to tendencies to reduce rituals to crude technologies of control.

3. This term (as well as the idea of world as active agent or subject) is Haraway's (1988, p. 594).

4. We borrow the notion of "etiquette" from Snyder (1990).

5. Birch is careful to stress the following caution: "Deontic experience is the source and test of what is of the greatest importance to us. To discover practical necessities we have to filter what we are called to do in deontic experience through our fund of practical wisdom" (1990, p. 23).

6. On the notion of the "idiographic" as a central (I might say "ecological") moral concept, see Rolston (1988): "An ethic too has an environment, a niche to inhabit. Like a species, it is what it is where it is. Ethics evolve, as do species, and have storied development" (1988, p. 342).

7. See Sanday (1981) for an excellent discussion.

8. It might be thought that mastery **requires** understanding that which one desires to control. This is so only to a limited extent. Accounts of the colonial experience show that colonizers very often understand very little about their colonized "subjects," whereas the colonized have a highly nuanced understanding of their oppressors. Survival often requires such knowledge on the part of oppressed people, whereas oppressors often

need to systematically misunderstand those they oppress (as being, for example, subhuman and ignorant) in order to justify the continuance of oppression. The takeover and domination of nature in the West required, apparently, the much simplified understanding of it as a mechanical system--the corpuscular theory. See Kuhn (1970) and Needham (1954).

9. "It doesn't matter what country they're from, my head said, they're still Americans, they're what's in store for us, what we are turning into. They spread themselves like a virus, they get into the brain and take over the cells and the cells change from inside and the ones that have the disease can't tell the difference....But how did they evolve, where did the first one come from, they weren't an invasion from another planet, they were terrestrial. How did we get bad. For us when we were small the origin was Hitler....But Hitler was gone and the thing remained..." (Atwood, 1976, pp. 152-3).

10. The connection with cruelty to humans: "...our proper food was tin cans. We were committing this act, violation, for sport or amusement or pleasure, recreation they call it, these were no longer the right reasons....Anything we could do to the animals we could do to each other; we practiced on them first" (Atwood, 1976, p. 143). Cf. Rodman (1977, pp. 101-7).

11. Hitler's use of mythology provides ample and tragic testimony of this.

12. In a sense, to provide such readings (e.g., power = deontic experience) is misleading. The point is not to provide a reductive reading or to cash in a metaphor. It is perhaps better to read them as attempts to enrich the meaning of the terms equated with those given in the text (in this case, to enrich the meaning of "deontic experience").

13. The meaning of "history"--the attempt to tell certain kinds of stories "objectively" (and urge "lessons") in the language of **Truth**--would, of course, be **utterly** transformed in the process. 14. For further reflections on the themes of this essay see Cheney (1989a, 1990a).

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## ECOFEMINISM

# ECOFEMINISM AND DEEP ECOLOGY: REFLECTIONS ON IDENTITY AND DIFFERENCE

Marti Kheel

### Introduction

It is a sad irony that the destruction of the natural world appears to be proceeding in direct ratio to the construction of moral theories for how we should behave in light of this plight. Behind the proliferation of moral theories lies a profound crisis in our feeling of connections to all life. Unable to trust or draw upon a sense of connection, most environmental theorists endorse reason as the sole guide in dealing with the natural world. The vast majority of theories that constitute the field of environmental ethics are thus axiological, or value theories, whose primary

purpose is the rational allotment of value to the appropriate aspects of the natural world.

Both ecofeminists and deep ecology<sup>1a</sup> share an opposition to these value theories. The emphasis of both philosophies is not on an abstract or "rational" calculation of value, but, rather, on the development of a new consciousness for all of life. It is, perhaps, above all, this emphasis on the primacy of consciousness that underlies the mutual interest taken by ecofeminists and deep ecologists in one another's thought. But, before ecofeminism and deep ecology consider merging their respective identities, it may be useful to determine in what ways the two philosophies diverge.

Ecofeminist philosophy is still in the process of formation. No single philosophical theory can fully represent its ideas and, undoubtedly, this will remain the case.<sup>1b</sup> All would agree that ecofeminism entails the option that the devaluation of women and nature has historically gone hand in hand. Most would concur, in addition, that our environmental problems have "psycho-sexual roots."<sup>2</sup> By this it is meant that domination of "outer nature" (the female-imagined environment) is inextricably tied to the domination of "inner nature" (one's passions, emotions and desires). As one environmental writer has aptly put it, "Instead of saying that we face an environmental crisis, it might be more appropriate verbal convention to say that **WE ARE** the environmental crisis."<sup>3</sup> To this, ecofeminists have hastened to add that this "inner environmental crisis" is rooted, above all, in the psychic identity of men. Men, it is argued, have sought to deny their feelings of vulnerability and dependency in relation to women and nature, and, in so doing, have sought to dominate both. Many ecofeminists have, therefore, concluded that no solution to our environmental problems will be forthcoming until sexism in all its forms is rooted out.

Outside of these overarching ideas, there seems to be little consensus as to what precisely ecofeminism is. This diversity of views undoubtedly reflects the multiplicity of paths by which women have found their way to ecofeminism. As Charlene Spretnak points out, some were drawn to ecofeminism through their exposure to nature-based goddess religions; others were drawn from the environmental movement; and, still others, from the study of political theory and history.<sup>4</sup> My own journey, which was via the animal-liberation movement, reflects the diversity of routes by which women have found their way to ecofeminism.

As ecofeminists attempt to weave together their common threads, it is useful to determine what is unique to the identity of ecofeminism as a philosophy. The attempt to contrast ecofeminism with what is, perhaps, its closest philosophical ally - deep ecology - can be a helpful means of furthering this process of identity formation. By scrutinizing some of the key ideas of leading deep ecologists through a feminist "lens," we can begin to discern what is unique to the identity of an ecofeminist philosophy. But before examining the differences between ecofeminism and deep ecology, it will be helpful to outline briefly the features that the two share.

Ecofeminists and deep ecologists (those Warwick Fox calls transpersonal ecologists) are united in their critique of an environmental ethic that is grounded in abstract principles and universal rules discoverable through reason alone. Feminists have argued that behind the preoccupation with universal principles and abstract rules lies a mistrust of nature, including nature as it is found within ourselves - namely, our instincts and feelings of connection to all of life. The quest for "truth" or "objective" knowledge is thus equated with the masculine endeavor to transcend the contingencies of the natural world.<sup>5</sup> In keeping with this notion, much of Western philosophy, including (ironically) much of environmental ethics, may be viewed as a continuation of the attempt to dominate the natural world.

In the modern patriarchal Industrial worldview, individuals are seen as discrete, atomistic beings, who must be compelled, through the use of reason, to behave in moral ways. Feminist moral theorists have contrasted this notion of morality with different ways in which women describe their ethical thought. In her book, *In a Different Voice*, Carol Gilligan argues that

women speak about moral problems in a "different voice" from that of men. For women, moral problems arise from what are perceived as conflicting responsibilities, rather than from competing rights. The resolution is, thus, sought in a mode of thinking that is "contextual and narrative," rather than "formal and abstract." Gilligan argues that the emphasis on particularity and feeling is a predominantly female mode of ethical thought. In her words:

The moral imperative that emerges repeatedly in interviews with women is an injunction to care, a responsibility to discern and alleviate the "real and recognizable trouble" of this world. For men, the moral imperative appears rather as an injunction to respect the rights of others and thus to protect from interference the rights to life and self-fulfillment.<sup>6</sup>

Embedded in such feminist theories is the notion that women have a sense of connection to other living beings that men need to recreate. Some have argued that this is a bodily wisdom that women have by virtue of their capacity to bring forth life. Others have argued that it stems from the differing conceptions of self that women and men develop in the process of socialization into sex roles necessary to the maintenance of patriarchy. Whatever the origin of this gender-related difference, the question, according to some feminist moral theorists, is not why people should behave in ethical ways, but when and why compassion, or moral behavior, fails. The search, then, for many ecofeminists is not for an abstract conception of appropriate value for the natural world, but, rather, for the development of a receptive consciousness that enables one to hear the "other voice."

Many followers of deep ecology articulate a similar theme in their statement that cultivating ecological consciousness is a process of learning to appreciate silence and solitude and learning how to listen. It is learning to be more receptive, trusting, holistic in perception, and it is grounded in a vision of non-exploitative science and technology.<sup>7</sup> Emphasizing the experimental nature of this ecological consciousness, deep ecologist Warwick Fox refers to:

...the extent to which deep ecology is ultimately grounded in **sensibility** (i.e., an openness to emotions and impressions) rather than a **rationality** (i.e., an openness to data ("facts") and logical inference but an attempted closedness to empathic understanding).<sup>8</sup>

It is this ecological sensibility that philosophers supporting deep ecology see as the matrix from which ethical conduct ultimately flows. According to Fox, "Deep ecologists agree with Birch and Cobb's insight that 'human beings are more deeply moved by the way they experience their world than by the claims ethics makes on them.'<sup>9</sup> Similarly, Arne Naess states that, "I'm not much interested in ethics and morals. I'm interested in how we experience the world."<sup>10</sup> And as George Sessions concludes, "The search then, as I understand it, is not for environmental ethics but for ecological consciousness."<sup>11</sup> Both ecofeminism and deep ecology may, therefore, be viewed as "deep" philosophies in the sense that they call for an inward transformation in order to attain an outward change. Deep ecologists contrast their philosophy with that of "shallow ecology" or "reform environmentalism," which sets as its purpose the preservation of the environment for future human needs. Deep ecologists argue that nature has inherent worth apart from any value with which humans may imbue it. Deep ecologists thus



attempt to move beyond the prudential concerns of conservation, to the development of a deep ecological sensibility that recognizes the value of all forms in the biosphere.

For both ecofeminists and these deep ecologists, the inward transformation of sensibility is often perceived as spiritual. Although deep ecologists often criticize the mainstream religions for their anthropocentrism and shallow ecology, they nonetheless take inspiration from the minority traditions within these and other religious traditions (e.g., Zen Buddhism, Taoism, Christianity, and Native American spirituality). Ecofeminists, on the other hand, draw especially on the ancient goddess religions and Native American spirituality. Although not all ecofeminists agree that there is a spiritual dimension to ecofeminism, many of them concur with deep ecologists on the importance of spirituality in helping us to attain a sense of our deep interconnection with all of life. Both ecofeminists and deep ecologists also look to the study of ecology (especially field ecology) to help reinforce spiritual insights such as the importance of diversity, as well as our interdependence with all of life.

Ecofeminists are less sanguine than deep ecologists that the major religious traditions can help promote a sense of interconnection with all of life. In fact, many claim that these traditions actually hinder development of this sensibility. My own spiritual journey has led me to reject the Judeo-Christian tradition on several accounts, foremost among which is its emphasis on (male) humanity's special relation to the divine. The exclusivity found in the notion that one species (more specifically "Man") is made in the image of God, precludes, in my mind, a true feeling of kinship with nature and sense of embeddedness in the natural world. Although I have found spiritual inspiration from knowledge of the ancient, earth-worshipping goddess religions, it can be difficult to adapt these beliefs to the contemporary world. For ecofeminists like myself, a sense of interconnection with nature must be forged, first and foremost, from personal experience and apart from the teachings of the major religions.

The two key norms of deep ecology - ecospherical egalitarianism and the process of Self-realization - flow from an ontological understanding of the interconnection of all of life. Self-realization, according to Arne Naess and others entails a growing sense of identification with all of the natural world. The small, ego-identified "self" expands its awareness into a larger more inclusive ecological "Self." According to Devall and Sessions, this process

...begins when we cease to understand or see ourselves as isolated and narrow competing egos and begin to identify with other humans from our family and friends to, eventually, our species. But the deep ecology sense of Self requires a further maturity and growth, an identification which goes beyond humanity to include the non-human world.<sup>12</sup>

This widened self-identification is also tied in with ecospherical egalitarianism, the second norm of deep ecology. Ecocentric or ecospherical egalitarianism entails the notion that all members of the ecosphere have equal inherent worth, which some deep ecologists argue must be interpreted in a metaphorical, rather than a literal, sense.<sup>13</sup> According to Devall and Sessions, "Biocentric equality is intimately related to the all-inclusive self-realization in the sense that if we harm the rest of Nature we are harming ourselves."<sup>14</sup>

Thus far, it might appear that ecofeminism and deep ecology have a great deal in common. Both posit a critique of abstract rationality while emphasizing the importance of feeling, experience, consciousness, and spirituality, as well as a holistic awareness of our interconnection with all of life. A superficial analysis might tempt us to dissolve the separate identities of the two streams of thought. But let us examine more closely the differences between the two philosophies to see whether a merger between them is, in fact, warranted.

Perhaps the most significant distinction between ecofeminism and followers of deep ecology resides in their respective understandings of the root cause of our environmental malaise. For deep ecologists, the anthropocentric worldview is foremost to blame. The two norms of deep ecology are thus designed to redress this human self-centered worldview. Ecofeminists, on the other hand, argue that it is the androcentric worldview that deserves primary blame.<sup>15</sup> For ecofeminists, it is not just "humans" but men and the masculinist worldview that must be dislodged from their dominant place.

The key to understanding the differences between the two philosophies thus lies in the differing conceptions of self that they both presuppose. When deep ecologists write of anthropocentrism and the notion of an "expanded Self," they ostensibly refer to a gender-neutral concept of self. Implicit in the feminist analysis of the androcentric worldview, however, is the understanding that men and women experience the world, and hence their conceptions of self, in widely divergent ways. Whereas the anthropocentric worldview perceives humans as at the center or apex of the natural world, the androcentric analysis suggests this worldview is unique to men. Feminists have argued that, unlike men, women's identities have not been established through their elevation over the natural world. On the contrary, women have been identified with the devalued natural world, an identification that they have often adopted themselves as well.

Deep ecology philosophers emphasize the importance of seeing into the nature of the real world, and then expanding one's conception of the self through external identification. However, if in this process we fail to recognize the real psychological differences in male and female identities, our grasp of the world must remain incomplete. If ontology is to be of any value, we must recognize the reality of not just "external" nature but of our inner drives and needs as well.<sup>16</sup>

In the remainder of this essay, therefore, I examine more closely the deep ecologists' concept of an expanded Self. What problems ensue from the assumption of gender neutrality in the concept of the ecological Self? Is the expanded Self something with which ecofeminists can identify? Or, does it express inner drives and needs that reflect a distinctly masculine point of view? In order to evaluate these questions, it is necessary to delve more deeply into the "inner ontology" or psychology of the masculine self. The second section of the paper, therefore, provides a brief review of some of the relevant philosophical and psychological theories of the self.

One of the precepts of feminism has been the importance of grounding one's theories in practical experience. In keeping with this notion, the concept of widened identification must be examined, not only for its conceptual legitimacy but for its practical implications as well. In the third section of this essay, therefore, I apply the aforementioned theories of self-hood to help explain the experiences of certain men who claim that their



process of widened identification (or self-realization) takes place within the context of a concrete activity in the natural world - namely, by means of hunting.

### Constructing the Self

One of the most thoroughgoing analyses of the masculine and feminine conceptions of self is found in Simone de Beauvoir's monumental work, **The Second Sex**. According to de Beauvoir, under patriarchal society, woman's sense of self is inextricably tied to her status as the "other":

Now, what peculiarly signalizes the situation of woman is that she - a free and autonomous being like all human creatures - nevertheless finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the other. They propose to stabilize her as object and to doom her to immanence since her transcendence is to be overshadowed and forever transcended by another ego (conscience) which is essential and sovereign.<sup>17</sup>

According to de Beauvoir, the facts of pregnancy, menstruation and childbirth have historically confined women to the world of immanence and contingency, a state of being in which life "merely" repeats itself. Authentic subjectivity is achieved to the extent that one raises oneself above biological necessity, and hence, above the animal world. Men have historically transcended the world of contingency through exploits and projects - that is, through attempts to transform the natural world. In her words: "Man's design is not to repeat himself in time: it is to take control of the instant and mold the future."<sup>18</sup> According to de Beauvoir, the prototypical activities of transcendence (hunting, fishing, and war) involve both risk and struggle. As she explains:

For it is not in giving life but in risking life that man is raised above the animal; that is why superiority has been accorded in humanity not to the sex that brings forth but to that which kills.<sup>19</sup>

De Beauvoir claims that self-hood is an identity that emerges through an antagonistic relation to an "other." For women to achieve full human status or self-hood, they must, therefore, join with men in exploits and projects that express this opposition to the natural world.

De Beauvoir developed her concept of the "other" from the writings of Hegel and Sartre.<sup>20</sup> Both of these philosophers considered antagonistic consciousness to be necessary for the establishment of the self. For Hegel, consciousness could only be achieved through recognition from an "other." If the truth of self-certainty - the sustained sense of oneself as a part of the world - was to be achieved, the "other" had to be overcome. The contradictory need for both recognition from, and negation of, the "other" could result in only two possible outcomes - the death of the "other" or the subjection of the "other" in the relation of master and love.

Sartre developed the notion of the antagonistic nature of consciousness with his concept of the "Look." The struggle between two consciousness thus becomes one of competing "Looks." When one is looked at, according to Sartre, one becomes objectified; one is no longer the center of infinite possibilities. Hegel's life-and-death struggle between rival

consciousness thus becomes transformed in Sartre's thought into the struggle of competing "Looks." Each self struggles to attain transcendence by transforming the other into an object.

De Beauvoir extended Sartre's thought by showing that it was women who had been assigned the role of the looked upon "other."

While agreeing with much of de Beauvoir's analysis, many contemporary feminists reject the masculine norm of autonomy that she endorsed. The notion of an autonomous (masculine) self, established through the defeat of a female-imagined "other," is viewed by many feminists as a central underpinning of the patriarchal world.<sup>21</sup> Feminists have shown that many of the world's most sacred traditions depict similar stories of struggle and conquest. Typically, the conquest is of Darkness or Chaos, usually symbolized by a female-imagined, animal form, frequently a dragon or a snake. Through this struggle against unruly nature, the world of Light and Order is born. As Monica Sjo and Barbara Mor describe these struggles:

The sun-worshipping pharaohs of later Egypt slay the dragon Apophis, Apollo slays Gaia's python. The Greek hero Perseus slays the Amazonian Medusa - who is described as three headed (the Triple Goddess) with snakes writhing from her three heads. St. George slays the dragon in England, even St. Patrick must drive the snake from the snakeless Ireland. And in Hebrew Genesis, the serpent is doomed by the War God Yahweh to be forever the enemy of the human race: to be crushed under our heels, and to give back to us only one poison. In Christian prophesy, in Revelation 12-21:1, the final extinction of the dragon is promised when a king-messiah kills the watery cosmic snake and then takes over the world unchallenged: "and there was no more sea." This event is prefigured in Psalms 74:13: "Thou breakest the heads of dragons in the waters."<sup>22</sup>

Similarly, in the Christian tradition, we find God, saints, and archangels enacting the same heroic struggle against the Devil, who is frequently depicted in animal form. The horned gods common to Mesopotamia, both in Babylon and Assyria, are transfigured, in the Christian tradition, into the familiar image of the horned Devil. The Devil is seen as the source of disorder or unruly nature that faith, prayer, and divine intervention must overcome.

These stories of struggle and conquest contrast sharply with the mythologies of the earliest matriarchal societies, in which the Goddess was intimately connected with the animal world. It is, in fact, the conquest of the Goddess in her animal aspect that these patriarchal mythologies record.

According to Erich Neumann,<sup>23</sup> the matricide of the "Terrible Mother," typically depicted in animal form, is the act of killing the "Archetypal Feminine" who represents, for both women and men, the eternal dark side that threatens to destroy ego consciousness. For Neumann and other Jungians, the heroic matricide of the mother figure was necessary for the development of consciousness. The matricidal act brings with it ambivalent feelings for the mother figure. Having sundered oneself from the mother figure, one longs to return to her as well. The heroic ego then must kill the "Terrible Mother" as an act of self-defense designed to protect the heroic consciousness against the return to an unconscious state.

According to Jung, the heroic ego establishes itself through the stolen power of the Mother Goddess. Eventually, it is a debt that must be repaid through the hero's self-sacrifice to the Mother.

It is often at mid-life that the illusion of autonomy is broken down and the ego finally faces the depths of the self's unconscious. Thus, the spiritual journey, for Jung, requires not an outward act of aggression, but an inward sacrifice of the ego self.

Although the Jungian "transpersonal" journey is designed to "sacrifice" the (masculine) autonomous self, what is of interest is that the imagery of struggle and conquest is still retained. Long before such modern analyses, Plato also depicted the spiritual journey in terms that reflect the notion of struggle and conquest. In Plato's thought, the spiritual journey of the soul is achieved through its struggle with, and conquest over, the non-rational aspects of itself. According to Plato, the highest part of the soul, embodied in reason, may be likened to a winged charioteer that must assert its control over the nonrational parts of the soul. In Plato's allegory, two winged steeds represent the lower passions that must be brought under the control of the charioteer. The spiritual journey commences, for Plato, with the sight of one's "beloved." The struggle ensues when the onlooker attempts to transform the desire for one's beloved into a spiritual journey of return to an original unified state. The desired union is ultimately not with an individual being but with the forms of Truth and Beauty, situated within a "higher," spiritual realm. As Plato describes the charioteer's struggle:

But the driver, with resentment even stronger than before, like a racer recoiling from the starting-rope, jerks back the bit in the mouth of the wanton horse with an even stronger pull, bespatters his railing tongue and his jaws with blood and forcing him down on legs and haunches delivers him over to anguish.... And so it happens, time and again, until the evil steed casts off his wantonness; humbled in the end, he obeys the counsel of his driver.<sup>24</sup>

What is significant, for our purposes, in this Platonic allegory is that the inward struggle over one's passions is depicted with the use of an image of violence towards the animal world. Furthermore, the violent struggle with internal nature (depicted as an animal) is conceived as an integral part of a spiritual journey to transcend the individual self.

Plato's allegory, thus, lends support to one of the major insights of the feminist writings on women and nature, as well as that of the Frankfurt school,<sup>25</sup> that is, that the domination of "external nature" is intimately linked to the domination of "inner nature." Susan Griffin highlights this point in her analysis of pornography. According to Griffin, the images of pornography reflect men's attempt to subdue the knowledge of bodily feeling. As she explains:

Yet the pornographer fears the power of nature; he cannot decide to admit his own feelings into his knowledge of himself. Therefore he is caught. And like a trapped animal, trapped by his own body, he becomes violent. He punishes that which he imagines holds him and entraps him: he punishes the female body.<sup>26</sup>

The psychoanalytic theory of object relations presents a modern-day critical analysis of the establishment of the masculine self in heroic opposition to the female world. According to this theory, both boys and girls experience their first forms of relatedness as a kind of merging with the mother figure. The child then develops a concept of self through a process of disengaging from this unified worldview. Unlike girls, boys have a two-stage process of disidentification. They must not

only disengage from the mother figure, but in order to identify as male they must deny all that is female within themselves, as well as their involvement with all of the female world. The self-identity of the boy child is thus founded upon the negation and objectification of an "other."<sup>27</sup>

According to Chodorow, since the girl child is not faced with the same need to differentiate her self-identity from that of the mother figure, "girls come to experience themselves as less differentiated than boys, as more continuous with and related to the external object world and as differently oriented to their inner object-world as well."<sup>28</sup> Girls, therefore, emerge from this period with a basis for "empathy" built into their primary definition of self in a way that boys do not. Thus, girls emerge with a stronger basis for experiencing another's needs or feelings as one's own, or of thinking that one is so experiencing another's needs and feelings.

Dorothy Dinnerstein extends this analysis to the masculine mode of interacting not only with women but with all of the natural world. For Dinnerstein, since a child's self-identity is originally viewed as indistinct from the surrounding world, later self-identity comes to be founded not only upon the notion of not being female, but upon the notion of not being nature as well.

For Dinnerstein, the process of developing a separate self brings with it the ambivalent feelings of rage and a fear and longing to return to the original coextensive self. Dinnerstein argues that it is the current sexual arrangement of women being the primary nurturers of children that results in women becoming the scapegoat for the repressed rage that the child feels. The rage is, in reality, a rage against the "knowledge of fleshly transience." In her words:

We hold this knowledge at bay by rejecting what is hardest to endure in the immediate sense of our own vulnerable animal existence, by demeaning it, splitting it off from our humanity. And we keep this knowledge nearby by embodying that immediate sense, disowned and degraded, in our pre-rational image of women.<sup>29</sup>

It is not necessary to concur with Dinnerstein's conclusion that the current sexual arrangements of childbearing are the sole cause of the contemporary conceptions of masculine and feminine self<sup>30</sup> in order to perceive the valuable insights of object-relations theory. Object-relations theory sheds important light on the long tradition that views the masculine self as a product of the negation of both the feminine and all of the natural world.

### Expanding the Self

This brief excursion into psychoanalytic and philosophical theories of the self should underline some of the problems entailed in assuming a gender-neutral concept of self. If men in our society are socialized to perceive their identity in opposition to a devalued, female-imagined world, we might expect that the process of reinstituting this forbidden identification will be fraught with problems along the way. At the very least, we might expect that the process of identification would be experienced in different ways by women and men. As we have seen, women's sense of identity is characterized by the maintenance of ties and connection; there is no felt need to establish their self-hood in opposition to others, or to the natural world.

In order to understand how these differences in women's and men's self-identities affect their process of self-realization process, the works of three prominent male writers and philosophers, who claim that their process of self-realization occurs through the act of hunting and killing animals, are suggestive in this regard. Two of the three writers are often cited with approval by some deep ecologists. Although the third, Randall Eaton, is not, to my knowledge, mentioned in their writings, the personal insights he provides into his own process of self-expansion are still relevant to the argument being developed here.

My criticism is directed not merely at the support that at least some deep ecologists have given to hunting; it is, rather, a critique of the limitations of a gender-neutral concept of self, which uses hunting to illustrate my point. Indeed, I would go so far as to say that the cogency of my argument would still hold even if deep ecologists never endorsed hunting as a means of expanding the self. The criticism, moreover, is not confined to deep ecologists but applies equally to all ecophilosophies which endorse the notion of caring for nature by means of expanding the sense of self-identification. My purpose in employing the example of hunting is to bring the discussion of identification and expansion of self down from the heights of abstraction, so characteristic of philosophical theory, to the level of concrete example. I feel that only in this way is it possible to assess the tangible results of the differences in women's and men's concepts of self as they find expression in identification with the natural world.

According to the philosopher/biologist Randall Eaton, "To hunt is to experience extreme oneness with nature.... The hunter imitates his prey to the point of identity."<sup>31</sup> As he explains:

...hunting connects a man completely with the earth more deeply and profoundly than any other human enterprise. Paradoxical as it may appear at first glimpse, the hunter's feelings for his prey is one of deep passion, ecstasy and respect.... The hunter loves the animal he kills....<sup>32</sup>

Let us recall that according to psychoanalytic theory the boy's yearning to identify with the mother figure is fueled by his feelings of alienation and the consequent urge to re-experience the original state of union. Randall Eaton's view conveys such a longing, which may be seen as a longing for the original self. In his words,

What do I mean at the deepest level when I say I want to know the behavior of the tiger? I really mean that I have affection for tigers and that I want to know the essential nature or being of the tiger. If the truth be known, I want to be a tiger, to walk in his skin, hear with his ears, flex my tiger body and feel as a tiger feels.<sup>33</sup>

The writings of a well-known Spanish philosopher, Jose Ortega y Gasset,<sup>34</sup> reflect a similar urge toward union with the animal, which he sees as a unification with the animal within himself. In his words,

Man cannot re-enter Nature except by temporarily rehabilitating that part of himself which is still an animal. And this, in turn, can be achieved only by placing himself in relation to another animal.<sup>35</sup>

For such men as Eaton and Ortega y Gasset, the ultimate purpose of the hunt would appear to be this reversion to an earlier, more primitive, state of being in which one's separation, not from women, but from animals, has not yet occurred. Ortega y Gasset, in fact, refers to hunting as a kind of "vacation from the human condition through an authentic 'immersion in nature'"<sup>36</sup> He explains, "in that mystical union with the beast a contagion is immediately generated and the hunter begins to behave like the game."<sup>37</sup>

Hunting is portrayed by all these and other male authors as a pleasurable activity to which one is continually drawn. The erotic undertones of this pleasure can be found in their sensuous descriptions of the hunt.<sup>38</sup> Thus, the prominent environmental writer Aldo Leopold, some of whose work is much endorsed by deep ecologists, notes that he "tingled" at the recollection of the big gander that sailed honking into his decoys<sup>39</sup> and Ortega y Gasset writes of the "exquisite" feel of the air that "glides over the skin and enters the lungs."<sup>40</sup> At other times, both write of hunting in more heated terms, using such words as "hunting fever" and the "drama" and "contagion" of the hunt. Indeed, Ortega y Gasset goes so far as to assert the "unequaled orgiastic power" of blood,<sup>41</sup> contending that wildlife photography is to hunting what Platonic love is to the real thing.<sup>42</sup>

According to both object-relations and Jungian theory, it is the ongoing denial of the original union with the mother figure that creates the lifelong yearning to experience this original state. Hunting is, in fact, described by all three writers as a permanent or instinctive longing. According to Ortega y Gasset, sport hunting is "however strangely a deep and permanent yearning in the human condition."<sup>43</sup> And in the words of Aldo Leopold, "The instinct that finds delight in the sight and pursuit of game is bred into the very fiber of the human race."<sup>44</sup> Desire for hunting, according to Leopold, lies deeper than that of other outdoor sports. In his words, "Its source is a matter of instinct as well as competition." He elaborates, "A son of Robinson Crusoe, having never seen a racket, might get along nicely without one, but he would be pretty sure to hunt or fish whether or not he were taught to do so."<sup>45</sup> In other words, for Leopold, a boy instinctively learns to shoot a gun, and moreover instinctively wants to hunt and kill! It must be emphasized that all three writers describe hunting not as a necessary means of subsistence, but rather as a **desire** that fulfills a deep psychological need.<sup>46</sup> At times Leopold is unclear as to whether this instinct is universally held by all humans or only men and boys. Leopold writes, ambiguously:

A man may not care for gold and still be human but the man who does not like to see, hunt, photograph or otherwise outwit birds and animals is hardly normal. He is supercivilized, and I for one do not know how to deal with him.<sup>47</sup>

To understand how the act of identification can coexist with the desire to kill the being with whom one identifies, it is important to understand the ambivalent nature of the hunt. Ortega y Gasset refers to this "ambivalence" felt by every hunter that results from "the equivocal nature of man's relationship with animals." As he explains:

Nor can it be otherwise, because man has never really known what an animal is. Before and beyond all science, humanity sees itself as something emerging from animality, but it cannot be sure of having transcended that state completely.<sup>48</sup>

The hunter is thus driven by the conflicting desires to both identify with the animal and to deny that he is an animal himself. The "drama" of the hunt enables the hunter to experience the yearning for a return to unity while ensuring, through the death of the animal, that such a unification is never attained. Nancy Hartsock provides an insight into this phenomenon through her analysis of the psychology of the masculine self.<sup>49</sup>

In words reminiscent of Hegel, she states:

As a consequence of this experience of discontinuity and aloneness, penetration of ego-boundaries or fusion with another is experienced as violent. Thus, the desire for fusion with another can take the form of domination of the other. In this form it leads to the only possible fusion with a threatening other: when the other ceases to exist as separate, and, for that reason, threatening being. Insisting that another submit to one's will is simply a milder form of the destruction of discontinuity in the death of the other since in this case one is no longer confronting a discontinuous embodiment. This is perhaps one source of the links between sexual activity, domination and death.<sup>50</sup>

Deep ecology philosophers caution that identification must entail a recognition of the "relative autonomy" of the other being, but it is precisely this autonomous existence that the above writers have failed to convey. According to object-relations theory, the mother is transformed and incorporated by the boy child into an object from which his identity can then be forged. In a similar way, animals become objects in the eyes of some men. In fact, Aldo Leopold openly expresses this urge to reduce animals to the status of objects. He states that "critics write and hunters outwit their animals for one and the same reason - to reduce that beauty to possession."<sup>51</sup> Interestingly, the original title of his famous *A Sand County Almanac* was "Great Possessions."<sup>52</sup>

The significance of the reduction of the animal to object status is that the **relationship** to the animal becomes more important than the animal itself. The feelings of yearning for union, the urge to "outwit" - all these take precedence over the living being that is killed. The animal is swallowed up in the act of merging. Even the death of the animal is considered incidental - a by-product of the more important desire that finds its expression in the hunt. As Ortega y Gasset explains:

To the sportsman the death of the game is not what interests him; that is not his purpose. What interests him is everything he had to do to achieve that death - that is, the hunt. Therefore, what was before only a means to an end is now an end in itself. Death is essential because without it there is no authentic hunting.... To sum up, one does not hunt in order to kill; on the contrary, one kills in order to have hunted.<sup>53</sup>

Hunters express multiple reasons for their desire to hunt, often down-playing their desire to kill. Many contend that they hunt in order to be in nature, to experience a sense of camaraderie with their fellow hunters, to obtain the meat of the animal, and so on. What is significant about this complex of motives, however, is how inextricably they are intertwined. As Ortega y Gasset points out, the killing of the animal is not an incidental event that can be eliminated while leaving the other experiences intact. Rather, the killing of the animal is the one ingredient in the hunting experience that cannot be removed. It is the climax

of the "drama" - that which gives meaning to all the other experiences that have led up to that point. This is not to deny the social aspects of the hunting experience. Clearly, hunting is often a powerful experience of male bonding between fathers and sons. Male bonding acts not only as a powerful social reinforcement of the hunting experience but as a strong inducement as well. Men often feel pressured into hunting by fathers and friends, succumbing to such pressure to avoid the accusation that they are not "real men." It would seem that not all men adapt with equal facility to the social construction of masculinity and to the acts of aggression typically entailed in this norm.

Deep ecologists argue that a widened identification will ensure that one will want to minimize harm to individual beings in that they will be viewed as part of the larger ecological Self. However, it is clear from the above examples of self-realization, that for these men this was not the case. For all three men, the killing of animals is seen as an **integral part** of the process of self-realization. The mind-set that they reveal is that of a psychological instrumentalism in which the animal is seen, not as a unique, living being, but rather, as a means of achieving a desired psychological (or psycho-biological) state. The animal is thus reduced to the status of object or symbol.

What first appears to be a transpersonal or beyond-the-ego experience upon further examination is merely the familiar, heroic struggle to establish the masculine self. The animal still functions in the role of the "other," a necessary prop for establishing the heroic, alleged "trans-egoic" state. The ego is seemingly transcended by vanquishing the "other," but, in reality, the ego has merely assumed another form.

For all three writers, the desire to hunt is clearly of greater importance than the life of the animal that they kill. For Leopold, the urge to hunt is strong enough to merit its enshrinement as an inalienable right.

Some can live without the opportunity for the exercise and control of the hunting instinct, just as I suppose some can live without work, play, love, business or other vital adventure. But in these days we regard such deprivation as unsocial. Opportunity for the exercise of all the normal instincts has come to be regarded more and more as an inalienable right.<sup>54</sup>

Aldo Leopold is considered by many to be a pioneer in ecophilosophy. He is perhaps best known as an early promulgator of an ethic of nonanthropocentrism and biocentric equality. What is not widely recognized, however, is how paramount the hunting instinct was to Leopold's philosophy, and to the "land ethic" for which he is so well known.<sup>55a</sup> Just after Leopold discusses the inalienable right for the free exercise of the "normal" instinct to hunt, he goes on to deplore that, "the men who are destroying our wildlife are alienating one of these rights and doing a good job of it."<sup>55b</sup> Wildlife must be conserved not because of the animals' inalienable right to life but rather because of "man's" inalienable right to hunt and kill! As Leopold elaborates:

His instincts prompt him to compete for his place in the community but his ethics prompt him also to cooperate (perhaps in order that there may be a place to **compete for**) [emphasis added].<sup>56</sup>

Leopold expands on this notion of ethics as a form of restraint when he argues,

An ethic ecologically is a limitation on freedom of action in the struggle for existence. An ethic philosophically is a differentiation of social from anti-social conduct. These are two definitions of one thing. Good social conduct involves a limitation of freedom.<sup>57</sup>

Leopold's land ethic is thus conceived as a necessary restraint for a self that is motivated by an inherently aggressive drive. All three of the pro hunting authors see such aggression and struggle as a fundamental fact of life. In Ortega y Gasset's words, "Life is a terrible conflict, a grandiose and atrocious confluence."<sup>58</sup> This notion of life's inherent conflict can be understood, with reference to object-relations theory, as the result of the male's ongoing internal struggle to maintain his self-identity as distinct from the female-imagined natural world. This internal conflict then becomes projected onto the "outside" world. The deep ecological concept of a widened identification of self seem to not account for the fact that, contrary to what all three authors would have us believe, not everyone's concept of self entails such an aggressive drive. From many women (and some men) this is clearly not the case. Such women's process of identification and widening of the self finds expression in different ways.

For many women, identification with animals entails not the simultaneous urge to express an aggressive drive but, rather, the desire to avoid causing them harm. In places, some deep ecologists would seem to express this feeling as well. Thus, Arne Naess writes,

There is a basic intuition in deep ecology that we have no right to destroy other living beings without sufficient reason. Another norm is that, with maturity, human beings will experience joy when other life forms experience joy, and sorrow when other life forms experience sorrow.<sup>59</sup>

This statement, however, would appear to be contradicted by Devall and Sessions who suggest, in **Deep Ecology**, that hunting, along with such diverse activities as surfing, sailing, sunbathing, and bicycling, is "an especially useful activity" that, with the "proper attitude," can help encourage "maturity" of the self.<sup>60</sup>

In order to understand this seeming contradiction, we must recall that it is the **widest** sense of identification that deep ecologists ultimately call for, namely, an identification not with individual beings but rather with the larger ecocentric community as a whole. Warwick Fox expresses this when he states:

In terms of the wider identification approach, then, it can be seen that there is a strong sense in which community (e.g., the species or the ecosystem) is even more important than the individual expressions that constitute it since the community itself constitutes an entire **dimension** of the world with which I identify, i.e., of my Self.<sup>61</sup>

Poet Robinson Jeffers, often cited with approval, by deep ecologists, expresses this relative prioritizing in even stronger terms:

I believe the universe is one being, all its parts are different expressions of the same energy, and they are all in communication with each other, therefore parts of an organic whole.... It seems to me that this whole **alone** is worthy of the deeper love. [Emphasis added].<sup>62</sup>

Many deep ecologists maintain that this primary identification with the "whole" is not at the expense of individual beings, since they too must be seen as part of the wider ecological self. But, as we have seen, the danger with widening one's identification to the "whole" or biotic community (as in the case of the pro hunters) is that one may widen it beyond the reach of individual beings.<sup>63</sup> This preference for identification with the larger "whole" may be seen in some cases to reflect the familiar masculine urge to transcend the concrete world of particularity in search for something more enduring and abstract.

### Forming an Ecofeminist Identity

Many deep ecology philosophers seem to believe that self-realization is a simple process of expanding one's identity to all of the natural world. We have seen, however, what problems this process may entail. The foregoing analysis can, thus, be helpful in pointing to the ways in which ecofeminist philosophy might distinguish itself from deep ecology. Ecofeminists must continue to question the value of all claims to gender-neutral generalizations. They must probe beneath such generalities to see what activities and motives they might conceal. When deep ecologists write of expanding the self, ecofeminists must be prepared to examine more deeply the unconscious drives that fuel the self that one seeks to expand.

We have seen that women and animals have been used as psychological instruments for the establishment of the masculine self. The conquest of the snake, the dragon, and other female-imagined monsters reflects the inner drives and needs of the masculine self. What we witness, in the experiences of the above-mentioned hunters, is the same conquest mentality now operating on an allegedly "higher" plane. Nonetheless, animals are still used as instruments of self-definition; they are killed not in the name of an individual, masculine ego but instead in the name of a higher, abstract self. But whether one is establishing the "self" writ small or the larger "Self," the experience of the animal - the loss of her or his life - remains the same.

As we have seen, the danger of an abstract identification with a larger "whole" is that it fails to recognize or respect the existence of independent, living beings. This has been one of the major failings of both environmental philosophy and the environmental movement. By alternately raising the ecosystem or an aggrandized Self to the level of supreme value, they have created a holism that risks obliterating the uniqueness and importance of individual beings. The disillusionment of many animal liberationists with both the environmental movement and environmental philosophy is a consequence of this fact.<sup>64</sup>

Ecofeminist philosophy must be wary of a holist philosophy that transcends the realm of individual beings. Our deep, holistic awareness of the interconnectedness of all of life must be a **lived** awareness that we experience in relation to **particular** beings as **well as** the larger "whole." As Carol Gilligan's research suggests, women's moral conduct is grounded in "contextual particularity," and the feelings of care and responsibility that such situations bring forth.<sup>65</sup> The emphasis is more on the image of an interconnected web than on that of an expanded self.<sup>66</sup>

If, as object-relations theory argues, women's self-identity, unlike that of men, is not bound up with the urge to negate one's dependence on the natural world, we should not be surprised to find that women's experiences with nature may differ from those of men. Although it cannot be claimed that no women hunt or



experience their sense of nature in the ways described by the hunters above, most people, I believe, will recognize such behavior as primarily characteristic of men.<sup>67</sup> Throughout history, hunting has been, in fact, an activity that has been pursued by and large by men.

Many women have found other ways to experience their oneness or identification with nature. Charlene Spretnak writes that women often have such experiences through the "body parables," that is, "re-claimed menstruation, orgasm, pregnancy, natural childbirth and motherhood." She goes on to comment:

Men, too, experience moments of heightened awareness when everything seems different, more vividly alive. They have often written that such instances occur during the hunting of large animals, the landing/killing of a large fish, the moments just before and during combat. Not feeling intrinsically involved in the process of birthing and nature, nor strongly predisposed toward empathic communion, men may have turned their attention, for many eras, toward the other aspect of the cycle, death.<sup>68</sup>

We have seen that women's self-identity, unlike men's, is not established through violent opposition to the natural world. The guiding motive in women's self-identity is not the attainment of an autonomous self, but rather the preservation of a sense of connection to other living being. This is not to say that women have not also been alienated from nature. A woman who buys or wears a fur coat has clearly accepted male standards of beauty, and hence the violence toward nature that such fashion entails.<sup>69</sup> The task for women, however, in contrast to that of men, may be to develop a **stronger** sense of separate identity while **simultaneously** recognizing their interconnection with other living beings.<sup>70</sup> Perhaps only in this way can women break-free from male norms of violence and alienation, and reclaim their deep-felt connection to the natural world. As Alice Walker's character, Shug, observes, in the context of describing her experience of "being part of everything, not separate at all... Before you can see anything at all...you have to git man off your eyeball."<sup>71</sup>

The development of an ecofeminist philosophy is analogous, in many ways, to this process of self-realization for women. Just as women must begin to develop a sense of our separate identities, so, too, must ecofeminism develop its own unique sense of "self." Ecofeminism, however, need not develop its "selfhood" by means of the masculine model of opposition. Indeed, ecofeminists need not oppose the philosophy of ecofeminism to that of deep ecology; on the contrary, we would do well to affirm those aspects of value in deep ecology and related philosophies. At the same time, ecofeminists would also do well to recognize the benefits to be gained for the identity of ecofeminism by contrasting its unique philosophy with other schools of thought. In the end, however, the foundation of ecofeminism and the source of its greatest strength lies in women shared personal experiences vis-a-vis the natural world.

It is out of women's felt sense of connection to the natural world that an ecofeminist philosophy must be forged. Identification may, in fact, enter into this philosophy, but only to the extent that it flows from an **existing** connection with individual lives. Individual beings must not be used in a kind of psychological instrumentalism to help establish a **feeling** of connection that in reality does not exist. Our sense of union with nature must be connected with concrete, loving actions rather than being borne from an "aggressive drive" to "fuse" an alienated self.<sup>72</sup> The

**quality** of connection is more important than the mere **existence** of a connection of any kind.

A holistic, ecofeminist ethic, as I conceive it, is a way of perceiving the world that invites us to affirm our interconnection with all of life, while at the same time acknowledging the distinction between ourselves and other living beings. It is an invocation to become "responsible" to nature, not in the sense of obligations and rights, but in the literal sense of our "ability for response." It is an appeal to attend to nature in order to detect, not what we might want from her, but rather, what she might want from us. It is, in short, an invitation to re-spect nature, literally to "look again."

Both ecofeminism and deep ecology have suggested, at times, that the new consciousness that each refers to is a consciousness of love. In this, and many other ways, ecofeminism and deep ecology concur. Love, however, can mean many things, and can be expressed in a variety of ways. As ecofeminism develops in relation to other philosophies, ecofeminists must carefully examine the practical consequences of all abstract ideals. Only then will ecofeminists know how far our own identification with these philosophies can go. But this is only one step in our journey toward self-identity. Our personal experiences and unfettered imaginations must take us the rest of the way.

## Notes

1a. I use the term "deep ecologists" loosely to refer to a variety of writers (e.g. Devall, Sessions, Naess and Fox) who identify as followers of the deep ecology movement. Arne Naess, who coined the term "deep ecology" in 1972, prefers to identify himself as a follower of the deep ecology movement, rather than as a deep ecologist as such. Naess uses the term "deep ecology" to refer to a world-wide grass-roots movement, which he saw as unified with respect to certain very broad platform principles or aims. My use of the term "deep ecologists" is, therefore, not intended to imply the existence of a single philosophical position common to all followers of deep ecology. In this essay, I focus on certain key ideas which many philosophers who are followers of the deep ecology movement share.

1b. Some of the major works on ecofeminism include Leonie Caldecott and Stephanie Leland, eds., **Reclaim the Earth: Women Speak Out for Life on Earth** (London: Women's Press, 1983); Mary Daly, **Gyn/Ecology: The Meta-Ethics of Radical Feminism** (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978); Irene Diamond and Gloria Orenstein, eds., **Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism** (San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1990); Susan Griffin, **Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her** (New York: Harper and Row, 1978); Carolyn Merchant, **the Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution** (New York: Harper and Row, 1983); Judith Plant, ed., **Healing the Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism** (Philadelphia: New Society, 1989); Elizabeth Dodson Gray, **Green Paradise Lost** (Wellesley, Mass: Roundtable Press, 1981); and **Heresies #13: Feminism and Ecology 4** (1981); Andree Collard with Joyce Contrucci, **Rape of the Wild: Men's Violence Against Nature and the Earth** (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1989).

2. Gray, **Green Paradise Lost**.

3. Neil Evernden, "The Environmentalist Dilemma," **Trumpeter, Journal of Ecosophy**, vol. 5, no. 1 (Winter 1988): 5.

4. Charlene Spretnak, "Our Roots and Flowering," in Diamond and Orenstein, eds., **Reweaving the World**.

5. The status of truth claims is a much debated topic in feminist theory. Although not all feminists (or ecofeminists) are willing to relinquish all claims to "objectivity" and "truth," most are agreed that the current definitions are derived from men. For an in-depth analysis of how the quest for "objectivity" reflects masculine drives and needs, see Evelyn Fox Keller, **Gender and Science** (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1985).

6. Carol Gilligan, **In a Different Voice** (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 100.

7. Bill Devall and George Sessions, **Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered** (Salt Lake City, Utah: Peregrine Smith Books, 1985), p. 8.

8. George Sessions, **Ecofeminism VI** (May 1984): 12.



9. Warwick Fox, "On the Guiding Stars to Deep Ecology: A Reply to Naess," *The Ecologist* 14 (1984): 203-4.
10. Quoted in Bill Devall, "Greenies: Observations on the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement in Australia," ms., 1984, p. 17.
11. George Sessions, *Ecophilosophy III* (April 1981): 5-51.
12. Devall and Sessions, p. 67.
13. George Sessions, *Ecophilosophy III*, (April 1981): 5-5a.
14. Devall and Sessions, p. 68.
15. For a sustained critique of deep ecology for its emphasis on anthropocentrism as opposed to androcentrism, see Ariel Kay Salleh, "Deeper than Deep Ecology: The Ecofeminist Connection." *Environmental Ethics* 6 (1984): 339-345.
16. One of the significant trends within current feminist philosophy has been the recognition of the role of unconscious drives in the production of apparently abstract and universal knowledge. According to Jane Flax, feminist philosophy thus represents the "return of the repressed." See "The Patriarchal Unconscious," in *Discovering Reality: Feminist Perspectives on Epistemology, Methodology, and Philosophy of Science*, ed. Sandra Harding and Merrill B. Hintikka (Boston: D. Reidel, 1983), p. 249.
17. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H.M. Parshley (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), p. xxxiii.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 72.
20. For further feminist critique of the notion of transcendence in the thought of Hegel, Sartre and de Beauvoir, see Genevieve Lloyd, "Masters, Slaves and Others," in *Radical Philosophy*, ed. Ray Edley and Richard Osborn (Thetford, Norfolk: Thetford Press, 1985), pp. 291-309.
21. The masculine ideal of autonomy is not always depicted as a story of conquest. For a brilliant analysis of the multiple manifestations of the masculine "separative self," see Catherine Keller, *From a Broken Web: Separation, Sexism, and Self* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986). According to Keller, the serene, rational, single God depicted by Aristotle as the Unmoved Mover achieves the same ideal of autonomy. As she states, "No wonder both the Greek and the Hebrew deities achieve an image of absolute independence from their worlds. They fulfill the heroic ego's impossible wish for an impenetrable dominion and for the final conquest of the too penetrable, permeating force-field of femaleness (p. 87). Similarly, the Christian concept of an omnipotent, transcendent, and eternal God reflects the masculine ideal of the autonomous self. Also see Evelyn Fox Keller, *Gender and Science*.
22. *The Great Cosmic Mother: Rediscovering the Religion of the Earth* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987), pp. 250-251.
23. Erich Neumann, *The Origins and History of Consciousness*, trans. R.F.C. Hull (Princeton, N.J.: Bollingen Series XLII/Princeton University Press, 1974).
24. In Reginald E. Allen, *Greek Philosophy: Thales to Aristotle*, rev. and enl. ed. (New York: Macmillan Free Press, 1966), p. 254.
25. See Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972). See also Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969).
26. Susan Griffin, *Pornography and Silence: Culture's Revenge against Nature* (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), p. 97.
27. Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).
28. *Ibid.*, p. 167.
29. Dorothy Dinnerstein, *The Mermaid and the Minotaur: Sexual Arrangements and Human Malaise* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), p. 246.
30. For feminist critiques of both Chodorow and Dinnerstein for their emphasis on the primacy of sexual arrangements in determining gender identity, see Pauline Bart, "Review of Chodorow's *The Reproduction of Mothering*," in *Mothering: Essays in Feminist Theory*, ed. Joyce Trebilcock (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Allanheld, 1984), pp. 147-152. See also, in the same volume, Iris Young's "Is Male Gender Identity the Cause of Male Dominance?," pp. 129-146.
31. "The Hunter as Alert Man: An Overview of the Origin of the Human/Animal Connection," in *The Human/Animal Connection*, ed. Randall L. Eaton (Incline Village, Nev: Carnivore Journal and Sierra Nevada College Press, 1985), p. 9.
32. *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
34. Ortega y Gasset was cited with approval by deep ecologist Bill Devall in a recent Elmwood Institute dialogue. According to Devall, Ortega's reflections exemplify the proper attitude toward hunting. "Whose Ecology: The Deep, the Socialist, or the Feminists?" (San Francisco, August, 1989).
35. *Meditations on Hunting*, trans. Howard B. Wescott, with a Foreword by Paul Shepard (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1985), p. 121.
36. *Ibid.*
37. *Ibid.*, p. 124.
38. The erotic aspect of the hunting experience is also tellingly revealed by language. Thus, the word "venery" Means both the "art of hunting" and "the pursuit of sexual pleasure," and the word "venison" is derived from the name of the Roman goddess of love.
39. Aldo Leopold. "Goose Music" in *A Sand Country Almanac with essays on Conservation from Round River* (Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 229.
40. Ortega y Gasset, p. 123.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 92.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 121.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
44. Leopold, p. 227.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 232.
46. I have omitted discussion of subsistence hunting in this essay since it presents a far more complex situation. Although hunting, in most tribal cultures, was (and is) typically associated with rituals and norms of masculine identity, the situation is complicated by the fact that some hunting may have been (or still may be) necessary for survival in such societies because of climatic and other environmental factors. Deep ecologists and other environmentalists often justify their support of hunting by pointing to the example of native cultures. This ignores, however, the very real differences in killing for reasons of survival and killing in order to achieve a particular psychological state.
47. Leopold, p. 227.
48. Ortega y Gasset, p. 88.
49. For more on Western culture's coupling of love and death, see Denis de Rougemont, trans. Montgomery Beligion, *Love in the Western World* (New York: Pantheon, 1956). See also Georges Bataille, *Death and Sensuality* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1969).
50. "The Feminist Standpoint," in *Discovering Reality*, ed. Sandra Harding and Merrill B. Hintikka, p. 300.
51. Leopold, p. 230.
52. The parallel attitude toward women is not difficult to discern. Men are "lured" by women's "beauty." Women are possessed by such acts of violence as pornography and rape.
53. Ortega y Gasset, pp. 96-97.
54. Leopold, p. 227.
- 55a. *Ibid.*
- 55b. A number of writers have noted that Leopold underwent a "transformation" in his attitude toward wildlife. Leopold, himself, recognized that in his early days he was "young...and full of trigger-itch...[and] had never heard of passing up a chance to kill a wolf." ("Thinking Like a Mountain," in Leopold, p. 138). It is generally recognized that Leopold moved from a "game management" orientation which sought to provide a shootable surplus of "game animal" to an ecological orientation whose aim was the greatest stability for "the land." However, Leopold never relinquished his passion for hunting. The land ethic, which Leopold developed in his later years, was designed to control, **not eliminate**, the hunters' inalienable right to kill. According to Curt Meine, "In the last season of his life [Leopold] went into the field as enthusiastically (and with as sharp a shot) as ever." Meine, *Aldo Leopold: His Life and Work* (Madison, Wisconsin: The university of Wisconsin Press, 1988), p. 476.
56. "The Land Ethic" in Leopold, p. 239.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 238.
58. Ortega y Gasset, p. 98.
59. Quoted in Devall and Sessions, p. 75.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 188.
61. "Approaching Deep Ecology: A Response to Richard Sylvan's Critique of Deep Ecology," *Environmental Studies Occasional Paper 20*, University of Tasmania, 1986.
62. Quoted in Devall and Sessions, p. 101.
63. An example of this danger may be found in the philosophy of Spinoza, which provides an important inspiration for many followers of deep ecology. Spinoza argued that the attainment of a higher self was to be achieved through a correct understanding of God/Nature - that is, through a unification of Mind and Nature. This understanding, however, did not include a respect for animals, for whom Spinoza felt deep contempt. In his words: "It is plain that the law against the slaughtering of animals is founded rather on vain superstition and womanish pity than sound reason." (Note I to Prop. xxxvii, pt. IV of the *Ethics*; in R.H.M. Elwes, trans., *The Chief Works of Benedict de Spinoza*, vol. 2 (New York: Dover, 1955), p. 213. Although some deep ecologists dismiss Spinoza's

speciesism as an "anomaly" (Devall and Sessions, p. 240), this disparity should underline some of the perils of grounding one's morality in an abstract conception of unity, rather than in a felt sense of connection to individual beings.

64. For a feminist critique of the dualistic mentality that underlies the current divisions between animal-liberation and environmental philosophies, see Marti Kheel, "The Liberation of Nature: A Circular Affair," *Environmental Ethics* 7 (Summer 1985): 135-149.

65. Gilligan, p. 182.

66. For an in-depth critique of deep ecology for its adherence to an abstract vision of unity, in contrast to the development of an ethical voice that emerges from the contextual particularities of one's human community or niche, see Jim Cheney, "The Neo-Stoicism of Radical Environmentalism," *Environmental Ethics*, vol. 2, no. 4 (Winter 1989): 293-325.

67. A study by Stephen Kellert and Joyce Berry confirms that there are, in fact, "dramatic" differences in men's and women's attitudes toward animals. According to their study: "The strength and consistency of male vs. female difference were so pronounced as to suggest gender is among the most important influences on attitudes toward animals in our society." ("Attitudes, Knowledge and Behaviors Toward Wildlife as Affected by Gender," *Wildlife Society Bulletin*, vol. 15, no. 3 [Fall 1987]: 365).

In discussing these differences, the authors point to the consistency of their findings with Carol Gilligan's research. In their words: "The postulate of a female moral emphasis on caring for intimates, nonaggressiveness, and compassion is consistent with our findings that women tend to assert strong emotional attachments to individual domestic animals and object to a wide variety of activities involving the possible infliction of cruelty, harm and suffering on animals.... Also consistent with Gilligan's (1982) model, males were characterized by a more cognitive and logically abstract perception of animals, reflected in substantially greater knowledge of animals and ecological concern for the relationship of wildlife to natural habitats. A further consistency was the tendency of males to derive greater satisfaction than females from competition and mastery over animals, as well as from their own exploitation. (Ibid., p. 369).

68. Charlene Spretnak, ed. *The Politics of Women's Spirituality* (New York: Anchor Books, 1982), p. xvii.

69. Clearly, some of the alienation from nature that women experience is facilitated by a physical alienation from the actuality of violence. The women who wear fur coats have been carefully shielded from the violence that the manufacture of furs entail. In order to break free from such alienation, it is, therefore, necessary for women to break through the mystification that surrounds so much of the violence of the modern world.

70. A similar point is made by Valerie Saivings, who critiques religious and theological traditions that posit a gender-neutral notion of sin as pride or self-aggrandizement. She argues that sin, for women, is more apt to take the form of "underdevelopment or negation of the self." Saivings, thus, concludes that "the feminine dilemma is, in fact, precisely the opposite of the masculine." "The Human Situation: A Feminine View," in *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion*, ed. Carol Christ and Judith Plaskow (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979), pp. 24-42. See also Susan Nelson Dunfee, "The Sin of Hiding: A Feminist Critique of Reinhold Niebuhr's Account of Sin," *Soundings*, vol. LXV, no. 3 (Fall 1982): 317-327, and Ann Carolyn Klein, "Finding A Self: Buddhist and Feminist Perspectives," in *Shaping New Visions: Gender and Values in American Culture*, ed. Clarissa W. Atkinson, Constance H. Buchanan, and Margaret R. Miles (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Research Press, 1987), pp. 191-218.

71. Alice Walker, *The Color Purple* (New York: Pocket Books, 1982), p. 178.

72. For a discussion of the drive toward fusion with an aggrandized Self as a manifestation of the atomistically defined (primary male) self's attempt to overcome alienation, see Jim Cheney, "Ecofeminism and Deep Ecology," *Environmental Ethics*, vol. 9, no. 2 (Summer 1987): 115-145. See also Cheney, "Neo-Stoicism of Radical Environmentalism." For a reply to some of these criticisms see Warwick Fox's "The Deep ecology - Ecofeminism debate and Its Parallels," *Environmental Ethics* 11 (1989), pp. 256-270.

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## AN ECOFEMINIST CRITIQUE OF MANSTREAM PLANNING

Janis Birkeland

### Introduction: The Need for a New Planning

This essay canvasses, with a broad brush, some of the systemic features of the public environmental law and land use planning system ('Planning') which contribute to environmental problems and conflict. The objective of this exercise is to make the case for **fundamental** social reform and the search for a process through which we, as a society, can begin to recognize, articulate and break free of the Power Paradigm in social decision making.

More planning as **presently conceived**, cannot resolve the problems of environmental degradation and conflict. In fact, Planning as an institution contributes to the economic and ethical deficiencies of the broader resource allocation system. In this essay, I contend that there is a basic misfit between the nature of the environmental problem and traditional Planning theory and

practice. Consequently, the system exacerbates the environmental problems and social conflict which justify its existence in the first place. Planning is necessary, but it must be of an entirely new order.

Traditionally Planning has generally been conceived as the process of evaluating and selecting alternative land uses.<sup>1</sup> The primary function of land use planning has been to allocate land for its most appropriate use as dictated by consumer demand. This means providing for efficient spatial distribution of activities and structures in response to changing demographic and market trends:

In order for land use controls to be effective in achieving efficient development patterns, regulations of the use of land must keep abreast of changes in the complexity of factors affecting the demand for land.<sup>2</sup>

I have no argument with the capacity of Planning structures and methods to cope with the narrow distributional issues for which they were developed. I submit, however, that **environmental protection** imperatives cannot be adequately met under the present decision-making methods and processes. That is, decision-making methods designed for "choosing land uses by balancing costs and benefits of alternatives" is a very different matter from providing for human needs and preparing for a safe, secure future - or **preventative** planning.

The reasons for the failure of Planning as an institution are systemic. They lie deeply rooted in the institutional and methodological 'infrastructure'<sup>3</sup> of Planning itself. Concepts of traditional Planning stem from anachronistic social values and ideologies. In other words, Planning thought is grounded in (and reinforces), the same way of thinking, relating and acting that has brought about the environmental problem in the first place - our **power-based** morality. Specifically, the 'perceptual screen' through which planners deal with planning problems is shaped by what has been referred to as an ethic of dominance. This Power Paradigm in Planning is characterized by anthropocentric and instrumentalist concepts - whereby human and natural resources are construed as having value to the extent that they can be used for human purposes. An ethic of dominance has led to Planning structures and practices that favor special interests over the general public in resource allocation decisions. That is, contrary to its image as obstructing development, Planning has internalized the goals of industry.<sup>4</sup> As an institution, it functions to legitimize the conversion of environmental goods to private profit and to manage subsequent conflict over resource distribution. But because Planning is designed for resource allocation (as opposed to preservation), it is ultimately **conflict generating**. This follows from the fact that, in the long term, the alienation of the public domain to special interests reduces meaningful social choice and personal freedom, making more social and environmental conflict inevitable.<sup>5</sup>

Planning methods and concepts also reflect the broader social construct. As I have argued elsewhere, these methods, by their internal logic, are risk and conflict oriented, and tend to close off options.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, in spite of public policies to the contrary, Planning allows the attrition of our cultural and natural heritage and cannot protect the public interest in peace, health, social justice and freedom. Finally, Planning theory itself impedes our ability to comprehend and resolve the ethical issues that lie at the heart of environmental problems. As a result, Planning has failed in its basic mission of serving the public interest.

### The need for an ethics-based system

A new Planning, capable of resolving "ethical", as well as distributional, issues is necessary if we are to prevent environmental destruction and conflict. I use the term ethics to refer to fundamental ecologically-based principles guiding interactions with other people, society as a whole, and with the nonhuman environment, rather than in a narrow utilitarian or teleological sense. The outline of the underlying argument for an ethics-based Planning could be put like this:

1. Planning, as an institution, is legitimate only if it can improve the condition of human society and protect the planet upon which we depend. Human survival and fulfilment are therefore among

the basic objectives of any planning system. These objectives cannot be met in the absence of environmental quality and peace.

2. Environmental quality and peace require social justice. Although one could argue that there are no ultimate principles for structuring human relationships, those that result in the destruction of the life support system are folly by any standard. As many social ecologists and ecofeminists have argued,<sup>8</sup> social structures based on dominance relations eventually lead to systems that abuse both human and nonhuman nature. For example, an unjust system eventually leads to militarism, which destroys the environment even without an actual war, through wasteful production and toxic waste. Dominance relationships destroys the human spirit as well.

3. Social justice requires a sustainable level of consumption - as opposed to "sustainable growth", an oxymoron. Land, water, air and life forms are finite. World poverty has been the result, not of limited resources, but of dominance relationships reflected in, for example, the conversion of Third World resources to First World commodities, the destruction of local economies and disenfranchisement of small landowners through colonization, created dependency on herbicides and fertilizers, and of course, inequitable distribution. Nonetheless, the demands of equality for the vast majority of the world's population who lack safe drinking water, basic health care and self-reliance cannot be met with diminishing and degraded resources.

4. Sustainable resource allocation requires a preventative planning system. A preventative planning system is one that can meet the following imperatives: (a) protect or restore our life support system,<sup>9</sup> (b) preserve cultural and biological diversity, and (c) prevent conflict over natural resources and amenities.

5. Finally, as explained below, these imperatives require an **ethics-based**, as opposed to a power-based, decision-making infrastructure, for their realization. By an ethics-based infrastructure, I have in mind a new Planning 'constitution'. New planning concepts, structures, processes, and techniques would be designed upon a constitution of new ecological/ethical precepts. For example, among the formative criteria for a decision-making infrastructure that could, if adopted, meet the above imperatives would be: (a) to avoid unnecessary risk (e.g. by not poisoning the environment), (b) to prevent unconstructive conflict, while facilitating substantive public debate, and (c) to keep future options open by avoiding irreversible decisions (e.g. via biological diversity, non-nuclear defense and energy options, and wilderness preservation).

### The need for radical change

Past reform proposals for Planning have not gone deep enough. They merely call for more ecological policies, more democratic processes, more scientific models, more efficient organization, more communication, and more accountable structures. In other words, they call for the integration of better means of developing or administering policies **within** the existing infrastructure and ethic. A case in point is the highly acclaimed Brundtland Report.<sup>10</sup> While it addressed the problems, goals and organizational issues that have been debated by planners for decades now, it did not question the anachronistic premises, incongruous

methods and conflict-generating practices of the decision-making infrastructure itself.

In Planning theory, the Power Paradigm itself has been made invisible and left unchallenged. Thus, even 'radical' reforms merely propose to rearrange or reverse power relationships, by moving the boxes in the office chart or interdepartmental structure, amalgamating or flattening hierarchies, and decentralizing (or, when that fails, centralizing). Such organizational engineering exercises only tilt the playing field back temporarily.

External pressures and personal insecurity have also been ignored in decision making and planning reform. Perhaps the greatest omission of mainstream critiques of society is the failure to link the male **psyche** and the power structures themselves: that is, to recognize that "the personal is political". Patriarchal theories are based on models of Man which universalize masculine characteristics (e.g. autonomous, competitive, self-interested, rational). Therefore, they accept power-based relationships as natural and inevitable. Even critical theory<sup>11</sup> which is concerned with power-based values, structures and concepts, does not really tackle the underlying origins of communication problems: in a power relationship there can be no meaningful communication. While concerned with democratization and class equality, it is largely blind to the gender bias.

This essay suggests ecofeminism as the basis of an alternative Planning paradigm. A thorough development of ecofeminism and its application to Planning is well beyond the scope of a single essay. I have, however, discussed these issues elsewhere.<sup>12</sup>

### An Introduction to Ecofeminism

Ecofeminism is a grassroots movement to end all forms of oppression: racism, sexism, classism and 'naturism' (the abuse of nature). It is also a conceptual framework through which we can better understand the interconnections between environmental and human exploitation, militarization, capitalism and technological determinism.

There can be no ecological ethic simply as a new relation of "man" and "nature". Any ecological ethic must always take into account the structures of social domination and exploitation that mediate domination of nature and prevent concern for the welfare of the whole community in favor of the immediate advantage of the dominant class, race, and sex.<sup>13</sup>

### Basic Principles

Some basic precepts which most ecofeminists would subscribe to are as follows:

1. Fundamental social reconstruction is necessary. We must **reconstruct** the underlying values and structural relations of our society. The promotion of equality, non-violence, cultural diversity and participatory, non-competitive and non-hierarchical forms of organization and decision making would be criteria for these new social forms.

2. Everything in Nature has **intrinsic value**. A reverence for and empathy with Nature and all life (or 'spirituality') is an essential element of the social transformation required.

3. Our anthropocentric viewpoint, instrumentalist values and mechanistic models should be rejected for a more ecocentric view which can comprehend the **interconnectedness** of all life processes.

4. Humans should not attempt to 'manage' or control nonhuman Nature, but should work with the land. The use of agricultural land should be guided by an ethic of **reciprocity**. Humans should intrude upon the remaining natural ecosystems and processes only where necessary to preserve **diversity**.

5. Merely redistributing power relationships is no answer. We must change **the fact of** power-based relationships and hierarchy, and move towards an ethic based on **mutual respect**. We must move beyond power.

6. We must **integrate** the false dualisms based on the male/female polarity, e.g. thought and action, the spiritual and natural, art and science, experience and knowledge in our perception of reality. This dualistic conceptual framework supports the ethic of dominance and divides us against each other, ourselves and nonhuman Nature.

7. **Process** is as important as goals, simply because how we go about things determines where we go. As the power-based relations and processes that permeate society are reflected in our personal relationships, we must enact our values.

### Basic Concepts

In the feminist vernacular, "Patriarchy" refers to the male-dominated system of social relations and values. For therapeutic purposes, ecofeminism identifies the underlying pathology of our patriarchal culture to be caused by our **power-based** morality, structures and relational processes. This power complex is reflected in dominance relationships at all levels of human interaction, from the personal to the international. By focusing on patriarchy, the intention is not to reduce all social and environmental problems to one set of causes, but rather to construct a problem definition that will enable us to uproot the system of oppression that is destroying the human and nonhuman environment.

In our Patriarchal culture, male domination constructs and values are internalized in our minds, embodied in our institutions and played out in power-based social relations in our daily lives and upon the world stage. Both men and women, to varying extents, are molded by this culture. And although the social system is male-controlled, dominance relationships also oppress men as well as women and Nature. In other words, Patriarchy is a 'gender-based', rather than a 'sex-based' concept. Gender here refers to the social significance of the masculine/feminine polarity.

Ecofeminists have sought to find the most important unifying threads in the complex tapestry of our Patriarchal culture and unravel them. One of these threads is the archetypal (immature) male way of coping with **insecurity** which is manifested in the drive for control and power. Security has been identified with ever more power and control, as exemplified by the ironic phrase "Peace through Strength".

Identifying the dynamics - largely **fear and resentment** - behind the dominance of male over female is the key to

comprehending every expression of patriarchal culture with its hierarchical, militaristic, mechanistic, industrial forms (my emphasis).<sup>14</sup>

Another thread is the symbolic association of women and Nature, both of which are perceived as existing to serve Man's purposes. Man has been associated in Western thought with mind and culture, while Woman - seen as his lesser and opposite - has been associated with body and Nature. Ecofeminists have traced how a dualistic conceptual framework based on sky/mind/male *versus* earth/matter/female has developed.

Because masculinity is taken for full personhood and masculinity is measured by power and autonomy, lack of power and dependence has been seen as inferior and grounds for unequal treatment.<sup>15</sup> That is, domination is legitimized on the basis of difference from the 'norm' (read white male). Hierarchical dualism also leads to a "them *versus* us" way of thinking such as East v. West (which may now become North v. South). It is "the most powerful conceptual link between the four interwoven modes of oppression" - racism, sexism, classism and naturism.<sup>16</sup>

Over time, this 'hierarchical dualism' has become more deeply etched in both the psyche and social structures of Western society. Because of the androcentric (male-centred) bias in the evolution of thought (and the fact that women were largely excluded from public institutions) the values, attitudes and assumptions traditionally associated with men were also taken to be representative of humanity as a whole. Patriarchal consciousness came to be accepted as co-extensive with reality. Consequently, women's experience, values and culture were devalued.

The universalization of masculine values has led to the instrumental and anthropocentric concepts which shape our relationships with each other and Nature, as well as to ideologies which promote military solutions. This evaluation of what has traditionally been seen as masculine values, and the drive for power and control, is simply maladaptive in an age of toxic wastes and nuclear weapons. As expressed by the psychologist Herb Goldberg:

The blueprint for masculinity is a blueprint for self-destruction. It is a process so deeply embedded in the male consciousness, however, that awareness of its course and its end has been lost. The masculine imperative, the pressure and compulsion to perform, to prove himself, to dominate, to live up to the "masculine ideal"<sup>17</sup> - in short, to "be a man" - supersedes the instinct to survive.

One problem with this androcentric definition of reality and humanity is that so-called 'human nature' - meaning aggressive, competitive and self-centred (i.e. 'male') - has been perpetually used to justify hierarchy, militarism and capitalism as being either inevitable or necessary to control human impulses. There is a chilling self-fulfilling prophecy in this argument.

However, even if, for the sake of the argument, aggression is genetic or hormonal - the majority of humans (women) are supposed to have a nature which has been socialized to be the opposite. An alternative model to Man exists - but it has been backgrounded as a women's culture.<sup>18</sup>

In challenging the idea that power differences are an inevitable aspect of 'human nature' and social structures, ecofeminism is more radical than even marxism or critical theory (the Frankfurt School). It is also more threatening to the power structure, since

to a large extent Western masculine identity depends on "power over".

### The Need for a New Planning Constitution

In a social structure built upon dominance relationships, institutions and methods are eventually corrupted to serve the interests of the powerful, as they are well placed to select and propagate ideologies that suit their interests. As evidence of this, consider the selectivity by which certain theoretical concepts achieve prominence. For example, we adopted Bentham's utilitarian calculus in the market, but not his broader intent.<sup>19</sup> Bentham's ethic was based on maximizing "happiness", but he envisaged that we would learn to take pleasure in the happiness of others, even of animals.<sup>20</sup> Economists have replaced this with maximizing consumer preferences, utility, as measured by their "willingness" or ability to pay. This is substantively different from the happiness people actually obtain as a consequence of paying.<sup>21</sup>

Another example of this "natural selection" of theories that serve the powerful is seen in the adoption of economic concepts in the legal arena. For example, the legal system historically protected property rights. One could not destroy the use of another's land through, say, pollution, without paying the value of that land as determined by the owner. But the potential was there to stop economic growth, as a growing number of people were valuing Nature, the home, and lifestyle more than money. So the legal, rights-based approach has been abandoned for the economist's cost-benefit approach.<sup>22</sup> In other words, property law concepts sufficed when they protected the powerful, but today the powerful are no longer the propertied gentry.

In a power-based culture, it does not matter who has the decision-making power. Hierarchical structures, even if initially democratic, will eventually cease to be benign. On the other hand, because dominance is so deeply entrenched in the individual psyche,<sup>23</sup> non-structured or anarchical approaches cannot work for large groups or long periods of time, without fundamental social transformation.<sup>24</sup>

But while any social system can become corrupted, a constitutional system takes longer to corrupt, because it makes the ethical basis for structures, actions and decisions explicit. However, a constitutional approach must be substantively different from past constitutional experiments. For example, while the United States Constitution provides a model, its values are inappropriate for environmental and planning issues. As we will see, the liberal model is only capable of encapsulating issues of rights or 'equity', not responsibilities or the feminine principle.

Another important distinction must be made. Fundamental principles upon which to develop methods and structures are very different from objectives and policies upon which, say, legislation is based. In the United States, for example, several significant environmental acts, such as the federal Endangered Species Act and Wilderness Acts, were supported by preambles which state deontological principles. However, the methods employed by the legislation were not consistent with these principles, based as they were upon utilitarian concepts.

Ethical precepts cannot be ascertained scientifically and therefore must be arrived at through reasoned public debate and democratic processes. By its very nature, therefore, an **ethics-based** Planning system would be arrived at through a constitutional process, where the public agrees to certain ethical precepts



upon which to structure their social institutions. In a Patriarchal society, this is unlikely to be achieved through **representative** democracy, where decision making is controlled by powerful outside interests. Nor is it likely to be achieved through **voting** processes where preferences are manipulated by big business (the media) that does not allow genuine alternatives to enter the public debate.<sup>25</sup>

Thus, while a preventative planning system, based on ethical principles, is necessary for human survival, it has little prospect of adoption within the present decision-making structure and public choice mechanisms. Community-based processes, I believe, are the only context within which such a Planning constitution could develop. This means **face-to-face** democracy. While slow, the process would be educative and encourage people to question underlying assumptions and to think in terms of basic social goals. As said above, the means are as important as the ends, because otherwise we will just end up back where we began.

### The Power Paradigm

#### The Power Paradigm in Planning Theory

We now take a quick foray into the bowels of Planning theory to identify its underlying Patriarchal values. There are two competing strands of malestream Planning thought: Rationalism and Pluralism.<sup>25</sup> Rationalist planning has emphasized scientific method, prediction and modelling. Its implicit values are cost **efficiency** and control. Pluralist planning, in contrast, has emphasized the socio-political process, which is envisaged as interest groups or individuals competing for political influence. Its central concern is distributional justice or **equity**, as distinguished from **ethics** as I use the term (above).

These paradigms are generally regarded as dichotomous but, in fact, they merely focus on different aspects of decision making within the same meta-ethic. That is, Rationalists are concerned with the 'scientific' techniques upon which experts base their selection of alternative plans or actions. Pluralists, on the other hand, are concerned with plan adoption and implementation - the 'politics' by which alternative plans or actions are chosen.

Both Rationalism and Pluralism are couched within the dominant androcentric philosophical construct, or Power Paradigm. This paradigm construes human and natural resources as having value to the extent that they serve Man's purpose. That purpose is a kind of "manifest" destiny called progress; it is based on an idealized, denaturalized portrayal of Man apart from Nature. Furthermore, this Patriarchal value system glorifies that which is seen as separating Man from Nature. Masculine values of particular relevance to Planning theory are: (1) **purposiveness** - a belief in a special vision of material "progress"; (2) **rationality** - a belief in goal-oriented linear thinking; (3) **positivism** - a belief in the scientific method as the true source of knowledge; (4) **individualism** - a belief in the separateness of the person from the community (and hence glorification of **risk taking and competition** as a means to progress); and finally, (5) **control** - a belief in the ability to gain control over society and human destiny.<sup>27</sup>

The elements of this value system reflect Man's insecurity and a desire to achieve certainty in a chaotic world by controlling Nature and the future. Planning techniques, which are modelled upon science, have therefore been centred on prediction, rather than prevention, as a means of coping with uncertainty.<sup>28</sup> Thus,

only things that can be predicted will be prevented. For example, because we do not have the capacity to predict the synergistic interactions of different chemicals in the environment, it is not a "problem" until there is measurable damage.

While Rationalism is concerned with prediction and control of the future through scientific knowledge, Pluralism relies on Man's supposedly 'innate competitive nature' to provide predictability, and hence a means of control. Risk taking and competition, ultimately manifested in military and technological adventurism, at first appear to be the antithesis of control. However, they are more accurately seen as attempts to immunize feeling and block out the knowledge of death, that is, to control reality itself.<sup>29</sup>

It is no coincidence that the above listed values are the same as those values associated with 'masculinity': what is valued in a culture can be ascertained by defining its concept of manliness. Thus Rationalism and Pluralism, rather than being conceptual polarities, are no more than a friendly opposition within the Power Paradigm. While Planning reform efforts have nibbled at the pillars of Patriarchy, none have challenged this basic meta-ethic and its masculine values.<sup>30</sup>

In manifesting the patriarchal impulse to predict and control, Planning is a reflection of social priorities in general. It has led to disastrous consequences that need no recitation here. On all levels of society, vast resources are spent on prediction and control, while almost nothing is spent on prevention. For example, the military spends billions and billions of dollars on the arms race annually to 'deter' war by making war through psychic terror and physical aggression, yet spends less than one percent of that budget on prevention, or peace-building efforts. Furthermore, for every one dollar the United States spends on environmental protection, it spends 126 dollars on the military.<sup>31</sup> We could save the world's tropical rain forests with one half day's world military spending, while ten days world military spending would fund a United Nations program to provide clean water for the whole world.

While some schools of thought do analyze power relations on an institutional level, they fail to look at the gender-based psychological undercurrents that influence decision making.<sup>32</sup> On all levels of theory and practice, Planning reflects the power-based morality of the broader patriarchal culture. The above masculine values pervade Planning on all levels - structure, theory, method, process. How then do the Patriarchal values that underlie Planning institutions and methods impede the resolution of environmental problems?

I will now discuss some of the ways the logic of the environmental law and planning system is systemically biased against the preservation of nonhuman Nature. Space only allows a survey of some of the incongruities between environmental problems and traditional Planning solutions. The points to be developed are that: (1) Planning is not designed to address ethical issues, such as the limits of growth; (2) Planning controls do not encompass the major actors, such large-scale multi-national, military and industrial interests; (3) Planning does not address the central conflict - the transfer of the public estate to special interests; (4) As an institution, Planning conceals 'corruption' of market mechanisms; (5) Planning ideology cannot deal with preservation issues because it is trapped in a liberal paradigm; (6) Decision-making processes in Planning lack a normative basis and increase social conflict; (7) Planning operates to mitigate spillover effects after the substantive decisions are

made; (8) Planning techniques are inherently biased in favor of development; (9) Planning regulations do not prevent environmental damage because they only abate pollution.

### Incongruities

#### (1) Planning cannot address ethical issues

There is no public decision making arena that can address the ethical issues which underlie environmental preservation. The goals and criteria listed in the introduction - to avoid unnecessary risk, to prevent unconstructive conflict, and to keep future options open - cannot be adequately achieved through the three decision-making arenas in which resources are presently allocated - the market, political and public planning systems. This is because these institutions are designed to resolve narrow distributional issues or disputes between competing "claims" to resources - but not the broader ethical questions.

The market system is designed to provide consumer choice and to distribute resources efficiently.<sup>33</sup> The political system, on the other hand, is designed to mediate conflicting interests and redistribute resources equitably. But efficiency and equity in distributional decisions refer only to how we **divide things up**, whether through technocratic rationality or electoral politics.

In other words, the market and electoral politics are designed to settle competing claims to resources or "balance conservation and development", but not to resolve the **substantive** dilemmas that underlie environmental conflict. And as shall be explained, Planning is based on the concepts underlying both economic and political liberalism, which is part of the environmental problem, not its solution.

To resolve environmental conflict, we must resolve ethical questions, such as whether we exploit people and the environment, exterminate fellow species, ecosystems and so on. These questions are not encapsulated by utilitarian and other methods which are concerned with whether we then distribute the spoils fairly (equitably) or without waste (efficiently). For example, 'nondecisions' which allow chemical companies to sell products banned in the First World or dump toxics in the Third World are really not a matter of balancing interests. Yet, such ethical issues are crucial. They mean life and death for real live people at home and abroad, and for the social, cultural, and biological systems on which they depend. And, after all, those same chemicals return home in imported fruit.

Similarly, we have no appropriate arena for dealing with **long term** planning issues. We have no plans as to how we will live within our means, yet we continue to close off options. For example, the Brundland Report<sup>34</sup> does not explain how it can sustain the continuing goals of environmental preservation with the rate of three percent GNP which would require a doubling of production every twenty four years. As usual in such a report, we are waiting for scientists to determine the limits of growth. Such a limit can only be set scientifically if we accept the point of no return as the physical limit of growth or the point of inflexibility. This is irrational by any conception. **Setting a limit that allows for life quality and human fulfillment** will not be possible if it involves difficult, non-technical, consultation. **Setting a limit that allows for life quality and human fulfillment** is the decision making arena that could perform the distributional justice that we need, however, in planning, the concept of 'ethics' itself has been narrowly construed to mean distributional justice - that is, **who** should obtain the benefits of

environmental exploitation and **how quickly**. This is because, in an effort to be 'relevant' (to the power structure), planners have developed goals, concepts, and processes compatible with contemporary liberal political and market ideologies. Consequently, Planning is designed to address consumption issues, such as equity and efficiency, but not issues of prevention and preservation.

Both political and economic (market) liberalism are manifestations of the power-based morality! Liberalism is based on a model of Man as an autonomous, independent and competitive, or "an image of an individual who owed nothing to society".<sup>36</sup> Because modern economic and political structures and the concepts of ethics which they embody are derived from such a deeply entrenched view of the nature of Man, they seem universal and preordained.

#### (2) Planning does not encompass the major actors

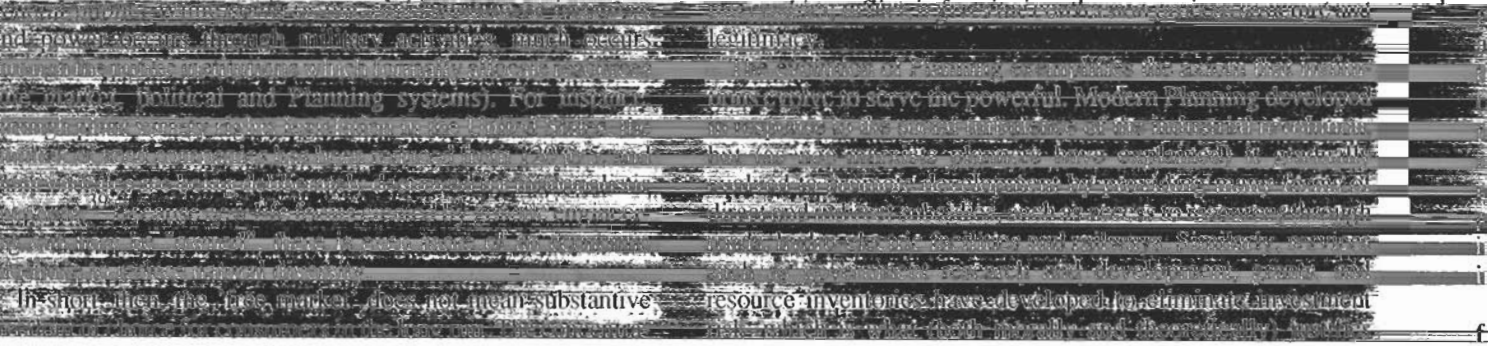
The greatest portion of environmental damage and conflict can be traced to the allocation of environmental goods (forests, rivers, land) to powerful special interests - particularly large-scale military and industrial users. They make their own decisions regarding the use of public resources: what is produced and by what methods. These activities consume vast amounts of resources, create vast amounts of pollution, and are inefficient means of creating work. However, we become dependent on them when, through public subsidies, they grow big enough to have large economic multipliers. An example of this is the woodchip industry, which makes inefficient use of the resource, while at the same time reducing employment<sup>37</sup> and liquidating native forests and ecosystems.

Our power-based and competitive social structure has been falsely associated in ideology with stability and efficiency. Powerful special interests, although highly integrated and monopolistic, compete for control over global resources. In business, control is achieved through growth. Essentially, then, conflict around the world is over limited social and natural resources. This competition reinforces the culturally-inbuilt drive for dominance. So a conflict spiral is created. Military conflict, for instance, is about power. But power is, by definition, 'control over resources' and hence the ability to get one's way.

When the public domain is not shared, but alienated to large development interests, the competition for resources becomes 'zero sum': that is, one person's gain means another's loss. In the long term, of course, everyone loses. The great Twentieth Century resource grab is a driving force behind the arms race and Third World crises. **Special interests try to obtain cheap resources in the Third World while the 'peasants' deal** with the support of progressive governments. **Commercial and industrial interests** do not lead to efficient either. **For example, when considering a military operation**, even in the Middle East, it is clear that the two nations in the Middle East are not only competing for resources, but also for the control of the region. **Global impact** military planning is left to military strategists and corporate planning is left to corporate strategists. **Even in academia there is a hard line of demarcation between environmental and military planning.**

Under the present world order, then, the alienation of the public domain to special interests simply leads to a concentration of power (and vice versa) rather than economic benefits for the

tions. However, the fundamental conflict is between the public and private stakes in natural resources and amenities - not to mention the food chain. But Planning does nothing to regulate



power structure, the bureaucracy, with an uncontrollable power structure of special interests, or privatization.

The transfer of land and environmental goods to development interests is often demonstrably at a net economic cost to the general public - aside from the related social costs (below). There are myriad cases where special interests receive benefits disproportionate to their contribution to the public. That is, they take more from the community than they give back. Due to international competition and pressure from powerful companies, the public does not receive the market price for much of its resources. For instance, the World Resources Institute (Wash, D.C.), has shown that, in the United States, timber rights are often sold off for a cost that is less than the transaction costs of preparing for the sale, let alone the public cost of growing the forest. United States taxpayers could save \$100 million annually just not to sell these forests. At present 76 of the 156 national forests in the U.S. sell timber at a loss.

Similarly, I have seen many forest management plans which were developed explicitly to meet the needs of resource development interests. For example, although allowing for multiple uses, areas conserved are not those of conservation value, but rather those areas that cannot economically be felled. These practices result from broader power relations in society and the individuals involved cannot be expected to challenge the system itself; however, it is activists who have generally researched and brought these facts to general public attention rather than foresters, planners or academics.

These practices are often justified, ironically, by reference to market forces. However, the transfer of public goods to private interests by a system that does not sustain vital and irreplaceable resources, including public health and wilderness, is corruption. Corruption, after all, is the misuse of political or administrative

formal institutional framework also obscures corruption. In contrast, as suggested above, an ethics-based system would make systemic corruption visible and therefore (potentially) subject to democratic and educative processes.

#### **(5) Planning theory cannot deal with preservation issues**

Pluralist Planning theory creates a perceptual barrier which impedes our ability to resolve environmental conflict usefully.<sup>47</sup> We have, for instance, already seen that the public-private nature of environmental conflict is obfuscated by an ideology which defines the environmental problem in terms of interest group conflict and therefore defines the solution in terms of equity (rights) rather than ethics (responsibilities). Consequently, the environmental problem is framed as the need to "balance the interests in conservation and development". In practice, this means to trading-off a bit of public land each year for development, which is **unsustainable**.

Pluralist ideology in Planning theory serves the interests of the powerful at the expense of the natural environment in several basic ways, as we shall see: (1) It legitimizes a power-based competitive social structure; (2) depicts humanity as divorced from nature and 'community';<sup>48</sup> (3) delegitimizes the concept of the 'public interest'; (4) obscures the conflict between special interests and the public interest; (5) portrays the environmental issue as conflict among competing interest groups having equal 'claims' to resources; and (6) finally conceives of 'ethics' in the narrow sense of (rights-based) egalitarianism.

1. Pluralism reinforces the competitive social structure. It does so by construing human relations as a series of bilateral or contractual exchanges, a model which tends to exclude moral

this Pluralist ideology, often heard in Planning circles, is that "no one can speak for the public interest". There is said to be no public interest - only an accumulation of individual needs and interests which others cannot morally judge. One might have thought that the destruction of the life support system and military conflict would be against a public interest in survival. But this problem is overcome by a tautology: people are (by definition) self-interested actors, and since Pluralist politics (by definition) maximizes self-interest, the public interest is (by definition) co-extensive with the sum of private interests, so the public interest is thereby served (by definition). Pluralism, in short, is simply a public decision making model that is perimorphic with the market.

4. Pluralism supports special interest claims to public resources by obscuring the pivotal conflict. The pivotal conflict is not competing (private) interest group demands. Rather, as said above, it is more fundamental. It is the conflict between the public interest and special interests, and it is fast becoming the life and death struggle of our species. But the concept of a public interest does not fit the Pluralist model, so pluralists simply do not recognize this fundamental conflict of interests.

5. In a liberal framework, the determination of ethical principles is assumed to be part of the private sphere of home and family. They cannot be matters for public agreement. The function of the public sphere, therefore, is to work out those rules which best enable people to pursue their private ends. Consistent with this tenet, the Pluralist paradigm in Planning does not recognize 'ethics', except in the narrow utilitarian sense of determining normative rules by which to make choices. However, this choice of rules has been predetermined by the technocracy in the selection of positivist, economics-based techniques. Since equal rights fills the place of ethics in this paradigm, then ethical decision making means 'balancing interests'. Balancing competing interests in resources or maximizing aggregate individual welfare<sup>50</sup> means democracy in consumption. In contrast, the ecofeminist value system interprets ethics to mean seeking fundamental principles to guide **relationships**, as opposed to guiding decisions.

6. Given a paradigm that does not recognize 'ethics' (responsibilities), but only rights, values are therefore equated with claims or preferences. As people are of equal value, their values must be equal. It would appear to follow then, that the 'claims' of environmentalists and developers must also be equal. Consequently, it would seem that all that is needed to solve conflict over resources is some kind of 'balancing' of interests in resources. For 'balance', therefore, when we allocate land to development, such as subdivisions or timber preserves, we believe it suffices to set aside a percentage for environmentalists to 'use'.

In other words, within this Pluralist, instrumentalist framework, the environmentalist 'claim' is assumed to be recreational or other 'use', rather than simply an ethical concern for life, even though we know that many greens do not hope to even visit some of the environments they work to protect. This is because, in this paradigm, competing claims and values have the status of constitutive elements. Ethical concepts, altruism, and the public interest, on the other hand, are outside the paradigm and therefore are seen as irrelevant or ephemeral.

Thus, the Pluralist model, which depicts the environmental problem as competing claims to environmental goodies, has militated against feminist concepts that value community and nature. Nature is not an interest group. Therefore, what economists call 'existence values' (the measure of our 'preferences' for preserving the intrinsic value of nature) will fluctuate with our perception of the economic situation. This perception is manipulated by the media, which is controlled by powerful special interests. Consequently, areas are 'permanently' reserved only until economic cycles create a demand for more resources. When a scarcity of resources eventually drives up the use value of a remaining natural area relative to its existence value, we will again divide it, setting aside some more (smaller) areas to meet the 'claims' of environmentalists.

#### (6) Planning processes lack a normative basis

The mythology of Pluralism does not conform to the reality of the politics of public choice. The general public is becoming more aware of the environmental impacts of ad hoc Planning decisions. However, the cumulative socio-economic impacts of the decision-making structure itself could have far greater impact on the environment and social choice over the long term. The old model of pluralist policy formation and bureaucratic implementation assumes the separation of public and private sectors (that is, private input and public output). This is no longer descriptively valid. First, transnational industrial and military organizations increasingly influence both policy and implementation. Second, issues concerning production and projects of major environmental significance are increasingly decided through corporatist<sup>51</sup> bargaining processes. That is, governments and their agencies negotiate concessions from firms and mediating organizations representing development interests and, increasingly, a professionalized environmental movement.

In effect, planners have abdicated responsibility for issues of high complexity or controversy to political decision making by structurally privileged groups, often neither informed by planning expertise nor accountable to the wider public. While such corporatist arrangements are arguably efficient for settling disputes, they are inappropriate for mediating the asymmetrical conflict involved in production and consumption.

This new form of environmental interest mediation has created a problem of legitimacy because it contravenes the tenants of pluralist democracy, checks and balances, and division of functions. That is, the public choice system has departed from the norms, procedures and legitimating myths of political democracy. Because Planning expands government (and by devolution, corporate) control over economic activity by limiting individual rights and freedoms, democratic decision-making processes are necessary to warrant obedience. To command the respect of both development and public interests, therefore, Planning requires a normative basis. Planning will fail to encapsulate conflict unless it can provide for due process in the representation of fundamental values and ethical considerations.

#### (7) Planning operates ex post facto

Bureaucratic, hierarchical structures have inherent problems which have been discussed *ad infinitum* in the literature. However, these problems do not establish that some form of privatization is a viable alternative. Both command and competitive



resource allocation systems lead to the same result - a self-sustaining power structure. The difference is largely in who makes the rules. For example, a de-regulated 'market' is, in fact, highly regulated - but by the private sector.<sup>52</sup> Also the irreversibility of privatization itself must be considered. As world events of late have demonstrated with staggering frequency, it is easier to overthrow a government than the military or corporate power structures that dictate that government's policy.<sup>53</sup> Whether for better or for worse, the move to a feudalistic capitalism has not been a matter of conscious public choice.

Environmental planning in a market system means environmental harm is mitigated by public planners after the basic decisions are made. The incongruity of Planning in a market system is exemplified by the private proposal to build a Very Fast Train (the 'VFT') connecting the three major eastern cities in Australia. At an international planning conference in Sydney,<sup>54</sup> it was explained that the purpose of the project is to find a use for Japanese investment capital. The design criteria is dictated by engineering constraints, which amount to the shortest, straightest route between destinations. The location of the track will create a "growth corridor", which its proponents have proudly proclaim will be the greatest land use determinant since Australia was settled by Europeans. Public planners will be called upon to select the best sites for terminals and to mitigate environmental impacts. There was no prior analysis, public or private, nor public debate regarding where growth should occur, if at all<sup>55</sup> - that fundamental question was preempted, and will ultimately be determined by confrontation.

Planning, in practice, means mitigating the spillover effects of private initiatives. We try to figure out how to best 'engineer' people to fit what we call technological or economic **imperatives** - as if they were God-given, rather than Man-made. That is, we try to change genetically and culturally encoded human needs and relationships to make our Man-made problems work - problems such as our blind obedience to market and technological determinism. Private sector decision making leads to efficiencies in price, but not in resource use.

#### **(8) Planning techniques are inherently biased**

Since the notable failure of control-oriented comprehensive planning, planning theorists have been attempting to superimpose the tools and concepts of neo-classical economics upon issues fundamentally incompatible with its underlying premises and assumptions. As a result of this 'economic creep', Planning has merged into policy analysis. It has therefore become concerned with predicting, modelling and monitoring, rather than social problem solving. Our economic decision analysis techniques, such as cost-benefit analyses and environmental impact statements, are evaluative tools at best. They are not appropriate for determining social goals. They are appropriate only for assisting a developer, not the public sector, to decide whether to proceed with a particular project or not. In fact, they usually serve as promotional documents designed to justify government and industry plans.

Not only do the decision sciences put the cart before the horse, these studies impede our ability to find the best use of public investment capital. For example, more jobs might be created by assisting small business enterprises than by borrowing to build a dam--but the processes and methods frame the issue as whether or not to build a dam. They do not enable us to examine the public

value of the industry, project or product in relation to the costs. For instance, any source of jobs is treated as intrinsically valuable, regardless of the relative cost of the jobs created, the nature of the work, and the social costs entailed--that is, ethical considerations.

These economic techniques do not realize their full potential as they are corrupted (discussed above). What often passes for a cost-benefit or environmental analysis in actual practice usually excludes many social costs (such as medical costs, lost options and cleanup costs) and the indirect subsidies to the developer (such as infrastructures, tax shelters and cheap loans). Thus, for example, the risks and costs of decommissioning nuclear plants have been left for taxpayers, investors and consumers to worry about.<sup>56</sup>

Furthermore, the inability of the economist's models to comprehend ethical, environmental and economic issues is becoming well understood.<sup>57</sup> Even if properly applied, the economist's concepts do not work. For instance, if the market is the source of value, wilderness will only be valued high enough to preserve when it is so scarce as to cease to be natural, or when segregated in islands, thereby losing its value (and sustainability) as wilderness, and causing species extinction and biosystem collapse.

The economic decision techniques are also biased against preserving and expanding future social options. For example, if we use 'present value' analyses for choosing among alternative land uses, a hidden imperative is created to use land at the highest present use, regardless of the particular discount rate used. These decision tools are designed to 'choose', and this creates a bias against keeping options open.<sup>58</sup> While the 'do nothing' alternative is always one choice, it will seldom outweigh development proposals in ad hoc decision making. Furthermore, a decision to not allocate a natural environment or public goods to development today will have to be defended every time a development is proposed or the public coffers run low. While criminals are immune from double-jeopardy, the environment is not; its defense is therefore very expensive.

Finally, these economic techniques are incongruous with environmental issues because they are based on 'preferences', or needs created by the market. The economist's approach purports to measure what people are willing to pay (or forego payment) to preserve environmental amenity or wildlife. For example, there are several techniques to find 'surrogate markets' for those priceless public goods that have no market. This requires all kinds of assumptions that are value-laden and permits all kinds of manipulation in converting values to numbers. As a case in point, the 'hedonic' price approach looks at how property values vary with the environmental attributes of different neighborhoods. By using multiple regressions, analysts can then assess what difference in property value is attributable to a unit increase in factors such as pollution, noise, or diminished view. But this excludes the opportunity cost of all the people who forego higher salaries, status and other benefits of city life to live in a healthier environment.

The public and private sectors increasingly use the same one-dimensional processes and methods for reaching decisions. Planners are becoming merely economic auditors. As more people come to perceive Planning as an extension service of the development industry, it will lose any remaining legitimacy as a forum for resolving environmental conflict.

### (9) Planning regulations do not prevent environmental damage

Many have written that our regulatory standards are anachronistic and ineffective. For example, our 'ambient quality' pollution controls assume a safe threshold level for toxic wastes although there are no safe thresholds for many toxic substances.<sup>59</sup> Further, we still do not have adequate knowledge about the interrelations of chemicals, ecosystems and human health to set thresholds. Others have criticized our 'technology-based' pollution controls which, on the other hand, effectively impose greater requirements on new industries and technologies, creating economic inefficiencies and disincentives. This again relates to the fact that ethical considerations are considered either invalid or are confused with 'equity' among producer interests: it seems inequitable to shut down old sources.

The trend is still toward market-based regulations. These are based on the 'polluter pays' principle, whereby one can pollute if one, in effect, buys a ticket.<sup>60</sup> Not only does this create a 'right' to pollute, it makes polluting fun. Transferrable development rights and emissions trading should soon appear as board games. Emissions trading is, in effect, a grant to continue the present rate of emissions. It does not create much incentive to develop abatement technology. Even where the political will exists to force modernization by reducing the emissions value of permits, the system cannot take into account the relative value of the product produced, or the costs per job created.

Part of the reason for these incongruities lies in the conceptual basis upon which the regulations are built. Although it is often said that land, water and forests are 'public goods', our methods do not reflect this. They are still treated as raw materials (of no intrinsic value) which can be compensated for or traded off by cash contributions or development impact fees. In short, our regulatory devices do not protect the public domain and public health, but merely exact a tax or royalties on their degradation.

nalized by having a closed loop approach. For example, the intake of water for a timber mill would be piped back from downstream of the mill. In the long run, it would be cheaper to forget the sunk cost and re-engineer industries or convert highly polluting activities to environmentally sound ones at public expense. If society can afford to pension-off thousands of redundant workers, perhaps it can pension off a few industrialists?

Prevention is the only cure. Once ecosystems are shattered for their resources or infiltrated with toxics, they are never the same. Prevention means changing not only consumption patterns but industrial processes and products themselves. Regulations do not do this. Environmental controls only filter or disperse pollution - it all gets into the environment eventually.

### Conclusion

In summary, Planning is a wealth distribution process without a relevant normative basis, structure, or conceptual framework that can comprehend or resolve the fundamental ethical issues at stake. The existing decision-making concepts and processes reinforce economic inefficiencies and inequities, generate risk and conflict, and close off future options. A fundamental bias against environmental protection and conflict prevention can be traced ultimately to patriarchal values which underpin Planning theory.

It will someday not read as an overstatement to say that Planning, as an institution, is an instrumental part of a resource allocation system that is destroying us and the planet. Planners have transposed theories, concepts, and techniques from economic theory onto environmental problems. Thus Planning has become irrelevant to its inherent *raison d'être* in the larger scheme of things--the resolution of ethical (land use and environmental) issues. Planning is necessary to address the imperatives of survival and human fulfilment. However, an entirely new type



53. In being pressured to sell off their assets, state bureaucracies are now in the same position as many Third World nations.
54. International Conference of Local Planning, sponsored by the RAPI, LGPA and AACP at Darling Harbour, Sydney, March, 1990.
55. Many ecologists have argued that the human population has already far exceeded the earth's carrying capacity.
56. The cost of decommissioning nuclear plants is from 50 million to 3 billion per plant. Lester Brown, 1985. *State of the World* (Wash., D.C.: World Watch Institute).
57. See *The Living Economy: a New Economics in the Making, above*.
58. *The Inherent Bias in Planning Methodology, above*.
59. Hilary Brown, and John Valentine, 1981. *Power Corrupts: The Arguments against Nuclear Power*, (London: Pluto Press).
60. See G. Nagel, 1981. "Environmental Policy on the Hazards of Incentives and Merits of Regulations", in Frank Joyce (ed). *Local Government and Environmental Planning and Control* (Gower Publishing Company).
61. See *For the Common Good, above*.

62. For a discussion of the relationship of planning to the superstructure, see Janis Birkeland. 1990. *Planning and Resource Allocation, myths and realities*. Dept of Geography and Environmental Studies, U. of Tasmania, 1990.

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## ECOLOGICAL FEMINISM: DRAWING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE OPPRESSION OF WOMEN, ANIMALS, AND NATURE

Susan Yeich

### Introduction

Ecological feminism is an emerging movement within feminism today. The approach represents the convergence of feminist and ecological thought.<sup>1</sup> Ecofeminist theory has drawn connections between the oppression and exploitation of women, animals and Nature.

Contemporary ecofeminism emerged about 12 years ago, with Susan Griffin's book, *Woman and Nature* (1978),<sup>2</sup> and Carolyn Merchant's book, *The Death of Nature* (1980).<sup>3</sup> The convergence of theories on the oppression of women and the oppression of Nature arises from finding the parallels between the two forms of oppression. Man's treatment of animals and Nature has been very similar throughout history to his treatment of women.<sup>4</sup> Man has tried to tame and conquer Nature, just as he has done to women.<sup>5</sup>

There are some historic parallels between the oppression of women and Nature and animals. For example, in 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft published "Vindication of the Rights of Women." Soon after, a second publication, "The Vindication of the Rights of Brutes," appeared in an attempt to reveal the absurdity of the notion of women's rights.<sup>6</sup> Donovan noted a similar pattern throughout history, finding that the centuries-long debate over whether women have souls paralleled similar discussion about the moral status of animals.<sup>7</sup>

Although eco-feminism appears to be a new theory, it has in fact had a long history. Ecofeminists even existed in the "first wave" of feminism. These feminists criticized the individualism and rationalism of the period, and proposed an alternative vision of collective, organic, and holistic living.<sup>8</sup> In 1845, Margaret Fuller argued that women's liberation would create a culture of gentleness, with an end to violence, including the slaughter of animals. In addition to Fuller, there were many other women who advocated for animal welfare reform and vegetarianism.

Women were, in fact, the principal leaders of the anti-vivisection movement of the late 19th century.<sup>9</sup>

As today, much ecofeminist thought in the 19th century arose in criticism of the institution of science. Merchant has described how a worldview and science was formed which sanctioned the domination of both Nature and women.<sup>10</sup> Science has worked to objectify reality, and has positioned man as superior to it.<sup>11</sup> Man has tried to distance himself from Nature in order to understand it and dominate it.<sup>12</sup> In the Newtonian-Cartesian paradigm, all that is anomalous is erased or subdued. The rationality of man grants him superior status, and there is no need for him to feel compassion for "irrational" beings. The belief in the superiority of man and the objectivity of science has allowed the realities of women and animals to be viewed as anomalies, and therefore subverted. Science has studied women and animals and deemed them inferior.<sup>13</sup>

### Connections Among Forms of Oppression

There is a common ground underlying the many forms of oppression of Nature, animals, and women. All of the acts of domination represent profit or pleasure to the oppressor. In most cases the exploiter benefits from financial profit acquired through the exploitation. This is seen in the extraction of resources and manufacture of commodities; in the use of animals in medical research, cosmetic and household product toxicity testing, factory farming, fur trapping and ranching, and entertainment; in the portrayal of women as sex objects for commercial and entertainment purposes; in the exploitation of women as cheap labor in Western and Third World countries; and in the use of women in prostitution and pornography.

In other cases the benefits are more social in nature. An oppressor may gain increased prestige or status as a result of the

domination. This can be seen in the case of the animal researcher who gains from the prestige associated with his or her research project; the hunter who has the opportunity to conspicuously confirm his virility; or the husband or employer who impresses his friends or colleagues by displaying his control over women. In still other cases, an oppressor may reap other kinds of psychological benefits. The act may fulfill a desire to dominate another being in order to enhance the feeling of personal power or even to support delusions of immortality. This is present in some instances of rape beating, and killing of women and animals.

In order for this domination to occur, the oppressor cannot view the object of domination as having any intrinsic worth. Rather, the oppressor determines the value of the object by the benefits it can reap for him or her. Carol Adams has described violence against women and the slaughter of animals as a process of objectification, fragmentation, and consumption. Objectification allows the oppressor to view the other being as an object. Fragmentation is a process of removing the being from its essence, taking away its freedom, will, or life. Consumption is a process of using the end product for some purpose. In the case of slaughtering animals, the animal's body is physically consumed; in the case of violence against women, the woman is used as an instrument for profit or pleasure.<sup>14</sup>

In this cycle of objectification, fragmentation, and consumption (or use), the notion that the exploited being had any intrinsic worth is removed and might even be seen as absurd. The value of the being lies only in the profit or pleasure it can bring to the oppressor. This cycle of objectifying and using other beings only as means is the essence of oppression and exploitation.

### Overcoming Illusions Which Serve the Powerful

The oppression of women and animals is so pervasive and insidious in our society that it is imperceptible to many people. This has presented the Women's Movement with a monumental task. The movement must not only battle the structure of the oppression of women, but must convince the masses that oppression in fact exists. Because women are viewed as objects, the notion that they are oppressed appears ludicrous to many.

The animal rights movement is facing the same difficulties. It is such a commonly-held belief in our culture that animals are inferior life-forms to be used for human purposes, that the suggestion that they should be freed from oppression is often seen as absurd.

An essential part of getting people to recognize the oppression of animals is overcoming the illusion that their exploitation benefits us all. The dominant ideology in many cultures condones and supports animal exploitation, and propagates the notion that all humans benefit from the exploitation. Critical examination of the process of exploitation, however, reveals that it does not benefit humankind as a whole, but in fact is detrimental to the vast majority of people. Two examples are given here to illustrate this point.

#### 1. Detrimental Effects of Animal Research

The use of animals in medical research is detrimental not only to animals, but to humankind as a whole. Enormous amounts of resources are put into animal research each year. The health of the masses would be much better served if the resources were

directed into alternative forms of research whose findings would be more relevant to human health care and into programs of preventive medicine.

A growing number of medical doctors challenge the practice of using animals in medical research for finding cures for human illness. They advocate alternatives to these archaic methods.<sup>15</sup> These doctors have criticized animal research for being unscientific and have said it is a hindrance to medical progress. They claim that the fundamental differences between species usually render the findings from animal research of little use when applied to humans. Because many scientists are uninformed about species differences, they conduct experiments that at best are of no value and at worst lead to dangerously wrong conclusions.<sup>16</sup> Cheryl F. Scott, a researcher at the Thrombosis Research Center at Temple University, wrote in *The Physiologist*:

As we become sophisticated in our technology and investigate at a molecular level, we find more differences in analogous proteins between species instead of finding more similarities.... The point is that knowledge gained from animal research needs ultimately to be applied to human clinical situations and in many instances, it cannot. This not only results in the sacrifice of hundreds of animals, but the misleading of scientific thought as well as hindrance of progress.<sup>17</sup>

The reliance on animal research may be partially responsible for the lack of progress in cancer research. Despite a two-decade "War on Cancer" that has killed millions of animals, cancer deaths have increased steadily.<sup>18</sup> For years, scientists have used massive numbers of mice to screen potential anti-cancer drugs. This system has been so unsuccessful at finding a substance that will work on humans that the National Cancer Institute is now concerned that mice and humans manifest very different kinds of cancer.<sup>19</sup> Progressive scientists are seeking alternatives to animal research, which hold more promise for advancing knowledge in cancer research. These alternatives include using cultures of human cells to test drugs and studying patients suffering from diseases ("clinical research").<sup>20</sup>

Progressive doctors are also questioning the backward approach to medicine practiced by the medical establishment. The institution is built on a re-active approach to health, in contrast to a pro-active approach. Very much is known about how to prevent many major illnesses, yet vast amounts of resources are continually put into finding cures for them. The National Cancer Institute spends over \$3 million each day in cancer research. The American Cancer Society spends an additional \$1 million each day. Despite this enormous output of resources, the search for a cure has not been very successful.<sup>21</sup> This situation is leading increasing numbers of cancer researchers to advocate shifting research emphasis from treatment to prevention.<sup>22</sup>

The backward conventional approach to medicine is also evidenced in the development of the artificial heart. Large amounts of resources have been put into this cure-oriented research, even though it is known how to prevent the vast majority of heart ailments. The research has had such limited success that the National Institutes of Health (NIH) had decided to discontinue funding for it in 1988. Politicians from financially-interested states, however, later coerced them into restoring funding by threatening to hold up approval of all NIH appropriations.<sup>23</sup>



The backward approach to health practiced today can be explained by the profit variable involved in cure-oriented medicine. Enormous profits are reaped by developing (and then "selling") cures to diseases, while there is much less profit to be made by preventing disease. And today, with so many scientists' livelihoods wrapped around the use of animals in research, there are powerful forces within the medical community preventing the development of alternative, progressive kinds of research. Researchers are fighting to keep their careers, and this explains the fervent propaganda put out by them to justify the continued use of animals in research. No matter how rational and beneficial the switch to non-animal alternatives is, inevitably there will be much resistance to the change because of the threat it presents to researchers' self-interests.

Viewed from a political-economic perspective it is clear that, contrary to the claims of animal researchers, the exploitation of animals in medical research does not benefit humankind as a whole. This practice wasted tremendous amounts of resources that could be applied to other areas, such as developing progressive research models, developing programs to help prevent disease, and ensuring health care availability for all people. This kind of research allocation has not occurred because it threatens the interests of medical professionals. Maintaining status quo operations within the medical system preserves the continued profit of large institutions and professional prestige of researchers.

## 2. Detrimental Effects of Factory Farming

Similar to the medical establishment, the meat production industry has perpetuated the mistaken belief that its exploitation of animals benefits all of society. Consumers see that the industry provides them with meat and other animal products, but they seldom see the many detrimental effects that factory farming has.

Some of the detrimental effects arise from the severe exploitation of resources that factory farming practices involve. These practices take a tremendous toll on the environment. The production of livestock is directly responsible for 50% of tropic rainforest deforestation, 50% of water pollution, and 85% of the loss of topsoil. The industry uses one-third of all raw materials consumed by the U.S. and uses tremendous amounts of water.<sup>24</sup>

This waste of resources has ramifications for the world hunger problem. There would be more than enough food for everyone on the planet if humans quit eating animal meat. Recycling grain through livestock wastes 90% of its protein 96% of its calories, 100% of its fiber, and 100% of its carbohydrates.<sup>25</sup> Sixty million people die of starvation each year throughout the world. It has been estimated that if Americans cut their meat consumption by just 10%, the grain saved would be enough to feed all these people.<sup>26</sup>

Factory farming practices also have detrimental effects on the health of those who consume the industry's products. According to the U.S. Office of Technology Assessment, antibiotics are put into the feed for the vast majority of animals.<sup>27</sup> This practice is a necessary procedure in factory farming. Because of the cramped and filthy conditions in which animals are kept, disease would spread rapidly, wiping out whole herds and flocks, resulting in great losses for the industry, if antibiotics were not administered.

Because of this practice, a number of common disease-causing bacteria (for example, those causing diarrhoea, septicaemia, psittacosis, salmonella, gonorrhoea, pneumonia, typhoid, and childhood meningitis) have now had long exposure to antibiotics, and have developed drug-resistant strains. These new strains are appearing in humans in increasing numbers, and standard antibiotics are now no longer effective in their treatment.<sup>28</sup>

Another factory farming practice with serious health implications involves the industry's use of hormones. Administering hormones to animals increases production of meat and dairy products, thus increasing profits. Hormones are powerful substances which can have severe consequences on human health. An epidemic of premature sexual development is now occurring in children in Puerto Rico thought due to contamination of meat and milk by hormones. An English medical journal reported that hormone traces in meat is causing British school girls to mature sexually at least three years earlier than in the past.<sup>29</sup>

The use of toxic chemicals is another factory farming practice with serious health implications. Humans absorb all toxins in the bodies of animals they consume. In fact, with each successive step in the food chain, the consumer gets an ever-more concentrated dose of toxins. Factory farmed animals have especially high concentrations of toxins because they are fed fish meal (which is very high in toxins), their feeds are often grown on land heavily sprayed with pesticides, and they are doused with and fed many toxic compounds.<sup>30</sup>

Recent studies indicate that from 95-99% of all toxic chemical residues in the American diet come from meat, fish, dairy products, and eggs.<sup>31</sup> The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has expressed concern that as many as 500 to 600 toxic chemicals may be present in the country's meat supply, and no adequate testing or monitoring program exists to check for them. A report by the General Accounting Office stated that "Of the 143 drugs and pesticides identified as likely to leave residues in raw meat and poultry, 42 are known to cause cancer or are suspected of causing cancer, 20 of causing birth defects and 6 of causing mutations."<sup>32</sup> Many scientists believe the presence of toxins in our bodies is largely responsible for the increase in cancer which has occurred in this century. The cancer death rate has increased from 3% in 1900 to 20% today.<sup>33</sup>

The practice of eating meat, even if free of contaminants, has costly health effects. Heart disease and stroke are the causes of death for 50% of Americans. Research has consistently shown that diets high in saturated fat and cholesterol lead directly to these diseases. The powerful meat industry has worked to discount those findings and has been remarkably successful in limiting their dissemination.<sup>34</sup>

Research has also found overwhelming evidence that no risk factor for cancer is more significant than diet and nutrition, with meat and animal fat intake being the most important dietary factors.<sup>35</sup> Despite these compelling findings, which reveal how the vast majority of diet caused cancer could be prevented, very little action has been taken to disseminate the findings and encourage Americans to alter their diets. Since the meat industry's entire foundation is threatened by such findings, as remarked above, the industry has taken strong actions to deny these findings.<sup>36</sup>

Another disease whose prevention has political implications is osteoporosis. Modern nutritional research indicates that the most significant cause of osteoporosis is excess dietary protein.

Consumption of an excess amount of protein, which is common among meat-eaters, works to pull calcium from the bones, regardless of how much calcium is consumed. This is not a controversial claim; research has consistently yielded this finding. These findings have been successfully kept from public view. Instead, the misconception that increasing calcium intake by supplements or milk products has been propagated. The National Dairy Council has spent tens of millions of dollars to promote this misconception.<sup>37</sup>

It is clear then, that at least some factory farming practices and the tradition of meat-eating have serious consequences for the environment, the world hunger problem, and human health. Humankind as a whole does not benefit from industry exploitation of animals, but in fact is a victim of the quest for profit. Overcoming the illusions that all humankind benefits from the exploitation of animals is an essential step in understanding the connections between this other and other forms of oppression. People may be more ready to draw the connections, if they realize that the exploitation of animals is just another part of an oppressive patriarchal system which serves the powerful.

### Reclaiming Control Over Personal Lives

Understanding the parallels between different forms of oppression allows people to take the radical step of ending their own oppression of other beings. Carol Adams has discussed how becoming vegetarian allows women to become autonomous from patriarchy and reject male dominance and violence in this realm of their lives. It is a way to refuse to participate in part of the patriarchal system of oppression.<sup>38</sup> From an ecofeminist perspective, it is essential in the struggle for liberation to recognize and bring an end to participating in the support of systems of domination of other people or creatures.

The act of refusing to participate in a system of oppression is itself an act of liberation. The system encourages people to oppress others, so refusing to participate takes away some of this power. The act is inherently radical: with an understanding of the fundamental connections among all forms of oppression as its basis, it strikes at the very root of oppression. A widespread, pervasive system of oppression cannot work without the participation of the masses. Thus, we must work toward solidarity between those who are aware of but refuse to participate in oppression. This solidarity is a long-term goal for revolutionaries. Subcultures can be created which function as microcosms of the longed-for future society. People in these subcultures can refuse to follow the dictates of the system which encourages them to oppress others.

Overcoming personal oppression within a larger system of oppression is indeed a monumental task. If some measure of it can be achieved, however, the gains to those involved will be tremendous. Successfully recognizing and ending one's own oppressive actions is a rewarding process of psychological and social liberation. It frees one from the mind-controlling influences of the powerful, and opens the way for genuine community.

Refusing the dictates of the powerful provides benefits on a more practical level as well. People in these subcultures can refuse to obey the "experts," and instead can make decisions for themselves. For example, they can refuse to participate in the re-active approach to medicine carried out by the medical establishment. They can regain some control over their own lives and practice pro-active methods for healing and maintaining health.

Instead of viewing Nature as a force to be feared and conquered (the view propagated by Western medicine), they can learn to work with Nature to remain healthy. A major part of the pro-active approach to health could include switching to a vegetarian or vegan diet.

The act of reclaiming control over one's own health is an act of defying the oppressors: It removes their control over this realm of one's life; it takes power away from the medical establishment by refusing to give the oppressors their desired profit and prestige; it takes power away from the factory farming industry by refusing to give the oppressors their desired profit.

### The Ecofeminist Vision

Ecofeminist theory thus far has drawn connections between the oppression of women, animals, and Nature. The theory can be expanded, however, to include many other forms of oppression. It can be argued that there is a dimension which underlies and therefore unites all forms of oppression. The ecofeminist vision is one of creating solidarity among all oppressed groups, a solidarity which is essential in the struggle for liberation.

### Notes

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## ECOFEMINISM, PATRIARCHAL CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS, AND OLD MEMORIES

Molly Baer Kramer

In her article "Feminism and Ecology: Making Connections" (*Environmental Ethics*, Volume 9, Number 1), Karen Warren explores the current feminist debate over ecology, and in doing so assesses the "theoretical adequacy" of each of the four leading versions of feminism (Marxist, radical, liberal, and socialist) as a basis for an ecofeminist ethic. Although recognizable differences exist in how each theory of feminism approaches the ecology issue, Warren identifies certain claims common to all theories upon which ecofeminism is based:

- (i) that important connections exist between the oppression of women and the oppression of nature;
- (ii) that understanding the nature of these connections is necessary to get any adequate understanding of the oppression of women and the oppression of nature;
- (iii) that [if (i) and (ii) are true] feminist theory and practice must include an ecological perspective; and
- (iv) that [if (i) and (ii) are true] solutions to ecological problems must include a feminist perspective.

On the basis of these claims and the assumption that ecofeminism is true or at least plausible, the author argues that each of the four leading versions of feminism is "inadequate, incomplete, or...problematic" as a theoretical basis for ecofeminism, and proposes a "transformative" feminism that moves beyond the familiar feminist frameworks to make ecofeminism the central perspective in feminist theory and practice.<sup>1</sup>

Central to Warren's account is the notion of a patriarchal conceptual framework. A conceptual framework is a socially constructed mindset, she explains, a "set of beliefs, values, attitudes, and assumptions which shape, reflect, and explain our view of ourselves and our world."<sup>2</sup> A patriarchal conceptual framework, then, is one that takes traditionally male-identified beliefs and values as the standard, higher prestiged, or superior ones. A patriarchal conceptual framework is identified by value-hierarchical thinking, where, Warren writes, quoting Elizabeth Dodson Gray, "diversity...is...organized by a spatial metaphor (Up- and-Down)," and greater value is attributed to that which

is higher or "Up"<sup>3</sup> (culture above nature, mind above body, men above women).

Value-hierarchical thinking is assumed to support the black-and-white way of thinking which generates "normative dualisms," or a way of thinking in which the sides of the dualism are seen as exclusive and oppositional, rather than inclusive and complementary (human/nonhuman, mind/body, reason/emotion). Such thinking becomes oppressive when coupled with a "logic of domination," explained by the author as a "value-hierarchical way of thinking which **explains, justifies, and maintains** the subordination of an 'inferior' group by a 'superior' group on the grounds of the (alleged) inferiority or superiority of the respective group."<sup>4</sup> This way, the inequality is legitimized "when, in fact, prior to the metaphor of Up-Down, one would have said only that there existed diversity."<sup>5</sup>

Therefore, the author concludes, ecofeminists see that the connections between the oppression of nature and women are at least and ultimately **conceptual**: they are embedded in a patriarchal conceptual framework and reflect a logic of domination which is used to explain, justify, and maintain the subordination of both women and nature to men. Ecofeminism, then, encourages women to **reconceptualize** ourselves and our relation to the earth in non-patriarchal ways.

Referring back to the four "minimal condition" claims of ecofeminism ((i)-(iv)), Warren determines that the interconnections between the four claims is what makes this critique of patriarchal conceptual frameworks distinctly ecofeminist. Her critique is used to show that there are important connections between the oppression of women and the oppression of nature (condition i); that understanding how a patriarchal conceptual framework acts to legitimize the oppression of women and nature (condition ii) puts ecofeminists in a position to show why "naturism," i.e., the subordination, domination, or abuse of non-human nature by humans, should be included among other systems of oppression supported by patriarchy (e.g., racism, classism); and why feminist theory and practice must reflect an ecological perspective (condition iii), and the ecological community must embrace a feminist perspective (condition iv), or each "will risk utilizing strategies and implementing solutions

which contribute to the continued subordination of women" and nature.<sup>6</sup>

According to Warren, ecofeminism provides a critique of contemporary feminist theory and practice as well as environmentalism and environmental ethics. In particular, including naturism in the social systems of domination sanctioned by patriarchy and patriarchal conceptual frameworks **mandates** that feminists actively oppose naturism. In conclusion, Warren writes:

The stakes are high. If ecofeminism is correct, then a feminist debate over ecology is much deeper and more basic to both the feminist and ecology movements than traditional constructs of feminism or ecology might have us believe. What is at stake is not only the success of the feminist and ecology movements, but the theoretical adequacy of feminism itself.<sup>7</sup>

### A Response:

As recently as last year, ecofeminism as a concept made only a limited amount of sense to me. I could see the connection ecofeminists were trying to make, but I wasn't able to make it true for myself. Then one day, on a walk in the woods near my home, I experienced something of a revelation about the connection I feel with nonhuman animals and the earth as a whole.

My friend Ramin and I walked through the woods in silence, as we often did (language is not always necessary - or adequate - between good friends). I was standing on the path in a shaft of sunlight that had found a hole in the canopy overhead. These were "my" woods. I had lived up the street from the trailhead all my life. I stood in the sunbeam and tried to remember what it was like to be a kid in these woods. What, if anything, had changed? I remembered other outdoor places that I loved when I was young - the woods behind my school, the farm I used to visit....

Often when I attempt to remember something from my childhood this farm comes to mind. It was owned by one of my relatives; I spent summers there when I was young. The farm was situated on the edge of a small town, and its main 'crops' were soybeans and hogs. Although I loved to visit this town and the people there, "He" - my relative, the man who owned the farm - sometimes frightened me. "He" was the head of the house, and occasionally sought to assert his dominance with his wife, my brother, myself. Here is where my memories get blurry. But that day, standing in that shaft of light in my safe woods, with a close friend nearby, I decided to try to piece some memories together.

What I remember about his interactions with me is fragmented. I remember his inappropriate kisses and the way they made me feel. I remember the strange look in his eyes when he talked to me. I can remember running from him one night, but I don't remember why I was running. I remember trying to lock the door to my room in his house and finding the lock was broken. The dresser I tried to move to block the door was too heavy. So I sat in bed, determined to stay awake and aware, but occasionally I would fall asleep into nightmares of him being in the room. Or were they nightmares?

I remember going to the farm with him to see the baby pigs. I remember him picking up the pigs by their hind legs, the pigs squealing loudly, clenching their eyes shut in what I saw to be

an expression of pain. And he was laughing, telling me "this is how you're supposed to pick them up." I remember not believing him.

And then the pigs began to feed. He pointed to the mother sow's teats, made some comment about how good it felt to get your teats sucked...and he had that same strange glint in his eye.

As I remembered these things in the woods, some connections were made.... Why was I a vegetarian? Because this farmer drew no line between how he treated me and how he raised his pigs. They were raised in confinement. So was I. They were belittled, abused, and even sexualized by him. So was I. To him, his farm and his home, and everything contained in them, existed for him to dominate and control: even his land - a monoculture of soybeans, poisoned with chemicals. Everything raised under tight control measures. Everything raised for the benefit of this one patriarch.

That day in the woods, and even more now, I realized his world to be a microcosm of the larger world around me: everything not man - nature, women, children, nonhuman animals - exists as one, exists for men. Ecofeminism's call to reconceptualize ourselves is a radical one, reaching to the roots of our very existence. As Rosemary Ruether writes in **New Woman/New Earth** (quoted by Karen Warren):

Women must see that there can be no liberation for them and no solution to the ecological crisis within a society whose fundamental model of relationships continues to be one of domination. They must unite the demands of the women's movement with those of the ecological movement to envision a radical reshaping of the basic socioeconomic relations and the underlying values of this society.<sup>8</sup>

"He" had attempted to define me, and define nature, relative to his needs. That day in the woods I took this back and felt my connection with nature to be positive. Looking around the woods, I realized there was more to me, and more to the trees, and more to those pigs than I had known before - and that we shared similar experiences. We could, therefore, help each other. My gift to the woods is to defend them. My gift to the pigs is to be a vegetarian. Their gift to me is to also be my friends. The bond we share is the bond of surviving, and with the promise of ecofeminism, we will remain.

### Notes

1. Warren, **Feminism and Ecology: Making Connections**, p. 5. For the purposes of this essay, I discuss only that part of Warren's article concerned with ecofeminism and patriarchal conceptual frameworks. While her examination of the theoretical strength of the four leading theories of feminism is both important and thought-provoking, I neither summarize nor critique that account here.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.* (emphasis added).
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*

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# ECOFEMINISM AND ITS DISCONTENTS: NOTES TOWARD A POLITICS OF DIVERSITY

Kate Sandilands

Greenham Common. The Chipko movement. The holistic health movement. Love Canal. Die Grunen. Native land claims and struggles for self-determination. Feminist city planning. WorldWIDE. The Green Belt movement. Women working to ban pesticides and food irradiation. Women working to prevent logging on Galiano Island. Women working to find alternatives to landfills in Toronto. Women naturalists, field biologists, conservationists. Women writing nature, painting nature, creating nature.

All of these moments - movements, places, people, currents of thought - contain points of connection between feminism and ecology. In theories, in individual transformations and in collective actions, links between women's struggles and environmental issues are coming into focus, are being constructed from and into a variety of practices surrounding social and ecological liberation. As in any process of coalition-building, these connections are fraught with tension: different feminisms collide with diverse ecological sensibilities in a wide range of social and political contexts, resulting in spirited discussions and often contradictory practices.

Emerging from this polyvocal array, however, is a particular theoretical current rapidly coming to dominate discussions of feminist/ecological coalition. "Eco-feminism," a term coined by French author Françoise d'Eaubonne, takes as its central problem the historical and continuing interstructuring of the exploitation of Nature with the domination of women.<sup>1</sup> In inhabiting a theoretical space which is critical of other feminisms, ecofeminism suggests that liberal, radical and socialist positions have inadequately addressed the ways in which the domination of Nature lies alongside the domination of women. Simultaneously, ecofeminism is critical of ecologies which point to "anthropocentrism" as the fundamental relation governing humanity's exploitation of nonhuman Nature. "Humanity," to ecofeminists, is not a monolithic actor in ecological degradation. Ynestra King, a key ecofeminist author, writes:

the ecological crisis is related to the systems of hatred of all that is natural and female by the white, male, western formulators of philosophy, technology, and death inventions... The systematic denigration of working-class people and people of colour, women, and animals are all connected to the basic dualism which lies at the root of western civilization.<sup>2</sup>

In this way, ecofeminism locates itself as a theory and movement which bridges the gap between feminism and ecology, but which transforms both to create a unified praxis to end all forms of domination. Although there are different approaches to this project, a number of underlying themes and assumptions inform most ecofeminist writing. First, there is a general reliance on certain understandings of the origins of domination of women and Nature. Second, particular constructions of humanity and

Nature, and of the relationship between the social and the natural, inform much ecofeminist writing. Particularly as outlined by "spiritual" ecofeminists (although pervasive as well in other areas), these directions have led to a contradictory, relatively univocal, and primarily idealistic notions of social and ecological change. After exploring these problems in greater detail, I would like to suggest that this "essentialist" ecofeminism is not the only way to constructing a praxis of feminist/ecological resistance.

## Dualism and Difference: On Origins

A number of ecofeminist works are concerned with questions of "roots": **how** has the oppression of women co-developed with the exploitation of Nature? To Val Plumwood, there are three variants of this type of exploration in ecofeminist writings.<sup>3</sup> While there are important differences in emphasis between them, the first two can be classified as "historical" and the third as "psychological".

In the first of the two historical approaches to ecofeminism, "the problem for both women and Nature is their place as part of a set of dualisms which have their origins in classical philosophy and which can be traced through a complex history to the present."<sup>4</sup> Here, authors such as Susan Griffin, Elizabeth Dodson Gray and Rosemary Radford Ruether focus on the historical polarization of humanity from Nature, men from women, mind from body, reason from emotion, in the development of Western conceptions of transcendent humanity. It is the specifically **hierarchical** character of these dualisms which is seen as problematic in these accounts: the lower "halves" are not "Other" in their own right, but are instead constructed as polar opposites of "true" humans. They are instrumentalized, having value only insofar as they serve the needs of the "higher" order. And, in a downward spiral of mutual association and denigration, women and Nature have been systematically devalued and exploited because of their supposedly shared "traits". Rosemary Radford Ruether states this position clearly:

all the basic dualities - the alienation of the mind from the body; the alienation of the self from the objective world; the subjective retreat of the individual, alienated from the social community; the domination or rejection of nature by spirit - these all have roots in the apocalyptic-Platonic religious heritage of classical Christianity. But the alienation of the masculine from the feminine is the primary sexual symbolism that sums up all these alienations.<sup>5</sup>

The second ecofeminist stream located by Plumwood concerns "those who would locate the problem for both women and Nature in the rise of mechanistic science during the Enlightenment and pre-Enlightenment period."<sup>6</sup> These theorists, including Carolyn



Merchant and Brian Easlea (and, I would add, a number of radical feminists who write about science and technology) argue that the roots of the exploitation of women and Nature are to be found in the transition from an organic to a mechanical view of Nature. To Merchant, for example, while dualism most certainly existed before the Enlightenment, the identification of women with Nature was not unambiguously negative in a worldview which emphasized complementarity, interdependence, and the primacy of community over individual needs. It is in the rise of rationality, with its concomitant post-Baconian valuation of individual mastery, that the roots of exploitation are to be found. "The core of female principles that had for centuries subtly guided human behavior toward the earth had given way to a new ethic of exploitation. The nurturing earth mother was subdued by science and technology."<sup>7</sup>

There are a number of problems with each of these accounts. First, each in its own way oversimplifies the development of Western thought, the first painting a unidimensional picture of dualism and the second an overly-optimistic view of pre-Enlightenment perspectives on women and Nature. Each creates, from a range of complex and often contradictory philosophical debates (covering a period of some centuries) a more-or-less linear narrative assuming the dominance of "gender polarity" in discourses about women and Nature. As Prudence Allen's work illustrates, the period between pre-Aristotelian constructions and the ultimate "triumph" of polarity as a guiding construction of gender was by no means characterized by linear philosophical or theological development.<sup>8</sup> Nor has polarity ever been completely dominant in Western conceptions of gender; even in Christianity, there remains a tension between women's connection with Eve's sin and their equality with men in Christ.<sup>9</sup> Thus, although perceived divisions between men and women may have gained ideological strength from associations with a nature/culture dualism, the fact remains that women have never **become** Nature, as these authors might suggest. It seems, then, problematic to assert that women and Nature occupy the same conceptual space in a hegemonic notion of hierarchical dualism. Not only is dualism itself a historically contested concept, but the historical association of women and Nature was never a question of complete identification. Similarly, it cannot be argued that even a once-harmonious identification was warped and inverted at a specific conceptual moment.

Second, both histories tend to take ideas of women and Nature out of the particular social contexts in which they were created, **as if** such ideas could persevere in a linear way despite dramatic social and political changes. Both accounts overlook, or de-emphasize, the socially constructed character of conceptions of women and Nature. Instead, each creates an account of how ideas have caused destruction, rather than looking at the complex ways in which technology, social relations, practices and ideas interact throughout history to construct women and to construct Nature.

Third, neither account problematizes the basis upon which the connections between women and Nature were made in the first place. Instead, there seems to be an interesting teleology in these accounts: both **assume** that there is some connection between women and Nature which men do not possess, or which men are reluctant to admit in themselves. From this starting assumption, both these accounts seek to prove that the degradation of women and Nature occurred as a result of that connection, and that as a result of this historical degradation, there is a connection between women and Nature which men do not possess. What the

accounts **do** is show how the connection between women and Nature has been devalued in Western thought. While this remains an interesting project, both end up in a "which came first" construction, inevitably prioritizing one oppression as most fundamental to the creation of hierarchical dualism. They do not question women's connection with Nature, why women's bodies are seen as unique to their "naturalness", why is it that processes associated with birth are constructed as essentially more "natural" than those associated with eating, sleeping or defecating. Thus, despite the objective of finding the roots of the "woman/nature" problem, both accounts end up **assuming** that the connection is naturally given, but that its **form** has been twisted.

In contrast to (although occasionally in combination with) these historical accounts of origins is a third representation of the connections between women and Nature. Following the works of feminist psychoanalysts Dorothy Dinnerstein and Nancy Chodorow, the third strand of the ecofeminist quest for "roots" focuses on "an explanation of the link based on **difference**, e.g., on sexually-differentiated personality formation or consciousness."<sup>10</sup> While there are variations within this camp, the central core is a focus on sex differences in the development of Self/Other identity in early childhood (particularly in the formation of "rigid" or "soft" ego boundaries and in processes of gender identification). For example, Ariel Salleh states:

whereas a girl child experiences her first living relationship empathically as a fusional continuum between self and mother, the boy child's ego identity emerges negatively, by differentiation between self and M/other. Masculine identity is thus at its very foundation constructed oppositionally, by exclusion of those characteristics which nurturant Woman displays.<sup>11</sup>

To ecofeminists, this masculine separation from both human mother and Mother Earth (joined together as embodiment of dependency, as forming together the primal state from which humanity emerges, or even as threats to masculine selfhood because of their generative capacities) results in men's desire to subdue both women and Nature in a quest for individual potency and transcendence. The male Self is not experienced as part of Nature, but is locked in a constant battle to conquer a primordial feminine Oneness.

The other side of this differentiatial coin suggests that women do not experience such separation and individuation. Akin to Carol Gilligan's conception of an alternative "feminine" morality based on connectedness and the balancing of Self/Other responsibility, ecofeminists suggest that the experience of connection to Nature develops differently in women.<sup>12</sup> As a result of women's responsibilities for childcare and processes of maintaining life, as a result of women's participation in creation of **new** life, as a result of women's location as a "bridge" between the "natural" world of infants and the "cultural" world of adults, and/or as a result of women's "soft" ego boundary development, women's connectedness to other humans and to the world of Nature is created and recreated generationally.

This last account is, by and large, the most pervasive; the types of politics it suggests underlie a large proportion of the works I will discuss in the next section. However, it is also problematic on a number of counts. First, while it does, unlike the accounts presented above, problematize the **process** of connection between women and Nature, it also assumes the construction of

birth and mothering as essentially more "natural" than other biological events or processes. I would argue that there is no essential connection between the individuated male's transcendence of his human M/other and "Mother Nature" unless the connection between women and Nature is **already** part of the historical, material and cultural context in which individuation is created and expressed. To put it another way, the repudiation of the human mother does not necessarily include the repudiation of "nature". While psychosocial processes of differentiation may lead the male child to separate from, and even to seek dominance over, his own mother, it is only in the context of other social relations which **construct** the mother/child bond as quintessentially "natural" that this desire to dominate Nature becomes connected to differentiation from the human mother.

Here again we see a teleology emerge: the primordial male desire to separate from M/other only includes the repudiation of Nature in a context where that repudiation has already occurred. In this way, these developmental accounts cannot be seen as "origins". While this failure does not mean that the account is useless, it does suggest that there are important questions not included in psychoanalytic accounts alone. In particular, questions that the perspective does not ask include the **construction** of the "naturalness" of birth and childrearing, the discursive character of the development of Self in relation to Nature and, perhaps most importantly, the flexibility of boundaries between "nature" and "culture" as they appear in and affect different social formations.

There are other criticisms of accounts of gender and Nature based on ego development (and related processes), some of which have generated creative responses from ecofeminist theorists. The types of psychoanalytic feminism appropriated by ecofeminist theory have been accused of ahistoricity and Western-centrism, largely because its models of child development are based on a very particular model of family and childrearing practices (and one which ignores the effects of race and/or class in constructing the individual).<sup>13</sup> In response, Isaac Balbus displays some sensitivity to this criticism. While he still falls into the trap of assuming, rather than problematizing, the "woman/nature connection," he constructs a model of history in which different modes of childrearing cultivate particular ecological sensibilities in different sociocultural contexts. Certain practices, he argues, primarily located in "primitive" (sic) cultures, do not give rise to the same sequence or intensity of separation between the male child and his mother as Western practices (e.g., as a result of the timing of rites of passage into adulthood and/or of more "nurturing" early childrearing modes). These different experiences for male children, he argues, result in different relationships between adult males and Nature.<sup>14</sup> He sees instrumentalization of Nature as a relatively recent and developmentally particular event, peculiar to societies in which childrearing is less "nurturant". What he suggests we need, then, is some sort of revolution in childrearing practices to complete a Hegelian synthesis between "primitive" and "instrumental" relations of childrearing, which would foster new relations between men and Nature (we assume, I suppose, that women are already "connected" but that we currently fail to pass on this sense to our male children).

While his argument is certainly creative, Balbus typifies the shortcomings of theory which rests solely on psychoanalysis to explain complex sociohistorical processes (it should be mentioned that he also succeeds in reifying the "primitive," in manner

akin to Carolyn Merchant's reification of pre-Enlightenment thought). As Frank Adler notes, "Balbus replicates all the logical problems of orthodox Marxism; instead of fetishizing the mode of production, he fetishizes the mode of child-rearing - everything else is epiphenomenal."<sup>15</sup> This approach ignores the effects of technology, of production (although Ariel Salleh has argued that production itself is symptomatic of men's separation from reproduction),<sup>16</sup> of culture, of power in the construction of relationships between men and women, or between humans (variously situated) and Nature.

In summary, then, none of these accounts of origins is adequate. Part of ecofeminism's problem is its oversimplification of both history and development: where are race, class or colonization? While there have been some attempts to include (at least nominally), an understanding of race and imperialism, these are few and far between (and tend to take a particular form, as I will describe later).<sup>17</sup> Perhaps more fundamentally, this ecofeminist literature tends toward the discovery of a threat, a **single** explanation to include all forms of domination. As a result, part of its failing is a problem with the whole project of origin-quests: "which came first" is an almost inevitable question if one is looking for a single answer.

In ecofeminism, even if attempts were made to pay more attention to class or race or conquest, it is clear that the dualism between men and women is considered primary. In either historical or psychoanalytic form, it is the experience of sex, of maleness or femaleness, which determines a person's place in, relationship to, or expected actions toward, Nature. In its final manifestation, sex is destiny: generic "male" thinking or "male" biology (or both, if one is seen to stem directly from the other) is "to blame" for contemporary relations of domination. Much ecofeminist writing does not attempt to hide this view: "ecofeminists...argue that it is the androcentric worldview that deserves primary blame [for our environmental malaise]. For ecofeminists, it is not just 'humans' but men and the masculinist worldview that must be dismantled from their privileged place."<sup>18</sup>

The general adoption of this broadly "cultural feminist" (or "nature feminist") project is manifested in more than just origin stories. And, while many authors specifically reject the hierarchy of oppressions that cultural feminism provides, even some of the most sophisticated works are influenced by its general agenda (and particularly by the types of origin stories outlined above). This problem is most noticeable in works which attempt to define a distinct terrain of theory and practice to be called "ecofeminist". In the following section, I will look specifically at ecofeminist ideas about "praxis" in order to show why the growing predominance of essentialist ecofeminism is problematic to relations between feminism and ecology.

### Praxis and the Legacy of Cultural Feminism

I must begin this section by reasserting that the forms of theory and practice which call themselves "ecofeminist" do not exhaust all possible, or even existing, forms of feminist and/or ecological politics. Ecofeminism is not alone in defining a terrain upon which feminism and ecology may be allied, but its assumptions and agenda are becoming increasingly dominant in attempts to recognize or build such a politics. In a sense, ecofeminism is coming to constitute itself as a social movement, distinct from

both other feminisms and other ecologies; it is in this process that we see only a limited range of possibilities being explored.

As mentioned earlier, the roots of ecofeminism lie strongly in cultural feminist insights: women are, biologically and/or psychologically, oppressed by our connections to Nature (in ecofeminism, the reverse is also true), as constructed and enacted in a history of dualistic, patriarchal domination. In contrast to theorists such as Sherry Ortner, who suggests that women need to repudiate the woman/natura connection<sup>19</sup> (Ynestra King calls these "radical rationalist feminists"), "cultural feminists celebrate the life experience of the 'female ghetto,' which they see as a source of freedom rather than subordination."<sup>20</sup> That life experience is, supposedly, one of connectedness to processes of life and renewal, of nurturance, of mothering, and of healing.

While individual works repudiate cultural feminism as such, while some also argue for a more sophisticated understanding of the relationship between Nature and culture, subject and object, theory and practice, the praxis of ecofeminism which seems to be emerging accepts a cultural feminist political agenda quite uncritically. Particularly, women's role in ecological struggle is defined by a series of metaphors located in "the female ghetto": women are nurturers, healers, mothers, builders of community. It is a praxis which emerges from devalued, "women's" knowledge and activity, and one which works from that ground to create a healthier biospheric "family".

Rather than attempting to list all types of currently existing, self-defined ecofeminist action, I would like to explore the ways a distinct praxis is emerging by using one particular form, ecofeminist spirituality, as a window. My reasons for doing this are threefold. First, this form of spirituality displays very clearly the roots of ecofeminism in cultural feminism. Second, spiritual ecofeminism is by far the largest "subcategory" of self-defined ecofeminist activity, as well as the most overt in its delineation of a distinct, proscriptive praxis. Finally, insights drawn from ecofeminist spirituality have had an enormous impact on other types of ecofeminist activity. Indeed, the reconnection of spirituality and politics has become part of the self-defined agenda of ecofeminism. It has become both means and end: the reunification of the fragmented Self as part of the reorientation of the world. Thus, while many ecofeminist authors locate their primary interests in places other than spiritual discourses, few criticize its impact or direction.

Ecofeminist spirituality is concerned with the resacralization of Nature, of the "divine feminine" inherent in all living beings. It is seen as part of a process of reconnection, a re-establishment of ways of knowing and being in the world that have been lost in the history of patriarchal domination. The Goddess, in myriad forms, represents an ultimate vision of connectedness: She is the intricate (simultaneously fragile and powerful) web of life which is the Earth; She is the obverse of the patriarchal, transcendent Yahweh; She is immanent and alive in all people as **parts** of Nature, rather than as beings trying to transcend the material world. In short, the Goddess represents both subject and object in spiritual ecofeminism: as parts of Nature, we are to work toward healing ourselves and our environment, as the distinction between self and world becomes blurred and as we become more aware of our own "naturalness."

This is powerful imagery indeed. As I have argued elsewhere,<sup>21</sup> spirituality may act, in particular contexts, as an important component in the development of alternative visions of the world, alternative forms of political action, and/or alternative

forms of community. However, there are some disturbing aspects to the ways in which spirituality is mobilized in ecofeminism.

First, the Goddess tends to be constructed in a way which reifies characteristics considered to be "feminine" in contemporary Western constructions. She is the ultimate cosmic mother: life-giving, gentle (unless her children are threatened), perfectly aware of herself and her offspring (a form of "maternal omniscience," if you will). Of course, these traits do not represent women's experiences in any comprehensive way. Rather, as the essence of a narrowly-defined but "sacred" femininity, they come to act as a template against which to model ourselves. In much the same manner as Christian discourses about the emulation of Christ as a means of salvation, the Goddess comes to personify and contain all that is sacred, the effect being an alternative, but equally confining, code of morality and behaviour.

Second, there are powerful and problematic truth-claims implicit in this construction. Specifically, the Goddess is viewed as the ultimate, "true" incarnation of natural wholeness. Her Being - the web of life, an organic harmony encompassing all of her children - is the essence which has been lost in five thousand years (or so) of patriarchal domination. She, and her presence within us, embodies the secret of connectedness from which we have deviated and to which we must return if we hope to save our/Her Selves. In some variations of this desire to return to a state of grace, it is also assumed that women have privileged access to this truth, given that the reason for our deviation from this organic harmony is men, male consciousness, and patriarchy. At the very least, men need to "reconnect" with their own essential femininity to access this organic truth. Ironically, then, our worldly salvation ends up occupying a space which was **created** by the very patriarchal constructions denounced by ecofeminism. Ecological and social health lie in recreating the obverse of what is.

A similar logic informs spiritual ecofeminists' representation of "nature". As that which is "not masculine" becomes the truth of essential femininity, so too does that which is "not culture" become the natural state from which we came and toward which we must aspire. Nature, here, is the obverse of "civilization". As patriarchal culture is "individuated," Nature is "connected". As male ideology emphasizes rationality, Nature is "mysterious". "Nature" is defined in terms of stereotypical femininity because contemporary "culture" embodies that which is quintessentially "male". Ironically, then, spiritual ecofeminists tend to create Nature (and women) in their own (desired) image. Considering that many specifically argue against anthropocentrism, proclaiming Nature's right to define Itself, this astounding anthropomorphism would seem a glaring contradiction. Instead, these "truths" about Nature - as a harmonic, feminine entity which is progressively being destroyed by patriarchal development - become ecofeminism's model of an ideal socio-ecological order.

Third and relatedly, the delineation of this essential and specifically-located "truth" has facilitated much inner transformation, but little social change.<sup>22</sup> Specifically, a great deal of attention has been paid to the rediscovery of **personal** connections to the Earth. Given that connectedness to the Goddess represents a knowledge which is superior to "man-made culture," the distancing of the Self from that culture becomes part of the process of connection. To put it another way, the "natural" aspects of the

Self become privileged over the "social"; "nature" represents a voice which can only be heard through distancing oneself from society and from individual subjectivity. The following passage illustrates this tendency:

I try to remember that it's not me...trying to protect the rainforest. I am part of the rainforest protecting myself; I am that part of the rainforest recently emerged into human thinking.<sup>23</sup>

Clearly, the self that is part of Nature is valued more highly than the social self: the former is sacred, the latter profane.

This stance has arisen in ecofeminism partly because of its connections to other streams of ecophilosophy, articulated notably, by some followers of "deep ecology." Indeed, a large portion of theoretical literature on ecofeminism is concerned with noting the similarities and differences between the two streams of thought. Some philosophers who are followers of deep ecology are primarily concerned with "anthropocentrism," which it sees as causal in the destruction of nonhuman Nature; it is "concerned with encouraging an egalitarian attitude on the part of humans not only toward all **members** of the ecosphere, but even toward all identifiable **entities** or **forms** in the ecosphere."<sup>24</sup> While ecofeminists point to androcentrism rather than anthropocentrism as the key problem, they inherit deep ecology's desire for "biocentric egalitarianism" as part of an agenda of connection, wholeness, and empathy with Nature. Phrases like "thinking like a mountain" become part of the political project of ecofeminists: to some, it just so happens that "women have always thought like mountains,"<sup>25</sup> creating a privileged status for women and "feminine thinking" in the quest for this inter-species empathy. Again, this is a profound - and contradictory - anthropomorphism. While "nature" is, ideally, the privileged speaker in this relationship, it can only have voice or value if, in some sense, it "thinks like us."

Janet Biehl, a self-defined ecofeminist, is extremely critical of this position. However, she locates it as a problem of deep ecology. The "self-oblivion" she sees in deep ecology strongly **conflicts** with contemporary feminism's quest to insert women into society as active, thinking subjects. She states that "it is telling that now, just when women and oppressed groups have come into subjectivity, subjectivity itself is suddenly condemned."<sup>26</sup> Although she does not direct this criticism at her own "movement," this is a valuable insight: ecofeminists do not speak for themselves. Rather they are, in a sense, "channelers" of the natural subject.

Biehl's definition of feminism is, unfortunately, a minority view. Ecofeminism, and spiritual ecofeminism in particular, is focused on women's empathy with Nature, women's identification with Nature, women's self-identification as **natural**. This privileging of connection with Nature, this desire to **be** Nature at the apparent expense of human subjectivity, represents an interesting attempt to construct a politics of identity. Here, the oppression of Nature becomes part of women's experience; that felt oppression is countered by reappropriating a negative set of definitions and turning it on its head. By emphasizing the connections between women and Nature, by asserting the primacy of the "natural" aspects of the Self, by the fusion of the social actor with the "natural" world (in an attempt to become a "natural actor"), ecofeminists assert that Nature is identity and that the strengthening of that identity will form an effective opposition to contemporary exploitations of women and Nature.

As with all politics of identity, this stance is open to question. **Whose** definition of Nature, or of women, is to be taken as the ideal toward which ecofeminists should strive? The reliance on images of "nurturance," "healing", and "empathy" is telling: as suggested earlier, ecofeminist visions are strongly located in a white, Western view of what essential femininity is all about. There is, however, an interesting twist here. **Particularly** among spiritual ecofeminists, there has been an active attempt to incorporate "women of colour," especially indigenous North American women, into definitions of what ecofeminist life should be like:

the collision of modern industrial society with indigenous cultures has decimated these ancestral forms, but it may have brought white westerners into contact with forms of knowledge useful to us as we try to imagine our way beyond dualism, to understand what it means to be embodied human beings on this planet.<sup>27</sup>

In works by those North American (white) ecofeminists who attempt to incorporate race and imperialism into their analysis, and in collected volumes which include aboriginal or "Third World" contributors, this is the type of place given to "women of colour," especially to indigenous North American women. Somehow, these women are seen as a **particularly** privileged repository of knowledge about Nature. The use of race is not analytical; it does not, in most cases, suggest ways in which women may be differently situated in relation to particular ecological issues or problems, and it does not look deeply at the ways in which "traditional" knowledges have themselves been subverted or reconstructed in particular social contexts. Rather, these knowledges have become somehow sacred **because** of their subaltern location in relation to the dominant culture. Thus, in many ways, the ecofeminist project of oppositional identity finds its ultimate expression in the voices of Native women.

There is nothing inherently wrong with (indeed, I'm sure we have a great deal to learn from) the project of looking to other cultures for examples of other ways of knowing and being in the world. What is problematic about the ecofeminist appropriation of Native knowledges is its characterization of them as somehow "pure," somehow disassociable from what colonization has actually done to aboriginal cultures and social practices. As ecofeminists reify the "feminine," so too do they tend to reify the "aboriginal," a project which has gone hand in hand with a relative failure to construct a critical polylogue among women from different perspectives. The two are strongly connected: what Native women are to do, in spiritual ecofeminism, is show white women how to reconnect with a part of themselves that is **already there**, but unexpressed. This project does not seem to have led to discussion of aboriginal women as whole people, particularly of their own struggles to reconstruct from scattered fragments a more integrated existence. In short, aboriginal women have become a "vanguard"; while there is little discussion of integrating struggles, there is a very large pedestal.

It must be noted that aboriginal women do not claim this space for themselves, in general. It is a space created for them in a movement which wants to see the integration of different struggles into a "unified" politics rather than potential conflicts between different groups. Not very many "women of colour" who write about ecological issues call themselves ecofeminists. Perhaps as a result of this, some of the most interesting analyses of particular struggles in particular locations are written by women



who aren't trying to "connect" to Nature but are rather trying to resist further damage.

Once again, such problems seem to stem from ecofeminism's roots in cultural feminism. Particularly in spiritual ecofeminism but also in other contexts, the praxis emerging as distinctly "ecofeminist" is one which reifies Nature, women and "people of colour" as beings with a privileged, pure "truth" toward which all humans must aspire. It is a praxis based on the repudiation of one identity and the wholehearted appropriation of its static obverse, rather than one of altogether transforming the perceived opposition. It is a politics of universality which levels, rather than explores, diverse experiences and viewpoints. At its worst, it involves a retreat from the social in a quest to "know" Nature, and a retreat from criticism and debate in a quest toward a perfect harmony of all beings.

In the final instance, then, ecofeminism is a problematic praxis (if we can call it a praxis at all), one which has alienated many women and been greeted by other feminisms with reactions ranging from apathy to open condemnation. In one of the few published articles which is overtly critical of ecofeminism, Susan Prentice writes "against the slow and steady work of the feminist and left movements to build...complex social theory, eco-feminism offers a seductively simple counter-argument."<sup>28</sup>

As a movement, she suggests, ecofeminism is problematic primarily because it is idealist, in the sense that it locates the problem for women and Nature in "male consciousness." I could not agree with her more on this point: in its origin stories, in its acceptance of cultural feminist ideas about spirituality, in its constructions of women and Nature, the central problematic emerging in ecofeminism surrounds the ways in which humans think about Nature. "Reconnection" becomes a matter of changing consciousness, irrespective of the particular social practices which shape the ways we live in the world (action may be there, but it is somehow epiphenomenal, a "natural" outgrowth of cognitive transformation). And in part, it is this idealism which gives rise to the levelling, totalizing tendencies of ecofeminist theory. "We are all one in the Earth" is certainly not an insight drawn from social practice.

But there is a point at which my view departs significantly from Prentice's. Where she states only that she would prefer to see ecofeminism "die a quiet death,"<sup>29</sup> I am more hopeful about the project of a feminist ecology, in part because I see other insights in existing feminist/ecological theory and activism. In the final section of this paper, I would like to point toward some of these potentials.

### **Feminism and Ecology: Toward a Politics of Diversity**

In a sense, what ecofeminism has done is create an oppositional mythology, a narrative of past, present and future to give voice to a set of subaltern experiences and values. That that narrative is internally contradictory, relatively univocal and primarily directed at changing "consciousness" is part of a larger problem: ecofeminism is a myth of unity. It suggests that all struggles are aspects of a single struggle, that power and subordination tend to take a similar form across all different "categories" of oppression, and that the way to go about changing the world is to unify, to resist together the conceptions of self and world which prevent subaltern groups and species from reaching their full potential. Perhaps most importantly, that unity is defined as a natural, rather than a social, form of organization.

Thus, while ecofeminism problematizes culture by looking at how particular patterns of thought have led to the repudiation of human and nonhuman Nature, it characterizes "nature" itself as a primordial and "pure" entity which, by some means, must be allowed to emerge if we are to survive. Nature is original; culture is superimposed on that biological web, and with devastating results. In short, ecofeminism advocates a "natural standpoint," a view **from** Nature as if it were a singular entity, as if it had an ontology independent of society (clearly, it doesn't: social organization has profoundly affected "natural" development), and as if that natural "being" could be accessed independently of social knowledge and practice.

While I will not here enter into a discussion about the ontology of nonhuman Nature (i.e., its existence independent of social knowers), I will make the argument that humans can never "know" Nature in ways which are presocial, and that knowledge of Nature itself exerts a strong effect on how nonhuman Nature is able to develop. In this sense, a fundamental problem with ecofeminism lies in its failure to problematize "nature" as itself a social product. Its myth of unity rests on the idea that humans can return to an organic state of grace by transcending the ways in which Nature has been constructed in patriarchal development. Such a quest for organic harmony is impossible and dangerous: impossible because we can never "know" Nature apart from culture, wilderness experiences notwithstanding; we cannot return to an organic state of grace, as it has never existed (although we may have once done less damage). And it is dangerous because it draws attention away from the fact that ecological degradation is a complex, **social** problem. Instead, the task of ecology must be to construct new relations to nonhuman Nature, to come to new realizations of humans as simultaneously social and biological creatures, and to work in the world aware of our limits and limitations.

While this focus detracts from the value - and possibility - of a "natural standpoint," including the idea that any group is "closer to nature" than any other, it does suggest possibilities for a rethinking of links between feminism and ecology. If our understanding of, and relations to, nonhuman Nature are irrevocably social, then particular forms of social interaction and structure have a strong effect not only on how Nature is treated, but how Nature is known. Simultaneously, our relations to nonhuman Nature affect how we know, are known, and act in different social formations. Nature here is not merely the biological foundation upon which society is based; it is the product of social interaction and is also a part of how social interaction is constructed.

The project of a feminist ecology, then, needs to be located squarely in the terrain of the social, but including Nature as a part of social relations. Perhaps ironically, it is here that feminist insights may form the basis of transformative relations to nonhuman Nature, not by suggesting that women have special knowledge (or by suggesting that patriarchal power is conceptually or materially similar to power over Nature, a question reserved for another paper), but by asserting that different forms of social relations have everything to do with our constructions of self and world, Nature included. As feminists seek to change social practices in conjunction with different visions of liberation, so too do the new forms of interaction which emerge from these visions give rise to different relations in other spheres of life. To put it another way, ecology and feminism are not the same struggle, but they may be allied: while not all feminisms



are ecological (any more than all ecologies are feminist), the types of questions feminists ask about social relations can inform, and be informed by, questions about the social construction - and liberation - of Nature.

To return to the moments of connection I noted at the beginning of the paper, I suggest that it is from these particular and local struggles that feminist ecologies should develop. These politics are based on locational knowledges - how particular aspects and forms of Nature (perhaps bioregions?) are inhabited by and themselves inhabit the varied consciousness and practices of the people who live there, how particular social formations are interdependent with nonhuman natures. These are politics of resistance, which in polylogue require us "to question the categories of experience that order the world and the truths we have come to know, including the truths of our radical politics, by confronting us with the truths of other women and men...fighting against specific threats to their particular lands and bodies."<sup>30</sup>

From unity to affinity, from singular "connection" to multiple and evolving tangencies: these are elements of a politics of diversity, one in which different constructions of both women and Nature may emerge. The tensions between them do not represent failure, but rather hope, as we struggle from diversity for diversity.

#### Notes

1. Francoise d'Eaubonne, "Feminism or Death," reprinted Marks and de Courtivron, **New French Feminisms: An Anthology**, Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press, 1980, p. 64-67. The term "ecofeminism" is used variously to refer to all attempts to connect feminism and ecology and to the particular currents outlined here. However, with some notable exceptions, the self-referential use of the term is largely confined to the narrower position I relate here.
2. Ynestra King, "Healing the Wounds: Feminism, Ecology and Nature/Culture Dualism," in Alison Jaggard and Susan Bordo, **Gender/Body/Knowledge**, New Brunswick, Rutgers, 1989, p. 115.
3. Val Plumwood, "Ecofeminism: An Overview and Discussion of Positions and Arguments," **Australasian Journal of Philosophy**, Vol. 64, Supplement, June, 1986. While her categories are neither mutually-exclusive nor exhaustive of ecofeminist approaches as a whole, the texts she presents represent some common ecofeminist themes. The criticism, however, are mine, not hers.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 121.
5. Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Mother Earth and the Megamachine," in Carol Christ and Judith Plaskow (eds) **Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion**, San Francisco, Harper and Row, 1979, p. 44.
6. Plumwood, *op cit*, p. 121.
7. Carolyn Merchant, "Mining the Earth's Womb," in Joan Rothschild, **Machina Ex Dea: Feminist Perspectives on Technology**, New York, Pergamon Press, 1983, p.
8. Prudence Allen, **The Concept of Woman: The Aristotelian Revolution, 750 B.C. - A.D. 1250**, Montreal, Eden Press, 1985.
9. Even St. Paul: "But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression" (Timothy 2:12-14), versus "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Jesus Christ" (Galatians 3:28).
10. Plumwood, "Ecofeminism: An Overview," *op cit*, p. 121.
11. Ariel Kay Salleh, "From Feminism to Ecology," **Social Alternatives**, Vol. 4, no. 3, 1984, p. 9.
12. Carol Gilligan, **In A Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development**, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1982.

This text has been extraordinarily influential in ecofeminist writing. However, I suggest that many ecofeminists have missed out a crucial point in her argument (aspects of which Gilligan has rethought since 1982): where Gilligan sees a balance between self and other as the apex of moral development for women, many ecofeminists move toward the subversion of the self as part of an ecofeminist praxis. I will discuss this at greater length later in the paper.

13. See, for example, Elizabeth Spelman, **Inessential Woman: Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought**, Boston, Beacon Press, 1988.
14. Interestingly, he argues that violence toward women and violence against nature are partially separable; while women still represent nature, the timing and intensity of separation determines at whom the aggression will be directed. See Isaac Balbus, "A Neo-Hegelian, Feminist, Psychoanalytic Perspective on Ecology," **Telos**, No. 52, Summer, 1982.
15. Frank Adler, "A Reply to Balbus," **Telos**, No. 52, Summer, 1982, p. 157.
16. "The source of man's disorder is his recognition that he cannot bring forth new life. He cannot 'reproduce'; he can only 'produce'. So he does so with a vengeance." Ariel K. Salleh, "Epistemology and the Metaphors of Production: An Eco-feminist Reading of Critical Theory," **Studies in the Humanities**, Vol. 15, no. 2, Dec., 1988, p. 134. I wonder how she sees her own process of writing, given that it would seem a "productive" activity.
17. The most elaborate of the attempts to include race in an origin story is Vandana Shiva's book **Staying Alive** (London, Verso, 1989). Unfortunately, she also relies on a very simple explanatory framework: development is a "project of western patriarchy," one which is formed as a result of dualism, mechanization, etc. In other words, she accepts and expands, rather than challenges, these other origin stories.
18. Marti Kheel, "Ecofeminism and Deep Ecology: Reflections on Identity and Difference," in Irene Diamond and Gloria Feman Orenstein, **Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism**, San Francisco, Sierra Club Books, 1990. [Reprinted in this issue. Ed.]
19. Sherry Ortner, "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?" in Rosaldo and Lamphere, **Women, Culture and Society**, Stanford University Press, 1974.
20. Ynestra King, "Healing the Wounds," *op cit*, pp. 110-111.
21. Catriona Sandilands, "Spirituality and Praxis: Witchcraft and Neo-Paganism in Canada," M.A. thesis, York University, 1988.
22. That is not to say that no spiritual ecofeminist "acts," but rather that outward-directed action occurs in spite of, rather than because of, the truths suggested in ecofeminism.
23. John Seed, quoted (and highly praised) in Joanna Macy, "Awakening to the Ecological Self" (the title alone is fascinating), in Judith Plant (ed), **Healing the Wounds: The Ecofeminist Experience**, Toronto, Between the Lines, 1989, p. 210.
24. Warwick Fox, "The Deep Ecology - Ecofeminism Debate and its Parallels," **Environmental Ethics**, Vol. 11, Spring, 1989, p. 6, his emphasis.
25. Sharon Doubiago, "Mama Coyote Talks to the Boys," in Judith Plant, **Healing the Wounds**, *op cit.*, p. 41.
26. Janet Biehl, "Ecofeminism and Deep Ecology: Unresolvable Conflict?" **Our Generation**, Vol. 19, no. 2, 1988, p. 25. This paper parallels Nancy Hartsock's views on postmodernism's "death of the subject."
27. Ynestra King, "Health the Wounds," *op cit*, p. 126.
28. Susan Prentice, "Taking Sides: What's Wrong with Eco-Feminism?" **Women and Environments**, Vol. 10, no. 3, Spring, 1988, p. 9.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
30. Lee Quinby, "Ecofeminism and the Politics of Resistance," in Diamond and Orenstein, **Reweaving the World**, *op cit*, pp. 126-127.

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