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# CHAPTER FIVE: SOCIAL ECOLOGY


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# 1. Introduction

"The way human beings deal with each other as social beings is crucial to addressing the ecological crisis"
(Murray Bookchin, social ecologist, 1993, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, p. 354)

Social ecology is amongst the earliest of the three radical eco-philosophies, formulated over five decades[1] from the 1950s onwards, by its founder, and most influential proponent (Clark, 1993, p. 345, in Zimmerman et al., 1993; Gruen, 1997, p. 357; Wall, 1994, p. 251), American left libertarian socialist and political philosopher Murray Bookchin (Biehl, 1997a). His critique of chemicals in agriculture appeared in 1952 under the pseudonym Lewis Herber (Bookchin, 1990d, p. 258, footnote 17), and his environmental critique *Our Synthetic Environment* (1962) briefly predated Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* critique of the USA chemical industry, usually taken as the beginning of the "ecological revolution". In 1971[2], he co-founded the Institute for Social Ecology (http://www.social-ecology.org) in Vermont, USA. Apart from being a philosopher of nature, Bookchin is also steeped in the communitarian anarchist and utopian traditions (Clark, 1993, p. 351). His philosophical writings are by no means easily understandable[3].

Bookchin (1991, in VanDeVeer& Pierce, 1994, pp. 236-237, his italics) has provided a helpful synopsis of the social ecology position [which included a jibe at deep ecologists generally as well]:

> Social ecology is neither "deep", "tall", "fat" nor "thick". It is *social.* It does not fall back on incantations, sutras, flow diagrams or spiritual vagaries. It is avowedly *rational.* It does not try to regale metaphorical forms of spiritual mechanism and crude biologism with Taoist, Buddhist, Christian, or shamanistic eco-babble. It is a coherent form of *naturalism* that looks to *evolution* and the *biosphere*, not to deities in the sky or under the earth for quasi-religious and supernaturalistic explanations of natural and social phenomena.
>
> *Philosophically*, social ecology stems from a solid organismic tradition in Western philosophy, beginning with Heraclitus, the near-evolutionary dialectic of Aristotle and Hegel, and the critical approach of the famous Frankfurt School…
>
> *Socially*, it is revolutionary, not merely 'radical'. It critically unmasks the entire evolution of hierarchy in all its forms, … It is rooted in the profound eco-anarchistic analyses of Peter Kropotkin, the radical economic insights of Karl Marx, the emancipatory promise of the revolutionary Enlightenment ... ,… revolutionary feminist ideals ... , ... communitarian visions[4] ... , and the various eco-revolutionary manifestoes of the early 1960s[5].
>
> *Politically*, it is *green* – radically green. It takes its stand with the left-wing tendencies in the German Greens and extra-parliamentary street movements of European cities; with the American radical ecofeminist movement....
>
> *Morally*, it is *humanistic* in the high Renaissance meaning of the term…Humanism from its inception has

[1] The volume of Bookchin's writing is considerable. "A thorough understanding of ... [Bookchin's] project would require a reading of his most important books" writes Biehl (1997a, p. 11). These she lists as inter alia, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (1971), *The Ecology of Freedom* (1982), *Remaking Society* (1989), *The Philosophy of Social Ecology (*especially the revised 1995 edition), and *Re-enchanting Humanity* (1995). Major excerpts from many of these are available in the Biehl (1997) reader on Bookchin. Some of Bookchin's writings are also available in the Institute of Social Ecology's online library at http://www.social-ecology.org

[2] According to Tokar (2006), it was 1974

[3] As he says himself "The ontological complexities that my assertions involve require a careful ... reading of my work ..." (Bookchin, 1990d, p. 269). In discussing an ontological approach to ethics, Bookchin noted that: "If understanding this is too much to ask of people, then I simply do not know what to say. Admittedly, I ask for a great deal but I do not ask for what is impossible or unachievable". (Bookchin, 1992, in Fotopoulos, 1992). My struggle to understand Bookchin is not solely due to lack of philosophical training. Simon (1990) also has to resort to phrases such as "I take this to mean..." (p. 222), and "This passage has proven to be very difficult to interpret..." (p. 223). Bookchin accuses those finding him difficult to understand, of not doing "the difficult intellectual work needed to understand his formulations" (Simon, 1990, p. 223)

[4] In this citation Bookchin mentions Paul Goodman and E.A. Gutkind . In his 1991 debate with deep ecologist Dave Foreman, Bookchin adds Lewis Mumford (Bookchin, in Chase, 1991, in VanDeVeer & Pierce, 1994, p. 245)

[5] One of these was his own *Ecology and revolutionary thought*, 1964, under the pseudonym Lewis Herber, republished in his *Post-scarcity anarchism* (1974, pp. 55-82)

> meant a shift in vision from the skies to the earth, from superstition to reason, from deities to people…Social ecology accepts neither a 'biocentricity' that essentially denies or degrades the uniqueness of human beings, human subjectivity, rationality, aesthetic sensibility, and the ethical potentiality of humanity, nor an 'anthropocentricity' that confers on the privileged few the right to plunder the world of life, including human life.....

The discussion which follows, adheres to the standard form set out in Chapter Two. Section 2 is an introduction to Bookchin's political philosophical background as legitimating narrative; 3, his epistemology; 4, ontology; 5, ethic; 6, view of society; and 7, praxis advocated. Section 8 contains critique from green sample partners, and 9, a summary of social ecology's ideas as presented in this chapter.

As preparation for the chapter, Bookchin's concept "nature" means simultaneously biological evolution ["first nature"], and human and social evolution ["second nature"]. The concept "free nature" represents the ideal ecological society.

## 2. Legitimating narratives

Bookchin's political philosophy draws critically on Hegelian dialectics (2.1.1), and Marxism and neo-Marxism (2.1.2). He seems to have contributed as much, if not more, to the counterculture and the New Left, as he drew on it (2.1.3). He synthesised a new left libertarian political philosophy from a combination of traditional anarchism and ecology interpreted radically (2.1.4), and emphasized the need for a left libertarian green perspective in real world politics (2.1.5).

### 2.1 Philosophy and political philosophy

#### 2.1.1 The western dialectical tradition

Bookchin's social and political approach is grounded in the western dialectical tradition of Aristotle, Hegel, and Marx. On his view, this tradition offers the possibility of an objective knowledge and ethic, unlike the relativism of postmodernism (Biehl, 1997e, pp. 197-198). Without being either "Hegelian" or "neo-Hegelian", Bookchin drew on Hegel's interpretation of dialectics, while considering its culmination in a cosmic Spirit ["Geist"] or "Absolute" which is "perfect" in its fullness, wholeness, and unity[6] as unacceptable (Bookchin, 1990b, in Biehl, 1997, p. 211). "What I have tried to rescue from the Hegelian dialectic is a sense of potentiality and 'rational necessity', which means, not an unswerving determinism or teleology, but a recognition of the *logic* of a given, ever-developing situation" (Bookchin, 1992, in Fotopoulos, 1992, his italics). Marx's dialectical materialism was for Bookchin, too "wooden" and "mechanis[tic]" (Bookchin, 1990d, p. 267), and also unacceptable. He developed his own variant, which he called dialectical naturalism [section 3.2].

#### 2.1.2 Marxism, and the neo Marxist Frankfurt School

In the political spectrum, Bookchin distanced himself from Marxism (Tokar, 2006). But while critical of Marxism, he never broke completely with all its basic ideas, incorporating some of it into his social ecology, such as its theory of capitalist development, its theory of the commodity and "the notion that

[6] More fully, Bookchin explains his objections as "We may reject what Hegel called his "absolute idealism," the transition from his logic to his philosophy of nature, his teleological culmination of the subjective and objective in a godlike 'Absolute', and his idea of a cosmic Spirit *(Geist)*. Hegel rarefied dialectical reason into a cosmological system that verged on the theological by trying to reconcile it with idealism, absolute knowledge, and a mystical unfolding *logos* that he often designated 'God.' Unfamiliar with ecology, Hegel rejected natural evolution as a viable theory in favor of a static hierarchy of Being. By the same token, Friedrich Engels intermingled dialectical reason with natural 'laws' that more closely resemble the premises of nineteenth-century physics than a plastic metaphysics or an organismic outlook, producing a crude dialectical materialism. Indeed, so enamored was Engels of matter and motion as the irreducible 'attributes' of Being that a kineticism based on mere motion invaded his dialectic of organic development." (Bookchin, 1990b, in Biehl, 1997, pp. 208-209)

complete freedom has material preconditions." (Biehl, 1997a, p. 4; Biehl, 1997c, pp. 122-124). He rejected Marxism's argument for the necessity of hierarchical relationships, authoritarianism and domination [including the domination of nature, as necessary precondition for human liberation], the creation of a centralized socialist state, and class analysis as an all-encompassing mode of social critique (Biehl, 1997c, p. 123). He was also "a sharp critic of vulgar Marxism's economic determinism ..." (Bookchin, 1990d, p. 263).

The Frankfurt School[7] was a group of philosophers, cultural critics, social scientists and writers associated with the Institute for Social Research, founded in Frankfurt in 1929. Their project was a critical social theory revision of Marx's historical materialism (Audi, 1999, p. 324; Haralambos & Holborn, 2000, p. 254; Powers, 2001). The particular Frankfurt School idea of interest here is Horkheimer and Adorno's critique of instrumental reason. The main ground for their critique was its domination of nature in search of human emancipation [a Marxist heritage], a process which *also* led to the domination and dehumanization of human beings by human beings, expressed inter alia in a "totally administered society", and a "manipulated, commodity culture" (Audi, 1999, p. 324). They contended that such domination brought with it a deep sense of alienation from both nature and fellow human beings (Goodin, 1992, p. 75, footnote 140). Social change was sought through an alternative "… non-instrumental and non-dominating relation to nature and to others" (Audi, 1999, p. 324).

Wall (1994, p. 29) attributes to Frankfurt School members Adorno and Horkheimer, the fusing of Marxism with "the politics of ecological concern". The School directly created "the conditions for a fuller and more human Green politics in the 1960s and 1970s. Bookchin and Marcuse, ... the German Green movement, the American counterculture ... all owe an explicit debt to the Frankfurt School in their attempts to produce a living and ecologically aware politics" (Wall, 1994, p. 29). Bramwell (1994), Capra and Spretnak (1984, p. 12), Goodin (1992, p. 74), and Naess (1993a, in Sessions, 1995, p. 219) also trace the debt of the New Left, and its contribution to green politics in the 1960s and 1970s, to the School's heritage.

### 2.1.3 The New Left, counter-cultural and eco-utopian ideas

The New Left enjoyed political significance from the late 1960s to the early 1980s (Sayer, 2000, p. 5). Central to its agenda was the "challenge to the bureaucratic character of modern government, and the call for self-management" (Doherty & de Geus, 1996, p. 5). It also represented a critique of instrumental rationalism for having contributed to a techno-bureaucratic society gone wrong. The views of the American New Left are perhaps best expressed in neo-Frankfurt School philosopher Marcuse's (1964) *One dimensional man: Studies in the ideology of advanced industrial society*. According to Bramwell, Marcuse's work critiqued "the centralised, anomie-producing, state" (1994, p. 60), and advocated alternative society themes such as "the hunt for values, the preference for authenticity, meaning and tradition, …" (p. 60), and "romanticism about personal liberation and the eroticisation of work" (p. 83). Marcuse's ideas were influential both sides of the Atlantic. In Europe they manifested themselves in the radical thought of the 1960s West German "Ausserparlementarische Opposition[8]", and the 1968 trans-Europe student unrest (Bahro, 1984, p. 176, p. 178), two of the many alternative movements from which Die Grünen (Chapter Seven) emerged. In America, Marcuse's ideas were taken up in the kind of 1970s countercultural eco-utopian critique of society represented by Roszak, Illich, Reich, and Callenbach [discussed in Chapter Two, section 2.3.1.c]. But Bookchin grew increasingly critical of the New Left's drift towards Marxism-Leninism (Tokar, 2006).

[7] The names of psychoanalyst Erich Fromm, and philosophers Adorno, Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse and Jurgen Habermas are associated with the School, some of whose members fled to America ahead of the growing domination of Nazism in Germany
[8] The movement particularly opposed the passage of emergency security laws in West Germany in 1968 (Henning, 2001, p. 3)

Bookchin's own ideas, contained in a mix of anarchism and ecology, also permeated[9] the North American New Left/counter-culture (Biehl 2006; Tokar, 2006). Together, these ideas provided models for the green movement in the USA and abroad (Biehl, 2006), and the emerging green political parties of the 1980s (Doherty & de Geus, 1994, p. 5; Goodin, 1992, p. 74), including Die Grünen.

## 2.1.4 Bookchin's eco-anarchism

Bookchin's 1964[10] radical ecology manifesto "overtly called for revolutionary change as a solution to the ecological crisis. It advanced a conjunction of anarchism and ecology to create an ecological society that would be humane and free [of hierarchy and domination (Biehl, 1997a, p. 7)], libertarian and decentralized, mutualistic and cooperative" (Biehl, 1997a, p. 6). I discuss next the key ideas of anarchy (2.1.4.1) and their link to Bookchin's understanding of ecology's radical message (2.1.4.2).

### *2.1.4.1 The left-libertarian tradition: Anarchism*

Among Bookchin's earliest political-ideological influences, were his maternal grandmother's "quasi-anarchistic populist" ideas. He subsequently joined the Young Communist League, broke with Stalinism, and briefly embraced Trotskyism. With capitalism's consolidation and expansion in the 1940s and 1950s (Biehl, 1997a, p. 3, p. 4), it became clear to Bookchin that Marx's idea that "conflict between wage labour and capital would bring capitalism to an end had to be called into serious question" (Biehl, 1997a, p. 3). He turned instead to libertarian socialism, particularly social anarchism[11], as "a viable revolutionary alternative in the postwar era." (Biehl, 1997a, pp. 3-4).

Bookchin has identified the main anarchist concepts as a libertarian, decentralized society in which communities are linked together confederally, instead of "statism"; a "balanced" community; direct or face-to-face democracy; and a "humanistic technology" (Bookchin, 1965a, in Bookchin, 1974, p. 69; Bookchin, 1995b, in Biehl, 1997, p. 170). In the anarchist vision, people "will attain full control over their daily lives" (Bookchin, 1967, in Biehl, 1997, p. 103); it is "a libidinal movement of humanity against coercion in any form" (Bookchin, 1969b, in Biehl, 1997, pp. 144-145). There is no state, no parliament (Bookchin, 1969b, in Biehl, 1997, p. 146). Mutual aid, "brotherhood", or communalism, including communal ownership of the means of production (Biehl, 1997a, in Biehl, 1997, pp. 3-4), are advocated instead of centralism and domination. The basic unit of society is the politically, economically, physically decentralized, human-scale, well-rounded or balanced community, harmonized with its surrounding countryside[12]. All citizens take part in the community's management via direct democracy in popular assemblies. Direct action is encouraged as a means of preserving "the spirit of revolt, to encourage spontaneity" (Bookchin, 1969b, in Biehl, 1997, p. 146). The well-rounded

[9] I have not tried to unravel here, whether Bookchin was actually contributing more to New Left/countercultural ideas such as those of Marcuse, Illich, Callenbach, and Reich, than he was drawing on them. According to Biehl (1997, p. 8), Bookchin "spent much of the 1960s criss-crossing the United States and Canada, indefatigably educating the counterculture and New Left about ecology and its revolutionary significance", and "At a time when 'ecology' was an unfamiliar concept to most people, he lectured indefatigably on the subject to countercultural groups throughout the United States. ... His 1960s essays were *very influential both in the counterculture and in the New Left* and were anthologized in *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (1971)." (Biehl, 2006, retrieved 5 October 2006 from http://www.social-ecology.org Follow link "Murray Bookchin obituary", my italics)

[10] Biehl (1997a, p. 12, footnote 11) notes that "Ecology and revolutionary thought" appeared in *Anarchy*, 1964, p. 5. It was re-published in slightly altered format in *Post-scarcity anarchism* (1974, p. 60)

[11] As opposed to individualist or "lifestyle" anarchism, which he characterizes as inwardlooking, narcissistic, "yuppie", and in the liberal-individualistic tradition. Personal insurrection is favoured over social revolution (Bookchin, 1995b, in Biehl, 1997, pp. 164-168). By contrast, social anarchism "...is ... heir to the Enlightenment tradition, with due regard to that tradition's limits and incompleteness. ... social anarchism celebrates the thinking human mind without in any way denying passion, ecstasy, imagination, play, and art. Yet rather than reify them into hazy categories, it tries to incorporate them into everyday life. It is committed to rationality while opposing the rationalization of experience; to technology, while opposing the 'megamachine'; to social institutionalization, while opposing class rule and hierarchy; to a genuine politics based on the confederal coordination of municipalities or communes by the people in direct face-to-face democracy, while opposing parliamentarianism and the state" (Bookchin, 1995b, in Biehl, 1997, pp. 168-169)

[12] Bookchin notes particularly nineteenth century anarchist Peter Kropotkin's "ecological visions and his practical concern with human scale, decentralization, and the harmonization of humanity with nature as distinguished from the explosive growth of urbanization and centralization ..." (Bookchin, 1990a, in Biehl, 1997, p. 153)

community is at the same time, an enabling milieu for the development of well-rounded individuals, an important issue for nineteenth century anarchists, who "... gave considerable attention to what they called integral education – the development of the whole man..." (Bookchin, 1969b, in Biehl, 1997, p. 146).

Anarchism recognizes the need for co-ordination between groups, for planning, and for unity in action, but based on voluntary consent, conviction, and insight, not on coercion, orders, decisions by a knowing few, or hierarchical control. Co-ordinated action is achieved on this basis by "affinity groups[13]" through assemblies, action committees, or local regional and national conferences (Bookchin, 1969b, in Biehl, 1997, pp. 146-147). Control is however always vested in the base community.

An anarchist society, argued Bookchin, "far from being a remote ideal has become a precondition for the practice of ecological principles" (Bookchin, 1964, in Biehl, 1997, p. 20), for human survival (Bookchin, 1965a, in Bookchin, 1974, p. 69).

#### *2.1.4.2 Radical ecology*

Already in the mid 1960s, Bookchin (1965a, in Bookchin, 1974) was writing of the revolutionary social implications of ecology as normative, its critical message, and its reconstructive message[14].

Normative because, "Broadly conceived, ecology deals with the balance of nature. Inasmuch as nature includes man, the science basically deals with the harmonization of nature and man". Ecology's critical and reconstructive message, "... carried through to all its implications, leads directly into anarchic areas of social thought. For, in the final analysis, it is impossible to achieve a harmonization of man and nature without creating a human community that lives in a lasting balance with its natural environment" (Bookchin, 1965a, in Bookchin, 1974, p. 58).

Ecology deals with the totality of the natural world – all nature's "aspects, cycles and interrelationships". Its critical message is that humanity cannot upset nature's basic cycles, or undermine its stability, or override or simplify its diverse, complex "subtly organized ecosystems", or convert them into economically rationalized industrial production areas or raw material deposits, or create vast areas of synthetic concrete, metal and glass, - in short, disassemble a highly complex, diverse organic environment, and replace it with a simplified inorganic one, thereby reversing the evolutionary process - "without bringing into question the survival of man and the survival of the planet itself" (Bookchin, 1965a, in Bookchin, 1974, pp. 59-62, pp. 65-68, p. 76; citation p. 59). This is ecology's critical message.

Ecology presents "this awesome message to humanity ... in a new social dimension" (Bookchin, 1965a, in Bookchin, 1974, p. 68). The imbalances humanity is producing in the natural world, the current reversal of organic evolution from diverse complexity to increasing homogeneity, "are caused by the imbalances ... [humanity] has produced in the social world" (p. 62): the "appalling contradictions between town and country, state and community, industry and husbandry, mass manufacture and craftsmanship, centralism and regionalism, the bureaucratic scale and the human scale" (p. 68). The problem, Bookchin writes, "runs even deeper. The notion that man must dominate nature emerges directly from the domination of man by man" (p. 63). But ecology also provides the metaphors for healing the alienation of humans from humans, and humans from nature.

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[13] An idea encountered again in ecofeminism (Chapter Six: 7.1) and in Die Grünen, as part of their social defence concept (Chapter Seven: 6.4.2.2)

[14] Bookchin draws on the work of ecologist Charles S. Elton (Bookchin, 1965, in Bookchin, 1974, p. 66)

Ecology's reconstructive message "can be summed up in the word 'diversity'. From an ecological viewpoint, balance and harmony in nature, in society and, by inference, in behaviour, are achieved not by mechanical standardization but by its opposite, organic differentiation" (Bookchin, 1965a, in Bookchin, 1974, p. 70). Ecological stability "is a function not of simplicity and homogeneity but of complexity and variety. The capacity of an ecosystem to retain its integrity depends not on the uniformity of the environment but on its diversity" (Bookchin, 1982b, in Biehl, 1997, p. 34). Nature's wholeness represents not homogeneity, but "a dynamic *unity of diversity"* (p. 34, his italics). From natural ecology to social ecology: "...my description of the ecosystem: the image of unity in diversity, spontaneity, and the complementary relationships, free of hierarchy and domination ... [guides my] definition of the term 'libertarian'..." (Eckersley, 1989, pp. 107-108, citing from Bookchin, 1982a, p. 352). Bookchin's anarchist community "... would approximate a clearly definable ecosystem – it would be diversified, balanced, and harmonious..." (Bookchin, 1964, in Biehl, 1997, p. 24), integrated into its local ecology – its resources, climate, soils, flora and fauna (Bookchin, 1965b, in Biehl, 1997, pp. 27-28), applying ecological principles to its farming practices ((Bookchin, 1965a, in Bookchin, 1974, pp. 71-72), and energy needs (pp. 72-75). Understanding its ecological roots, the community would respect "...the organic interrelationships that sustain it" (Bookchin, 1964, in Biehl, 1997, p. 23) and make "a more intelligent and more loving use of its environment" (p. 23).

**2.1.4.2.1 Radical ecology, not mystical ecology, or environmentalism**

Bookchin was critical of "mystical" interpretations of ecology:

> American ecology movements -- and particularly the American Greens -- are faced with a serious crisis of conscience and direction. Will ecologically oriented groups and the Greens become a movement that sees the roots of our ecological dislocations in social dislocations -- notably, in the domination of human by human which has produced the very notion of dominating nature? Or will ecology groups and the Greens turn the entire ecology movement into a starry-eyed religion decorated by gods, goddesses, woodsprites, and organized around sedating rituals that reduce militant activist groups to self-indulgent encounter groups? (Bookchin, 1988b, opening paragraph).

He was also critical of environmentalism, as opposed to radical ecology[15]:

> For good reason, more and more people are trying to go beyond the vapid environmentalism of the early 1970s and develop a more fundamental indeed, a more radical approach to the ecological crises that beleaguer us. They are looking for an ecological approach: one that is rooted in an ecological *philosophy*, *ethics*, *sensibility*, *image of nature*, and, ultimately, an *ecological movement* that will transform our domineering market society into a nonhierarchical cooperative society – a society that will live in harmony with nature because its members live in harmony with each other." (Bookchin, 1990d, p. 263, his italics; in slightly different wording also in Bookchin, 1988a, in VanDeVeer & Pierce, 1994, p. 229),

and

> I speak, here, of *ecology*, not environmentalism. Environmentalism deals with the serviceability of the human habitat, a passive habitat that people *use*, in short, an assemblage of things called 'natural resources' and 'urban resources.' Taken by themselves, environmental issues require the use of no greater wisdom than the instrumentalist modes of thought and methods that are used by city planners, engineers, physicians, lawyers – and socialists (Bookchin, 1971, his italics, in Biehl, 1997a, p. 8).

On Bookchin's view, environmentalism is "a less radical more technocratic approach" to ecological issues and environmental problems, which represents "mere environmental tinkering: instead of proposing to transform society as a whole, it look...[s] for technological solutions to specific environmental problems (Biehl, 1997a, p. 8). Deep ecologist Eckersley understands Bookchin's

[15] Biehl points out that Bookchin, not Naess, was the first to make this distinction, "anchoring it ... in a social and political matrix" (Biehl, 1997a, p. 8)

distinction between radical ecology and environmentalism as following "from Bookchin's organismic philosophy, which recognizes subjectivity as present, however germinally, in all phenomena, not just humans. For Bookchin, it is crassly instrumental to reduce the richly textured ecocommunities (he prefers this term to *ecosystem* because of the latter's mechanistic connotations) of nonhuman nature to a mere storage bin of raw materials for human use ... " (Eckersley, 1989, p. 115).

### 2.1.5 The need for a "left green perspective"

Bookchin was critical of "the ecological illiteracy of so much of the conventional left" (Bookchin, 1991, in VanDeVeer& Pierce, 1994, p. 245). While he agreed that the green movement was "right to reject a mere variant of conventional left orthodoxy dressed up in a few new environmental metaphors...", he felt that they would be cutting themselves off "from an important source of insight, wisdom, and social experience", if they did not retain the "left libertarian and populist traditions, particularly eco-anarchism". It is "very important that we consciously develop a left green perspective" (Bookchin, 1991, in VanDeVeer & Pierce, 1994, p. 245). A key element of this was a complete rejection of all forms of hierarchy, and of capitalism. "I believe that the colour of radicalism today is not red, but green" (Bookchin, 1991, in VanDeVeer & Pierce, 1994, p. 244).

## 2.2 Key thesis on environmental crisis

It is social ecology's thesis that "all our present ecological problems arise from deep-seated social problems", such as economic, ethnic, cultural and gender conflicts, and conversely, that ecological problems cannot be understood, or resolved, "without resolutely dealing with problems within society" (Bookchin, 1993, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, p. 354). Ecological problems are essentially social justice and political issues, "stemming from capitalism and problems of social hierarchy and social class domination" (Sessions, 1995f, pp. 265-266). It is the "hierarchical mentality" which pervades our society that gives rise to "the very idea of dominating the natural world" (Bookchin, 1993, p. 355).

## 2.3 The rhetoric

Freedom!

"During the late 1960s and 1970s Bookchin's anthropological historical and political explorations of the 'legacy of freedom' and the 'legacy of domination', as he called it, percolated through radical social movements – not only the ecology movement but the feminist, communitarian, and anarchist movements as well. The concept of hierarchy in particular [i.e., its critique], assimilated by the counterculture into conventional wisdom, has become essential to radical thought due largely to Bookchin's insistence on its nature and importance in many lectures in the late 1960s." (Biehl, 1997a, p. 9).

In Bookchin's examination of these two legacies, writes Clark, humanity "...falls from its primordial unity with nature in 'organic society', it suffers through its long struggle ['the history of freedom'] while in bondage during the 'history of domination', finally to regain its lost unity – at a higher level – with the achievement of 'the ecological society' (Clark, 1993, pp. 350-351) or "free nature[16]".

### 2.3.1 Preconditions for, and conditions of, freedom

According to Marx, the preconditions for freedom [in the sense of release from toil and necessity] were national unification, technological development and material abundance (Bookchin, 1969a, in Biehl, 1997, p. 141). In Bookchin's writings, the major precondition for freedom is a humanistic, liberatory

[16] This theme is similar, Clark (1993, pp. 350-351) points out, to the story of the Fall and Redemption in Judeo-Christianity, in the self-alienation and self-reconciliation of Hegel's Spirit, and in Marx's "depiction of humanity's enslavement to the realm of necessity and its striving toward the realm of freedom"

technology, which will enable humanity to move from scarcity and necessity, to a post-scarcity society. The conditions of freedom according to Bookchin are decentralization, the formation of communities, the human scale, and direct democracy. All these aspects of freedom are discussed in this chapter's section 6: View of society.

# 3. Epistemology

Social ecology subscribes to the Enlightenment ideal of reason (3.1), but continues the Frankfurt School critique of instrumental rationalism (3.2). Utilizing dialectical reasoning[17], Bookchin (1993, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, p. 359) calls social ecology's epistemology, "dialectical naturalism" (3.3). Despite being presented before ontology here, I understand Bookchin's dialectical naturalism, as epistemology, to be integral to his dialectical naturalism as ontology [section 4].

## 3.1 Affirmation of Enlightenment ideal of reason

Social ecology via its Marxist heritage subscribes to the Enlightenment ideals of reason, science, and technology (Bookchin, 1991, in Chase, 1991, in Van de Veer, 1994, p. 245). With the emergence of ecological-political tendencies that embraced irrationalism, Bookchin emphasized that an ecological society "would neither renounce, nor denigrate reason, science, and technology" (Biehl, 1997a, p. 10). He was opposed to postmodernism, which in his view, had produced "chilling and dangerous" theoretical and ethical relativism, even nihilism (Bookchin, 1992, in Fotopoulos, 1992).

But social ecology continues the Frankfurt School critique of instrumental reason. More specifically writes Bookchin, our warped capitalist society has "reduc[ed] reason to a harsh industrial rationalism focused on efficiency rather than on an ethically inspired intellectuality; … uses science to quantify the world and divide thought against feeling; … [and] uses technology to exploit nature, including *human* nature, [however, that] should not negate the value of the underlying Enlightenment ideals" (Bookchin, 1991, in Chase, 1991, in VanDeVeer & Pierce, 1994, p. 245, his italics).

## 3.2 The critique of instrumental rationalism

Social ecologists problematize instrumental reason on three interrelated grounds – its separation from the moral context of nature, its misuse in rational self-interest, bureaucracy and capitalism, and its redefinition of reality to fit its basic principle of consistency, the latter discussed in section 3.3 (Biehl, 1993, pp. 377-379; Bookchin, 1995c, in Biehl, 1997, pp. 207-208).

Before the mechanistic ontology of nature replaced the organismic view, the Greek concept *logos* summed up the belief that there was in nature, an "immanent intelligibility"; that the human mind possessed the ability to discover and understand this intelligibility; and that there was a congruence between both (Biehl, 1993, p. 375). There is an order in reality that is not simply imposed on it by the human mind (Bookchin, 1995c, in Biehl, 1997, p. 215). Reason was a reason of moral purpose, of moral ends: to discover, and understand, this intelligibility, this order in nature, and its values.

But as the mechanistic ontology took hold, reason became separated from its moral context and moral purpose. Ethics was removed from reason's "discourse and concerns" (Bookchin, 1995c, in Biehl, 1997, p. 207). Instrumental rationality validated itself through the efficiency of its means, the pragmatic success it achieved, not through appeal to cherished values, ideals, goals or beliefs as moral ends (Biehl, 1993, p. 375). These became "irrelevant ... arbitrary matters of personal mood and taste" (Bookchin, 1995c, in Biehl, 1997, p. 207).

[17] Dialectical reasoning is a form of reasoning which originated in the Greek concept of *logos*, and blossomed particularly in Hegel's thought (Biehl, 1993, p. 384)

At the individual level, reason was "validated exclusively by its effectiveness in satisfying the ego's pursuits and responsibilities" (Biehl, 1993, p. 378, citing Bookchin, 1982a, p. 270). Reason became an instrument for self-survival rather than for grasping ethical purpose or meaning; rationally-based self-interest, in effect. At social level, in the name of a mechanistic ontology, supposedly value-free instrumental rationality became the tool with which to *administer* human beings, a possibility which nation-states were quick to utilize in all spheres of human functioning, through increasing bureaucracy. In the economic sphere, instrumental rationality was applied to promote and protect the capitalist system by instrumentalizing people as sources of labour, and by commodifying ever more aspects of nature as goods and services to be exchanged in the fiercely competitive free market. "If the instrumental ethos reduced moral purpose to self-interest in order to survive, capitalism made competition a social imperative" (Biehl, 1993, p. 377).

Bookchin saw in dialectical reasoning as basis for his dialectical naturalism, the means of re-connecting rationality and ethics.

## 3.3 Dialectical reasoning

Bookchin subscribes to dialectical reasoning, rather than instrumental or analytical reasoning [Bookchin sometimes calls these two together, "conventional reasoning"]. He explains dialectical reasoning – no easy concept - by contrasting it with instrumental or conventional reasoning.

Instrumental reasoning is based on the identity principle [or A equals A, or consistency], and efficient causality (Bookchin, 1995c, in Biehl, 1997, pp. 204-206). It "freezes" a phenomenon in order to understand it through analysis of its components [structure] and functioning (Biehl, 1993, pp. 383-384). Change is understood in terms of linear causality: "The causality that conventional reason describes, ... is a matter of kinetics: one billiard ball strikes another and causes them both to move from one position to another — that is to say, by means of *efficient cause*" (Bookchin, 1995c, in Biehl, 1997, p. 205, his italics). Despite this external change, neither of these objects has changed in its essence. Based on these understandings of identity [consistency] and change, conventional thinking gives us indispensable knowledge about phenomena (Biehl, 1993, pp. 383-384), and has "contributed immeasurably to our knowledge of the universe" (Bookchin, 1995c, in Biehl, 1997, p. 207).

But such thinking is unable to deal with the paradox of consistency and change in reality. Here, conventional reason "with its message of identity and consistency as truth" fails us, writes Bookchin, "not because it is false as such but because it has staked out too broad a claim for its own validity in explaining reality. It even redefines reality to fit its claim ...." (Bookchin, 1995c, in Biehl. 1997, p. 208). Hegel resolved this paradox of identity and change in reality "by systematically showing that identity, or self-persistence, actually expresses itself *through* change as an ever-variegated unfolding of 'unity in diversity', to use his own words" (Bookchin, 1995c, in Biehl, 1997, p. 208, his italics), i.e., there is an ongoing dialectic between identity and change. Hegel posited a dialectical or emergent causality. This is "not merely motion, force, or changes of form, but things and phenomena in development". In dialectical causality, "the implicit becomes explicit through the unfolding of its latent form and possibilities" (Bookchin, 1995c, in Biehl, 1997, p. 208). I think the critical difference in this view is, change is not *caused* by some prior event ["efficient cause"], but *elicited* by something like [but not] Aristotle's "final" causes. Where Aristotle thought in terms of a deity as "final cause", Hegel thought of the "imperfection", "inadequacy" or "contradiction" implicit in a phenomenon as eliciting development. Change elicited through an internal carrot, and not caused by an external stick, as it were.

Analytical reasoning, which focuses on the structure and functioning of a phenomenon at a given moment, can only provide an incomplete account of this understanding of reality (Biehl, 1993, pp. 383-

384). Dialectical reasoning, which attempts to understand the ongoing dialectic between identity and change, fares better. Bookchin calls his version of dialectical reasoning applied to understanding reality, dialectical naturalism.

## 3.4 Dialectical naturalism as epistemology

Bookchin understands nature as evolution, and the nature of reality as "Being" and an ever-unfolding (Bookchin, 1995c, in Biehl, 1997, p. 210, p. 214), or development, through phases (Simon, 1990, p. 223, citing Bookchin, 1987a, p. 28). "Unlike conventional reason, dialectical reason acknowledges the developmental nature of reality by asserting in one fashion or another that *A equals not only A but also not-A*. ... Dialectical reason grasps not only how an entity is organized at a particular moment but how it is organized to go beyond that level of development and become *other* than what it is, even as it retains its identity. The contradictory nature of identity — notably, that *A equals both A and not-A* — is an intrinsic feature of identity itself. The unity of opposites is, in fact, a unity qua the emerging 'other', what Hegel called 'the identity of identity and nonidentity'." (Bookchin, 1995c, in Biehl, 1997, pp. 205-206, his italics).

The "intellectual challenge" then, is not to "*arrest*...the fluidity of a phenomenon, by reducing it to its components at a fixed point in a development's unfolding, and by turning them into hard and fast 'facts' or 'data' that are notable for their fixity rather than their logic of transformation. The emphasis of dialectic is, rather, on the transitions that account for a development" (Bookchin, 1990d, p. 268, his italics), those moments or periods in a phenomenon's ongoing development, unfolding, or becoming, in which the phenomenon both is what it is, *and* the "other" it is becoming, as it seeks to make its implicit potentiality explicit (Bookchin, 1990d, p. 268). The transitions, rather than an analysis of the component parts, relationships, and functions of a phenomenon assumed to be static, are the focus of dialectical naturalism.

This "processual[18]" way of knowing calls for an appropriate methodology. Unlike positivism and sceptical empiricism, the methodology must have a feel for context, with a "vital sense of history, continuity, and immanent directionality", and a different focus too: on transitions representing past, present and emerging future, not on reified moments in a phenomenon's development (Bookchin, 1990d, pp. 268-269, p. 271). Bookchin introduces a dialectical methodology called "eduction", which is "an exploration of [a potentiality's] latent and implicit possibilities" (Bookchin [no bibliographical details], cited in Biehl, 1993, p. 385). It seeks to understand "the *inherent logic*" of a thing's development: where it started, where it is now, and how it could be expected to progress towards wholeness, given its "immanent developmental logic" (Biehl, 1993, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, p. 385, her italics). Extracting from Bookchin (1987a, p. 24), Eckersley (1989, p. 109) describes eduction as "a phased process that renders 'the latent possibilities of phenomena fully manifest and articulated'". In Bookchin's own words, such an approach is creative because it ceaselessly contrasts 'the free, rational and moral actuality of 'what-could-be' that inheres in nature's thrust towards self-reflexivity with the existential reality of 'what-is''" (Bookchin, 1987a, p. 31 in Eckersley, 1989, p. 109). Eduction seems to be a form of speculative reasoning, judging by this comment of Bookchin's (1990d, p. 270): "....speculative reason has the all-important function of dealing with a notion of Being as becoming, of probing the implicit in the potential with a view toward grasping the logic of its unfolding, and finally, of trying to determine if that logic has been fulfilled". These are ontological matters.

[18] As opposed for example, to deep ecologist supporter Robyn Eckersley's "positivistic methodology" (Bookchin, 1990d, p. 253)

# 4. Ontology

"Being as becoming" (Bookchin, 1995c, in Biehl, 1997, p. 213, p. 214) sums up I think, Bookchin's ontology. His dialectical naturalism is firmly "processual and organismic" rather than "factual and structural" (Bookchin, 1990d, p. 269). It "is based overwhelmingly on *potentiality*, conceived as the configuration of a [phenomenon's] development ...." (Bookchin, 1992, in Fotopoulos, 1992, his italics). Bookchin explains his version as "an ecological approach that sees nature in all its forms as self-organizing and self-formative with neither a cosmic subject nor mechanical 'forces' to inform a development[19]" (Bookchin, 1990d, pp. 267-268). Phenomena are seen as naturally "incomplete and unactualized in their development - not 'imperfect' in any idealistic or supranatural sense". (Bookchin, 1995c, in Biehl, 1997, p. 211).

Social ecology's dialectical naturalism as ontology comprises views on "biological evolution" or "first nature" (section 4.1), and "social evolution" or "second nature", which comprises both human beings and the societies they create (section 4.2). Second nature has become warped (section 4.2.3), in that its developmental path is not rationally fulfilling its potentiality; it needs to be integrated into first nature, to become "free nature" (section 4.3).

## 4.1 "First nature"

Nature *is* natural evolution, in "the very real sense that it is composed of atoms, molecules that have evolved into amino acids, proteins, unicellular organisms, genetic codes, invertebrates and vertebrates, amphibia, reptiles, mammals, primates, and human beings – all, in a cumulative thrust toward ever-greater complexity, ever-greater subjectivity, and finally, an ever-greater capacity for conceptual thought, symbolic communication, and self-consciousness" (Bookchin, 1988a, in VanDeVeer, 1994, p. 237). In this section, which deals with nature as biological evolution, I attempt to unpack these ideas a little more, by introducing Bookchin's nature as a developmental graded phenomenon (4.1.1), with immanent mind (4.1.2), displaying a specific nisus (4.1.3).

### 4.1.1 Nature as a developmental graded continuum

Dialectical naturalism is a way of understanding nature [inorganic, organic and social] as development through contradiction (Biehl, 1993, p. 381). Each phenomenon contains within it, a kind of incompleteness - a contradiction [which it strives to overcome] between what it is at any given moment, and what it potentially should become in its maturity, when its development is fulfilled (Biehl, 1993, p. 381, p. 382, p. 384).

These contradictions are not as between two arbitrary states which have no connection with each other, but between states which stand in a developmental relationship to each other (Biehl, 1993, p. 384). The real-world examples usually given are the oak tree implicit in the acorn, or the bird implicit in the egg. "A thing or phenomenon in dialectical causality remains unsettled, unstable, in tension ... until it develops itself into what it 'should be' in all its wholeness or fullness" (Bookchin, 1990c, in Biehl, 1997, p. 211). Until a thing is what it has been constituted to become, it exists in a dynamic tension, because it is incomplete, unfulfilled or inadequate, in Bookchin's terminology. "It cannot remain in endless tension or 'contradiction' with what it is organized to become without warping or undoing itself. It must ripen into the fullness of its being" (Bookchin, 1990c, in Biehl, 1997, p. 211). It is the resolution of the instability which arises from such contradiction or tension (Biehl, 1993, p. 382) that propels any organism's growth, or self-formation, or self-development (Biehl, 1993, p. 382). What the *implicit* arrangement or potentiality in a phenomenon is, is rendered *explicit* or *actual* by its own self-

[19] A reference to the Hegelian idealistic, and Engels/Marxian mechanistic dialectic (Biehl, 1993, p. 385)

development. Such a transition in self-development is called an "Aufhebung"; that is, the organism transcends, yet also incorporates what it was, into its new state (Biehl, 1993, pp. 384-385).

In dialectical causality, cause and effect are not discrete from each other; but cumulative. In Bookchin's words: "the implicit or 'in itself' *(an sich),* to use Hegel's terminology, is not simply replaced or negated by its more developed explicit or 'for itself' *(für sich);* rather, it is absorbed into and developed beyond the explicit into a fuller, more differentiated, and more adequate form — the Hegelian 'in and for itself' *(an und für sich)*" (Bookchin, 1995c, his italics, in Biehl, 1997, p. 212). As a phenomenon differentiates its potentiality into a new actuality, so that new actuality "becomes the potentiality for further differentiation and actualization" (Bookchin, 1995c, in Biehl, 1997, p. 210). This introduces the idea of nature as a graded continuum, including past and present, but implying future as well, as the phenomenon unfolds towards richer degrees of wholeness (Bookchin, 1993, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, p. 359).

The notion "continuum" also denies the idea that nature is hierarchically organized. "Ecology ... is an outlook that interprets all interdependencies (social and psychological as well as natural) nonhierarchically. Ecology denies that nature can be interpreted from a hierarchical viewpoint ..." (Biehl, 1997a, p. 8).

### 4.1.2 Cosmos as organism with immanent mind

A mechanistic ontology and mechanistic science denies any rationality to nature, reserving that for the human mind only. Social ecology views the cosmos, and nature here on Earth, as neither mechanistic, nor "a meaningless flow of random events" (Biehl, 1993, p. 380). It is *because* nature displays a rationality, that its "immanent intelligibility" can be discovered and comprehended by a human rationality (Biehl, 1993, p. 375), which evolved out of it (Biehl, 1993, p. 386). The rationality is not simply and only a process in which the organism or species adapts to its niche and ecosystem. The rationality is displaying a tendency, direction, or *nisus,* which is a manifestation of mind at work in nature (Biehl, 1993, p. 381), a view also encountered in Bateson's (1979) work.

### 4.1.3 Cosmos as organism, displaying *nisus*

Dialectical naturalism discerns in nature's developmental transitions, a tendency, direction, or *nisus,* an "immanent self-directiveness" (Bookchin, 1987a, p. 28, in Simon, 1990, p. 223), toward greater differentiation of life forms, self-organization, self-maintenance, self-realization of potentiality, subjectivity [or consciousness, or awareness], self-awareness, self-reflexivity and conceptual communication[20] (Bookchin, 1995c, in Biehl, 1997, pp. 215-217).

Is nature's immanent self-directiveness related to *telos*? Bookchin rejects the idea of "telos" in nature [inter alia, for its deterministic and hierarchical implications], if this should mean the traditional teleology of Aristotle and Hegel, i.e. "an unyielding *telos*" (1990d, p. 267), a pre-ordained end (1990d, p. 267). He uses rather the concepts "tendency", "striving", "directionality", "organic entelechies" or "*nisus*" in nature, to indicate not a pre-ordained end, but "an actualization of what is implicit in the potential" of something in nature. Whether acorn, or human being (Bookchin, 1990d, pp. 267-268), the development is "open-ended, fluid, spontaneous, … and free from predeterminations" (Biehl, 1993, p. 385).

#### *4.1.3.1 The emergence of subjectivity [self-identity]*

"According to Bookchin, if we carefully examine evolutionary development, we find cumulative degrees of increased subjectivity" (Simon, 1990, p. 224). From its original inorganic state, nature

[20] Not necessarily in that order

developed through millennia first into initially relatively limited, undifferentiated unicellular organisms, then into multicellular organisms, which exhibited self-identity, and self-maintenance. Even the amoeba, as simplest example of organic life, "is busy maintaining itself" in "an environment that would otherwise tend to dissolve it", thereby exhibiting "the existence of a germinal form of selfhood and a nascent form of subjectivity", which clearly differentiates it from its inorganic context (Biehl, 1993, pp. 380-381). There is subjectivity throughout nature "that is latent even within matter/energy itself", social ecologist Clark suggests (1993, p. 349).

#### *4.1.3.2 Self-transformation and self-development*

Once self-identity and self-maintenance are established, the developmental process is marked by increasing self-transformation towards differentiation, flexibility, subjectivity, and self-direction (Biehl, 1993, p. 376). There is in nature, "a significant evolutionary trend toward intellectuality, self-awareness, will, intentionality, and expressiveness, be it in oral or body language" (Bookchin, 1993, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, p. 357). Clark's view is that social ecology "proposes a principle of ecological wholeness that sees the entire course of planetary evolution as a process aiming at increasing diversity and the emergence of value", or that the "directiveness" present in nature "is a movement toward the greater unfolding of value" (Clark, 1993, p. 345).

#### *4.1.3.3 Increasing self-determination as "potentiality for freedom"*

The "greater differentiation of life-forms, increasing subjectivity and flexibility, and finally the emergence of intellectuality, intentionality, and a high order of choice" mentioned earlier, are the "precondition[s] for freedom" (Biehl, 1993, p. 380). According to Bookchin "One can find a visible and logical elaboration of subjectivity, diversity, flexibility, and rudimentary freedom in the simple choices that species make in participating in their evolutionary pathway" (Bookchin, 1990d, p. 271). So an organism or species or ecosystem's progressive unfolding is also an unfolding of its "potentiality for freedom" where freedom is understood as self-determination and self-directed activity[21].

#### *4.1.3.4 "Rational" and "irrational" development*

In the course of actualizing its potentialities, on its way to achieving "self-realization", or what Hegel called '"actuality" *(Wirklichkeit)* (Bookchin, 1995c, in Biehl, 1997, p. 210), a phenomenon might develop irrationally or rationally. "External factors, internal rearrangements, accidents" (Bookchin, 1995c, in Biehl, 1997, p. 215) might place a phenomenon on a developmental path which will fail to actualize its potentialities, in which case, it is an existing reality that is "irrational", less than it could be, incomplete, "untrue". "Although it is 'real' in an existential sense, it is unfulfilled and hence 'unreal' *in terms of its potentialities*" (Bookchin, 1995c, in Biehl, 1997, p. 212, his italics).

By contrast, "rational", "logical", "real", and "adequate", are words Bookchin uses to describe a development which *is* following "its immanent self-development to its logical actuality" (Bookchin, 1995c, in Biehl, 1997, p. 212, p. 215). That is, it is on the way to becoming what it is "structured" or "constituted" to become (Bookchin, 1995c, in Biehl, 1997, p. 210, p. 212), "by virtue of its *internal logic*" (Bookchin, 1995c, in Biehl, 1997, p. 212, his italics). It is "more properly 'real' than a given 'what-is' that is aborted or distorted and hence, in Hegelian terms, 'untrue' to its possibilities" (Bookchin, 1995c, in Biehl, 1997, p. 212).

Herein is an ethical implication for human beings: dialectical reasoning demands that we consider a phenomenon not simply as it exists [its "Realität" (Bookchin, 1995c, in Biehl, 1997, p. 214)], but also speculate about [or "educe"] whether its development is on track, as it were, towards its implicit or

[21] This idea of self-direction or self-organization appears similar to the "autopoeisis" of ecosystemic thinking

immanent "actuality" ["Wirklichkeit"]. Or has its developmental path been aborted, or warped (Bookchin, 1995c, in Biehl, 1997, p. 213)? Does there need to be a re-orientation? "It would be philosophically frivolous to embrace the 'what-is' of a thing or phenomenon as constituting its 'reality' without considering it in the light of the 'what-should-be' that would logically emerge from its potentialities" (Bookchin, 1995c, in Biehl, 1997, p. 213). "*Reason* has the obligation to explore the potentialities that are latent in any social development", to "educe its authentic actualization, its fulfillment and 'truth'", and presumably, if it is not on track, then consider, and implement, whatever "new and more rational social dispensation" *would* set it on its logical developmental path (Bookchin, 1995c, in Biehl, 1997, p. 212, his italicization of "Reason").

## 4.2 "Second nature"

Where "first nature" means inorganic and organic nature (Biehl, 1993, p. 381), "second nature" is humanity, "with its sociality, institutions, intellectuality, language, ethics, and political life" (Biehl, 1993, p. 387). Though it emerged from first nature, it remains a part of it, embedded in it (Biehl, 1993, p. 385) (section 4.2.1). Early second nature was characterised by social egalitarianism (4.2.2.1). However, this became warped by ideas of hierarchy and domination (4.2.2.2 - 4.2.2.3). There must be a radical dissolution of hierarchy and its manifestations in society before "free nature" – an ecological society – can be achieved (4.3).

### 4.2.1 Relation of "second" to "first nature"

One implication of the replacement of an organismic by a mechanist ontology, was that "human beings … lost their [special] cosmological place". Some scientist-philosophers in this tradition, for example, Bertrand Russell, viewed the human being in the scheme of things as "a mere accident in the cosmos, a chance spark in a meaningless world" (Biehl, 1993, p. 376). There existed "an unbridgeable dualism between mentality and the external world" (Bookchin, 1982a, pp. 238, cited by Biehl, 1993, p. 376), a philosophy or worldview in which social ideas such as mastery over nature easily find root (Biehl, 1993, p. 376).

#### *4.2.1.1. Human beings, and their societies, are as "natural" as nature*

In the social ecology view, human beings are part of "the self-organizing thrust of natural evolution toward increasing subjectivity and flexibility" (Bookchin, 1993, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, p. 358), "squarely within organic evolution" (p. 357), a "product of the increasing subjectivity in first nature" (Biehl, 1993, p. 385). There is no "sharp bifurcation" of human from nonhuman nature (Bookchin, 1990d, p. 271), no "untenable disjunction" (Bookchin, 1993, p. 357), they are related in a natural continuum. Both share "... an evolutionary potential for greater subjectivity and flexibility" (p. 360).

Though they "always remain rooted in their biological evolutionary history", human beings "produce a characteristically human social nature of their own" (Bookchin, 1993, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, p. 358). Society is merely the way humans inhabit their world, or adapt to and create an environment for themselves, just as nonhuman beings do, to the extent that their programmed instincts and abilities allow. What human beings do, is not discontinuous from first nature. It is natural evolution after all, which has "not only provided humans with the *ability,* but also the *necessity* to be purposive interveners into 'first nature', to consciously *change* 'first nature' by means of a highly institutionalised form of community we call 'society'" (Bookchin, 1988a, in VanDeVeer & Pierce, 1994, p. 237, his italics). Bookchin understands human works – societies, social institutions, science, and technology, for example - to be as "natural" as nature, because they are the products of human foresight, innovation and creativity, themselves all products of the natural evolutionary process (Bookchin, 1993, pp. 357-358). Second nature is therefore as "natural" as "first" nature in Bookchin's view.

#### *4.2.1.2 But human beings have a unique place in evolution*

Human beings however, occupy a unique place in natural evolution (Bookchin, 1990d, p. 273). The graded continuum which links first and second nature is marked in the case of human beings, by "important qualitative distinctions" (Bookchin, 1990d, p. 271):

> Humanity's awareness of itself, its ability to generalize this awareness to the level of a highly systematic understanding of its environment in the form of philosophy, science, ethics, and aesthetics, and finally, its capacity to alter itself and its environment systematically by means of knowledge and technology place it beyond the realm of subjectivity that exists in first nature (Bookchin, 1995c, in Biehl, 1997, p. 216).

Humanity is "the most richly developed ... being to emerge thus far in the earth's evolutionary self-realization" (Clark, 1993, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, p. 348), nature "rendered self-conscious" (Clark, 1993, p. 349), "the very knowingness of nature" (Clark, 1993, p. 352), "the self-reflexive voice of nature" (Bookchin, 1990d, p. 273). Humanity's unique position confers on it, special ecological responsibilities (section 5).

But early in its evolutionary history, second nature became "warped" (Bookchin, 1990d, p. 273) or "distorted" (1990d, p. 264) by the idea of hierarchy, and the possibility of human domination and exploitation of other humans.

### 4.2.2 Second nature gone wrong

Human beings' evolutionary social development has produced ideologies and antagonisms, "that have distorted humanity's unique capacities for development". Second nature has become "warped" (Bookchin, 1990d, p. 258, citing from his 1987 paper, p. 38); a sign of which is the ecological crisis. Where there was originally social egalitarianism (4.2.2.1), social hierarchy evolved (4.2.2.2), with its ideas of 'power over' and domination, whether of humans over humans, or of humans over nature (4.2.2.3). Radical integration of second with first nature "along far reaching ecological lines[22]" (Bookchin, 1990d, p. 258, citing from the same 1987 article, p. 32, p. 21) is needed (4.2.2.4).

#### *4.2.2.1 Social egalitarianism in early second nature*

In early second nature, certain egalitarian customs prevailed: those of "the irreducible minimum, usufruct, and mutual aid" (Bookchin, 1993, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, p. 366). I cite Bookchin's explanation of these in full, because I think it suggests what has "gone wrong" with second nature, and also represents his ideal egalitarian, communitarian and caring "ecological" society (section 6):

> [The irreducible minimum is]...the shared notion that all members of a community are entitled to the means of life, irrespective of the amount of work they perform. To deny anyone food, shelter, and the basic means of life because of infirmities or even frivolous behavior would have been seen as a heinous denial of the very right to live. Nor were the resources and things needed to sustain the community ever completely privately owned: overriding individualistic control was the broader principle of usufruct – the notion that the means of life that were not being used by one group could be used, as need be, by another. Thus unused land, orchards, and even tools and weapons, if left idle, were at the disposition of anyone in the community who needed them. Lastly, custom fostered the practice of mutual aid, the rather sensible cooperative behavior of sharing things and labor, so that an individual or family in fairly good circumstances could expect to be helped by others if their fortunes should change for the worse… (Bookchin, 1993, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, p. 364).

#### *4.2.2.2 The evolution of social hierarchy*

One definition by Bookchin of hierarchies (1982a, p. 4, cited in Desjardins, 1993, pp. 242-243) is

[22] Section 2.1.4.2

> The cultural traditional and psychological systems of obedience and command, not merely the economic and political systems to which the terms class and State most appropriately refer. ... I refer to the domination of the young by the old, of women by men, of one ethnic group by another, of 'masses' by bureaucrats who profess to speak of 'higher social interests', of countryside by town, and in a more subtle psychological sense, of body by mind, of spirit by a shallow instrumental rationality.

Desjardins (1993, p. 243) goes on to explain this excerpt as "Thus, hierarchies imply the existence of at least two groups, one of which holds power over the other. This power enables the 'superior' group to command obedience from the 'inferior' group. Hierarchies promote social systems of domination, in which the superior group is able to manipulate the inferior group to serve the purposes of the superiors while preventing the inferiors from pursuing their own true ends."

Based on anthropological work, Bookchin speculates that in place of social egalitarianism, hierarchy emerged from differences in "biological facts such as lineage, gender distribution, and age differences". Social customs developed around these biological facts, and became social institutions. Characteristic attitudes and values came to be associated with such institutions (Bookchin, 1993, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, pp. 361-365).

This process[23] (Bookchin, 1993, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, pp. 361-365) I have summarized in the table below:

**Figure 6: The evolution of social hierarchy**

| In the "organic society" of prehistorical Europe, there exists primordial unity with nature (Biehl, 1997a, p. 9) |
|---|
| **NATURAL BIOLOGICAL FACT: BLOOD TIES**<br>**Social customs/institution:** Bloodties create families; intermarriage between families creates bands, clans, tribes<br>**Associated attitudes/values**: Initially a **kinship ethic** develops: one's "own" are treated as "insiders"; there exists an ethic of solidarity and mutual obligation. All others are treated as strangers - "outsiders". Within both insider and outsider groups, relationships are egalitarian [section 4.2.2.1] |
| **NATURAL BIOLOGICAL FACT: AGE**<br>**Social customs/institution**: In the absence of writing, memory and tradition are significant sources of knowledge, customs, mores. This wisdom is usually held by the eldest members of the family, tribe, clan, etc. Hierarchical structures based on command and obedience slowly emerge - Councils of "Elders" are probably the earliest form of hierarchy<br>**Associated attitudes/values**: **Gerontocracy** becomes a form of hierarchy |
| **NATURAL BIOLOGICAL FACT: SEX**<br>**Social customs/institution:** Division of duties between the sexes<br>**Associated attitudes/values:** Initially relations between these groups were complementary, no group dominated the other, both were needed "to form a relatively stable whole" (Bookchin, 1993, p. 362) |

[23] Compare Bookchin's "breakdown theory" with the usual deep ecology version: In the beginning at least, of their historical emergence from nature (roughly pre-10, 000 years ago?), humans were integrated with, and lived in "primordial harmony" with the "larger earth community". The dominant perspective in human-nature relationships was ecocentric (Sessions, 1995d, p. 158). But as humans sought for themselves a niche which satisfied their particular needs for food, clothing, shelter, community and communication, largely through the beginnings of agriculture (Sessions, 1995d, p. 158), the "great cultural worlds of the human developed, along with vast and powerful social establishments whereby humans became oppressive and even destructive of other life forms. Alienation from the natural world increased…" (Berry, 1987, in Sessions, 1995, p. 9). The first half of this theme is frequently encountered in deep ecology/green writing as the ecological Eden/Garden of Eden theme; in which certain cultures today are seen still to retain a nature-oriented cosmology (Sessions, 1995d, p. 158) which should preferably be left untainted by western culture

| NATURAL BIOLOGICAL FACT: SEX-FEMALE |
|---|
| **Social customs/institution:** Food gathering, food planting, done mostly by women, leads to the formation of 'sororities' with own customs, belief systems and values. The economic independence of the group depends largely on women<br>**Associated attitudes/values: "Feminine" values: care, nurture**.<br>In what I see as Bookchin's version of the "feminine principle", he writes: "This marvel we call 'Nature' has produced a marvel we call homo sapiens – 'thinking man'- and, more significantly for the development of society, 'thinking woman', whose primeval domestic domain provided the arena for the origins of a caring society, human empathy, love, and idealistic commitment." (Bookchin, 1988a, in VanDeVeer & Pierce, 1994, p. 237) |
| **NATURAL BIOLOGICAL FACT: SEX-MALE**<br>**Social customs/institution:** Hunting, and caring for animals, done mostly by men, leads to the formation of 'fraternities' or 'men's houses' with own customs, belief systems and values. Fraternities, by virtue of their growing "civil" responsibilities, and the spread of warfare, supersede the largely domestic sphere of women in importance[24]. The change to animal draft power in agriculture accentuates this shift in predominance.<br>**Associated attitudes/values:** "Masculine" values: combat, aggression, **patricentricity**. Its most severe form is **patriarchy**, "an institution in which the eldest male of an extended family or clan has life-and-death command over all members of the group" (Bookchin, 1993, p. 363). |
| The emergence of property, class, capitalism, and nation-states follows |

Some ecofeminists approve Bookchin's hypothesis here, because he articulates a historical theory of hierarchy that begins with the domination of women by men, making way for domination by race and class, and the domination of nature (Diamond & Orenstein, 1990, p. 293). Class exploitation is often seen in this way, i.e. as a form of hierarchical domination. Bookchin refers to Marxist theory which singles out "technological advances and the presumed material surpluses they produce to explain the emergence of elite strata – indeed, of the exploiting ruling classes" (Bookchin, 1993, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, p. 363). Both these things privilege male responsibilities over female responsibilities, and it is well-known that "surpluses are necessary to support elites and classes" (Bookchin, 1993, pp. 363-364). But this explanation doesn't account for why many societies, which were rich in food supplies, remained egalitarian, and never developed elite strata. Bookchin was critical of Marx's "central focus on economics and class" which in his view, "obscured the more profound role of social hierarchy in the shaping of human history" (Tokar, 2006). Abolishing class rule and economic exploitation is not to say that one removes hierarchy at the same time; hierarchical systems of domination are more deeply entrenched in society than class (Bookchin, 1993, p. 364).

The root form of exploitation to be removed from second nature is the very *idea* of hierarchy. Bookchin contends that it is the rise of hierarchy, or more specifically, its transformation from pre-eminence earned and respected, to something coercive (Bookchin, 1993, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, p. 364), which planted the *idea* of human dominion over other humans. And, " ... I conceive of hierarchy as a historical presupposition for the *idea* of dominating nature" (Bookchin, 1990d, p. 264).

#### *4.2.2.3 The idea of dominating nature*

The *idea* of human dominion over other humans is the primary source of the idea that nature is hierarchically organized[25], and can also be dominated by humans (Bookchin, 1993, p. 365; also 1990d,

[24] Feminists and ecofeminists in their critique of patriarchy, also trace the "superior" value of the "public" over the "private" sphere to this shift

[25] One example to which Bookchin refers, is the idea of domination of nature inherent in the biblical stories of Adam and Noah, stories which he notes are "an expression of a *social* dispensation" (1993, p. 365). Domineering hierarchy is also to be found in the 7 000 year old Gilgamesh epic of Mesopotamia, and the Greek Odyssey. There is "ample evidence" of a "sweeping remaking and despoliation of the planet" by the elites of the Mediterranean basin and China "long before the emergence of modern science, "linear" rationality, and the "industrial society, to cite causal factors that are invoked so freely in the modern ecology movement". Such harm to nature existed alongside to harm to humanity in the form of genocide, wars and "heartless oppression" (Bookchin, 1993, p. 366). Another such hierarchical idea is surely the Great Chain of Being, examined by Lovejoy (1936, reprinted 1960)

p. 264). Bookchin explains the "distinction between ideology and reality" in the domination of nature as:

> I do not know how often I have to repeat that there is a distinction between the *idea* of dominating nature – an ideology – and actually dominating nature. ... my writings focus on the *idea* of dominating nature, not on the actual *dominating of nature*, which I repeatedly, indeed emphatically, claim is impossible.[26] ...
> The distinction between "dominating nature" and the *idea* of dominating nature is not an idle one. I am not concerned exclusively with whether a given society (be it hierarchical or egalitarian) actually damages the ecocommunity in which it is located; I am also concerned with whether it *ideologically* identifies human progress with the idea of dominating nature. I am concerned, in effect, with a broad cultural mentality and its underlying sources – notably, the projection of the idea of social domination and control into nature – not with transient behavior patterns that come or go as a result of opportunistic, often historically short-lived circumstances. Under capitalism (corporate or state), the *idea* of controlling nature is a deeply *systemic* factor in social life... (Bookchin, 1990d, p. 262, his italics).

Bookchin's primary insight here as far as "green" is concerned, I think, is the link he makes between the idea of hierarchy, and the idea of domination of nature inherent in capitalism as means to progress. Today's politically correct version of progress is free market sustainable development, but the ideology vis-a-vis nature is essentially the same I think – "dominating" nature is today called, the "management" of natural goods and services for humanity's benefit.

For Bookchin, the idea of hierarchy and domination precedes as ultimate cause, all other social malformations such as ethnicity and class (Bookchin, 1990d, p. 259), and particularly capitalism, as proximate cause of the ecological crisis (Biehl, 1997a, p. 9). "... I regard it [i.e., what he calls the solid entrenchment of hierarchy in our thinking] as a problem that must now be resolved if we are to achieve an ecological society" (Bookchin, 1990d, p. 264). "Until human beings cease to live in societies that are structured around hierarchies as well as economic classes, we shall never be free of domination, however much we try to dispel it with rituals, incantations, ecotheologies, and the adoption of seemingly 'natural' ways of life" (Bookchin, 1993, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, pp. 365-366).

We also need to overcome our "visions of nature as a hierarchical order" if we are ever to achieve the relationships with nature envisaged in deep ecology's "respect for nature", or "egalitarian outlook" (Bookchin, 1990d, p. 264). Overcoming the idea of dominating a hierarchically-ordered first and second nature, so that both first and second nature may resume their rational ecological path of fulfilling their latent potentialities for freedom, can only be achieved through a "new dispensation" (Bookchin, 1993, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, p. 365; also Bookchin, 1990d, p. 264).

#### *4.2.2.4 Integrating second nature with first nature*

Accepting that natural phenomena [including humanity and society] are dialectical phenomena displaying a recognizable nisus toward increasing subjectivity and freedom, generates a specific ethic. This discussion brings forward in some respects, Bookchin's ethic of complementarity [section 5], and views on an "ecological society" [section 6], but both are related to the next phase in his evolutionary ontology, which he calls "free nature" [section 4.3].

Biehl (1993, pp. 386-387) suggests that dialectics can educe how human beings *should* be [i.e., rational, free, and self-conscious (Biehl, 1993, p. 388)], and what an ecological society based on an ethic of complementarity with first nature *should* be, compared to what they are at present. But "what society *should be* is vastly different from what it *is*. Where it should be rational and ecological if humanity's potentialities are fulfilled, it is irrational and anti-ecological today" (Biehl, 1993, p. 387,

[26] Because, as I understand Bookchin, the "domination of nature is an oxymoron that is absolutely impossible to achieve if only because all phenomena are, in a broad sense, 'natural'" (Bookchin, 1990d, p. 262)

her italics). Second nature, as it currently is, "far from marking the fulfillment of human potentialities" (Bookchin, 1993, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, p. 361), more resembles "a fallen humanity" (Bookchin, 1990d, p. 258), which contains the potential of "tearing down the biosphere" (Bookchin, 1993, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, p. 361). But second nature *also* contains the potential of development toward "an entirely new ecological dispensation", and a new ecological society (Bookchin, 1993, p. 361). This can be achieved if humanity's contact with nature is "restored at a fuller level of mutualistic harmony" (Bookchin, 1990d, p. 258), if there is a "'radical *integration* of second nature with first nature along far reaching ecological lines' or what I call 'free nature'" (Bookchin, 1990d, p. 258, citing from Bookchin, 1987a, p. 32, p. 21, his italics).

From second nature to "free nature", is another step in natural and social evolution, another transformation or *Aufhebung* (Biehl, 1993, p. 387).

## 4.3 "Free" nature

As I understand it, this *Aufhebung* is to be achieved through a "redemptive" social dialectic (Bookchin, 1967/1968, in Bookchin, 1974, p. 37): "... the absolute negation of *all* hierarchical forms *as such"* (p. 40, his italics):

> The absolute negation of the state is anarchism – a situation in which .... [human beings liberate] all the immediate circumstances of their everyday lives. The absolute negation of the city is community – a community in which the social environment is decentralized into rounded, ecologically balanced communities. The absolute negation of bureaucracy is immediate ... relations – a situation in which representation is replaced by face-to-face relations in a general assembly of free individuals. The absolute negation of the centralized economy is regional ecotechnology – a situation in which the instruments of production are molded to the resources of an ecosystem. The absolute negation of the patriarchal family is liberated sexuality – in which all forms of sexual regulation are transcended by the spontaneous, untrammeled expression of eroticism among equals. The absolute negation of the marketplace is communism – in which collective abundance and cooperation transform labor into play and need into desire. (Bookchin, 1967/1968, in Bookchin, 1974, p. 41).

These elements are to be found in Bookchin's vision of the rational free, ecological society [section 6]. The above explanation makes it easier to understand, I think, Bookchin's later descriptions of "free nature" and its ethic of complementarity:

> Free nature represents the 'synthesis' of first and second nature in a qualitatively *new* evolutionary dimension in which 'first and second nature are melded into a free, rational and ethical nature' that retains the 'specificity' of first and second nature divested of all notions of 'centricity' (read: hierarchy) *as such.* The concept of free nature is meant to express precisely the 'ethics of complementarity', as Roderick Nash has recently put it in his account of my views[27], in which human conceptual thought, placed not 'over' first nature but in the service of both natural and social evolution, forms a new *symbiotic* relationship between human communities and the nonhuman ecocommunities in which they are located (Bookchin, 1990d, pp. 258-259, his italics).

"Free nature" is the phase in evolution in which "both human and nonhuman nature come into their own as a rational self-conscious, and purposeful unity" (Biehl, 1993, pp. 387-388); it represents the *telos* in which both first nature and humanity, evolving in symbiosis, have fulfilled their potential, have reached "their full actualisation"(p. 388).

[27] Nash, 1989, p. 165

### 4.3.1 View of the rational free, human being

Bookchin's view of the human being, closely intertwined with what his view of society should be [primarily section 6], is influenced by his humanist, socialist and libertarian anarchist heritage (Biehl, 1997a, p. 14).

Biehl (1997a, p. 1) sums up the socialist heritage view of the human being as:

> ...People are ends in their own right, the socialist tradition asserted, not means for one another's use; and they are substantive beings, with considered opinions and deep feelings, not mass-produced things with artificially induced notions and wants. People can and should throw away the economic shackles that bind them, socialists argued, cast off the fictions and unrealities that mystify them, and plan and construct, deliberately and consciously, a truly enlightened and emancipated society based on freedom and cooperation, reason and solidarity. Material aims would be secondary to ethical concerns, people would have rich, spontaneous social relationships with one another, and they would actively and responsibly participate in making all decisions about their lives, rather than subject themselves to external authoritarian control.

From the libertarian anarchist tradition, Bookchin derived his emphasis on individual autonomy, and the individual's capacity to make rational ethical choices, unfettered "by the social burdens of suprahuman forces and all forms of domination, including statesmen, the authority of custom as well as the authority of the State" (Bookchin, 1990a, in Biehl, 1997, p. 153). There is for Bookchin, a similarity between the ecologist's emphasis on spontaneity in producing diversity, and the anarchist's emphasis on "social spontaneity": of "releasing the potentialities of society and humanity, of giving free and unfettered rein" to people's creativity (Bookchin, 1965, in Bookchin, 1974, pp. 77-78). A social situation should not rule, but release such creative potential (p. 78). The possibility of autonomous choice is all-important. Anything less represents a curtailment of the individual's freedom, and demands emancipation (Bookchin, 1990a, in Biehl, 1997, pp. 151-152).

The libertarian view of the autonomous human being is however, not the isolated egoism of the liberal view, which originated in an economic market context, as Bookchin explains: "Liberalism offered the individual a modicum of 'freedom', to be sure, but one that was constructed by the 'invisible hand' of the competitive marketplace, not by the capacity of free individuals to act according to ethical considerations. The 'free entrepreneur' on whom liberalism modeled its image of individual autonomy was in fact completely trapped in a market collectivity, however 'emancipated' he seemed ... He was the plaything of a 'higher law' of market interactions based on competing egos..." (Bookchin, 1990a, in Biehl, 1997, p. 152).

By contrast, the social anarchist tradition recognizes "the social matrix of individuality"; that "our individuality depends heavily on community support systems and solidarity" (Bookchin, 1987b, revised 1995, in Biehl, 1997, p. 180). We enhance our creativity, solidarity, sense of justice, self-development, and freedom "within a socially creative and institutionally rich collectivity" (Bookchin, 1987b, p. 180).

The same anarchist heritage emphasizes the importance of the well-rounded person, in whom the dualities engendered by the oppression of hierarchy, are knitted together again, by exposing "....man to the stimuli provided by both agrarian and urban life, to physical activity and mental activity, to unrepressed sensuality[28] and self-directed spirituality, to communal solidarity and individual

[28] According to Bookchin, a frequently unaddressed schism is the suppression of sensuality by reason, or of the body by the mind. In the anarchist view of the human being, the body is emancipated "in the form of a new sensuousness... A sheer sense of *joie de vivre* is closely wedded to the anarchic tradition, despite the arid patches of asceticism that surface in its midst ...". Bookchin writes approvingly of the Ophites, who "in the backwash of antiquity, reread the biblical scriptures to make knowledge the key to salvation; the snake and Eve, the agents of freedom; the ecstatic release of the flesh, the medium for the full expression of the soul..." (Bookchin, 1990a, in Biehl, 1997, p. 153)

development, to regional uniqueness and worldwide brotherhood, to spontaneity and self-discipline, to the elimination of toil and the promotion of craftsmanship. In our schizoid society, these goals are regarded as mutually exclusive, indeed as sharply opposed. They appear as dualities because of the very logistics of present-day society .... " (Bookchin, 1964, in Biehl, 1997, p. 21). Anarchist thought at its best "saw these contradictions clearly and tried to overcome them with an ideal of freedom ..." (Bookchin, 1990a, in Biehl, 1997, p. 154), i.e. through a redemptive social dialectic which expresses itself in concrete, alternative social arrangements.

In free nature, humanity embraces a new ethic of complementarity. In this ethic, human beings do not regard themselves as "the lords of creation". Human needs and the needs of nonhuman life-forms are joined in a beneficial reciprocal relationship. Human beings are divided neither against the nonhuman world, nor against themselves (Biehl, 1993, p. 388).

## 5. The ethic

Dialectical naturalism contains within it, a naturalistic ethic, which in Bookchin's view, is an *objective* ethic, based in evolution as ontology, which however avoids past abuse of nature philosophy to legitimate social aberrations such as fascism, anti-Semitism, imperialism, and racism. There is in the idea that first nature has immanent mind, displaying nisus towards increasing subjectivity and freedom [4.1.2, 4.1.3], and in a phenomenon's successful or unsuccessful development towards its implied actuality, an ontological standard of what "the rational, the good, the just, or indeed the free" is (Bookchin, 1992, in Fotopoulos, 1992). Dialectical naturalism "forms an *objective* framework for making ethical judgements...". Its ethic is not "merely a matter of personal taste and values", but "factually anchored in the world itself as an objective standard of self-realization" (Bookchin, 1995c, in Biehl, 1997, p. 214, his italics).

Bookchin rejects "the naturalistic fallacy", that is, the failure to separate "ought" from "is". Because he rejects Hume's philosophical heritage, "with its lack of contextuality, historicity, or sense of direction" in which "virtually anything is possible if it can be stated consistently" (Bookchin, 1990d, p. 255), he also rejects Hume's argument that an "ought" cannot be derived from an "is". From a dialectical point of view, Bookchin argues that Hume's is/ought dichotomy is "simply meaningless" (Bookchin, 1990d, p. 270), a non-issue[29]. Using "eduction" as form of reasoning [section 3.2], evolutionary biology and ecology can act normatively as well (based on thoughts from Eckersley, 1989, p. 109). "The 'ought' or the 'what should be', in fact, is even more 'real' than an existential 'is' *if* it expresses the logical implications of the potential. It ["it" referring as I understand it, to the "ought"] is the *actual (wirklich)* qua the realization of the potential and, as such, the *rational*. The critical and moral implications of this view, as writers like Max Horkheimer and Herbert Marcuse have pointed out, are sweeping indeed ... " (Bookchin, 1990d, p. 270, his italics).

While not comprehending fully what Bookchin is saying here, I understand at least that he means, that it is in the difference between the "what should be" of something, compared to what it "is", that moral significance lies. There are moral dimensions to immanent potentiality becoming actuality. One is that the actualization might not happen. Something might interfere with it, or eliminate the process altogether. The thing might not become what its potentialities suggest it *ought* to become. Bookchin sees in this "distinction between the rational[30] and the accidental ... a significant moral ... insight"

[29] Committing the "naturalistic fallacy" seems to be a regular feature of the ecological worldview. Goldsmith (1992) also argues that Hume's view is invalid. On Goldsmith's view, the relation of is to ought cannot be reduced to a mere matter of logic; it is inescapably linked to a worldview as well (pp. 403-407)

[30] Bookchin's term for what the thing's potentialities suggest it ought to become. It is "rational" because the "ought" is not arbitrary but implicit in the phenomenon. "Accidental" would suggest randomness in nature's evolution, which social ecologists refute

(Bookchin, 1990d, p. 267; also p. 269, p. 270)]. In the real-world example given earlier, the acorn might not become the oak tree. It might be prematurely eaten, or fail to find soil in which to germinate.

A second moral dimension of first nature is its symbiosis. While not denying opposition, conflict, and struggle as operating forces in nature [the traditional Marxist dialectical view of nature], Bookchin emphasizes reconciliation, co-operation, and harmony more (Simon, 1990, pp. 218-219, 223), much as nineteenth century anarchist Kropotkin's mutual aid in nature[31] thesis did. The success of an organism's unfolding of potentiality into increasing freedom "*depends on the existence of symbiotic cooperation at all levels*" of nature (Clark, 1993, p. 347, my italics). Socially, this milieu of mutual aid/symbiosis is best provided in the context of Kropotkin-like small-scale communities (Bookchin, 1988a, in VanDeVeer and Pierce, 1994, p. 231). Hence the antipathy to hierarchy, the preference for local autonomy, and for communitarian values in political praxis found in Social Ecology's view of society [section 6].

## 5.1 The theory of motivation to ethical behaviour

How to achieve the "Aufhebung" from second nature to "free nature", the *telos* in which both first nature and humanity have fulfilled their potential, have reached "their full actualisation", of which Biehl (1993, p. 387, p. 388) spoke? It is only through a change in humanity's spiritual values – "a far-reaching transformation of our prevailing mentality of domination into one of complementarity" – that "an awakened humanity" will be able to "complement nonhuman beings own capacities to produce a richer, creative, and developmental whole – not as a "dominant" species but as a supportive one" (Bookchin, 1993, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, p. 355).

However, the concept of spiritual regeneration in Bookchin's work has nothing to do with religion. Nature's self-evolving pattern of self-organization is not dependent on a "transcendent God or Spirit" (Eckersley, 1989, p. 102). Social ecology's call for the "respiritization of the natural world" is also not to be understood as, for example, some ecofeminists' understanding of the earth as goddess to be worshipped (Chapter Six). It "should not be mistaken for a theology that raises a deity above the natural world or that seeks to discover one within it." Its spirituality "is definitively naturalistic … rather than supernaturalistic or pantheistic" (Bookchin, 1993, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, p. 355).

Social ecology does not prioritise *any* form of spirituality above the social factors responsible for the degradation of nature. It is the "blind social mechanism" of the market, along with hierarchy and class, which is responsible for "turning soil into sand, …poisoning air and water, and producing sweeping climatic and atmospheric changes…" (Bookchin, 1993, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, p. 355) … these are the factors which have far greater potential in shaping the future of the natural world than any "privatistic forms of spiritual self-regeneration" (Bookchin, 1993, p. 356).

## 5.2 The theory of value

Bookchin did not subscribe to "a priori vagaries like 'intrinsic worth' (Bookchin, 1992, in Fotopoulos, 1992), a concept which only humans could have come up with in the first place (Bookchin, 1995c, in Biehl, 1997, pp. 217-218). Bookchin does consider that values in nature are values in themselves; he refers to "implicit" value: "... I am trying to say, following a long philosophical tradition, that values are implicit in the natural world..." (Bookchin, 1990d, p. 255, footnote 9). He identifies some of these values: "Mutualism [sometimes called symbiosis], self-organization, freedom, and subjectivity, cohered by social ecology's principles of unity in diversity, spontaneity, and nonhierarchical

[31] According to social ecologist Bradford, Kropotkin's thesis of mutual aid and co-operation in evolution "is now being vindicated by evolutionary theory's deepening understanding of symbiosis and mutualism in nature" (Bradford, 1993, p. 431)

relationships, *are thus ends in themselves ... Nature does not 'exist' for us*; it simply legitimates us and our uniqueness ecologically" (Bookchin, 1990d, p. 273, my italics).

Other values are first nature's "directionality" (Simon, 1990, p. 213), "increasing complexity", "incredible mutability", "fecundity" and "creativity" (Bookchin, 1990d, p. 257; Eckersley, 1989, p. 103 and footnote 15). Eckersley (1989, p. 103) provides a social ecology version of Leopold's famous maxim[32]: "A thing is right when it tends to foster the diversity, complexity, complementarity, and spontaneity of the ecosystem. It is wrong when it tends otherwise".

### 5.2.1 The special status of diversity as value

Diversity [variety, increasing differentiation] holds special value for Bookchin, because (1) it produces the equilibrium and stability in first nature needed to support advanced life; applied to both first and second nature, (2) it is a source of freedom, and (3) a measure of progress in society.

#### *5.2.1.1 Diversity and stability*

Diversity is at the heart of what Bookchin calls ecology's "critical" and "reconstructive" messages:

> If we diminish variety in the natural world, we debase its unity and wholeness; we destroy the forces making for natural harmony and for a lasting equilibrium; and, what is even more significant, we introduce an absolute retrogression in the development of the natural world that may eventually render the environment unfit for advanced forms of life. To sum up the reconstructive message of ecology: If we wish to advance the unity and stability of the natural world, if we wish to harmonize it, we must conserve and promote variety" (Bookchin, 1964, in Biehl, 1997, p. 20).

#### *5.2.1.2. Diversity and freedom*

Eckersley (1989, p. 104) suggests that Bookchin accords to diversity "a special status as a guarantor of ongoing freedom", and cites from his paper on "Freedom and necessity in nature: a problem in ecological ethics":

> Diversity may be regarded as a source not only of greater ecocommunity stability; it may also be regarded in a very fundamental sense as an ever-expanding, albeit nascent, source of *freedom* within nature, a medium of objectively anchoring varying degrees of choice, self-directedness, and *participation by life-forms in their own evolution* (Bookchin, 1986b, p. 5, his italics).

Some conceptual steps have been omitted in this particular Bookchin leap from diversity to freedom though. I understand his argument to be that variety [differentiation, diversity] is "a *precondition* for complexity in organisms and ecosystems" (Bookchin, 1995c, p. 215, his italics); it is the interactive and interdependent complexity which allows the emergence of subjectivity. As subjectivity accumulates in first nature, so it allows the increased choice and self-direction which constitutes freedom (based on Bookchin, 1995c, in Biehl, 1997, p. 215, p. 216, p. 217).

#### *5.2.1.3 Diversity and social progress*

Diversity produces the "ecological principle of wholeness and balance as a product of diversity" (Bookchin, 1964, in Biehl, 1997, p. 21). How would this principle apply to social theory? In Herbert Read's (1954/1971) discussion of the philosophy of anarchism, progress "is measured by the degree of differentiation within a society". Closely associated with diversity in first nature is the spontaneity with which it arises. A society should therefore be one in which "the potentialities of society and humanity" are released, one in which people's creativity is given "free and unfettered rein". This is not achieved in societies of rule and domination, but in one in which "insight, reason, and knowledge" are

[32] "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise" (Leopold, [1949], 1966, p. 240)

recognized as the means for fulfilling the potentialities of a situation (Bookchin, 1964, in Biehl, 1997, p. 21).

## 5.3 The scope

Bookchin's ethic covers the entire spectrum of nature as he understands it - first, second, and free nature: "...in my view, 'the only meaningful, long-term solution [is] to replace the modern world's 'odious morality' with a holistic, environmental ethic that ... [has] as its basis respect for all people and all nature'" (Bookchin, 1990d, p. 266, citing his own words, in Nash, 1989, p.p. 164-165). Complementarity as ethical obligation towards fellow human beings forms part of my discussion of Bookchin's views on society [section 6]. I focus next on human beings' obligations towards first nature.

## 5.4 The moral obligation: an ethic of complementarity

> The concept of free nature is meant to express precisely the 'ethics of complementarity', ... in which human conceptual thought, placed not 'over' first nature but in the service of both natural and social evolution, forms a new *symbiotic* relationship between human communities and the nonhuman ecocommunities in which they are located. (Bookchin, 1990d, pp. 258-259, his italics)

Bookchin's ethic of complementarity as far as first nature is concerned, boils down to purposive human intervention in it, but with an important caveat.

Human beings, having understood the nature of nature – evolutionary, creative, mutualistic, fecund (Simon, 1990, p. 225 citing Bookchin, 1986a, p. 71), marked by a tendency towards increasing subjectivity, rationality, and freedom (Bookchin, 1990d, p. 259), have, as nature's "self-reflexive" voice (Bookchin, 1990d, p. 273), "a moral responsibility to function creatively in the unfolding of that evolution" (Bookchin, 1993, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, p. 369). They should place their "intellectual, communicative, and social [traits] at the *service* of natural evolution[33] to consciously increase biotic diversity, diminish suffering, foster the further evolution of new and ecologically valuable life-forms, reduce the impact of disastrous accidents or the harsh effects of mere change" (Bookchin, 1988a, in VanDeVeer, 1994, p. 237; his italics). Human beings should "complement nonhuman beings own capacities to produce a richer, creative, and developmental whole" (Bookchin, 1993, p. 355), even act "on behalf of life and evolution" (Clark, 1993, p. 349), helping nature along, as it were, in its own tendency towards self-transformation and self-development, towards greater diversity and greater value.

Here is the caveat:

> Whether this species, gifted by the creativity of natural evolution, can play the role of a nature rendered self-conscious or cut against the grain of natural evolution by simplifying the biosphere, polluting it, and undermining the cumulative results of organic evolution is above all a *social* problem (Bookchin, 1988a, in VanDeVeer & Pierce, 1994, pp. 237-238, his italics).

For Bookchin, the social problem can only be solved by a transition to a society free of the idea of hierarchy and domination, expressed in "palpable social institutions that will give active meaning to its goal [i.e. the complementarity ethic] of wholeness, and of human involvement as conscious and moral agents in the interplay of species" (Bookchin, 1993, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, p. 369). This is the "free nature" stage of evolution.

[33] Biehl (1993, p. 387) writes similarly that in the complementarity ethic, humanity places its consciousness at the service of first nature, "by diminishing the impact of natural catastrophes, and promoting the thrust of natural evolution toward diversity and ending needless suffering, thereby fueling the creativity of natural evolution through its technics, science and rationality"

### 5.4.1 Clarification of acceptable human intervention into first nature

> I repeatedly encounter criticisms of my support of human intervention into nature ... As I have repeatedly emphasized, only in an ecological society can we hope that human ingenuity and technology will play an ecologically creative role. Rarely, however, do my deep ecology critics take cognizance of this position (Bookchin, 1990d, p. 272).

I derive next from Bookchin's 1990 paper, and other writings, what I see as clarifications of the kind of human intervention into nature which would be permissible within an ethic of complementarity:

(1) Intervention is not " a desideratum under all circumstances" (Bookchin, 1990d, p. 272).

(2) The intervention should protect, restore, and help those values in nature which Bookchin considers important, for example, mutualism, self-organization, unity in diversity, spontaneity, and nonhierarchical relationships (Bookchin, 1990d, p. 273).

(3) It is dubious if any intervention within a capitalist system would count as "complementarity": "Let me explain again that I have no confidence that capitalism – either corporate or state – can intervene in first nature (or for that matter, in second nature) constructively" (Bookchin, 1990d, p. 272).

(4) Complementarity demands prudence, not mastery. "Even if we were to make this advance [to a free nature society], it would be an essential part of my view that first nature is far too complex to be dealt with in anything but the most prudent manner" (Bookchin, 1990d, p. 255, footnote 6). This view is also present in his citation from his *Ecology of Freedom* (1982, pp. 24-25, repeated in Bookchin, 1990d, p. 257; also in Bookchin, 1982, in Biehl, 1997, p. 35):

> To assume that science commands this vast nexus of organic and inorganic relationship in all its details is worse than arrogance; it is sheer stupidity. ... The compelling dictum 'respect for nature', has concrete implications. To assume that our knowledge of this complex, richly textured, and perpetually changing natural kaleidoscope of life-forms lends itself to a degree of 'mastery' that allows us free rein in manipulating the biosphere is sheer foolishness.

(5) But it is unlikely that a case could be made against human interventions which are "very *prudent*, *nonexploitative*, and *ecologically guided* ... in an ecological society" (Bookchin, 1990d, p. 272, his italics). The concept "ecological society" [section 6] also has limiting implications on intervention into nature.

Deep ecology, writes Bookchin, "...must desist from calling everything "anthropocentric" such that every creative intervention of the human mind into first nature, within the framework of an ecological society, is assumed to be *ipso facto* undesirable" (Bookchin, 1990d, p. 272).

### 5.4.2 Is the ethic of complementarity, anthropocentric?

Deep ecologists have accused social ecologists of ontological dualism, of seeing humanity as transcendent over nature, as seeking to steer the direction of evolution; generally, of being anthropocentric. It is essential to look carefully at this critique by deep ecologists, because, within the purpose of this study, it is saying that social ecology, in one important dimension at least, is not "green" [the Wissenburg heuristic, Chapter One, Figure 2; and the rough "rule definition[34]" of "green"

[34] "Any new social movement, political party, philosophy, or political ideology which describes itself as "green", or is described by a reliable commentator as "green" qualifies as a member of the "green" set. Further, a member of the "green" set will tend towards biocentrism/ecocentrism as theory of environmental value, and propose radical, not reformist, changes to society (Wissenburg, 1993, pp. 4-5)"

partly derived from it, in Chapter Two, section 1.1]. On balance though, it seems that Bookchin cannot be accused of anthropocentrism as it is normally defined. Even so, defined by dark green deep ecology standards[35], his ethic of complementarity is too interfering in nature.

#### *5.4.2.1 Dualistic?*

Deep ecologist Sessions (1995c, p. 97) charges that social ecology's 'second nature' view exemplifies a human/nature dualism. It is hard to find in Bookchin's ontological thought though [section 4.2.1.1], anything except a firm denial of any human/nature dualism. Even Robyn Eckersley, deep ecologist critic of Bookchin, grants that his numerous writings on social ecology "have sought to undermine the cleavage between the social and the natural and restore a sense of continuity between human society and the creative process of natural evolution..." (Eckersley, 1989, p. 100).

#### *5.4.2.2 Transcendent?*

Sessions also critiques the second nature view as dualistic and anthropocentric in that human beings are able to escape the "predictability, determinism, environmental control, instincts and other mechanisms which 'imprison' other life forms" (Sessions, 1995c, pp. 101-102[36]). On this view, humanity has transcended nature (Sessions, 1995c, p. 97), implying also then, the transcendence of "natural laws and constraints" (Sessions, 1995c, p. 303).

Bookchin does speak of transcendence, but in the context of a second nature [humanity] which has overcome its hierarchical failings:

> It is basic to my argument, ... that in an ecological society, no conflict need exist between the two [i.e. between human and nonhuman interests] precisely because second nature – with its hierarchical class, economic, ethnic and psychological malformations – is transcended in a harmonious relationship among humans and between humanity and nature (Bookchin, 1990d, p. 259).

And:

> It is essential to emphasize that second nature is, in fact, an *unfinished,* indeed inadequate, development of nature as a whole. ... Hierarchy, class, the state, and the like are evidence – and, by no means, purely accidental evidence – of the unfulfilled potentialities of nature to actualize itself as a nature that is self-consciously creative. *Humanity as it now exists is not nature rendered self-conscious.* The future of the biosphere depends overwhelmingly on whether second nature can be transcended in a new system of social and organic conciliation, one that I would call 'free nature' – a nature that would diminish the pain and suffering that exist in both first and second nature. Free nature, in effect, would be a conscious and ethical nature, an ecological society.... (Bookchin, 1990b, in Biehl, 1997, p. 218, his italics).

#### *5.4.2.3 Steering the direction of evolution?*

Deep ecologists have charged Bookchin with suggesting that humanity should "seize the helm of evolution[37]" (Bookchin, 1990d, p. 254, p. 258, commenting on this charge by Eckersley); that human beings, through their rationality, "can take control of the earth's evolutionary processes", and can "determine the direction of evolution" (Sessions, 1994, p. 220), a claim which Bookchin rejects (1990d, pp. 253-274).

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[35] Chapter Four, point 5 of the deep ecology platform, in section 1.3.4, and primarily section 4.1.4
[36] Drawing on Shepard (1969, no page given)
[37] Eckersley wrote: "There are certain parallels ... between Bookchin's organismic philosophy and the interdisciplinary philosophy of the French theologian Teilhard de Chardin, although they should not be pressed too far. Both thinkers understand the evolutionary process in terms of advancing subjectivity that has reached its most developed forms in humans, who have become 'nature rendered self-conscious', at the helm of evolution" (Eckersley, 1989, p. 104). Eckersley's "helm" image possibly comes from Bookchin's interpretation of ecologist Charles Elton's image of nature as a boat: " 'The world's future has to be managed, but this management would not be just like a game of chess – more like steering a boat.' What ecology, both natural and social can hope to teach us is how to find the current and understand the direction of the stream." (Bookchin, 1982b, in Biehl, 1997, p. 35)

Bookchin does see humanity as playing a creative role in nature's further evolution, particularly towards increasing diversity (Bookchin, 1982b, in Biehl, 1997, p. 35), but again, it is within his vision of complementarity in "free nature": "The objective ethics of dialectical naturalism has a special importance in creating an ecological sensibility, in that it justifies the creative function that human beings can play in the evolutionary process in fostering biodiversity, preserving species, diminishing needless pain and suffering in the natural world, and the like. Dialectical naturalism provides the soundest basis that I know of for imbuing a free, ecologically oriented society with the ethical obligation to engage in the evolutionary function of humanity as potentially nature rendered self-conscious." (Bookchin, 1992, in Fotopoulos, 1992).

#### *5.4.2.4 Not the more familiar kind of anthropocentrism*

Is the ethic of complementarity, anthropocentric as deep ecologist Sessions charges? Environmental ethicist Attfield (2003, p. 188) defines normative anthropocentrism as "A stance that limits moral standing to human beings, confines the scope of morality and moral concern to human interests, and regards nothing but human well-being as valuable intrinsically. (Literally, anthropocentrism of values, norms and principles)". Bookchin's anthropocentrism is not of this variety.

Deep ecology supporter Eckersley (1989, p. 115, her italics, my bold emphasis) writes that "Bookchin's anthropocentrism ... is not of the more familiar kind. Indeed, his philosophy of nature is in part a critique of mechanistic materialism and instrumentalism along with the idea that humans must dominate and control nature so as to adapt it to *human* ends. Rather, human activity must be guided by overarching evolutionary and ecological processes, **not the instrumental needs of humans**, an approach that seeks to reconnect human social activity with the natural realm". She also writes that "To be sure, Bookchin himself has made many early and important inroads into anthropocentrism. He has repeatedly emphasized his rejection of *environmentalism*[38]..." (Eckersley, 1989, p. 114, her italics). These comments seem to rule out the complementarity ethic as strictly anthropocentric.

#### *5.4.2.5 But a rather interfering kind of stewardship, nonetheless*

The other idea abhorrent to deep ecologists is the amount of interference into natural processes which Bookchin's special role for human beings ["human stewardship of the earth" (Bookchin, 1987a, p. 32)] seems to legitimate. He writes: "From an evolutionary viewpoint, humanity has been *constituted* to intervene actively, consciously, and purposively into first nature with unparalleled effectiveness and to alter it on a planetary scale. To denigrate this capacity is to deny the thrust of natural evolution itself...." (Bookchin, 1990b, in Biehl, 1997, p. 216, his italics). There is in Bookchin's writings, a spirited defence of human interference in natural processes (for example, Bookchin, 1990d, pp. 272-273). Second nature has anyway, "all but absorbed first nature"; there is no part of the world "that has not been profoundly affected by human activity", such wild areas which continue to exist do so primarily as a result of human decisions; nearly all "the nonhuman life-forms that exist today are, like it or not, to some degree in human custody, and whether they are preserved in their wild lifeways depends largely on human attitudes and behaviour" (Bookchin, 1990b, in Biehl, 1997, p. 217).

Sessions argues that Bookchin's views positively encourage the "continued humanization and domestication" of "first nature" by "second nature", on the grounds that "the wild is 'liberated' and made 'free' when humans override natural spontaneous processes" (Sessions, 1994, p. 220[39]). Eckersley argues that Bookchin's "vision of human stewardship" is "troubling" in that it "does not qualify how and to what extent" we are to discharge our responsibility of promoting diversity in nature (Eckersley, 1989, p. 111). Simon (1990, pp. 223-224) also has concerns as to how specifically, humans

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[38] Bookchin's understanding of environmentalism is presented in section 2.1.4.2 of this chapter

[39] "As with Marcuse, the wild is 'liberated' and made 'free' for Bookchin when humans override natural spontaneous processes and 'rationally' direct the Earth's evolutionary processes" (Sessions, 1995g, p. 304, citing Bookchin, 1990c, p. 204

are to co-operate "in the process of teleological development of which we are such a significant part", such as, who decides what the potentialities in nature are, and which ones count as teleological development? Bookchin's view that humanity's distinctive intellectual, communicative, and social traits should be placed in the service of natural evolution to consciously increase biotic diversity, leaves deep ecologists "wondering what biotechnology company could present a better case to legitimate their activities?" (Fox, 1989, p. 16, footnote 28).

Environmental ethicist Attfield is also concerned: "Belief in stewardship also has its dangers. While stewardship is usually regarded as aimed at 'preserving the face of the earth in beauty, usefulness and fruitfulness' and therewith Earth's species, attempts to take control of the entire surface of the planet, or of the entire evolutionary process, have been suggested in its name by (among others) the social ecologist Murray Bookchin, as realizing the creativity implicit in nature. This, however, is a domineering approach, out of keeping with stewardship..." (Attfield, 2003, p. 23, and footnotes 55 and 56 on p. 28[40]).

Even if we ever did achieve Bookchin's ecological free nature society, and its harmonious complementarity ethic, it *is,* if not anthropocentric, then at least breathtakingly arrogant [presumptuous, in Eckersley's view (1989, p. 111, p. 115), domineering in environmental ethicist Attfield's view (2003, p. 23)] to think that humanity, which represents only a moment in evolutionary history, has understood evolution's intent, and could or should forthwith assist in its further unfolding towards not mere diversity, but subjectivity. In the final analysis, I think, it is only one's personal ultimate premises which can help one decide if human beings are entitled to guide [not just interfere with] nature's general evolution.

### 5.4.3 The animal welfare issue

Despite its claims to being radically green [section 1], the issue of animal welfare - one of Wall's (1994, p. 66) two qualifying criteria for "dark green" - appears to be a non-issue in social ecology. In all the sources personally consulted on social ecology, I encountered only one paragraph referring to one aspect of animal welfare, that is, the status of livestock in industrial agriculture:

> Today food animals are being manipulated like a lifeless industrial resource. Normally, large numbers of animals are collected in the smallest possible area and are allowed only as much movement as is necessary for mere survival. Our meat animals have been placed on a diet composed for the most part of medicated feed high in carbohydrates. ... Our dairy herds are handled like machines, our poultry flocks, like hothouse tomatoes. The need to restore the time-honored intimacy between man and his livestock is just as pronounced as the need to bring agriculture within the horizon of the individual farmer. .... (Bookchin, 1962, in Biehl, 1997, p. 16).

The flavour here is decidedly human; farm animals are unlikely to have as their first priority, intimacy with the farmer. I encountered no discussion, for example, of how the ethic of complementarity is to be interpreted vis-a-vis the kind of animal welfare issues which concern the animal liberation theorists [Chapter Three], the ecofeminists [Chapter Six], or even Die Grünen [Chapter Seven, section 5.4.4]. As with the deep ecologists, attention to animal liberation issues in social ecology seems underdeveloped, to say the least.

## 6. View of society

The *Leitmotif* for social ecology is always that the causes of the ecological crisis are social in nature. The way to avert the danger of ecological disaster is to fundamentally transform present society "into a rational[41] and ecological one" (Biehl, 1997a, p. 7). The major characteristics of Bookchin's "free

[40] These cite respectively, Hale, M. (1677), section 4, Chapter. 8, p. 370; and Bookchin (1987a, no page given by Attfield)
[41] Where "rational" means, that both first and second nature are firmly on the developmental path that their latent potentiality suggests they

nature" society were already introduced in section 4.3. Here I discuss some elements of Bookchin's critique of existing hierarchical society (6.1), humanistic or liberatory technology as means of progressing to a post-scarcity society (6.2), and the major characteristics of his rational ecological society (6.3).

## 6.1 The critique of existing society

Bookchin's critique of current society begins with an affirmation of Enlightenment values such as "humanism, naturalism, reason, science, and technology". But second nature, as it exists today, is marked by "monstrous attributes", such as hierarchy, the state, private property, class, and "a competitive market economy that obliges economic rivals to grow at the expense of each other or perish" (Bookchin, 1995c, in Biehl, 1997, p. 217). The two aspects of Bookchin's critique of existing society discussed here are the concentration of power in hierarchical institutions such as the state (6.1.1), and capitalism as economic system and culture (6.1.2).

### 6.1.1 Power

Bookchin does not see power in the diffused way that postmodernists do. "The problem of dealing with the growing power of nation-states and of centralized corporations, property ownership, production, and the like is *precisely a question of power* – that is to say, who shall have it or who shall be denied any power at all" (Bookchin, 1987b, revised 1995, in Biehl, 1997, p. 192, his italics). Power is real, tangible, and solid, a "muscular fact of life" (p. 193). To ignore that is to "drift from the visionary into the ethereal ..." (p. 193). Power that is not in the hands of citizens, is in Bookchin's view, power in the wrong place.

#### *6.1.1.1 and the nation-state*

Bookchin does not favour the nation-state, "the principal source of nationalism, a regressive ideology, and of statism, the principle source of coercion" (Bookchin, 1993, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, p. 371). "Statecraft", that is, the professional management of the state, is nothing other than "the exercise of its [i.e. the State's] monopoly of violence, its control of the entire regulative apparatus of society in the form of legal and ordinance-making bodies, and its governance of society by means of professional legislators, armies, police forces, and bureaucracies" (Bookchin, 1987b, revised 1995, in Biehl, 1997, p. 193). By its very nature, the state is "a coercive, professionalized, and domineering phenomenon that never ceases to expand, to increase its powers, and to try in all circumstances to take over the entirety of social life" (Bookchin, 1992, in Fotopoulos, 1992). Political parties, with their hierarchical organization, and their attempts through power manoeuvres to occupy the offices which make and execute policy, are nothing other than miniature states (Bookchin, 1987b, p. 174).

He dismisses patriotism too: " 'Patriotism', as the etymology of the word indicates, is the nation-state's conception of the citizen as a child, the obedient creature of the nation-state conceived as a paterfamilias or stern father, who orchestrates belief and commands devotion..." (Bookchin, 1987b, revised 1995, in Biehl, 1997, p. 181). *Philia* [section 6.3.3.1], not patriotism, is the expression of true citizenship.

Only if the entire hierarchical power structure is radically democratized, will the principles of participation and complementarity be possible (Bookchin, 1987b, revised 1995, in Biehl, 1997, p. 193). If ordinary people are to regain power from the state, "the management of society must be deprofessionalized as much as possible. That is to say, it must be simplified and rendered transparent, indeed, clear, accessible, and manageable such that most of its affairs can be run by ordinary citizens" (p. 193). I single out this aspect of Bookchin's thought because it provides the forgotten radical context

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should be on, i.e. on their way to freedom

- as with so much of "green" - of today's citizens' polite requests for "transparency" in government. What is needed is a movement of people which will "*initiate* local steps to regain power in its most popular and democratic forms" (p. 193, his italics). It is only citizens participating in direct democracy who can "potentially eliminate the domination of human by human" (Bookchin, 1993, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, p. 372) and thereby, the human domination of nature. Part of this domination is capitalism as economic system, and as culture.

### 6.1.2 Capitalism as economy and culture

> Unless we realize that the present market society, structured around the brutally competitive imperative of 'grow or die', is a thoroughly impersonal self-operating mechanism, we will falsely tend to blame technology as such or population growth as such for environmental problems. We will ignore their root causes, such as trade for profit, industrial expansion, and the identification of 'progress' with corporate self-interest (Bookchin, 1993, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, p. 355).

To all his writing, notes Biehl (1997a, p. 11), "Bookchin brings a passionate hatred of the capitalist social order...". Let's not beat about the bush, or use metaphors such as "technological/industrial" society as the reason for our ecocide, says Bookchin (1988a, in VanDeVeer, 1994, p. 237), the problem is "the vested corporate and political interests we should properly call *capitalism*" (1988, in VanDeVeer, 1994, p. 238, his italics), one of the worst forms of hierarchal social order, and ecological destruction, now expressing itself in multinational mobile capital and globalization. Nor in the social ecology view, were the planned, state capitalisms of the East European communist states any better in this regard (Kovel, 1993, p. 407); they were "equally ecologically destructive" (Bookchin, 1991, in Chase, 1991, in VanDeVeer & Pierce, 1994, p. 241). Social ecology's major criticisms of modern capitalism are the a-morality of its market system, its devastating impact on the environment, its "commodification" and "marketing" of almost every aspect of human life, and its "aura of invincibility".

The market system has acquired a life of its own, and is "*largely impervious to moral considerations and efforts at ethical persuasion*" (Bookchin, 1993, in Zimmerman et al., p. 367; his italics; also p. 368). Maxims such as " 'business is business' explicitly tell us that ethical, religious, psychological and emotional factors have absolutely no place in the impersonal world of production, profit, and growth" (p. 368). Progress is now defined in these terms, and no longer, as it once was, as "a faith in the evolution of greater human cooperation and care" (Bookchin, 1993, p. 367). Other elements of his market critique are: (1) It is no longer a place of exchange, providing for people's moderate needs, but has become "a procreator of needs, many of which are simply useless" (2) It is a "bitterly competitive" (p. 367) system in which non-durable, non-repairable goods are produced "exclusively for sale and profit" (p. 367), and the media contribute to fostering their "mindless consumption" (p. 368). Large corporations have become skilled at turning people's ecological concern into marketing ploys aimed at "green" consumerism[42] (p. 368). (3) The "driving imperatives" (p. 367) of the industrial market are capitalistic development, technological innovation, dehumanizing competition, profit, and expansionism – a kind of devour or be devoured mentality.

A society based on such an outlook must necessarily have a "devastating ecological impact" (Bookchin, 1993, in Zimmerman et al., p. 368). Capitalism, "with its insatiable extraction of energy and resources and its relentless production of waste under the imperative of accumulation, is responsible for the ecological crisis. The capitalist must obey the rule of the maximization of profit or disappear, to be replaced by another who obeys; and since profits are made by the exploitation of nature, so must capital exploit nature on an ever-increasing scale" (Kovel, 1993, p. 406). This is exacerbated as the capitalist economy "becomes industrialized, monopolized, and globalized". Small-

[42] "We live in a highly cooptative society that is only too eager to find new areas of commercial aggrandizement and to add ecological verbiage to its advertising and customer relations" (Bookchin, 1993, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, p. 356)

scale, local destruction of nature becomes "ecocide" (Kovel, 1993, p. 411). Corporate capitalism is for Bookchin, "*inherently* anti-ecological". "Green" capitalism, "green" consumerism, and running workshops for corporate executives on how to adopt "ecologically sound business ethics" is nothing other than "shallow, reformist, and very naïve thinking" (Bookchin, 1991, in Chase, 1991, in VanDeVeer & Pierce, 1994, p. 245, his italics).

Capitalism has gone beyond being only an economic system, to becoming an entire way of life, "based upon economization of human reality" (Kovel, 1993, p. 406). It "is penetrating into every aspect of daily life--into the family, personal relationships, the most intimate values--not only into all aspects of economic life. The supermarket and shopping mall are perhaps the best metaphors I have for the way in which [capitalism organizes] daily life ... People are being reduced to mere buyers and sellers, not fulfilled as individuals and citizens ... [there has been] what I call the *marketization* of everyday life, to coin a word--commodification is not a strong enough word ..." (Bookchin, 1992, in Fotopoulos, 1992, his italics). Capitalism has become "a grim social pathology"(Bookchin, 1993, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, p. 355).

Yet capitalism has about it, an "aura of invincibility", a "mystique" (Kovel, 1993, p. 407), now strengthened by the failure of "the heroic socialist revolutions" to dislodge it (Kovel, 1993, p. 407). We "are only just beginning to understand what capitalism really *is*, and we can barely anticipate what it will become at a later period. ... We have yet to see how capitalism will unfold ..." (Bookchin, 1992, in Fotopoulos, 1992, his italics). Given that, Marx's economic prognoses of capitalism's further development are today irrelevant, and so are "the attempts of neo-Marxists to situate Marxian theories in contemporary life" (Bookchin, in Fotopoulos, 1992). What is needed is a *fundamental* social transformation (Bookchin, 1993, p. 369):

> We are not simply talking about ending class exploitation, as most Marxists demand, as important as that is. We are talking about uprooting *all* forms of hierarchy and domination, in all spheres of social life. Of course, the immediate source of the ecological crisis is capitalism, but, to this, social ecologists add a deeper problem at the heart of our civilization – the existence of hierarchies and of a hierarchical mentality or culture that preceded the emergence of economic classes and exploitation. ... We need to search into institutionalized systems of coercion, command, and obedience that exist today and which preceded the emergence of economic classes. Hierarchy is not necessarily economically motivated. We must look beyond economic forms of exploitation into cultural forms of domination that exist in the family, between generations, sexes, racial and ethnic groups, in all institutions of political economic, and social management, and very significantly in the way we experience reality as a whole, including nature and non-human life-forms. (Bookchin, 1991, in Chase, 1991, in VanDeVeer, 1994, p. 244, his italics).

Bookchin considered the amazing advances in twentieth century technology to hold the potential for satisfying the preconditions for freedom in his "post-scarcity" society.

## 6.2 Scarcity, technology, and post-scarcity

"Liberatory" technology is the key which opens the door to Bookchin's radical new society. His views must be understood though within the context of the idea of "scarcity", both as material scarcity and as ideological pretext for centralized control of human beings by human beings, and domination of nature by human beings.

Often as a result of inequitable distribution of wealth, people have been, and are still, obliged to toil for long hours each day, either to wrest the goods they need for survival from a "stingy nature", or to earn a livelihood. This is Marx's "realm of necessity". Bookchin sees material scarcity to blame for the emergence of hierarchy in our anthropological history [section 4.2.3.1]. It "provided the historic rationale of the development of the patriarchal family, private property, class domination, and the

state..." (Bookchin, 1971, p. 9, in Biehl, 1997b, p. 99). Apart from actual material scarcity, there is also the *idea* of scarcity[43], utilized by authoritarian elites for ideological purposes of control – Bookchin would say, for domination and exploitation - of the many by an elite few. One need only think of the regulation of oil supply, or a food product, where surpluses are deliberately not released into the market in order to preserve the notion of scarcity, and thus a particular price, to realise that this kind of constructed scarcity is still part of our economy.

Practically, in our own age, scarcity and necessity have meant that there is simply not enough time for people to engage themselves in those pursuits which would contribute to the unfolding of their full potential as human beings, part of which, on the anarchist view, is political self-management. Because of its "pernicious social and political consequences", the elimination of scarcity (the reduction of toil, and the ushering in of an age of abundance for all) is a longstanding vision in the socialist tradition (Biehl, 1997b, p. 100).

Bookchin's argument is that up until the 1950s/1960s in western history, material scarcity was a function of *technology*'s limited ability to lessen the amount of time spent by humankind each day in "toil". But with the advent of modern automation and "cybernation[44]", modern technology is capable of delivering an abundance of goods in a fraction of the time previously needed. Western countries "... are now confronted by the possibility of a materially abundant, even toilless era in which most of the means of life can be provided by machines" (Bookchin, 1965d, in Biehl, 1997, p. 107). With the possibility of banishing scarcity, there could be no further justification for centralized authorities or the market to regulate distribution of goods and resources. The human being, now relieved of the burden of necessity through "liberatory technology", would have the free time to pursue "erotic liberation" as well as "social and political revolution" (Biehl, 1997b, p. 100) in a "post-scarcity" society.

By "post-scarcity", Bookchin means, not just freedom from material want, but the dissolution of all forms of hierarchy and domination, including capitalism, in a new, eco-anarchist society. By "liberatory" technology, he means not only the new, versatile, human-scale computer-based technologies which would reduce the amount of daily toil and free people to pursue liberation, but also the renewable energy technologies (Biehl, 1997b, p. 101) which would restore human beings' relationship with nature: "To bring the sun, the wind, the earth, indeed the world of life back into technology, into the means of human survival would be a revolutionary renewal of man's ties to nature" (Bookchin, 1965b, in Biehl, 1997, p. 30). These two kinds of technologies would provide the means of moving into a post-scarcity, eco-anarchist society, whose nature is suggested in this one of many of Bookchin's descriptions:

> …the decentralization of cities into confederally united communities sensitively tailored to the natural areas in which they are located. It means the use of ecotechnologies, and of solar, wind, methane, and other resources of energy, the use of organic forms of agriculture, the design of humanly scaled, versatile industrial installations to meet regional needs of confederated municipalities. It means, too, an emphasis not only on recycling, but on the production of high-quality goods that can last for generations. It means the substitution of creative work for insensate labor and an emphasis on artful craftspersonship in preference to mechanized production. It means the leisure to be artful and engage in public affairs. One would hope that the sheer availability of goods and the freedom to choose one's material lifestyle would sooner or later influence people to adopt moderation in all aspects of life as a response to the 'consumerism' that is promoted by the capitalist market (Bookchin, 1993, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, p. 370).

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[43] Another explanation is the "social construction of scarcity". Achterhuis (in Van Dieren, 1995, pp. 15-27, and drawing on the work of Toulmin, 1990), suggests that this began with Hobbes' unsavoury view that people always struggle to acquire more and more, not because they need it to survive, but to prevent another from having it. There was constant strife to keep this kind of "scarcity" at bay. Locke too, "often considered to be the grandfather of our modern economy, is also obsessed by the idea" of humankind facing a perpetual scarcity (Achterhuis, in Van Dieren, p. 17)

[44] Bookchin's term for the application of computer hard and software

New Left theorist Marcuse held a less optimistic view of the new abundance to be produced by advanced technology. He felt it would have "ambiguous social consequences. On the one hand, it would have the desirable consequence of making possible the liberation of the libido; but it would also generate the artificial satisfactions of consumerism and a new form of imperialism" (Biehl, 1997b, p. 100). Ecologist David Ehrenfeld has criticized Bookchin for his "toil-less technological" utopian optimism, claiming that "Bookchin and others like him have fled from reality to an altogether more soothing world of techno-pastoral dreams" (Sessions, 1994, pp. 220-221). But in Bookchin's view, "liberatory technology" would at last enable human beings to recover from the great wound[45] inflicted on them by the advent of "propertied society" (Bookchin, 1967, in Biehl, 1997, p. 102). The precondition for freedom has been satisfied.

## 6.3 The ecological rational [free] society

> Perhaps the greatest single failing of movements for social reconstruction--I refer particularly to the Left, to radical ecology groups, and to organizations that profess to speak for the oppressed--is their lack of a politics that will carry people beyond the limits established by the status quo (Bookchin, 2003).

The conditions of freedom, according to Bookchin, are decentralization, the formation of communities, the human scale, and direct democracy (Bookchin, 1969a, in Biehl, 1997, p. 141). His libertarian municipalism, a later version of his earlier eco-anarchism[46], sought to provide all these conditions. As I understand it, its essence is an enriched meaning of "decentralization" as opposition to all forms of hierarchy and domination. I discuss next, decentralization expressed in human scale eco-communities (6.3.1), and in the politics of libertarian municipalism (6.3.2).

### 6.3.1 Decentralization as human scale, communitarian, eco-communities

#### *6.3.1.1 Understanding the "flight to the suburbs"*

In the 1960s, the social phenomenon of "flight to the suburbs" or urban exodus began. Bookchin interpreted this phenomenon as a kind of people-initiated decentralization. The city has reached its biological economic but also psychic limits (Bookchin, 1962, in Biehl, 1997, p. 15). In the metropolis milieu, "city man ... has reached a degree of anonymity, social atomization, and spiritual isolation ... virtually unprecedented in human history. Today man's alienation from man is almost absolute. His standards of cooperation, mutual aid, simple human hospitality, and decency have suffered an appalling erosion...." (p. 19). There was also an alienation between town and country, between human and nonhuman nature. A "reconciliation" was not only desirable, but a necessity (p. 15). Millions of people, "however confusedly", are attempting to restore a sense of human scale to their environment, and to recreate in the suburbs, an interaction with other humans, and with the land [through activities such as horticulture, or some handicrafts], with which they could cope as individuals.

This confirmed for Bookchin, the need for decentralization in all spheres of human life. The basic social unit is the community. The community is "real", there is human scale in all spheres of human functioning, harmony is achieved with nature through respect for ecology, political power is exercised by citizens in face to face democracy, and there are opportunities for people's genuine self-development and realization.

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[45] "This technological revolution, culminating in cybernation, has created the objective, quantitative basis for a world without class rule, exploitation, toil, or material want. The means now exist for the development of the rounded man, the total man, freed of guilt and the workings of authoritarian modes of training, and given over to desire and the sensuous apprehension of the marvellous. It is now possible to conceive of man's future experience in terms of a coherent process in which the bifurcations of thought and activity, mind and sensuousness, discipline and spontaneity, individuality and community, man and nature, town and country, education and life, work and play are all resolved, harmonized, and organically wedded in a qualitatively new realm of freedom. ... particularized, bifurcated society ... [will be replaced by] an organically unified, many-sided community. The great wound opened by propertied society ... can now be healed" (Bookchin, 1967, in Biehl, 1997, p. 102)

[46] In the 1990s, Bookchin broke with anarchism, and instead, "articulated a new political vision that he called communalism" (Tokar, 2006). Its essential elements remain the same however

### *6.3.1.2 "Real" communities*

The human scale community is moderately sized: "... the megalopolis must be decentralized. A new type of community, carefully tailored to the characteristics and resources of a region, must replace the sprawling urban belts that are emerging today." (Biehl, 1997a, p. 7, citing from Bookchin's "Ecology and revolutionary thought", in *Post-scarcity anarchism*, 1971, pp. 74-75). The community is not simply a geographical suburb, or town, or village, it is a "real" community (Bookchin, 1964, in Biehl, 1997, p. 22). It constitutes the "most essential social political and, indeed, ethical sphere". Within the community, "cooperative institutions in all areas of social life will begin to emerge. These will include mutualistic associations for child care and education, for production and distribution, for cultural creation, for play and enjoyment, for reflection and spiritual renewal" (Clark, 1993, p. 350). The community's organization is based "not on the demands of power, as is inevitable under capitalist and statist institutions, but rather on the requirements for people's self-realization as free social beings, and for a nondominating human interaction with the whole of nature. Such a conception of the political requires that institutions be humanly scaled, decentralized, non-hierarchical and based on face-to-face democracy" (Clark, 1993, p. 350).

### *6.3.1.3 Human scale: industry and agriculture as examples*

Liberatory technology, particularly its replacement of large by ever smaller machines (Bookchin, 1965c, in Biehl, 1997, p. 24), and costly, specialized machines by "highly versatile, multipurpose machines" (Bookchin, 1965c, p. 24) promises human scale in industry, which can now be downsized from centralized national production to moderate-sized community level production, without being burdened by underused industrial facilities (Bookchin, 1965c, p. 25).

The decentralized community would help to reverse "gigantism" in agriculture: "Unless principles of good land use permit otherwise, a farm should not be smaller or larger than the individual farmer can command" (Bookchin, 1962, in Biehl, 1997, p. 16). Human scale agriculture, assisted by toil-relieving liberatory technology, would restore the possibility that "farmer and the soil can develop together, each responding as fully as possible to the needs of the other" (p. 16), and the "time-honored intimacy between man and his livestock" (p. 16). Agricultural and biological diversity are promoted (Bookchin, 1962, p. 18); organic, not chemical means of controlling agricultural pests (p. 18) are employed.

### *6.3.1.4 The eco-community*

The decentralized community would also be an eco-community. The community is established after a careful study of its natural ecology (Bookchin, 1965b, in Biehl, 1997, p. 27). It would be "well integrated with the resources of the surrounding region" (Bookchin, 1962, in Biehl, 1997, p. 17). The ecological region forms "the living social cultural and biotic boundaries" of the community or communities which it supports (Bookchin, 1965b, in Biehl, 1997, p. 28). Land management is guided entirely by ecological principles (p. 27). Agriculture is highly mechanized, but "as mixed as possible" (p. 27), avoiding the ecological damage done by monocropping (Bookchin, 1982b, in Biehl, pp. 34-35). Flora and fauna diversity is practised both as biological means of controlling pests and "enhancing scenic beauty" (Bookchin, 1965b, in Biehl, 1997, p. 27). Farming units are generally small-scale (p. 28). Sharp gradients are covered by timber to prevent erosion and conserve water (p. 28). Crops are grown only in soils suitable for them (p. 28). The human scale eco-community "holds the greatest promise for conserving natural resources"; it would promote the use of local resources and eco-technology[47] utilizing sources of energy such as "wind power, solar energy, and hydroelectric power" (Bookchin, 1962, in Biehl, 1997, p. 18), thus delaying, if not eliminating, the need to turn to nuclear

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[47] Bookchin notes that many of his views, for example those on "ecotechnology" formulated in the mid-1960s, were "assimilated over time by subsequent ecology movements", and re-expressed as "appropriate technology" (Bookchin, 1993, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, footnote 6, p. 373)

energy (p. 18). The use of such alternative technology "would be a revolutionary renewal of man's ties to nature" (Bookchin, 1965b, in Biehl, 1997, p. 30). Clean, quiet, slow-moving electrically-powered cars are used (p. 30). Communities are linked by rail, reducing scarring of the countryside (p.30).

In an unusually gentle passage, Bookchin writes: "Each community contains many vegetable and flower gardens, attractive arbors, park land, even streams and ponds that support fish and aquatic birds. The countryside, from which food and raw materials are acquired, not only constitutes the immediate environs of the community, accessible to all by foot, but invades the community. .... nature appears everywhere in the town, while the town seems to have caressed and left a gentle human imprint on nature..." (Bookchin, 1965b, in Biehl, 1997, p. 28).

#### *6.3.1.5 Direct democracy*

The decentralized community would "make an intimate and direct democracy possible" (Bookchin, 1982b, in Biehl, 1997, p. 32). This aspect, with its enriched notion of citizenship, is discussed in section 6.3.2.

#### *6.3.1.6 New dimensions in self-development*

Decentralized eco-communities, by restoring communal life, human scale, and harmony with nature, and by re-introducing complexity, offer the opportunity "to make individual life a more rounded experience" (Bookchin, 1962, in Biehl, 1997, p. 19), to create "new dimensions in self-development" (Bookchin, 1964, in Biehl, 1997, p. 23). For example, enterprises could be established which combine industry with agriculture, thus allowing diversification of occupational activities for the same individual (Bookchin, 1962, in Biehl, 1997, p. 17; 1964, in Biehl, 1997, p. 22). There would also be the experience of direct face to face democracy through participation in the local assemblies which will manage the affairs of the community (Bookchin, 1965c, in Biehl, 1997, p. 24). The mature human being would approach something like the completeness of Homer's *arete* – all round excellence in being human, rather than specialization (Bookchin, 1964, in Biehl, 1997, p. 23).

These are not notions of reverting to an idealised primitive life, but a vision which combines the best of the past with a full use of modern technology, in a synthesis of "man and nature, nation and region, town and country" (Bookchin, 1962, in Biehl, 1997, p. 19). "I do not claim that all of man's economic activities can be completely decentralized, but the majority can surely be scaled to human and communitarian dimensions. This much is certain: we can shift the center of economic power from national to local scale and from centralized bureaucratic forms to local popular assemblies. This shift would be a revolutionary change of vast proportions for it would create powerful economic foundations for the sovereignty and autonomy of the local community" (Bookchin, 1964, in Biehl, 1997, p. 25).

### 6.3.2 Decentralization as comprehensive local self-management

Bookchin believes in the original meaning of the word politics, that is, self-management. In the political sense, people are not "constituents" or "taxpayers" [or, one could add, once-in-a-while voters], but "citizens" (Bookchin 1987b, revised 1995, in Biehl, p. 173), a concept with rich meaning for Bookchin. Libertarian municipalism seeks to restore the original meaning of politics, by "reopen[ing] a public sphere in flat opposition to statism, one that allows for maximum democracy in the literal sense of the term, and to create in embryonic form the institutions that can give power to a people generally" (Bookchin 1987b, in Biehl, p. 175).

These institutions are the neighbourhood assembly (6.3.2.1), which would also manage the decentralized economy (6.3.2.2). Matters requiring co-ordination across areas wider than just that controlled by the neighbourhood assembly, would be dealt with by confederations of neighbourhood

assemblies, or regional assemblies (6.3.2.3). I touch on the transition from statism to libertarian municipalism briefly in section 6.3.2.4.

### *6.3.2.1 The community's "neighbourhood assembly"*

In libertarian municipalism, municipalities self-manage their affairs through popular, face-to-face nieghbourhood assemblies (Bookchin, 1987b, revised 1995, in Biehl, 1997, p. 178). The basic unit of political life, of "participatory politics" (Bookchin, 1992, in Fotopoulos, 1992) is the municipality. This should not be understood as the local authority. "Municipality" means rather a community - the villages or other localities where people are living together on human scale. In large towns and cities where human scale has been lost, "municipality" means individual neighbourhoods – "smaller communities which have a certain measure of identity" (Bookchin, 1987b, in Biehl, 1997, p. 176).

Instead of the remote and mediated nature of representative democracy, the popular neighbourhood assembly gives people a "discursive arena in which ... [they] can intellectually and emotionally confront one another, indeed, experience one another through dialogue, body language, personal intimacy, and face-to-face modes of expression in the course of making collective decisions" (Bookchin, 1987b, revised 1995, in Biehl, 1997, p. 181). A plurality of views is encouraged (Clark, 1993, p. 350). Direct democracy decisions are made through majority vote, not consensus (Bookchin, 1992, in Fotopoulos, 1992): " ... policy decisions by these assemblies would vote on a majority-rule basis. (I am not a naive admirer of consensus except in small, intimate groups in which everyone is thoroughly familiar with everyone else.)".

The major business of the neighbourhood assembly is *policy-making,* as opposed to its execution, which is administration. Communities decide through their neighbourhood assemblies what policy to adopt/course of action to follow on specific issues, leaving their logistical execution and administration (Bookchin, 1987b, revised 1995, in Biehl, 1997, pp. 177-178) to, for example, "mandated, carefully supervised boards of coordinators who could easily be recalled if they failed to abide by the decisions of the assembly's citizens" (Bookchin, 1993, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, p. 371).

Any tendency to insular self-sufficiency (Bookchin, 1987b, revised 1995, in Biehl, 1997, p. 179), where that means not "prudence in dealing with material resources" (p. 187) but parochialism, is not true politics; neighbourhood assemblies must "enter into a network of mutual obligations", and work together with other neighbourhood assemblies in their region. That is, the interdependence of communities for satisfying material needs, and achieving common political goals, is a "crucial element ... for an authentic mutualism based on shared resources, produce and policy-making" (p. 179). This is achieved through a local confederation of assemblies (p. 178). Confederalism allows a community to retain its identity while "participating in a sharing way with the larger whole that makes up a balanced ecological society..." (p. 179). Part of the business of each neighbourhood assembly then, would be to elect delegates to the local confederation council, which would comprise delegates from a group of neighbourhood assemblies (p. 177). These delegates are strictly mandated, i.e. "rigorously instructed in written form to either support or oppose" whatever issue appears on the agenda of the local confederal council (p. 177). Delegates are also rotatable, and recallable (p. 177, p. 178).

#### **6.3.2.1.1. Citizenship**

The neighbourhood assembly represents "a school for citizenship" (Bookchin, 1987b, revised 1995, in Biehl, 1997, p. 182). It is not only that neighbourhood assemblies provide a space in which people can become familiar with, and gain experience in the political process (p. 181). As opportunities for the exercise of citizenship in a public, face-to-face space, neighbourhood assemblies provide what the ancient Athenians called "*paideia*", a process of character-building, of personality formation, of education, of forming a sense of public responsibility and commitment (Bookchin, 1987b, p. 181)

through participation in the political process. Citizenship means practising "the values of humanism, cooperation, community, and public service" in everyday civic life, in place of current society's "commodification, rivalry, anomie, and egoism" (p. 182). Instead of the nation-state's "patriotism", community participation in neighbourhood assemblies generates "*philia*" or solidarity, a sense of civic commitment "... created by knowledge, training, experience, and reason – in short, by a political education developed during the course of political participation" (p. 181). "*Paideia*" produces "*philia*", and the practice of politics takes on an ethical dimension, in which "...the communal interest …[is] placed above personal interest, … in which the personal interest … [is] congruent with and realized through the common" (Bookchin, 1993, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, p. 372). It is the quality of *philia* that makes self-management possible (Bookchin, 1992, in Fotopoulos, 1992).

#### *6.3.2.2 The municipalization of the economy*

It is impossible to set out all Bookchin's thought on this topic here, but basically, through the neighbourhood assembly, the community would also manage its economic life, which is organized on a municipal basis.

Municipalization of the economy brings "the economy as a whole into the orbit of the public sphere, where economic policy could be formulated by the *entire* community... The economy would cease to be merely an economy in the conventional sense of the term, composed of capitalistic, nationalized, or "worker-controlled" enterprises. It would become the economy of the *polis* or municipality. The ... citizen body in face-to-face assembly, would absorb the economy into its public business, divesting it of a separate identity..." (Bookchin, 1987b, revised 1995, in Biehl, 1997, p. 186, his italics).

More specifically, private property would be abolished (Biehl, 1997e, p. 173), and "From each according to his ability and to each according to his needs" would be institutionalized as part of the public sphere (Bookchin, 1987b, revised 1995, in Biehl, 1997, p. 186). Land and enterprises would be "... placed increasingly in the custody of the community – more precisely, the custody of citizens in free assemblies and their deputies in confederal councils ... In such a municipal economy – confederal, interdependent, and rational by ecological, not simply technological, standards – we would expect that the special interests that divide people today into workers, professionals, managers, and the like would be melded into a general interest in which people see themselves as citizens guided strictly by the needs of their community and region rather than by personal proclivities and vocational concerns. Here, citizenship would come into its own..." (Bookchin, 1987b, revised 1995, in Biehl, 1997, p. 184).

#### *6.3.2.3 Confederalism*

Confederal councils would be established, not only to link neighbourhood assemblies as an antidote to the threat of parochialism, but also to provide the means of addressing issues on a wider scale (Biehl, 1997d, p. 173). However, because they are comprised of strictly mandated, recallable, rotatable, fully accountable neighbourhood assembly delegates, power continues to be exercised from the bottom up. The functions of the confederal councils are purely administrative, that is, the co-ordination and execution of adopted policies, not policy-making, which remains the prerogative of the neighbourhood assemblies (Bookchin, 1987b, revised 1995, in Biehl, 1997, pp. 178-179): "Wherever policy-making slips from the hands of the people, it is devoured by its delegates, who quickly become bureaucrats" (p. 179).

#### *6.3.2.4 The transition from statism to libertarian municipalism*

"These confederations would ultimately constitute a counterpower to the state, the corporations, and the market, and they could expand at the expense of those forces, ultimately mobilizing a confrontation with them" (Biehl, 1997d, p. 173). Bookchin understands this as a dialectical process: "... libertarian municipalism gains its ... integrity *precisely* from the dialectical tension it proposes between the nation-

state and the municipal confederation. Its ‘law of life’, to use an old Marxian term, consists precisely in its struggle with the State. Then *tension* between municipal confederations and the State must be *clear and uncompromising*. Since these confederations would exist primarily in *opposition* to statecraft, they cannot be compromised by state, provincial or national elections, much less achieved by these means....” (Bookchin, 1987b, revised 1995, in Biehl, 1997, p. 179, his italics). Eventually, communitarian and self-governing ecological communities would replace present capitalist and statist hierarchical institutions. The process can be expected to be slow (Bookchin, 1987b, in Biehl, 1997, pp. 190-191).

How statism and libertarian municipalism “...will relate to each other is a matter of the future--and for another generation to decide. For the present, Greens, social ecologists, and the like must try to create a new politics and a new public sphere based not merely on greater local control and municipal democracy but on confederal relationships between municipalities. I know of no other movement in the left that has advanced such an idea of *authentic* politics, or *politics* in its classical Hellenic sense as distinguished from *statecraft*, or involvement in parliamentarism” (Bookchin, 1992, in Fotopoulos, 1992, his italics).

# 7. Praxis

The praxis of *paideia* – all-round education through direct democratic political participation - has been noted [6.3.2.1.1]. Another characteristic of traditional anarchism’s “unwavering opposition to statism” (Bookchin, 1995b, in Biehl, 1997, p. 170; section 2.1.4.1) is direct action. So one finds in Bookchin’s own life many examples of protest activities: in the unions, against nuclear energy, against the Vietnam war, for civil rights, for ecology, for direct democracy (Biehl, 1993, p. 10).

## 7.1 Political restructuring, not personal change

He rejected the deep ecology-type idea that personal change and “redemption” would avert the ecological crisis:

> Even as we denounce a materialistic and consumeristic mentality, we ourselves become avid consumers of costly, supposedly spiritual or ecological products, ‘green’ wares that bear lofty messages. ... Our mailboxes are flooded with catalogues, and our bookstores are filled with paperbacks that offer us new roads to mystical communion and a New Age into which we can withdraw and turn our backs to the harsh realities that constantly assail us. Often, this mystical withdrawal yields a state of social quietism that is more dreamlike than real, more passive than active. Preoccupied more with personal change than with social change, and concerned more with the symptoms of our powerless, alienated lives than with their root causes, we surrender control over the social aspects of our lives, even as they are so important in shaping our private lives. But there can be no personal ‘redemption’ without social ‘redemption’ ... (Bookchin 1995a[48]).

In Bookchin’s view, the profound transformation from second nature to free nature is not to be achieved through either “privatistic forms of spiritual self-regeneration”, or the “personalistic forms of consumption and investment that often go under the rubric of ‘green capitalism’” (Bookchin, 1993, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, p. 356). The environmentalism [section 2.1.4.2.1] which statism generates[49], is not the answer either. Only social action aimed at the social sources of the ecological crisis are sufficient to deal with humanity’s hierarchy-based domination of humanity and the natural world. Political restructuring has primacy over individual worldview change.

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[48] Biehl has omitted this paragraph from her edited version of this paper. See elision identification (...) in Biehl, 1997, p. 208

[49] “In libertarian municipalism, you make a clear distinction between local politics and national politics, and you rightly reject participation in national politics, which, as the experience of the last ten years has also shown, leads directly to environmentalism rather than to the creation of a radical green movement” (Fotopoulos, 1992, in his interview with Bookchin, 1992)

### 7.2 Avoid statist political practices

Bookchin opposed participation in elections at any level of the state as a way of bringing about the kind of radical eco-social restructuring social ecology demands:

> I would have no quarrel with a radical Green movement that worked with a conventional organization to prevent a specific ecological despoliation, such as the construction of a nuclear reactor. But I would emphatically oppose an electoral *coalition* with a party, however radical it may appear, that tries to gain seats in a statist or even quasi-statist body like the European Parliament, irrespective of the promises it makes. I learned to distrust the promises of statist parties--indeed, of parties generally ... (Bookchin, 1992, in Fotopoulos, 1992).

### 7.3 Create neighbourhood assemblies

The way to begin, is through the creation of local assemblies in one's neighbourhood, even if these initially have no more than "moral authority": "Although it is highly doubtful that even civic authorities [our municipalities] would allow a neighbourhood assembly to acquire the legal power to make civic policy, still less state and national authorities, let me emphasize that assemblies that have no legal power can exercise enormous moral power. A popular assembly that sternly voices its views on many issues can cause considerable disquiet among local authorities and generate a widespread public reaction in its favour..." (Bookchin, 1987b, revised 1995, in Biehl, 1997, p. 191).

Heady as Bookchin's ideas for direct democracy at community level are, one may wonder at their practicality. In Burlington, USA, Biehl (2006) notes that Bookchin "...attempted to put these ideas into practice by working with the Northern Vermont Greens, the Vermont Council for Democracy, and the Burlington Greens, retiring from politics in 1990".

## 8. Critique

In this section I focus (8.1) on the deep ecology/social ecology debate, but only in principle, (8.2) present a critique of Bookchin's thesis that the domination of nature is sufficiently explained by human domination of humans, and (8.3) note the critique that ecological politics generally gives insufficient attention to the role of language. Other critique, such as social ecology as anthropocentric was dealt with in section 5.4.2; doubts on Bookchin's optimistic view of "liberatory technology" were mentioned in section 6.2.

### 8.1 The deep ecology/social ecology debate

It is not difficult to find in the environmental philosophical literature, many examples of the sometimes-rancorous differences between deep and social ecologists, not presented in any detail here. Some of them, particularly Bookchin's, are colourful and entertaining, even if one doesn't agree with them. It helps to regain perspective on the agreements rather than differences between the two, if one reads the debate "Searching for agreement" (Chase, 1991) between Bookchin, and deep ecology activist Dave Foreman of Earth First!

Kovel[50] (1993, p. 407, my italics) provides a simple, yet incisive philosophical framework within which to understand most of the disagreements in the deep ecology/social ecology debate. At the same time, I think, he presents food for thought as to whether the debate could ever be completely resolved:

[50] Kovel's views are interesting in that he is a social ecologist, albeit a "dissenting" one, and also someone who is not unsympathetic to deep ecology. " I see myself on the social-ecological side in the dialogue of radical ecologies. I also, despite everything, remain heavily influenced by Marx, and this is itself a heterodox view within social ecology. This would seem to make me doubly removed from being able to view the claims of deep ecology sympathetically. However such is not the case. I have serious problems with the political obtuseness and/or reactionary implications of deep ecology. But deep ecology also calls attention to a profound estrangement from nature, which traditional Marxism has tended to reproduce and even social ecology has found difficult to apprehend...." (Kovel, 1993, pp. 407-408)

> Ecological politics is praxis based upon an appropriation of what takes place at the interface between humanity and nature. We might heuristically say that this appropriation takes place in different ways according to the values given its two main terms, humanity and nature. Indeed two of the major branches of radical ecology – social ecology and deep ecology – have defined their differences precisely along this divide.
>
> *Social ecology is grounded in the critique of domination*, especially the realization that no domination of nature takes place without the domination of humans. Thus it attends primarily to the human world. For social ecologists, the recovery of nature is a vital indeed essential goal but it cannot be the primary goal inasmuch as the natural world has to be approached through a transformation of the human world. *Deep ecology, by contrast, proceeds from the critique of anthropocentrism*, that which makes man the measure of all things and displaces the rest of nature into the realm of instrumentality. This, to deep ecology, is the "social order" that oppresses nature. From this perspective, the recovery of nature is primarily a matter of decentering the human world. For the deep ecologist, nature must come first, not only in terms of value, but also as the result of an epistemological shift.
>
> It follows that the social-ecological critique of deep ecology accuses it of an indifference to key social distinctions such as class, race, and gender, as well as a romanticization of nature that ominously flirts with reactionary, even fascistic politics. By contrast, the deep-ecological critique of social ecology accuses it of recycling the traditional distancing between humanity and nature, which has characterized all modern politics, whether bourgeois or Marxist. These are of course extreme statements; and in practice there can be considerable convergence between the two tendencies. However the differences are real and stem from unresolved issues in the philosophy of nature...."

Rereading Biehl's (2003, my italics) sketch of the development of Bookchin's political-philosophical thought, though, it seems fair to say that Bookchin saw in the ecological crisis, "a new limit to capitalist expansion, one that held the potential to supersede the misery of the working class *as a source of fundamental social change*", before he developed the idea of "revolutionary change as a solution to the ecological crisis". This is *fundamentally* different to the deep ecological approach of wide ecological sustainability as end in itself.

## 8.2 The idea of hierarchy and domination is insufficient to explain "ecocide"

Is the idea of hierarchy and domination sufficient to account for our present "ecocidal social formations" (Kovel, 1993, footnote 2, p. 416), as social ecology argues? From a Marxist perspective, Kovel suggests not. He cites the example of the Hunza, a strict hierarchical society in Pakistan's remote mountainous areas, in which women "are sharply subordinated to men", and in which "everybody bows down to the local prince", and yet their "luscious" organic produce is highly praised by the health food and holism movements, and their lifestyle is so "salubrious" that it has "induced extraordinary longevity" and well-being. "Clearly, hierarchy in itself does not generate ecocidal degrees of the domination of nature. [Not just an idea, but] *An engine of exploitation and aggrandizement is required"*. This engine he suggests, is capitalism (Kovel, 1993, footnote 2, p. 416). As Bookchin also critiques capitalism [but within the idea of hierarchy] I take Kovel's critique to mean that Bookchin places too little emphasis on capitalism as the proximate cause of ecocide.

From a deep ecology perspective, Warwick Fox suggests that "Bookchin ... insists far too much that there is a straightforward, necessary relationship between the internal organization of human societies and their treatment of the nonhuman world" (Fox, 1989, p. 16). He argues that "it is possible for a relatively egalitarian human society to be extremely exploitative ecologically" (Fox, 1989, p. 15, in Bookchin, 1990d, p. 263); "there is no necessary relationship between these two forms of domination" (Eckersley, affirming Fox's viewpoint, in Eckersley, 1989, p. 101, footnote 7). Bookchin in turn, refutes both Fox and Eckersley's viewpoints (1990d, pp. 263-266).

## 8.3 Insufficient attention to language

I extract from Kovel's critique of the "second nature" idea, two elements: (1) the idea of nature as a necessary "other" to humanness. This idea is also present in ecofeminism [Chapter Six], and Goodin's suggested theory of value in nature for green political theory [Chapter Seven, section 5.2.2]; and (2) insufficient attention to the role of language[51] in nature's domination by humans.

Kovel (1993, p. 408) criticizes the "profound estrangement from nature, which traditional Marxism has tended to reproduce" (1993, p. 408), but is also critical of the social ecology position that the world of humanity can properly be called "second nature". For him, there is a radical distinction between the human and natural worlds; the "one can [not] be continuously mediated into the other" (Kovel, 1993, p. 408) as social ecology suggests. Second nature has the "the stamp of humanness on it: the presence of signification" (p. 408). We can only relate to nature through the distinctly human invention of language. Signification creates a dialectic between human beings and nature. Kovel understands this dialectic as the tension of our participation in nature on the one hand, and our separateness, our radical difference[52] from nature on the other (p. 411-412). It is only if nature remains "other" to us, that it can engender in us an "attitude of respect, wonder and reverence" (Kovel, 1993, p. 412). We need to recognize and preserve nature's otherness, not to dominate it, but so that it can provide a source "from which we draw our own being ..." (p. 412).

Given that our relationship to nature is always mediated by language, "...ecological politics has [generally] not attended sufficiently to the domain of *language*" (Kovel, 1993, p. 408, his italics). "First of all, 'nature' is a word before it is a thing... when I, or any other person, regard nature, I do so through a prism constructed out of language. The only 'nature' that is real for any of us is a linguistically constituted field..." (p. 409). Our relationship to nature is always mediated by language. We should be aware of how, through our language, we may be engaging in a relationship of domination with nature, for example, capitalism's "economisation of reality, the reduction of everything to relations of exchange ... the ever-expanding power of money and the corresponding decline of the spiritual and the sacred" (p. 411, my italics).

Nature needs to be emancipated *in words* as well as in ecological acts. As Kovel says (1994, pp. 413-414) "… emancipation, whether of human slaves or a dominated nature, begins in the signified field…Politics expresses the choices made by the imagination, whether of freedom or repression. Social ecology should begin therefore with the emancipation of the imaginary, signified nature… We cannot collapse the human and natural worlds one into the other…We have only the choice as to how nature is to be signified: As an inert other, or … an entity transfigured with spirit".

---

[51] From a promising beginning on the idea that we can only approach nature through signification, Kovel (pp. 408-416) passes through a useful critique of capitalism, before [for me] becoming obscure in a Freudian-like discussion of the ontological relationships between language and nature, and of the relationship between "poeisis and transformation" [also surely obscure to the uninitiated] illustrated by William Blake "as the poet of social ecology" (p. 413). Much of Kovel's argument is incomprehensible to me, but it does call for an awareness of how "Newtonian perception" as well as "liberal environmentalism" strips "spirit-qualities from existence in order to prepare the way for [capitalism's] commodification" and for "technical-instrumental views of nature" (Kovel, 1993, p. 414)

[52] Here Kovel is rejecting the deep ecology position which in his view, "seeks to abolish any sense of specialness from being human, any essential difference from the rest of nature" (Kovel, 1993, p. 411). But see Chapter 4, section 5.1.1, 5.4.2.2, and 5.4.5.2, all of which suggest to me that deep ecologists do not deny the "specialness" of being human within a radically non-dual ontology

# 9. Summary

Here, under a **THEME HEADING**, are summarized the main ideas of social ecology's contribution to seeing green, together with their primary location in the chapter:

**WORLDVIEW:** The concept worldview scarcely appears in Bookchin's writings. Social and political restructuring to address the ecological crisis has primacy over individual worldview change [7]. Nonetheless, social ecology as a specific philosophy of nature, and a comprehensive socio-economic programme, contains all the customary elements of a worldview.

**LEGITIMATING NARRATIVE:** Social ecology's ontology, epistemology, environmental ethic and radical political programme are all underpinned by its philosophy of dialectical naturalism, which draws on the western philosophical dialectical tradition [2.1.1]. Bookchin's political philosophy, which could be summed up as libertarian, combines insights from Marxism, neo-Marxism, and the New Left [2.1.2 – 2.1.3], anarchism and radical ecology. Both "mystical" forms of ecology, and environmentalism are rejected [2.1.4]. In real-world politics, he urged the necessity for a libertarian left-green perspective [2.1.5]. Social ecology's key thesis is that the ecological crisis is caused by the *idea* of hierarchy which arose in our anthropological history, leading to the possibility of human domination of humans, and human domination of nature. [2.2]. This provides the context for social ecology's rhetoric of freedom, for both humans and nature [2.3]

**EPISTEMOLOGY**: Social ecology affirms the Enlightenment ideal of Reason [3.1], but rejects its deterioration into a merely instrumental rationality, used to manipulate and dominate both human beings and nature [3.2]. Where instrumental/analytical thinking is unable to apprehend an organic nature defined by both identity and change [Being and Becoming], dialectical reasoning can [3.3]. Dialectical naturalism as epistemology is a kind of speculative reasoning, in which one seeks to understand the "inherent logic" of a phenomenon's development, where it came from, where it is now, and how it can be expected to unfold its further potentialities [3.4].

**ONTOLOGY**:
**-View of nature:** Being and Becoming sums up Bookchin's ontological view of nature, which is complex. It comprises biological evolution or "first nature", and humanity and society or "second nature". First nature is seen as an organic, dialectic, developmental phenomenon, which displays as a whole, mind, and self-direction toward ever increasing subjectivity [4.1]. This tendency reaches its peak in humanity's self-awareness. Humanity is firmly part of nature, having emerged from it, yet also occupies a special place in evolution [4.2]. A key social ecology hypothesis is that second nature has not fulfilled its latent potentiality, but is on an irrational developmental path, entirely due to the idea of hierarchy which emerged early in our anthropological history. There must be a fundamental transition in second nature from hierarchy and domination of self and nature, towards "free nature", or an "ecological society" in which first and second nature pursue untrammelled, their progress towards freedom [4.3].

**-View of the human being:** Bookchin's view of the human being in free nature is derived from principles of anarchism, socialism and ecology. It is a libertarian view, closely related to Bookchin's view of the libertarian society. In this view [4.3.1], the human being is free to unfold his/her creative potential and develop into a well-rounded person, in the context of a libertarian, communitarian, society [6.3]. Part of becoming a well-rounded person is to take an active, and direct role in citizenship [6.3.2.1].

**THE ETHIC:** Based on dialectical naturalism as epistemology and ontology, social ecology advocates an ethic of complementarity towards both human and non-human nature. Non-metaphysical spirituality plays a minor motivational role [5.1]. Humanity's role vis-a-vis nature, given its special place in evolutionary history as nature's potential self-awareness, and "voice", is to assist the evolutionary process towards greater increase of diversity, nature's major value [5.2.1]. While this stewardship represents active and direct intervention in the evolutionary process, there are criteria for such intervention, the major one being, no intervention in the spirit of domination, such as capitalism, is acceptable [5.4.1]. Only radical social restructuring to eliminate the idea of hierarchy [6], will create the conditions in which an ethic of complementarity becomes possible.

**- Animal liberation issues:** Specific attention to animal liberation issues is practically absent. The only reference found was in humanistic vein [5.4.3].

**VIEW ON SOCIETY**

The social ecology society is libertarian, decentralized, and eco-anarchist, a combination of ideas Bookchin later called "libertarian municipalism". Patriotism, statism, parliamentarianism, political parties, bureaucracy, and capitalism as economic system and cultural order, are all critiqued as manifestations of hierarchical thinking [6.1]. A major precondition for the transition from a society driven by the struggle against necessity and scarcity, to a society in which humanity has the time and milieu to unfold its full creative potential is the availability of a humanistic, "liberatory" technology. Modern advances in automation and computer technology are now able to deliver such liberatory technology [6.2]. In the radically new ecological post-scarcity society, decentralization is a key concept. It means "real" communities, human scale in all aspects of human life, and respect for ecological principles [6.3.1]. Decentralization also means, non-hierarchical face-to-face democratic self-management at all political and economic levels [6.3.2].

**PRAXIS**

Recommended praxis includes an enriched meaning of citizenship [6.1.3.2.1], direct action, and the initiation at local level of the ideas of "community" and "assembly". "Privatistic" spiritualism, mystical ecology, environmentalism, green consumerism, and participation in statist elections at any level are rejected [7].

# CHAPTER SIX: ECOFEMINISM

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# 1. Introduction

Feminist theory focuses primarily on women's oppression[1], repression, and backgrounding, which is commonly attributed to a patriarchal ideology[2] (for example, Rosemary Radford Ruether's (1975) work, in Li, 1993, pp. 273-274). Feminists analyze and theorize inter alia, gender roles under patriarchy, because these "are part of *the means* of domination and subordination in patriarchy" (Davion, 1994, p. 292, her italics). Feminists argue that they have successfully shown that what were thought to be the "natural" social arrangements of western patriarchy, have been socially constructed by men (Diamond & Orenstein, 1990, p. ix). Feminist rhetoric is of women's liberation from patriarchy (Davion, 1994, p. 289).

Contemplating in the 1970s, the dual threats of ecocide and nuclear annihilation, feminist Ruether wrote that:

> 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 [modern industrial] society. (Ruether[3], 1975, p. 204, in Warren, 1996, p. ix).

Ecological feminism [often called ecofeminism[4]] is seen by some feminists (e.g., Salleh, 1992, p. 200) as another paradigm within "second wave", or 1960s/1970s feminism[5]. It began to emerge in the mid to late 1970[6]s, from "...various fields of feminist enquiry and activism: peace movements, labor movements, women's health care, and the anti-nuclear, environmental and animal liberation movements" (Gaard, 1993, p. 1), as well as women's spirituality/nature-based religion (Spretnak, 1990, pp. 3-14). Its first manifesto was formulated in 1980 (Mies & Shiva, 1998, p. 487), and its first anthology, edited by Caldecott & Leland, appeared in 1983 (Gaard, 1993, p. 3). Ecofeminism's potential as an alternative to mainstream environmental ethics began to gain recognition around 1990 (Warren, 1990, p. 125).

In this section, I note (1.1) ecofeminism's "four minimal conditions" (1.2) the conceptual links which ecofeminists see between feminism and ecology (1.3) ecofeminism's common "project", and yet (1.4) its non-homogeneity. Thereafter, the chapter follows the standard format: Section 2 is an introduction to ecofeminism's legitimating narratives; 3, its epistemology; 4, ontology; 5, ethic; 6, view of society;

---

[1] Freire (1972, 1978), and Young (1990) are examples I have encountered of feminist understandings of the concept of oppression

[2] Feminist Sheila Collins considered that "racism, sexism, class exploitation, and ecological destruction are four interlocking pillars upon which the structure of patriarchy rests" (Collins, 1973, no page given, cited by Li, 1993, p. 289). Warren (1987, p. 17, her italics) repeats this view of patriarchy [without acknowledging Collins] as "sexism, racism, classism *and* naturism". On Davion's (1996, p. 181) view, ecological feminists argue that "a reason/nature dualism underlies the conceptual framework of Western patriarchal cultures". Salleh (1993, p. 225) considers the "separation of humanity and nature" as "the lynch pin of patriarchal ideology"

[3] Li (1993, in Gaard, 1993, pp. 273-276) also discusses Ruether's view of the link between the oppression of women and the destruction of nature

[4] The term "ecofeminisme" was coined by Francoise d'Eaubonne in 1974 (Warren, 1990, p. 125)

[5] This chapter makes no attempt to do justice to the full range of feminist thought, but McLaughlin (2003) provides brief and useful feminist comment on major contemporary debates in social and political theory. The chapter cannot do full justice either, to the rich diversity of ecofeminism. Warren's (1997) "reader" on ecofeminism alone comprises more than 400 printed pages. I hope nevertheless, to have avoided the kind of conceptual confusion between the various theoretical strands of feminism and ecofeminism of which Salleh (1992) accuses deep ecologists. My primary sources on ecofeminism have been the anthologies by Diamond & Orenstein (1990), Gaard (1993), and Warren (1996, 1997)

[6] Many feminists/ecofeminists (for example, Donovan, 1993, in Gaard, 1993, p. 173, and p. 188, footnote 29) document the origins of "first wave" feminism in the nineteenth century, including ["reading backwards" as it were], early ecofeminist work in the humanitarian, pro-vegetarian, and anti-vivisection movements. More contemporary early and major works on ecofeminism were Collard and Contrucci (1989), Plant (1989), and Diamond and Orenstein (1990). Warren (1990, p. 125, footnote 1) lists many more

and 7, praxis advocated. Section 8 contains critique from green sample partners, and 9, a summary of its ideas on these topics.

## 1.1 Ecofeminism's "four minimal conditions"

In 1987, ecofeminist Karen Warren (Adams, 1996, p. 116; see Warren (1987)) listed "four minimal conditions of ecofeminism": (1) there is an important connection between the domination of women and the domination of nature (Adams, 1996, p. 116); (2) these connections between the oppression of women and of nature must be understood (p. 117); (3) feminist theory and practice must include an ecological perspective (p. 118); and (4), ecological movements must include a feminist perspective (p. 131, footnote 6). Understanding, and theorizing the first two, could be considered ecofeminism's "project" (section 1.3). Regarding the last two, Warren (1996, p. xiii) has identified the "conceptual links" between feminism and ecology, discussed next.

## 1.2 Conceptual links between feminism and "ecology"

> "To me feminism is ecology and ecology is feminism. It's a holistic way of looking at things" (Die Grünen's feminist eco-activist Petra Kelly, speaking in 1983 to Capra & Spretnak (1984, p. 53))

Warren identifies several[7] "conceptual links" (1996, pp. xi-xvi) between feminism and environmental concerns. *If one grants these conceptual links, the implication is that the philosophy and politics of nature should be informed by feminist gender analysis* (idea from Davion, 1994, my italics). Those links discussed in this chapter to varying degrees are: (1) historical: the grounds for the twin domination of women and nature can be traced in western history; (2) empirical evidence: this documents *inter alia*, sexist-naturist language, disproportionate health risks to women and children from eco-hazards, degradation and pollution; and Third World women-unfriendly development (Gaard, 1993, p. 5); (3) symbolic: ecofeminists explore "the symbolic association and devaluation of women and nature that appears in art, literature, religion, and theology" (p. xiv); (4) "women's spirituality": a neglected but significant element in environmentalism, and of environmental ethics (Warren, 1996, p. xiv); (5) epistemological: ecofeminism investigates the prevalence of male versions of 'reason', 'rationality', 'knowledge" and 'the nature of the knower', particularly as they have produced the reason versus nature [or culture vs. nature] debate[8], and how they permeate mainstream environmental ethics; (6) oppressive conceptual frameworks: value dualisms, and value hierarchies embedded in larger conceptual frameworks such as patriarchy, which is seen to undergird many "isms of domination" (p. xii), as well as hierarchy; (7) ethical: ecofeminists claim that that all these interconnections between the treatment of women and the treatment of nature "require a feminist ethical analysis and response" (p. xv); feminist environmental ethics are concerned to develop "theories and practices concerning humans and the natural environment which are not male-biased…" (p. xv); (8) political (praxis). Feminist theoretical perspectives can inform "grassroots activism and political concerns by developing analyses of domination which explain, clarify, and guide that praxis" (p. xvi). All these links inform the ecofeminist "project".

## 1.3 Ecofeminism's project

> "Ecofeminism challenges all relations of domination" (Starhawk, 1990, p. 76)

Ecofeminists agree that there are links between the domination of women and the domination of nature, and that an understanding of the one will aid an understanding of the other (Davion, 1994, p. 288). As do feminists, ecofeminists point out the transcendent dualities[9] of western thought – male and

[7] Not all of them are pursued in this section or chapter. Warren lists them as historical and causal, conceptual, empirical and experiential, epistemological, symbolic, ethical, theoretical, and political (praxis) (1996, pp. x-xvi)
[8] In this regard, some ecofeminists draw on the critical theory of Horkheimer and the Frankfurt School (Warren, 1996, p. xiv)
[9] Ruether highlighted the transcendence in the dualisms of western [male] thought. Subjugation and exploitation of the one by the other is then justified as "natural" (Li, 1993, p. 274, discussing Ruether's work)

female, mind and body, reason and emotion, universal and particular[10], culture and nature, human and animal, for example. It is particularly the reason/nature dualism, which feminists see as underlying and justifying a whole series of domination and oppression "-isms" – sexism, ageism, racism, classism, for example (Davion, 1996, pp. 181-182). Ecofeminists add "naturism", a term Warren[11] uses to mean, "the unjustified domination of nature" (Gaard, 1993, p. 5; Warren, 1997, p. 4).

A major philosophical project for feminism and ecofeminism, is analyzing and theorizing the connections between these different forms of oppression (Gruen, 1993, in Gaard, 1993, p. 60; Plumwood, 1997, p. 327). In addition, because the categories "woman" and "animal" "serve the same symbolic function in patriarchal society" (Gruen, 1993, in Gaard, 1993, p. 61), "...an adequate ecofeminist theory must not only analyze the joint oppression of women and nature, but must specifically address the oppression of the nonhuman animals with whom we share the planet" (Gruen, 1993, in Gaard, 1993, p. 61). Basically, ecofeminists highlight and critique the "androcentric[12] and anthropocentric biases of Western civilization" (Diamond & Orenstein, 1990, p. xi). Such theorizing, they suggest, will contribute "to a fuller understanding" of the domination of nature by humans, and so to a "deeper" environmental ethic (Davion, 1994, p. 288).

### 1.4 Ecofeminism is not however homogenous

Ecofeminism is not however, "a monolithic, homogenous ideology" (Diamond & Orenstein, 1990, p. xii). Ecofeminist Karen Warren explains: "Ecological feminism is the name of a variety of different feminist perspectives on the nature of the connections between the domination of women … and the domination of nature. … it is an open question ... how many, which, and on what grounds any of the proposed ecological feminist philosophies are properly identified as ecofeminist positions" (Warren, 1996, p. x). "No single theory is sought or expected to emerge", notes Kheel (1993, in Gaard, 1993, p. 243). There can be no one woman's voice, because every woman comes from some race, class, age, marital status, region, nation, and so on. Feminism and ecofeminism are interested in solidarity against oppression, not "unity in sameness", because they associate the latter with domination (Warren, 1990, pp. 131-132). They celebrate diversity.

Ecofeminist Chris Cuomo thinks however, that "an unqualified call for diversity in ecofeminism is uninformative, if not nonsensical"; not all differences are good differences, those that are good, must be identified (1992, pp. 357-358). Social ecologist Janet Biehl critiques ecofeminists for what she sees as their theoretical inconsistencies rather than what they regard as their healthy diversity (Gaard, 1993, p. 6). I deal in this chapter with ecofeminist diversity in opinion by using the method "Some ecofeminists say...", and then giving an author as example. Such examples are not necessarily to be considered *the,* or only, ecofeminist position on any particular topic.

In developing its critique of androcentrism – which underpins the entire ecofeminist worldview – ecofeminism draws on a variety of legitimating narratives.

## 2. Legitimating narratives

In this section I introduce briefly the feminist philosophies informing ecofeminism (2.1), ecofeminist spirituality (2.2), the ecofeminist key thesis on the cause of the ecological crisis (2.3), and the images and rhetoric that ecofeminist writers employ in expressing their viewpoint (2.4).

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[10] The *particular* in patriarchal ideology is construed as personal and private, and subordinate to the *universal*, construed as political and public (based on Zimmerman, 1987, p. 35). It is a characteristic of ecofeminism that it elevates the personal, the private, and the particular, to equal importance in this dualism

[11] Anti-naturism rejects any way of thinking about, or acting towards nonhuman nature "that reflects a logic, values, or attitude of domination" (Warren, 1990, p. 141)

[12] Loosely, a male, disconnected sense of Self, an oppositional sense of Self/Other, a patriarchal orientation, and a power-based morality

## 2.1 Feminist philosophies informing ecofeminism

Several feminist philosophies inform ecofeminism: liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, socialist feminism, radical or cultural feminism, black and Third World feminisms, postmodern and psychoanalytic feminism (McLaughlin, 2003; Salleh, 1992; Warren, 1997; Wilson, 1997). I discuss next the four theoretical strands which appear[13] to have most influenced ecofeminism: (2.1.1) liberal feminism, (2.1.2) Marxist feminism, (2.1.3) socialist feminism, and (2.1.4) radical or cultural feminism.

Gruen characterises the first three "feminisms" [liberal, Marxist, and socialist] as the "anthropocentric feminisms" (1993, p. 75), for their underlying assumption that women's liberation must take place within the "culture" half of the culture/nature dualism (p. 77); all three privilege the human being over nature, and specifically, over animals (p. 75). Some radical feminists, on the other hand, embrace the women and nature/animal connection (p. 77). All four positions are, on some ecofeminist views (e.g. Warren, 1987, p. 20), "inadequate, incomplete, or seriously problematic as a theoretical grounding of ecofeminist concerns".

### 2.1.1 Liberal feminism

Liberal feminism, which emerged from the political theory of liberalism in the 1960s, is closest to the viewpoints of "the mother of modern feminism", Simone de Beauvoir (1965, in King, 1990, p. 110). De Beauvoir's ideas draw "on Hegelian metaphysics. In the Hegelian schema, the category of the Other[14], as distinctively opposite to the Self, provides epistemological and ontological conditions for the development of self-consciousness...." (Li, in Gaard, 1993, p. 281). In patriarchal ideology, the masculine self [understood as a gender construction, not biological sex (Plumwood, 1991b, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, p. 306, footnote 21)] defines itself in opposition to the feminine other, and it is this conceptualization which underpins all forms of oppression, including the oppression of nature (King, 1990) – eliminate patriarchy, and all other forms of oppression "will likewise crumble" (King, 1990, p. 110).

Liberal feminism is about "equality for women in a system defined by men" (Salleh, 1992, p. 200). Liberal/radical rational feminists argue that women do not differ from men as rational, autonomous agents, and demand for women, equality, self-determination, and the same rights as men in all spheres of human functioning (Donner, 1997, p. 385; Gruen, 1993, p. 75; Zimmerman, 1990, p. 142). Women's reproductive capacity should not impede their right to equality with men; access to contraception and the right to abortion are thus companion political issues (Salleh, 1992, p. 200). Some ecofeminists (e.g. Gruen, 1993, p. 76; Mies & Shiva, 1998, pp. 482-483) critique it for failing to problematize the system itself, for failing to see that it is a form of "catch-up" in which women demand an equal share of what men have taken from nature.

Liberal feminists/radical rational feminists reject the western historical women-nature connection. They deny that women have any special relationship with nature, because that view supports the very gender differences they wish to eliminate (King, 1990). Their approach to environmental issues is consonant with reform environmentalism, which proposes to achieve better human-nature relations through improved science, management of resources and regulation by legislation (Merchant, 1990a, pp. 100-101). Problematic for some ecofeminists, is liberal feminism's drawing of the line of moral considerability at those nonhumans argued to be "rational, sentient, interest carriers, or rights holders" (Warren, 1987, p. 9).

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[13] Drawing mostly on analyses by Gruen (1993, in Gaard, 1993, pp. 74-78), King (1990, pp. 106-121), and Merchant (1990a, pp. 100-105). McLaughlin (2003, p. 2), Salleh (1992, pp. 200-202), and Warren (1987, pp. 8-17), also discuss the different versions of feminism

[14] Self and Other is a constantly recurring theme in ecofeminist accounts of the oppression of women and nature

### 2.1.2 Marxist feminism

Marxist ideas "made an important contribution" to the development of second wave feminist ideas (McLaughlin, 2003, p. 50). True to their Marxist tradition, Marxist feminists do pay attention to structural changes to the system (Gruen, 1993, p. 76; Salleh, 1992, p. 200), particularly to political economy and class (King, 1990, p. 114). Labour is its prime category of analysis (King, 1990, p. 113). The root cause of women's oppression is patriarchal capitalism (Merchant, 1990a), or, some feminists argue, patriarchy and capitalism as two oppressive but different systems working together (McLaughlin, 2003, p. 51). In this historical social construction, the role of women is passive, entailing unpaid labour and nurture in the private sphere of the home, whereas the role and responsibility of men is constructed as paid activity in the public sphere, and in the capitalist marketplace (Merchant, 1990a). Important issues for Marxist feminists, are "equal access to the means of production" (Gruen, 1993, p. 76), the "full-scale entry of women into the waged sector and the socialization of domestic functions" (Salleh, 1992, pp. 200-201). They work towards replacing patriarchy with "resocializing men and women into nonsexist, nonracist, non-violent, anti-imperialist forms of life" (Merchant, 1990a, p. 105).

Gruen (1993, pp. 76-77) critiques the Marxist feminist view of nature and animals: "...Marx viewed animals and nature as fundamentally distinct from human beings and as "objects" to be used in the service of humanity. ... the feminists who follow in the Marxist tradition continue to maintain their hierarchical position with regard to animals and the natural world" (Gruen, 1993, pp. 76-77).

### 2.1.3 Socialist feminism

On Merchant's description (1990a, pp. 103-105), Marxist feminism and socialist feminism seem closely related. McLaughlin (2003, p. 2) refers to it as "Marxist/socialist feminism". King considers socialist feminism "an odd hybrid – an attempt at synthesis of rationalist feminism (radical and liberal) and the historical materialism of the Marxist tradition" (King, 1990, p. 113). On Gruen's view (1993, p. 77), socialist feminists "have developed a much more comprehensive theory than the Marxist feminists". Together with their class analysis of society, they provide a gender analysis (Gruen, 1993, p. 77). They see women's oppression as sex-based, understood as reproductive biology, and as a product of gender construction (Warren, 1987, pp. 13-14). They argue for women's control over their own reproductive capacities[15]. They agree with the liberal feminists that women "must strive in all possible ways to demonstrate that we are more like men than different"; the women/nature connection must be severed (King, 1990, p. 114). They argue for "an egalitarian socialist state" (Merchant, 1990a p. 105), and call for "... a radical transformation of most existing institutions: the family, education, compulsory heterosexuality, government, and industry" (Gruen, 1993, p. 77).

Nonhuman nature is seen as the material basis of human life; social justice cannot be achieved without the earth's well-being (Diamond & Orenstein, 1990, p. xii). Thus socialist feminists support political and environmental action which develops "sustainable, non-dominating relations with nature", and which improves the lot of working-class women, and women of colour (Merchant, 1990a, pp. 104-105). In King's view however, socialist feminists do not attend enough to the domination of nonhuman nature (King, 1990, p. 114). She ascribes this to their commitment to "a central tenet of socialism" - a "direct relationship between the rationalization and domination of nature and the project of human liberation" (King, 1990, p. 115). Gruen also critiques the socialist feminists because "For the most part, ... [they] have not yet addressed the institutionalized oppression of animals and its relation to oppression generally." (Gruen, 1993, p. 77).

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[15] But suggests King, socialist feminist theory is "inadequate" to confront the new reproductive technologies available – should it be so that women's reproductive capacities are now being "bought and sold in the marketplace, as one more form of wage labour"? (King, 1990, p. 114). McLaughlin (2003) also presents feminist comment on reproductive technologies in her chapter on "Social studies of technology" (pp. 160-181)

### 2.1.4 Radical feminism

Merchant's (1990a) 'radical feminism' [called 'cultural feminism' or 'big picture'[16] feminism by Spretnak (1990, p. 5, p. 9 respectively), 'radical cultural feminism' by King (1990), or 'nature feminism' by others (King, 1990, p. 117)], also developed in the late 1960s and the 1970s.

Radical feminists do not wish to "obliterate" the differences between men and women, as did the early 1960s feminists; they do not wish to be like men. There is an essential 'feminine' which patriarchy has distorted; they theorize the differences between women and men (Zimmerman[17], 1990, p. 142). They take the women's side, which they simultaneously see as nature's side (King, 1990, p. 111) in the culture/nature dualism (Gruen, 1993, p. 77). They "elevate what they consider to be women's virtues – caring, nurturing, interdependence – and reject the individualist, rationalist, and destructive values typically associated with men" (Gruen, 1993, p. 77).

While celebrating their biological sex, and reproductive role, radical feminists object to patriarchal control of female reproduction, and to the gendered construction of women as only home-loving reproducers, feeders and nurses. Radical cultural feminists argue that both women and nature possess elemental power; both must be "elevated and liberated through direct political action" (Merchant, 1990a, p. 101).

Cultural feminism is seen by King (1990, p. 117) also as "an appropriate response to the need for mystery and attention to personal alienation in an overly rationalized world" (King, 1990, p. 117). It is "mother" to the feminist spirituality movement (King, 1990, p. 111), which is committed to both personal and social change. Cultural feminism argues that since the original worship of the mother goddesses in Western history was replaced by the worship of male gods to whom the female deities became subservient, women and nature have been consistently associated, and consistently devalued (Merchant, 1990a; Spretnak, 1990). The "widespread slaughter of animals and the degradation of the environment are seen as the responsibility of the patriarchs" (Gruen, 1993, p. 77). Cultural feminism's spirituality movement also largely inspired the radical feminine peace movement (King, 1990, p. 111).

While some see this view of nature, and of women's culture based on a supposed women-nature connection, as "special", and liberatory, others see it as potentially dangerous (Diamond & Orenstein, 1990, p. xi, Merchant, 1990a, p. 102). King (1990, p. 115) notes that particularly socialist feminists are "unsympathetic" to radical cultural feminists, she thinks for two reasons: first, they interpret radical cultural feminism as an "essentialist" position – male essences are different to female essences. Such a position can be seen both as exclusivist, and non-emancipatory. Second, they see it as being on the wrong side as it were, in the western philosophical epistemology-ontology, or knowing vs. being debate, in which men "know" and women are relegated to the "ontological slums" [!] of being (King, 1990, p. 115). Gruen (1993, p. 77) thinks that radical feminism, even though it is "at the other extreme" from the anthropocentric feminisms, actually "reproduces a particular patriarchal notion: the belief that women and nature are essentially connected", and feeds a "determinism that forever separates woman and man" (p. 78). It cannot therefore be truly liberatory - the oppressor and the oppressed "simply change their masks" (p. 78), while oppression remains.

Largely in agreement with King's (1990), Merchant's (1990a), and Warren's (1987) analysis of ecofeminism's feminist theoretical roots, Spretnak (1990, pp. 5-6) suggests that ecofeminism has been mostly associated with radical or 'cultural', or 'big-picture' feminism, and women's spirituality/nature-based religion (Spretnak, 1990, pp. 3-14), together with influences from critical social theory and the

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[16] 'Big picture' because radical/cultural feminism examines "the deepest assumptions, values, and fears that inform the structures and expectations of patriarchal culture" (Spretnak, 1990, p. 9)
[17] But see Salleh's (1992) critique of Zimmerman's account of the various feminisms

environmental movement. Salleh adds post-structuralism as a theoretical influence on radical feminism (1992, p. 201).

Some writers distinguish two types of ecofeminism arising from all these roots – socialist ecofeminism, and radical ecofeminism, the latter being the more common form (Taylor, 1997, p. 62).

## 2.2 Spirituality

As do members of the other new social movements, many ecofeminists feel that a spiritual vacuum, along with political, technological and economic causes, lies at the root of the planet's destruction: "We have lost the sense that this Earth is our true home, and we fail to recognize our profound connection with all beings in the web of life" (Christ, 1990, p. 58). Spirituality in ecofeminist literature has not only a religious connotation, but also means variously, "respect for natural life processes" (Birkeland, 1993, in Gaard, 1993, p. 56, footnote 25), the recognition that there is in every life form, a life-force, an "immanence[18]", a spirit, which makes all things sacred (Mies & Shiva, 1998, p. 487). A deep sense of interconnectedness with all life-forms is part of this spirituality. Mies and Shiva (1998, p. 487) write that "As women in various movements – ecology, peace, feminist and especially health – rediscovered the interdependence and connectedness of everything, they also rediscovered what was called the spiritual dimension of life – the realization of this interconnectedness was itself sometimes called spirituality". There is however some critique of the spiritual strand within ecofeminism, both from those on the ideological left, and from those who see it as "luxury spirituality.... idealist icing on top of the material cake of the West's standard of living" (Mies & Shiva, 1998, p. 488).

While ecofeminist earth/goddess worship is clearly spirituality in metaphysical form (2.2.1), it also serves as metaphor for a "female" interconnected worldview replaced in anthropological history by the Sky God, "masculine", and oppositional, self-other worldview (2.2.2). I also understand the ecofeminist concepts of "the feminine principle" (4.3.2.4), and "partnership" (4.3.2.5) to be expressions [whether understood as spirituality in metaphysical or mundane form] of a non-masculine worldview. "Partnership" for example, is a theme expressed strongly at political level, by Die Grünen [Chapter Seven].

### 2.2.1 Earth/goddess worship

Spirituality, often in the form of Goddess worship (Spretnak, 1990, p. 5), is usually a strong element in radical cultural ecofeminists' descriptions of their worldview [see for example, Abbott, Eisler, Keller (M.L.), Spretnak, and Starhawk, all in Diamond & Orenstein, 1990, part 1). Their work is replete with references to early female goddesses such as Persephone, Demeter, Isis, Ishtar, and now to Gaia (Eisler, 1990, p. 23, p. 31). Eisler interprets biologists Lynn Margulis and James Lovelock's scientific Gaia [the Greek name for the Earth] hypothesis as "in essence … a scientific update of the belief system of Goddess-worshipping prehistoric societies" (Eisler, 1990, p. 26). On King's view, the Gaia hypothesis (Lovelock, 1979), which understands the planet as "one single living organism" (King, 1990, p. 112), and which ascribes the power of autopoeisis [self-organization[19]] to it, increasingly confirms "what people in tribal cultures, what Witches, shamans, and psychics, have been saying for thousands of years", namely that the Earth is alive (Starhawk, 1990, p. 74). Immanence is a key feature of earth-based spirituality; others are "…interconnection, and community" (Starhawk, 1990, p. 73). There seems to be variation though in the extent of the sacred – just the Earth [as in Gaia-worship], or the Oneness which includes the Earth (Spretnak, 1990).

What ecofeminists found in the old earth religions was not a female version of Yahweh - "Yahweh with a skirt" as Spretnak (1990, p. 5) says - but a spirituality/religion which *valued* both women and

[18] Some ecofeminists such as Starhawk, equate immanence with sensual or sexual spirituality (Mies & Shiva, 1998, p. 487)
[19] Lovelock also claimed that Gaia was perfectly capable of looking after herself (Kheel, 1993, p. 251; Wissenburg, 1993, p. 9)

nature, which understood "the Divine as immanent in and around us[20]" (Spretnak, 1990, p. 5). At the beginning of this period of exhilarating spiritual discovery, Spretnak notes (1990, p. 6), "ecology was not on our minds; since moving out of that period into activism, ecology has never left our minds. Today we work for ecopeace, ecojustice, ecoeconomics, ecopolitics, ecoeducation, ecophilosophy, ecotheology, …" (Spretnak, 1990, p. 6).

But as Starhawk notes: "Earth-based spirituality influences ecofeminism by informing its values. This does not mean that every ecofeminist must worship the goddess, [or] perform rituals..." (in Birkeland, 1993, in Gaard, 1993, p. 23). Ecofeminism is not a religion; "people of any belief system can take on board the ethical and political insights it offers" (Birkeland, 1993, in Gaard, 1993, p. 23).

### 2.2.2 The western anthropological worldview shift in self-other relations

The ecofeminist version of the "breakdown theory" [Chapter Two, section 1.3.1, aspect 2: Legitimating narratives] locates the breakdown in harmonious people/planet relations around 4500 BC, when nomadic tribes from the Eurasian steppes invaded the near East, and Greece. The invaders are described as "Goddess-slaying, Sky-Father-worshipping nomadic horsemen…" (Zimmerman, 1990, p. 143). The nomadic tribes "replaced the nature-based and female-honoring religion of the Goddess in Europe, the Near East, Persia, and India with their thunderbolt God, removing that which is held sacred and revered from the life processes of the earth to the distant realm of an omnipotent, male Sky-God" (Spretnak, 1990, p. 11). These new "angry gods of thunder and war" (Eisler, 1990, p. 29) replace the creative, nurturing, and caring goddess/es they encounter; they support conquest and domination, expressed in war, and in patriarchal social arrangements. Spirituality was separated from nature, and from women[21] (Eisler, 1990, pp. 30-32). "Desacralized nature" justified the definition of human progress in opposition to, rather than with, nature (Spretnak, 1990, p. 11, p. 9; also Eisler[22], 1990, pp. 23-34).

The evocative language represents the displacement of one worldview by another – 'feminine' values by 'masculine' or 'patriarchal' values. The displaced societies [which, it is important to note, were not matriarchal societies] were peaceful not warlike, not societies in which women were subordinate to men, but in which there was mutual respect; not societies in which the Earth was seen "as an object for exploitation and domination". 'Soft' values such as partnership, caring, compassion and nonviolence were not devalued as 'feminine' (Eisler, 1990, p. 30; Starhawk, 1990, p. 76). These values are often summarized as "the feminine principle" [4.3.2.4] generating a "partnership" ethic [4.3.2.5].

## 2.3 Key thesis on environmental crisis

Ecofeminist Marti Kheel has suggested that "The 'environmental crisis' is, above all, a crisis of perception" (1993, p. 259). Ecofeminists generally locate the root cause of the environmental crisis in androcentrism, understood as a male, disconnected sense of Self (Gaard, 1993, p. 2, p. 3), a patriarchal orientation toward the Other, and a power-based morality (Gaard, 1993, p. 6; also Kheel, 1990, in Diamond & Orenstein, 1990, pp. 129-131). The (male) disconnected Self views everything else as "Other" to itself, and thus as a potential object of management, exploitation, domination, or oppression. It manifests itself structurally and systemically as patriarchy and hierarchy. Androcentrism is prior to deep ecology's anthropocentric thesis, and also to social ecology's hierarchy thesis. The solution to all forms of oppression, of which the environmental crisis is one manifestation, is an

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[20] Spretnak is a believer in a One Mind kind of radical nondualist ontology (Spretnak, 1990, p. 8). See section 4.3.1

[21] This idea (Eisler, 1990, p. 31), also found in Gray's (1981) *Green Paradise lost*, that spirituality was separated from women, because only men could attain "the higher states of spiritual being" (Gray, 1981, p. 6; reference from Ebenreck, 1983, p. 38), is historically fascinating, isn't it? Where female priestesses were common in societies where the patriarchal viewpoint had not taken hold, they were disallowed where it had, notes Eisler. And still are, in some religions today…

[22] Eisler supports her presentation of these early civilizations by extensive reference to archeological discoveries

integrated Self, an interconnected sense of the Self/Other relationship, and a radical social transformation towards post-patriarchal values and structures.

## 2.4 Imagery, rhetoric

Images of nature as female create ecofeminist disagreement [section 4.3.2.3]. Merchant[23] has argued that the "image of the earth as ... nurturing mother has historically served as a cultural constraint restricting the actions of human beings. One does not readily slay a mother, dig into her entrails for gold, or mutilate her body....". But some ecofeminists, such as Roach (1996) problematize the symbol "Mother nature" even when its use is intended positively, such as in the 17 principles of the environmental justice movement (Taylor, 1997, pp. 42-44). Ecofeminist Linda Vance "critiques the male environmentalist description of nature as mother, protectress, provider, and nurturer as based primarily in male desire, and argues for a feminist reconceptualization of nature as sister..." (Gaard, 1993, p. 7). Kheel (1993, p, 243, p. 248-255) is critical of nature portrayed as "Mother Nature", or "a damsel in distress", requiring rescue by the masculine hero [currently in the form of "reason" in malestream environmental ethics, in which, Kheel (1993, p. 251) argues, ethical conduct is conceptualized as "restraint of [male] aggression" by reason].

With the dawn of the Scientific Revolution, Merchant (1980) argues, it suited patriarchal scientists to re-image, from the sixteenth century onwards, nature as an unruly and disorderly woman (Li, 1993, pp. 277-279, discussing Merchant, 1980). One image is of nature as the Beast, "conceived as a symbol for all that is not human, for that which is evil, irrational, and wild" (Kheel, 1993, in Gaard, 1993, p. 245). Kheel (1993, pp. 245- 246, p. 247) traces how often in western patriarchal thought - Sumero-Babylonian, Greek, Jewish, and Christian - the "hero" vanquishes "the demonic Beast" – the python, the three-headed Medusa, the serpent, the dragon, all often portrayed as female. With the rise of Enlightenment rationalism, increasing mechanization, and also increasing commercial and industrial interests, the image of nature as woman was increasingly replaced by mechanistic images (Merchant, 1980), or the "the image of nature as mindless matter, which exists to serve the needs of superior, rational 'Man'." (Kheel, 1993, pp. 246-247; Zimmerman, 1987, p. 25).

Positive images include nets (Spretnak, 1997, p. 427), webs[24] (for example, Christ, 1990, p. 58; Diamond & Orenstein, 1990, p. xiii), and weaving. These are employed to convey the kind of interconnectedness and relatedness eco-feminists advocate, for example, "Life on earth is an interconnected web, not a hierarchy..." (Gruen, 1993, in Gaard, 1993, p. 80[25]). Warren refers to a "web-like decision making" framework, in place of hierarchical decision-making in ethics (Brown, 2004, p. 250, footnote 11, referring to Warren, 1987, p. 10). "Weaving" is sometimes used to describe the "fundamental dynamic of this universe" (Spretnak cited in Swimme, 1990, p. 20). Ecofeminists "reweave new stories ..." (Diamond & Orenstein[26], 1990, p. xi), for example, Kheel (1993, p. 261) writes: "... As this tapestry begins to take shape, I stretch my imagination into the future and spin the following narrative...". An ecofeminist direct action practice is sometimes to weave closed the doors of public buildings which are the focus of some or other ecofeminist issue.

The rhetoric is of liberation of all oppressed groups (Gaard, 1993, p. 5; Gruen, 1993, in Gaard, 1993, p. 60). There is talk of "healing the wounds[27]" inflicted on people and the planet by oppression (Birkeland, 1993, p. 23).

[23] Merchant, 1983, p. 100, cited by Kheel, 1993, p. 251, and also by Li, 1993, p. 277
[24] Reminiscent of green author Capra's "web of life" and deep ecologist Naess's "biospherical net" ontological metaphors
[25] Citing from King, "The ecology of feminism and the feminism of ecology", in Plant, 1989, p. 19
[26] Their anthology on ecofeminism (1990) is entitled " Reweaving the world"
[27] Also the title of Plant's (1989) anthology on ecofeminism

# 3. Epistemology

> "The critique of reason, rationality, and universal principles as male concepts is a familiar theme in many environmentalist, feminist and ecofeminist writings..." (Donner, 1997, p. 376)

Ecofeminists argue that rationalism is a *masculinist*, and not a universal, way of knowing. They argue further, that such androcentric epistemology colours all western dominant culture views on ontology [section 4], ethics/nature ethics [section 5], and infuses political and social structures as well [section 6].

This section necessarily begins with a partial ontological digression (3.1; and then section 4). From the critique of the "male" rational self, ecofeminists construct evidence of the connections between masculinity, rationality, and domination in our language of the Other, including nature (3.2), critique [masculine] scientific epistemology (3.3), and the invisibility [to men] of women's, and local, non-expert knowledge (3.4). However, there has been "in-house" critique of what some ecofeminists see as the rejection by their sisters of the Enlightenment legacy of Reason [3.5].

## 3.1 The Enlightenment's "masculine model of man"

Where many feminists locate their accounts of the male psyche within depth psychology [section 4.1], Birkeland (1993, in Gaard, 1993, pp. 23-25) locates hers within Enlightenment thought. She suggests that besides celebrating the ideal of progress[28], the Enlightenment also celebrated a "masculine model of Man", the connection between the two being the supposed male possession of *rationality*. Human progress could be achieved by knowledge gained through a " ... 'masculinist' notion of reason – removed from emotion and intuition and disciplined by scientific method..." (Birkeland, 1993, in Gaard, 1993, p. 24). In ethical thought too, Kant for example, strongly dichotomized universalized, disinterested reason, and emotion (Plumwood, 1991c, in Warren, 1996, p. 156).

### 3.1.1 The "androcentric" premise on rationality, Self and Other

Presupposing I think, what Birkeland calls "the androcentric premise" of Self and Other, would be the feminist premise that there is such a thing as an "abstract masculinity" (McLaughlin, 2003, p. 56). This is an epistemology (rationality) which generates a specific ontology: a "dichotomous way of thinking about the world, which constructs a series of hierarchical oppositions – nature/culture, reason/emotion, and female/male – that legitimate patterns of oppression and domination." (McLaughlin, 2003, p. 55).

The "androcentric premise" on rationality, self and other comprises five key ideas: (1) the creation of masculine and feminine archetypes, their polarization, and the elevation of values defined as masculine (rational, competitive, dominating, calculating) above those defined as female (emotional, nurturing, caring, accommodating) (Birkeland, 1993, in Gaard, 1993, p. 25); (2) the idea that "masculine" Man is autonomous – independent of both nature and community. "This false sense of masculine autonomy underlies the alienation and anthropocentrism to which many environmentalists trace the modern crisis" (pp. 24-25); (3) masculinity is measured by distance from the feminine, by autonomy, and by the amount of "*power over*" others (p. 25; her italics); (4) a patriarchal association of women with nature seen as "feminine". Rationalism underwrites "human chauvinism" or instrumentalism,

[28] Deconstructing Enlightenment values and claims is a feminist project (McLaughlin, 2003, pp. 5-7). On the Enlightenment view, "progress" was "self-realization through independence from necessity (nature) and freedom from social constraints (community)..." (Birkeland, 1993, in Gaard, 1993, p. 25). Mies & Shiva (1998, p. 482, their italics) also refer to the Enlightenment view of human freedom and happiness as "*an ongoing process of emancipation from nature*, or independence from, and dominance over natural processes by the power of reason and rationality". On the links between Enlightenment values, such as rationality, and progress, ecofeminist Shiva (1988, p. xiv, in Hayward, 1995, p. 3) writes: "The Age of Enlightenment and the theory of progress to which it gave rise, was centered on the sacredness of two categories: modern scientific knowledge and economic development. Somewhere along the way, the unbridled pursuit of progress, guided by science and development, began to destroy life... The act of living and of celebrating and conserving life in all its diversity – seems to have been sacrificed to progress, and the sanctity of life has been substituted by the sanctity of science and development."

"whereby things are valued only to the extent that they are useful to Man" (Birkeland, 1993, in Gaard, 1993, p. 25, p. 24); (5) the universalization of this masculine model of experiences and values: "...what men do not experience is regarded as somewhat unimportant, distant or unreal." (Birkeland, 1993, in Gaard, 1993, p. 25).

## 3.2 Domination metaphors in descriptions of malestream rationality

Eco-feminist Warren (1997, p. 13) highlights how the connections between "masculine" rationality and domination of the Other operate empirically in language:

> … domination metaphors and sexist language pervade philosophical descriptions of reason, rationality, and good reasoning: good reasoners knock down arguments; they tear, rip, chew, cut them up, attack them, try to beat, destroy, or annihilate them, preferably by "nailing them to the wall.". Good arguers are sharp, incisive, cutting, relentless, intimidating … Those not good at giving arguments are wimpy, …nagging. Good arguments have a thrust to them; they are compelling, binding, air-tight, steel-trap, knock-down, dynamite, smashing and devastating bits of reasoning which lay things out and pin them down…

## 3.3 Malestream scientific epistemology critiqued

Ecofeminists critique the distance and domination inherent in "masculinist" or "patriarchal" scientific epistemology (Donovan, 1993, in Gaard, 1993, p. 181). Drawing on Horkheimer and Adorno's critical theory, as well as the work of several feminist writers, ecofeminist Donovan[29] rejects the Cartesian/Newtonian paradigm's scientific epistemology (p. 175, 178), inter alia, in as far as it "converts reality into mathematical entities modeled on the physical universe..." (p. 174); its relegation of that which cannot be mathematized to the realm of the unimportant (p. 174); its a-contextuality (p. 177); its "inherent subject-object mode" and the "rationalist distancing" that entails (p. 183); its " psychology of domination"; its "pretensions" to universality which has the effect of erasing, subduing, and dominating "differences and particularities" (Donovan, 1993, p. 174). Donovan sees scientific epistemology as expression of the same rejection-of-the-feminine process by which boys become men[30] (p. 180) [section 4.1]. Drawing on Evelyn Fox Keller's work (Keller, 1978), Donovan suggests that "the autonomy and objectivity of the male scientist reflect the basic dissociation from the feminine affective world required in the male maturation process" (p. 180). Supporter of ecofeminism cosmologist Brian Swimme argues that standard western scientific training has "chiseled to perfection" our minds "for controlling, for distancing, for calculating, and for dominating. The rest [of our minds] has been sacrificed in the surgery of patriarchal initiation" (Swimme, 1990, p. 16). The patriarchal stance is again revealed in language: where male-type science chooses as metaphor for the origins of the universe, "The Big Bang"; ecofeminist consciousness chooses "the Great Birth" (Swimme, 1990, p. 18).

### 3.3.1 Alternatives

Feminist standpoint theory[31] argues that the differences in how men and women "see" the world are important, and it seeks to provide a framework "for exploring the importance of such differences" (McLaughlin, 2003, p. 47). Women's experiences within the everyday life of the material world, and within a view of the self "that opposes dualisms, ... and is able to sense connection and continuities 'both with other persons and with the natural world'" (McLaughlin, 2003, p. 56, citing Hartsock, 1998, p. 120), cannot be understood within the consciousness and ideology of those in power, which generally represents a "masculine" standpoint (McLaughlin, 2003, p. 57). In the words of Harding and

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[29] Donovan's critique is in the context of theorizing the "dominance over nature, women, and animals inherent in ... scientific epistemology" (1993, p. 179)

[30] In developing this idea, Donovan cites Hanna Fenichel Pitkin's (1984, p. 230) work on Machiavelli's psychological development, and also Evelyn Fox Keller's Gender and Science (1978, pp. 187-205, especially p. 197) in Harding and Hintikka (1983)

[31] This and the next paragraph hardly does justice to standpoint theorizing – McLaughlin (2003, pp. 47-69) briefly but usefully presents its key perspective, feminist critique and "incorporations", and its political uses

Hintikka's title (1983), feminists have explored alternative feminist perspectives on the philosophy of science, epistemology, metaphysics, and methodology.

Standpoint theorists such as Nancy Hartsock (1983, discussed in McLaughlin, 2003), Sandra Harding (1989, 1991, discussed in Donovan, 1993, and in McLaughlin, 2003), and Donna Haraway (1985, 1988, discussed in Donovan, 1993, and McLaughlin, 2003) undermine some of the implicit assumptions of malestream scientific epistemology, for example, that there is such a thing as transcendent objectivity [the "God-trick" (McLaughlin, 2003, p. 60)], and that only universal, abstract, objective knowledge is valid knowledge. They claim that what is presumed to be the universality of (malestream and mainstream) scientific knowledge, is actually situated knowledge (Sayer, 2000, pp. 51-52), it comes from somewhere (McLaughlin, 2003, p. 60) – it is a product of the scientist's race, gender and sexuality, and his/her society's media and technology. They argue that as science is dominated by white, western, male, middle-class, heterosexuals, the claim that their knowledge is "disembodied, unmarked by their position and character, and ... of universal applicability" (Sayer, 2000, p. 51) is disputable; their so-called universal knowledge comes from a very narrow social group (Sayer, 2000, p. 54). A standpoint theorist such as Harding does not discard the notion of objectivity; instead she argues for what she calls "strong objectivity", which "asserts that claims generated from particular locations will be 'less false' than others" (McLaughlin, 2003, p. 61; Sayer, 2000, p. 52 also discusses Harding's "strong objectivity"). A third important characteristic of standpoint theory is I think, its viewpoint that knowledge is not only situated, but political. It should generate political agendas and political action to improve the position of the marginalized and oppressed in the world (McLaughlin, 2003, pp. 67-68). I would include here, nature as a marginalized "group".

Ecofeminists argue for what I call, a relational methodology. Science's "will to know" need not be equated with "the will to power" [i.e. 'power over']; there are "ways of knowing the world that are not based on objectification and domination" (King, 1990, p. 120). Ruether suggests as alternative, that researchers adopt a "relational, affective mode popularly called "right-brain thinking", which moves beyond the linear, dichotomized, alienated consciousness characteristic of the "left-brain" mode seen in masculinist epistemology" (Donovan, 1993, p. 181[32]). Rachel Carson, for example, "... thought that loving the world was what science had to be about. That it is essential to love the natural world before you can understand it…." (Paley, 1990[33]). Female natural scientist Barbara McClintock's approach of "empathetic respect" towards that which is researched, of "letting the material speak to you", and allowing it to "tell you what to do next", rather than the imposition of preconceived mathematical models on it, is often quoted, also by Donovan (1993, p. 183).

There are also calls for "methodological humility" (Gruen, 1993, in Gaard, 1993, p. 84, drawing on the work of Uma Narayan (1988)). Basically, this entails "... deep respect for difference", and "working together across difference". Also, in action, Gruen (1993, p. 84) writes, "one must always operate under the assumption that there may be something happening that cannot be immediately understood. ... Methodological humility suggests that there may not be one right answer to the problem of undoing patriarchal oppression....".

## 3.4 The "invisibility" of women's ecological knowledge critiqued

Malestream scientific epistemology tends to the view that particular knowledge situated in the experience of the marginalized is not valid knowledge. So an important ecofeminist epistemological task is to reveal the "invisibility" [to men] of women's ecological knowledge[34], the ignoring of what

[32] Drawing on Ruether, 1983, p. 87
[33] Dedication to Rachel Carson by Grace Paley (1990), in Diamond and Orenstein (1990)
[34] Curtin (1997, pp.90-91) characterizes women's ecological knowledge as relational, inherently collaborative, situated not abstract, future-oriented therefore sustainable, and bodily, i.e. integrating "head and hand"

women know about their particular locality, especially when it comes to formulation of environmental policies and their implementation (Wilson, 1997, p. 391, p. 393), and to development projects involving natural resources in the Third World (Wilson, 1997, p. 403, p. 405). [This aspect is discussed in more detail at section 6.3, under the concept 'maldevelopment']. Ecofeminists argue that women's ecological knowledge must be granted legitimacy in mainstream ways of knowing (e.g., Curtin, 1997, p. 86, in Warren, 1997).

### 3.5. Critique of ecofeminist epistemology

Some feminists/ecofeminists criticize their sisters for ignoring or rejecting Enlightenment legacies, including reason and rationality (e.g., social ecologist Janet Biehl, 1991, p. 1, in Donner, 1997, p. 375). Donner suggests that since feminists/ecofeminists generally also wish to affirm that women [and some argue, nature too] possess reason, careful thought must be given to which forms of rationality are to be rejected, and which retained (Donner, 1997, p. 376). The middle road viewpoint is not that reason must be replaced with emotion, or rationality with intuition, but that the two must be brought into better balance: "reason and emotion are symbiotically related, coequal sources of knowledge" ('feminist epistemology' in Audi, 1999, p. 305).

## 4. Ontology

Ecofeminist ontological views are usually simultaneous views of reality, self and other. Ecofeminists argue that prevailing western views of Self, and Self vis-a-vis Other [whether other people, nature generally, or animals particularly] are *masculine* ontological views. In section 4.1, I present what could be called a "depth psychology" (Meyer, Moore, & Viljoen, 1989, pp. 35-38) view of the masculine self. Ecofeminists have theorized what they see as androcentric views of Self and Other; two accounts are presented in section 4.2. Some ecofeminist ontological views are set out in section 4.3.

### 4.1 Anthropological/depth psychology views of the male Self

The "Sky God" with his thunderbolts, is seen by ecofeminists as the "projection of the male's hierarchical, patriarchal, domineering, and authoritarian" view of self, and self vis-a-vis the other, including nature (Zimmerman, 1990, p. 143). Carl Jung, and psychotherapist Erich Neumann, on Zimmerman's (1990) view[35], have interpreted the replacement of the original female Earth Goddess or Great Mother by the male Sky God as representative of an increasing individuation of [male] consciousness from the relatively collective state of consciousness then obtaining: "They see the solar God as representing the clarity of the free-willed, self-assertive, *rational* ego-self. For this kind of individuated selfhood to be possible, according to Jung, the heroic ego had to escape from the embrace of the great Mother, who represents both the organic-bodily and the subconscious domain of human existence … Rightly understood, the great Father can be regarded as a further development of the *individuating* and *transcendent* principles…." (Zimmerman, 1990, p. 143, my italics). The Father God, or Sky God, was construed as all-powerful, separate, and other-worldly [i.e. not material], and men construed themselves in his image. They dissociated themselves from their own bodies, from nature, and from women, who were now construed as being too associated with "the subconscious, prerational, collective, material, and emotional realms" (Zimmerman, 1990, p. 144). The organic and the subconscious became western humanity's "dark side" – its mortality, dependence, and finitude. All these characteristics are projected by western humanity "upon the body and nature, which it then attempts to "dominate" and "control" (Zimmerman[36], 1990, p. 140).

[35] Zimmerman presented in 1987 (pp. 24-25) a similar discussion, based on feminist Marilyn French's (1985) work

[36] Zimmerman expands far more on this theme (1990, pp. 143-145) than I do here. The concluding sentence of his discussion is "The fierceness of the ego's repression of the female, the bodily, and the natural is directly proportional to the ego's recognition of its ultimate *dependent* status. … the anxious ego finally claims to be independent of everything…" (p. 145)

This analysis appears in broad agreement with feminist interpretations of psychoanalytic object-relations theory[37] (McLaughlin, 2003, pp. 55-56), and also with Birkeland's "androcentric premise" introduced earlier. All suggest the ingredients of the masculine psyche as rational, separate, autonomous, transcendent over the Other. Expressed psychologically, these characteristics give rise to an alienated sense of one's own self, as well as an alienated, and dominating sense of self vis-a-vis the Other.

## 4.2 Theorizing androcentric views on Self and Other

Here I take as exemplary, Plumwood (1991b, 1997), and Warren (1990). Both of these authors, in different ways, theorize the connections between androcentric dichotomous views of self and other, and domination. I introduce first (4.2.1), Plumwood's centric model to illustrate how androcentrism's "Otherization" works vis-a-vis that which is/or construed as feminine, then Warren's "logic of domination" model, to illuminate the androcentric justification for the twin exploitation of women, and of nature as "Other".

### 4.2.1 Plumwood's "centrism": masculine Centre/feminine Other as example

Plumwood draws on feminist Nancy Hartsock[38]'s (1990) work which "discerns a common centric structure underlying different forms of oppression" (Plumwood, 1997, p. 327) – racism, sexism, ethnocentrism and colonialism, for example. There is an "omnipotent subject at the centre" which constructs everything else as other, and that other "as sets of negative qualities" (Plumwood, 1997, p. 336, citing Hartsock, 1990).

Plumwood (1997, pp. 337-341), within her project of proposing a "liberation" version of anthropocentrism [(p. 336); section 5.1.1 in this chapter], identifies five characteristic features of "centrism", or the "structure of Otherization" as she also calls it, and shows its applicability to androcentrism, interpreted as masculine Centre/feminine Other:

(a) **The Other as inferior** and therefore to be kept separate and radically excluded. Institutionalized systems of domination take advantage of cultural opportunities to clearly identify the Centre, usually portrayed as reason-as-male, by excluding the "inferiorized qualities of the periphery". Men are rational, and women are set apart as lacking in reason. Because they are different, lower, or on the periphery, their shared qualities with men are denied, and they are also denied equal access to socio-economic goods. "Separate 'natures' explain, justify, and naturalize widely different privileges… between men and women, block identification and sympathy, tendencies to question…" (Plumwood, 1997, p. 337).

(b) **Homogenization of the Other**. This allows differences to be disregarded. Everyone within the otherized group "is stereotyped as interchangeable, replaceable, all alike, homogenous" (p. 337). The other is not an individual but a class of interchangeable things viewed as resources

[37] Feminist/ecofeminist writers Nancy Chodorow, Dorothy Dinnerstein, and Elizabeth Dodson Gray, have all developed psychosexual accounts [but somewhat differing interpretations, on Li's account, 1993, pp. 279-280 at least] of the development of the male psyche. Zimmerman (1987, pp. 31-32) refers to Chodorow's object-relations theory in seeking to explain the male social atomist view of self and other. Ecofeminist Kheel (1990, in Diamond & Orenstein, 1990, pp. 130-131, and again in Gaard, 1993, pp. 247-248), also draws on the "psychoanalytic theory of object relations" to describe a male sense of self, replete with images of identification with the mother figure, the struggle for dis-identification through portrayal of the female as "darkness or Chaos, usually symbolized by a female-imaged form" (1990, p. 130), but also a subsequent yearning "to reexperience the original state of union" (1990, p. 131). She too, refers inter alia, to the work of Chodorow and Dinnerstein (1993, p. 264, footnotes 14 and 15), as does ecofeminist Li (1993, p. 279), in discussing Elizabeth Gray's work. Rosemary Radford Ruether (cited by Donovan, 1993, p. 180, from Ruether, 1975, p. 25) also writes of the male "war against the mother"; the "struggle of the transcendent ego to free itself from bondage to nature"

[38] King lists Nancy Hartsock as a socialist feminist (1990, p. 114); McLaughlin (2003, p. 54) describes her as seeking to re-interpret Marx's historical materialism through "women's experiences and forms of knowledge"

for the centre; diversity in the otherized group is only recognized to the extent that it serves the centre's needs.

Together, (a) radical exclusion and (b) homogenization, combine to "set up a polarized structure" (Plumwood, 1997, p. 337) which makes the two groups very different, yet everyone in each group the same, making the domination of the Other by the centre, natural, justified and justifiable. Proposed change in this status quo is often seen as challenge to tradition.

(c) **Denial, backgrounding**. Once the Other is set aside as separate and inferior, there is a tendency to both background[39] the Other, and to disclaim any dependency on the Other. "Women's work" – home care, child care – is disvalued and treated as the "private" sphere, the background, against which the really important, male-dominated things happen in the "public" sphere – politics, corporate business, money markets. Women's work in home care and childcare is still not recognized in national financial accounting generally. Namibian women are still radically disempowered, despite Namibia's accession to all international agreements promoting women's rights (Thomas, 2005). Thomas writes: "Namibian traditional cultures, as well as colonial history, neglected and oppressed women in many ways - to the point that until independence women were treated as minors". She conducted her study "to determine whether this dismal state of affairs has changed since independence [1990] or not" and concluded that despite an enabling legal climate, male politicians have not taken active steps to level the political playing field for women, or to "educate men to share equally in housework and the raising of the children". Namibian male politicians blame women for not coming forward, rather than "analysing and removing the many barriers and constraints facing women who enter the male dominated sphere of politics" (2005, Abstract, pp. i-ii). This is perhaps an example of what Plumwood calls, "... denial ... accomplished via a perceptual politics of what ... can be acknowledged…" (Plumwood, 1997, p. 338).

(d) **Incorporation.** The Other is defined not as a person in themselves, but a person in relation to the subject at the centre. Plumwood (1997, p. 338) cites Simone de Beauvoir's (1965, p. 8) inditement: "humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being…[recall here Thomas's (2005) reference to Namibian women being treated as minors before independence]; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute, she is the Other". She is "lack", "exception", "negation", and these things form the basis of her lower place in the social hierarchy, her inferiority, her exclusion (Plumwood, 1997, p. 338).

(e) **Instrumentalism.** Instrumentalism implies a denial of agency in the Other, the "use of the periphery as the means to the center's ends" (Plumwood, 1997, p. 352, footnote 13). In the androcentric view, the female's agency is downplayed, downgraded or denied. She is portrayed as passive, and as requiring a protector. She does not have value in her own right, but derives her "social worth instrumentally, from service to others" (Plumwood, 1997, p. 338), as in the popular slogan "Behind every successful man is a woman".

[39] Salleh (1993, p. 234), drawing on Spender's (1982) *Women of ideas and what men have done to them,* lists several "discursive strategies" and "common patriarchal procedures for dealing with intellectual and political challenges by women: ageism, appropriation, burial (of contribution), contempt (sexual), character assassination, the double bind, the double standard, harassment, isolation, charges of man hating, masculine mind, misrepresentation, namelessness, scapegoating, and witch hunting"

### 4.2.2 Warren's "logic of domination": theorizing the oppression of women and nature

Warren's "logic of domination" model has been influential in ecofeminist thought, and both critiqued and defended[40]. Warren (1997, pp. 19-20) suggests that the connection between *all* forms of oppression – whether it is called sexism, racism, colonialism, heterosexism, agism, anthropocentrism or naturism, is their common dualistic conceptual framework[41], *understood within a "logic of domination"*. Three[42] features mark such an oppressive conceptual framework:

> (1) "value-hierarchical thinking", that is, up/down thinking: what is "up" has more value, status or prestige than what is "down" (Warren, 1990, p. 128),
> (2) "value dualisms" - pairs of terms which are not complementary and inclusive, but oppositional and exclusive, and which place higher value, status or prestige on one term of the pair (p. 128). Contrary to what many feminists and ecofeminists suggest, Warren argues that "there may be nothing *inherently* problematic about 'hierarchical thinking' or even 'value-hierarchical thinking' (p. 128, her italics). They become problematic, i.e. oppressive, when understood within the third feature,
> (3) "a logic of domination". It is the logic of domination, *coupled with* value-hierarchical thinking and value dualisms, which "justifies" subordination (p. 129, her italics). That is because a logic of domination "involves a substantive value system". It contains the ethical premise/s needed (p. 128) to provide "the moral justification of subordination, that is, that superiority justifies subordination".

Working together, these three features identify difference/similarity, establish inferiority, and justify subordination of that which is inferior or lesser. Together they constitute a justified and justifiable, *moral* hierarchy.

Warren suggests that an ecofeminist philosophical perspective "extends this sort of feminist critique of oppressive conceptual frameworks, and the behaviours of domination they give rise to, to nonhuman nature." (Warren, 1997, footnote 52, p. 20). Here (based on another example in Warren, 1990, p. 130, not her exact example), is the oppressive framework linking the domination of women and nature, or the superiority of "culture" over "nature"[43] made visible:

> (1) Women are identified with the realm of the physical [or "nature"], and men are identified with the realm of the mental [or "humanity" or "culture"]
> (2) Whatever is identified with nature and the realm of the physical, is inferior to ("below") whatever is identified with the "human" and the realm of the mental; or conversely, the latter is superior to/above the former
> (3) Thus, women [and/or "nature"] are inferior to ("below") men [or "culture"]; or, conversely, men [culture] are/is superior to ("above") women [nature]
> (4) For any X and Y, if X is superior to Y, then X is justified in subordinating Y
> (5) Thus, men are justified in subordinating women and nature, or, "culture" is justified in subordinating "nature".

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[40] The "logic of domination" concept is often referred to in the literature on ecofeminism, for example, Adams, 1996, p. 117; Cuomo, 1992, p. 351; Davion, 1996, p. 182; Gruen, 1993, p. 79. It has been critiqued inter alia, by Frodeman (1992, pp. 313-314), and critiqued and defended in a paper by Goff-Yates (2000)

[41] Warren (1990, p. 127, her italics) defines a conceptual framework as "a set of *basic* beliefs, values, attitudes, and assumptions which shape and reflect how one views oneself and one's world". An oppressive conceptual framework is one which is interpreted within a "logic of domination". This logic "explains, justifies, and maintains relationships of domination and subordination" (Warren, 1990, p. 127)

[42] Warren's 1997 version lists five features, but I think her 1990 version is the stronger and clearer of the two. The two additional features are (a) "power over" conceptions of power (b) "conceptions of privilege" which maintain and justify the dominance of those who are "up" over those who are "down". She inserts them in that order between the (2) and the (3) of the 1990 version discussed here

[43] Wilson (1997, p. 400) notes that "There is a long sedimented history of thought which has opposed human culture to the natural world"

Such social constructions of women and nature have been successful because the oppressive conceptual framework of patriarchy underlies both. Part of the success of the patriarchal oppressive framework has been its "naturalization" of women, and its "feminization" of nature (Warren, 1990, p. 133, and footnote 14), a process which Warren documents empirically in sexist-naturist language.

#### *4.2.2.1 Naturizing women, and feminizing nature in language*

Warren (1997, p. 12) notes that many philosophers have argued "that the language we use mirrors and reflects our conceptions of ourselves and our world. When language is sexist or naturist, it mirrors and reflects conceptions of women and nonhuman nature as inferior to, having less prestige or status than, that which is identified as male, masculine, or "human" (i.e. male)":

> The language used to describe women, [and] nature …often is sexist and naturist. Women are described in animal terms as pets, cows, sows, foxes, chicks, serpents, bitches, beavers, old bats, old hens, mother hens, pussycats, cats, … birdbrains, and harebrains. Animalizing or naturalizing women in a (patriarchal) culture where animals are seen as inferior to humans (men) thereby reinforces and authorizes women's inferior status. Similarly, language which feminizes nature in a (patriarchal) culture where women are viewed as subordinate and inferior reinforces and authorizes the domination of nature: 'Mother' nature is raped, mastered, conquered…; her secrets are 'penetrated'….Virgin timber is felled… land that lies 'fallow' is 'barren', useless. The exploitation of nature and animals is justified by feminizing them; the exploitation of women is justified by naturalizing them. (Warren, 1997, p. 12).

## 4.3 Ecofeminist views on Self and Other

> "From the vantage point of ecofeminism, human beings are part of nature, and nature and culture are interrelated" (Li, 1993, p. 290)

Despite their rejection of patriarchal ontological dualisms, few ecofeminists propose a radically non-dualistic ontology. Spretnak is one of those who do (section 4.3.1). Ecofeminists tend rather to advocate "a relational, interdependent understanding of reality" (Spretnak, 1997, p. 425), one in which both difference and relatedness, autonomy and symbiosis, are recognized [section 4.3.2].

### 4.3.1 Spretnak's radical ontological nonduality

Spretnak (1997, in Warren, 1997, p. 426) argues for a total rejection of the "core Western dualism of self versus world", but sees at least three obstacles in the way of moving radical nonduality as ontology into respectable philosophy: (1) the predominant western worldview which rejects that which cannot be quantified (2) "the grip of … postmodernism on much contemporary intellectual (particularly academic) thought", and (3) feminist suspicion of nonduality based on bad experience with male versions of it (Spretnak, 1997, p. 426).

She conceptualises reality as an organism[44] possessing mind. The universe is "not just a thing but also a mode of being that has been continually unfolding since the time of the primordial fireball". Mind is not something limited to individual organisms but also exhibited by the Earth as a "great biocybernetic system" in that it [and other systems and communities] appears to exhibit "immensely complex capabilities for self-organization and self-regulation" (Spretnak, 1997, p. 432).

She herself argues for the adoption of a holistic, systemic view of reality, that is, reality as systems within systems, parts which are wholes within other wholes. Her understanding of holism[45] is radical. She uses expressions such as "the oneness that is almost palpable", or "the One Mind" (Spretnak, 1990, p. 8). She presents several examples to suggest that many people in many different cultures have

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[44] But some ecofeminists, she notes, point to [male] political misuse of metaphors of organicism in the past (Spretnak, 1997, p. 428)

[45] One wonders if she too, like Gandhi, and Naess, is influenced by the Hindu notion of advaita [non-duality] "I believe" wrote Gandhi, "in the essential unity … of all that lives" (Naess, 1974, p. 35, referred to by Naess, 1988, in VanDeVeer & Pierce, 1994, p. 226, footnote 3)

experienced moments of total connection with all that there is, during which self-world boundaries learnt in the socialization process melt away (1997, pp. 429-432).

Her ontology/epistemology appears to be a blend of the postmodern acceptance of the social construction of reality, yet at the same time, she insists on its physical groundedness. She speaks of "our constitutive embeddedness in subtle biological, ecological, cosmological, and quantum processes …." (Spretnak, 1997, p. 433). The human experience can not be totally ungrounded, free-floating and constructed as postmodernism suggests, because it also emerges from "one's genetic inheritance of behavioural predispositions; one's cognitive functions, which include the continuous resculpting of neuronal groups and pathways near synaptic interactions; the influence of bodily experience on metaphor, by which most conceptual thought is organized; the influences of landscape, weather, and other dynamics of one's bioregion on imagination and mood; the self-regulating dynamics of the body-mind; the effect of daily exposures to strong and weak electromagnetic fields…" (Spretnak, 1997, p. 433). But we also need to recognize the power plays in human metanarratives and language games, and to "break out of the conceptual box that keeps modern society self-identified apart from nature" (Spretnak, 1997, p. 433).

On the difficult ecofeminist issue of separation and connectedness [4.3.2.1], Spretnak argues for a "polyvalent perception", which would negate fears of overwhelming of the individual. She recognizes that "the subjectivity of every manifestation in the universe is … real and precious" (1997, p. 434), and that there is "astounding diversity and profound *difference* in the universe" (p. 434, her italics), yet she says, all these manifestations *also* have their being within "the dynamic web of relationships that are *constitutive* for that being at a given moment" (p. 433, her italics).

Spretnak suggests that many ecofeminist ontologies don't go nearly far enough towards understanding reality as a "gestalt of a subtle, unitary field of form, motion, space and time", or existence as one [or many] "unitive dimensions of being" (Spretnak, 1997, p. 425). On her view, ecofeminist philosophers appear more comfortable with an ontology which proposes a solidarity "of thoroughly discrete beings" but not a "unity[46]". While rejecting patriarchally-inspired Self-Other dualisms (Wilson, 1997, p. 400), many ecofeminists are also wary of replacing patriarchal "metaphysical and social atomism" with "metaphysical and social relationism" (Zimmerman, 1990, p. 147). They call for "a new version of selfhood or individuation, one that avoids isolated egos on the one hand and unconscious blending on the other" (1990, p. 147). Relational ontological understandings are more commonly found among ecofeminists than Spretnak's radical nonduality.

### 4.3.2 Relational, interdependent ontological understandings

Karen Warren (Wilson, 1997, p. 390) for example, argues for a "nonpatriarchal" ontology, in which "we see ourselves as both co-members of an ecological community and yet different from other members of it" (p. 390). Kheel agrees: ecofeminist philosophy must be "wary" of a holism that "transcends the realm of individual beings"; a holistic interconnectedness means connectedness to both the larger whole, *and* to particular beings (Kheel, 1985, p. 135 summary and pp. 139-141; 1990, pp. 136-137; 1993, p. 261). Not to experience this both-and relationality, may "reflect the familiar masculine urge to transcend the concrete world of particularity in preference for something more … abstract" (Kheel, 1990, in Diamond & Orenstein, 1990, p. 136).

In this section, I introduce the ecofeminist ambivalence around autonomy vis-a-vis connectedness [4.3.2.1]; their view of the Self-in-relation [4.3.2.2], their ambivalence about whether there are

[46] Spretnak points out (1997, p. 428) for example, that some ecofeminist philosophers are prepared to accept as ontological model, scientific ecological theory which conceptualizes reality as "discrete and relatively disconnected or autonomous holons and hierarchical levels of organization", but dismiss as "dubious metaphysical holism" theories from physics which suggest otherwise

women's ways of being in the world [4.3.2.3], the 'feminine principle" [4.3.2.4], and the 'partnership' concept [4.3.2.5].

#### *4.3.2.1 The ambivalence around autonomy vis-a-vis connectedness*

In the ecofeminist view, being human "*is to understand our connection to other people and to all other beings…*" (Christ, 1990, p. 67, her italics).

But in the midst of their concerns for interdependence, interrelation, connectedness and community, autonomy, individuality and agency for women remain important values. On the one hand, they have been so strongly construed as androcentric qualities, easily lending themselves to the logic of domination. But on the other hand, women have for so long been denied autonomy and individuality, and for so long been socialised to cater for/take second place to the needs of others, that feminists wish to protect their emerging autonomy. They are wary of any ontology proposing a merging of the self [male]/other boundary (Plumwood, 1991b, in Zimmerman, 1993, pp. 284-309; Donner, 1997, in Warren, pp. 375-389).

Some ecofeminists construe Arne Naess's "ecological self" [Chapter Four, section 4.2] as an even further expansion of the male self (Spretnak, 1997, p. 434). Kheel is worried that Naess's ecological self doesn't discriminate between the differing socialization histories of men and women, and so is an unsuitable personal development/emancipation model for feminists/ecofeminists (Spretnak 1997, p. 428 and footnote 4 on p. 435). Donner (1997, pp. 379-381), drawing on Laing's (1964) work, suggests that failure to develop an appropriate boundary of Self, and sense of agency, leads to pathological behaviour. She agrees with Plumwood's critique of all three deep ecology versions of Self [Chapter Four, section 4.2.3.2] as too drastic an obliteration of all distinction between Self and Other, and supports Plumwood's "nonholistic but relational account of the self" which does not deny the "independence or distinguishability of the other", and "enables us to stress continuity without drowning in a sea of indistinguishability" (Donner, 1997, pp. 381-382, citing Plumwood, 1991, p. 14, and p. 19[47]).

#### *4.3.2.2 "Self-in-relation"*

Instead of androcentrism's divided Self, self against other, and self against nature on the one hand, and what she sees as deep ecology's obliterated self on the other, ecofeminist Plumwood argues, as do other ecofeminists (Warren, 1999, p. 158, who calls the concept "relational selves") for the concept of an integrated "self-in-relation[48]" to the Other, whether understood as persons, the community, or nature, the focus in this section.

On Plumwood's view (1991c, in Warren, 1996, p.170), there "are two parts to the restructuring of the human self in relation to nature – reconceptualizing the human and reconceptualizing the self, and especially its possibilities of relating to nature in other than instrumental ways". Underlying both though, it must be remembered, is the consistent ecofeminist critique of masculine rationalism. So part

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[47] These page numbers refer to Plumwood's paper as published in *Hypatia*, VI, *1* (Spring, 1991), 3-27. See Plumwood, 1991c, p. 165 and p. 170 for republished equivalent

[48] 'Self-in-relation' is a concept discussed in psychology/social psychology too, often drawing on feminist insights. Psychologist E.E. Sampson examined in 1988, the merits of "American individualism" versus what he called a preferable "ensembled individualism", based inter alia, on feminist Nodding's (1984) work. Social psychologist Burr (1995, pp. 109-110), in discussing alternatives to the individual/society dichotomy, describes Chodorow (1978) and Gilligan's (1982) psychoanalytic perspective on the differences between women's and men's sense of self thus: " [they] suggest that the predominant western notion of the highly individuated, self-sufficient, separate person describes primarily the experience of men. They argue that women's sense of self is that of the 'self-in-relationship', that women's identity is so closely bound up in their relations with others that for them the dividing line between self and other is less clear than for men. The suggestion here is that the person's identity lies in their relation to others, and is not an entity to be found inside the person". Burr also refers to Sampson's work. By 1990, Sampson was calling his "ensembled individualism", "embedded individualism" (Burr, 1995, p. 110, citing Sampson, 1990, p. 124). But still individualism!

of what is involved in challenging the human/nature dualism, is challenging "the centrality and dominance of the rational in the account of the human self" (Plumwood, 1991c, in Warren, 1997, p. 169).

In western culture, what it is to be "fully and authentically human", has, Plumwood argues (1991c, in Warren, 1996, p. 169), "been defined oppositionally, by *exclusion* of what is associated with the inferior natural sphere" (p. 169, her italics). An important task for the self-in-relation, is to abandon masculine models of being "human", which value "maximizing control over the natural sphere (both within and without)..." (p. 169), and to re-integrate into the self, those aspects of being human which in malestream rationalist-inspired ontology, have been "split off, denied, ...construed as alien" (p. 169), or "devalued" (p. 168), for example, emotionality and sensuality, *because* they represent the feminine, the animal, the natural (p. 173). This would form an essential part of a strategy for "challenging ... the human/nature dualism", because it would "provide a basis for the recognition of *continuities* with the natural world" (p. 169), rather than highlighting as "human" only those qualities such as rationality, abstract planning and calculation (p. 169), which illustrate our discontinuity from nature.

Feminist/ecofeminist theory argues that the rational autonomous self, making instrumental use of the Other, is neither a full, nor accurate, account of being human. To be human is also to be social and to be connected. We should see human beings rather as "*essentially* related and interdependent" (Plumwood, 1991c, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, p. 301, her italics). This view of self-in-relationship is one that "enables a recognition of interdependence and relationship without falling into the problems of indistinguishability" (1991c, pp. 301-302) [Plumwood's group term for the various deep ecology accounts of self]. It "acknowledges both continuity and difference, ... breaks the culturally posed false dichotomy of egoism and altruism of interests [relational interests are neither egoistic nor altruistic, says Plumwood (1991b, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, p. 306, footnote 19)];" and "it bypasses both masculine "separation" and traditional-feminine "merger" accounts of the self. It can also provide an appropriate foundation for an ethic of connectedness and caring for others…" (Plumwood, 1991b, pp. 301-302).

When Other is understood as nature, then the view of the human being as self-in-relation is one which recognizes both our continuity with nature and our distinctness from it. Relationship with nature is viewed as an essential rather than an accidental part of what it is to be human. On such an account, land, for example, is understood as something to which one can become as connected as to a human being, and not a piece of real estate, or instrumental backdrop for human activity. Such essential relationships with nature involve at least, recognition, not denigration, of the worth of particular relationships - to "places, forests, animals, to which one is particularly strongly related or attached and toward which one has specific and meaningful, not merely abstract, responsibilities of care" (Plumwood, 1991b, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, p. 303). It is important to note here that Plumwood is not arguing for a replacement of universality and rationality with particularity and emotion, because that would be to "implicitly … accept the dualistic construction of these as oppositional". What is needed is to re-integrate the personal, the particular, and the emotional, into environmental philosophy and ethics[49] (Plumwood, 1991b, p. 304, footnote 3).

#### *4.3.2.3 Are there women's ways of being in the world?*

Whether women should deny or celebrate a feminine essence, and accept or reject any particular affinity to nature, is also the site of ecofeminist ambivalence. Are women "essentially" different to men? Is the women-nature connection potentially emancipatory for women or not ? (King, 1990, pp. 106-121). Will it contribute to lessening or eliminating ecological domination?

[49] Field (1995) however problematizes ecofeminist optimism about relational-self theories and place-based ethics

Some see the significance of ecofeminism as its recognition that women's ways of being in the world *are* different to men's ways. In this kind of "standpoint" feminism, women are seen to "possess an essential nature – a biological connection or a spiritual affinity with nature that men do not" (Birkeland, 1993, in Gaard, 1993, p. 22). The "nature as female" idea is also "the central category of analysis" for radical feminists. Some radical feminists do, and some don't, urge women to celebrate their femaleness, and their close association with nature (Warren, 1987, p. 14).

The "essential" female, and interconnected sense of Self, is argued to give rise to a different kind of moral reasoning from that of the male, disconnected, sense of Self, even though both kinds are available to both sexes (Gaard, 1993, p. 2, citing Chodorow and Gilligan[50]'s ethical studies; Brown (2004, p. 253, footnote 20) cites several other feminist works on moral theory). This idea comes from work in psychology on the development of moral reasoning and judgement. Piaget and Kohlberg (based on studies with boys) claimed that the development of morality moves through invariant, hierarchical, and universal stages. In the higher stages of development, moral judgements are based on abstract reason, rationality, and universally-agreed to rules. Women have difficulty in reaching these higher stages (!) (McLaughlin, 2003, p. 74, p. 80). Gilligan (1982), who was a student of Kohlberg's, claimed by contrast, after her studies with girls, that the development of morality moves through non-invariant stages depending on life experience and context, that the higher stages of moral development are premised on relationship, meeting responsibilities, and providing care, in specific contexts, and that "Women and men can base judgements on an ethic of care or justice when notions of femininity or masculinity do not inhibit their psychological development" (McLaughlin, 2003, p. 80, Box 3.1, summarizing Gilligan's claims; also Schutte, 1993, discussing Gilligan's work).

On this view, morality is gendered: "Where men emphasise rights, women emphasise responsibility. Whereas men seek impartial judgement on the basis of equality through the agreement of all rational people, women seek to respond with selective care to each different situation of need. Men stress the justice of non-interference, women the necessity of caring involvement" (Schutte, drawing on Gilligan's work, p. 149). But Gilligan's claims have "been met with anxiety by feminists troubled with its perspective and conclusions" (McLaughlin, 2003, p. 80). McLaughlin discusses these concerns further (2003, pp. 80-83), and also a more public-political "rearticulation" of an ethic of care as social practice. Using an ethics of care as standard, for example (1) the extent to which, and way in which the state provides care for its citizens, as well as (2) the state's understandings of responsible citizenship can be evalued and critiqued. Political change can be demanded (McLaughlin, 2003, pp. 83-89).

From the environmental philosophy viewpoint, ecofeminist theory supporter Jim Cheney (1987, p. 128) also notes that where men tend towards a theory of rights, justice and obligation as suitable basis for an environmental ethic, ecofeminism is concerned with "an ethics of love, care, and friendship". Environmental philosopher Zimmerman notes (1990, p. 143) though, that the viewpoint that women are "essentially" or biologically or "naturally" different, seems to confirm the misogynist viewpoint that these are the very qualities which make women 'inferior'. The qualities certainly cannot make them 'superior' because then we have moved no further in dismantling dualistic, hierarchical thought. Patriarchy has also distorted women's views of themselves, because many women buy into the male patriarchal version of what it is to be a female (Zimmerman, 1990, p. 143; Davion (1994) argues similarly). Ecofeminists Ynestra King and Janis Birkeland both repudiate the essentialist nature of women thesis as a part of ecofeminism, basically on the grounds that it is a patriarchal plot (Birkeland, 1993, in Gaard, 1993, p. 22). Without a western patriarchal thought-split between culture and nature in the first place, the question would be a non-issue. And if women do see themselves as closer to nature than men, and men believe this too, it is the result of hundreds of years of cultural patriarchal

[50] Gilligan's work is often quoted in ecofeminist writing, for example, Warren's reference (1990, p. 140, footnote 27) to Gilligan's work on women's values, or Wilson (1997, footnote 51 on p. 409)

conditioning. The crucial point, it is argued, is that both aggressive as well as caring, gentle, non-dominating behaviour patterns are available to both sexes; the adoption of either is a matter of choice. "In short, men can subscribe to ecofeminism, and, in fact, their cooperation is necessary if we are to save the planet" (Birkeland, 1993, in Gaard, 1993, p. 23). Green theorist Dobson (2000, pp. 189-200) concurs: he is concerned that a "standpoint" ethic might border on abandoning slightly less than half the population [men!] as beyond redemption as far as reforming their environmental ethic is concerned.

#### *4.3.2.4 The feminine principle*

There is no one "definition" in ecofeminism of what is meant by the "feminine principle[51]", but the assumption is that it has something positive to offer in addressing the ecological crisis, developing an ecological consciousness, and generating an ecological society. In a women's spirituality context, the feminine principle is understood as "intimate communion with the natural world" (Spretnak, 1990, p. 14), because that is where sacredness is (Starhawk, 1990, p. 73). Some ecofeminists mean by it, that instead of "power over" [domination, control] in structural and personal relationships, harmony, compassion, wisdom (Spretnak, 1990, p. 7) relatedness, and 'power to', that is, creative power (Eisler, 1990, p. 30; Starhawk, 1990, p. 76) are valued. Eisler (1990, pp. 23-24) refers to caring, compassion and non-violence as "'feminine' values". Shiva critiques western development [section 6.4] *inter alia*, because it lacks the "feminine principle" by which she means, "the conserving, ecological principle[52]", the recognition of diversity as asset, not threat, the abandonment of reductionism, duality and linearity, the rejection of the alienation and subjugation of women and nature. Davion (1994[53]) however suggests that some ecofeminists have not been critical enough of concepts of the "feminine" developed within a patriarchal culture. If patriarchy is damaging, then it has damaged the understanding of "the feminine" too.

The concept "partnership", also found in ecofeminist literature, and taken up by Die Grünen [Chapter Seven] as the name of their ethic, can perhaps be understood as concrete "signifier" of the feminine principle.

#### *4.3.2.5 Partnership*

A key concept in the ecofeminist vision of a new, non-exploitative, non-hierarchical society [which is *not* a matriarchal society (King, 1990, p. 120)] is what King (1990, p. 117) calls "partnership" – a "politics of heart and a beloved community, recognizing our connection with each other – and with nonhuman nature". Eisler (1990, p. 28) talks of "partnership" as key principle in the new society. She describes it as "a way of organizing human relations in which beginning with the most fundamental difference in our species – the difference between male and female – diversity is *not* equated with inferiority or superiority". Ecofeminists believe that their worldview also holds the promise of delivering a partnership environmental ethic – an ethic of care - which takes the connections between the twin oppressions of women and nature seriously (Warren 1990, p. 126).

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[51] The concept 'feminine principle' comes from Taoism's 'yin', as opposed to the male principle, 'yang'. Though the concept of the Yin and Yang of nature is highly prized by some deep ecologists and ecofeminists, Jaki (1975, p. 45), in the context of the development of scientific thought, is highly critical: "This conceptual merry-go-round in which the Chinese mind was trapped can be seen in almost every page written by the Chinese of old on nature. The most striking expression of this can be found in the bewildering ramifications that grew out from the primitive notion of the Yin and Yang. The latter, which originally meant bright sunlight, was subsequently identified with the principle of maleness and also with the qualities of hardness and weightlessness. The Yin which originally referred to dark clouds, became the word for the feminine, soft, and heavy. Later connotations of the Yang extended to everything hot, dry, and pure, whereas the Yin became tied to anything cold, turbid, and moist. Again, fire was spoken of as Yang, and so was everything ready to extend or to move upward. Yin, in turn, was said to be the essence of water and of downward and contracting movements. Yang produced everything round and moving, while Yin represented squareness and stillness....". He goes on to note the inadequacy and illogicality of the concepts Yin and Yang for developing scientific thought

[52] Shiva, 1990, p. 190. But it is not clear what Shiva means by the "ecological principle". Davion (1994, p. 292) interprets Shiva's "feminine principle" as "conservation and nurturing"

[53] In her analysis, Davion considers the viewpoints of Eisler (1990), Kheel (1990), Salleh (1984), Shiva (1990), and Swimme (1990) specifically

# 5. Ethic

Ecofeminists query the usually unquestioned premise which underlies much western ethical theory, that rationality is the specific difference which separates [male] humans from, places them in opposition to, and justifies their domination of, the world (Wilson, 1997, p. 391, p. 393). As feminist critique, ecofeminism is committed to "critique male bias in ethics wherever it occurs …" (Warren, 1990, p. 138). Ecofeminists seek "to engage properly" with the rationalist, and dualist-ontological, assumptions underlying traditional moral philosophy, which have been carried over, unexamined, into environmental philosophy[54] (Plumwood, 1991b, in Zimmerman, 1993, p. 284). Any environmental ethic which emerges from mainstream western ethics, and has failed to notice the western historical reality of women's and nature's exploitation, and to acknowledge and redress the patriarchal oppressive conceptual framework underlying the domination of both, is functioning from a "privileged and "unmarked" position" (Warren, 1990, p. 144). It would be "at best an incomplete, inaccurate, … partial" and male-biased account of "what is required of a conceptually adequate environmental ethic" (Warrren, 1990, p. 144). Anthropocentrism, undergirded by implicit androcentrism, is critiqued as just such a male-biased environmental theory of values and norms [section 5.1].

Ecofeminism is also committed "to *develop* ethics which are not male-biased" (Warren, 1990, p. 138, my italics). Warren has suggested that an ecofeminist ethic should operate within certain "boundary conditions" [section 5.2]. The "ethic of care" [section 5.3] is an example. An issue which was originally marginalized in the ecofeminist ethic of care was animal welfare, but since the 1990's, ecofeminists have given considerable attention to the theory and praxis of this aspect [section 5.4].

## 5.1 A centric-based critique of anthropocentrism

Ecofeminist Val Plumwood considers the critique of anthropocentrism[55] as a core project of "the Green movement" (Plumwood, 1997, p. 328). However, she notes that it is an "embattled central concept" finding little support (pp. 328-329) from either those environmental ethicists unsympathetic or sympathetic to deep ecology/the Green cause. Those unsympathetic, exemplified by Grey (1993), whose views are discussed further in Chapter Nine, Environment and development (section 6.2.3), criticize it as a fatally flawed argument, "fit only for the dustbin", because nature cannot "intelligibly be valued independently of human interests" (Plumwood, 1997, p. 329). Deep ecology as antidote to anthropocentrism has been criticized by Dobson[56] [whom I read as sympathetic to the Green cause], as perhaps giving "personal uplift" (Plumwood, 1997, p. 328) but appearing "to provide little help with practical Green action, strategy or politics." (p. 328). In short, anthropocentrism as concept has been "denied legitimacy", and its usefulness to the green movement has been challenged.

Plumwood herself thinks that the concept is one of "the major revolutionary insights of environmental thought" (Plumwood, 1997, p. 328); the "Green movement's flagship" in the "liberation armada" (Plumwood, 1997, p. 328) of contemporary centrist critiques – androcentrism, phallocentrism, ethnocentrism, Eurocentrism, heterocentrism and so on, and fundamental to the Green critique (Plumwood, 1997, p. 329). She suggests that because the largely deep ecology version of it (p. 328) has attracted criticism, the Green movement has not been able to link its anthropocentric critique with the liberation theorizing and politics of the other centrist critiques.

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[54] This sentence from Grey (1993, p. 464) illustrates Plumwood's point I think: "Moral philosophy aims to provide a rational critique or justification of the principles which guide or govern human conduct. In this enquiry it is of course assumed that these principles are accessible to reason…"

[55] "A stance that limits moral standing to human beings, confines the scope of morality and moral concern to human interests, and regards nothing but human well-being as valuable intrinsically" (Attfield, 2003, p. 188)

[56] In his 1990 version of *Green Political Thought*, p. 70

What is required, Plumwood suggests, is a reconceptualization of anthropocentrism, applying feminist centric critiques of oppressive ontological dualism (Plumwood, 1991b, in Zimmerman, 1993, pp. 298-300; Plumwood, 1997, p. 329). Such an approach – rather than the "indistinguishability" remedies of deep ecology, is, in her view, "theoretically illuminating ... [and] of practical value to the Green movement (Plumwood, 1997, p. 329). On her centric account, anthropocentrism cannot be admitted to the ecofeminist ethical space [section 5.2] because of its "naturism" [explained in section 1.3 of this chapter].

### *5.1.1 The anthropocentric view of nature as "colonized other"*

Here I present more or less the centric structure as introduced at section 4.2.1, but now applied to the anthropocentric view of nature as "colonized other" (Plumwood, 1991b, 1997[57]). To maintain an integrated and stand-alone account, I have retained some thoughts already introduced elsewhere in this chapter.

**(a) A view of the Self rooted in rational individualism, itself a product of ill-conceived ontological dualism**

I think that Plumwood (1997) is essentially arguing that the deep ecologist conception and critique of anthropocentrism as human-centered, is still stuck in the psychological egoist assumptions of what it is to be human. In one sense, psychological egoism is a theory of human motivation - the belief that "human beings are so constituted that they must always act out of self-interest" (Velasquez, 1991, p. 560). The link between this view of Self to Bentham and Mill's utilitarianism seems clear: human beings are so constituted that they must always act out of self-interest, construed as expedient social utility. The link to anthropocentrism as environmental ethic is also clear: human beings are so constituted that they must always act towards nature out of *human* self-interest. This is why, Plumwood suggests, deep ecologists call for alternative views of being human such as "wider identification of self" or "transcendence of self" (Plumwood, 1991b, in Zimmerman, 1993, pp. 293-298).

But suggests Plumwood, what underlies psychological egoism [a "remarkably persistent, widespread, and socially fostered fallacy" (Plumwood, 1997, p. 335)], are *malestream* ontological views of the human being as (1) self divided against self, and (2) self divided from the other. This view of self is the product of a (masculine) dualist ontology which "typically polarizes difference and minimizes shared characteristics, construes difference along the lines of superiority/inferiority, and views the inferior side as a means to the higher ends of the superior side (the instrumental thesis). Because its nature is defined oppositionally, the task of the superior side, that in which it realizes itself and expresses its true nature, is to separate from, dominate, and control the lower side." (Plumwood, 1991b, in Zimmerman, 1993, p. 298). This leads to a view of Self as divided against itself – as in mind/body, and reason/emotion - as well as a view of an isolated, autonomous Self against the Other, whether this is construed as other human beings generally, females, nature, or animals. In adjudicating between Self and Other's [here nature] interests, notions of rationality, justice, fairness, and impartiality are key features throughout mainstream ethical theory, and have been carried over into environmental ethical theory.

Plumwood illustrates this via Paul Taylor's biocentric "respect for nature" approach ["biotic individualism" (Botzler & Armstrong, 1998, p. 350)]. I particularly reproduce her argument here, because biocentrism is often seen as "marker" for "green", as in the Wissenburg heuristic (Chapter One, Figure 2). Taylor's theory, she argues, falls within a Kantian ethical framework, in which morality is based on rationality (Plumwood, 1991b, in Zimmerman, 1993, p. 287), and self-interest is contained, or held in check, by universalization. Thus Taylor argues that the attitude of respect towards

[57] Plumwood's (1997, pp. 327-355) paper is packed with sophisticated philosophical argument. What I present here is a minimal but hopefully accurate description

nature is the only moral approach possible, because it is universalizing, self-containing, and disinterested, "that is, each moral agent who sincerely has the attitude advocates its universal adoption by all other agents, regardless of whether they are so inclined and regardless of their fondness or lack of fondness for particular individuals" (Taylor, 1986, p. 41, in Plumwood 1991b, in Zimmerman et al., 1993 p. 285). Taylor discerns in "respect[58]", "valuational, conative, practical and affective dimensions", but highlights the cognitive valuational aspect as central - the other aspects should not be allowed to get the upper hand, because respect is an essentially cognitive matter. Thus the features of Taylor's morality are reason, distance, disinterestedness, abstractness and universality (Plumwood, 1991b, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, p. 299) - that is, those aspects considered as "essential and valuable" about the (male) human being. Emotion manifested as love, care, the personal, the particular, the special, all become at best irrelevant**,** at worst, denied, or construed as alien and inferior (Plumwood, 1991b, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, p. 299).

But Plumwood (1991b, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, p. 288) argues that there is no necessary clash between general moral concern and caring for the particular, unless the latter is accompanied by exclusion of others from care, or chauvinistic attitudes towards them. Special relationships or empathy for particular beings in nature – a tree, river, special place, particular animal – provide continuities between ourselves and aspects of the natural world (1991b, p. 299), they are necessary steps towards "acquiring a wider, more generalized concern" (p. 288); our capacity to do so is "an index of our moral being" (p. 288). Taylor's "respect", she suggests, is merely the completion of a process of extending a masculine rational concept of ethics to nature - "universalization, moral abstraction, and disconnection, discarding the self, emotions, and special ties (all, of course, associated with the private sphere and femininity)" (p. 288).

The extension of rights theory to environmental ethics [as in animal rights theory, Chapter Three, and section 5.4.3 in this chapter] is also problematic. The concept of rights, Plumwood suggests, "requires *strong individual separation* of rights-holders …" (Plumwood, 1991b, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, p. 289, my italics). And, in the context of discussing Tom Regan's (1986) argument for rights for animals as a suitable environmental ethic, she notes that "Rights seem to have acquired an exaggerated importance as part of the prestige of the public sphere and the masculine, and the emphasis on *separation and autonomy*, on *reason* and *abstraction*" (Plumwood, 1991b, p. 290; my italics).

Since masculine views of what it is to be human – a rational, autonomous individual against an Other – is part of the human/nature problem, it is time, she thinks, to re-assess concepts such as concern, care, compassion and responsibility[59] as valuable moral concepts, and not simply as lesser, feminine, emotional, subjective, and private notions. They have the advantage that they are difficult to dichotomize as reason/emotion because they include both; they do not require reciprocity which the concept of "rights" does; they are able to account for indigenous peoples' often spiritual relationship to the land in a way that the concept of "rights" cannot, and they extend to the natural world far less problematically than does the concept of rights, with its human-legal background - how does one apply principles of justice, fairness and rights to ecosystems? Above all, concepts such as concern, care, compassion and responsibility as moral concepts "treat ethical relations as an expression of self-in-relationship", a far better basis for a non-instrumental attitude to nature [and other human beings] than

[58] By way of contrast, Plumwood (1991b, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, p. 289) argues that "the most important elements of respect, which are not reducible to or based on duty or obligation any more than the most important elements of friendship are, ... are rather an expression of a certain kind of selfhood and a certain kind of relation between self and other"

[59] Kheel (1993, p. 260) writes on the concept "responsibility" in nature ethics thus: "... genuine responsibility for nature begins with the root meaning of the word – 'our capacity for response'. Learning to respond to nature in caring ways is not an abstract exercise in reasoning. It is, above all, a form of psychic and emotional health". Gaard (1996, pp. 439-441) sounds a warning note on the concept of responsibility in ethics: "The logic of both rights and responsibilities is inadequate, rights because it relies on the separation of the individual from the community, and responsibilities because it has the potential to erase the needs of the individual in its emphasis on the community"

one based on a view of the human being as disconnected and self-interested (Plumwood, 1991b, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, pp. 290-291, and footnote 1 on p. 304).

**(b) Radical exclusion of the Other**

In anthropocentrism, reason-as-human is the Centre. Nature is "sharply discontinuous or ontologically divided from the human sphere" (Plumwood, 1991b, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, p. 291). Nature is seen to be lacking in the essentially human characteristics of "mind" and agency. While the human physical body might be subject to natural laws, that which is essential, authentic and worthwhile in being human excludes the natural (Plumwood, 1991b, p. 299). Humanity is seen as "outside of and apart from … nature" (Plumwood, 1997, p. 340). Because it is different, lower, or on the periphery, nature's shared qualities with humans - self-organization, self-regulation, self-repair for example, are de-emphasized or denied. Despite evolutionary and genetic theory, humans are still "hyperseparated" from animals. Identification and sympathy with nonhuman living beings is blocked, tendencies to question the status quo are blunted (Plumwood, 1997, p. 337, p. 340).

**(c) Homogenization of the Other**

This move allows differences within the Other to be disregarded, for example, "the diversity of mindlike qualities found in nature and animals is ignored" (Plumwood, 1997, p. 340). Nature as Other/colonized other is viewed as interchangeable, replaceable "resources" for the Centre, i.e. rational human beings. Plumwood (1997, p. 341) argues that these ideas of interchangeability and replaceability are assumptions left over from the mechanistic worldview, which are inadequate ways of grasping nature's complexity. The idea of bits and pieces of nature as replaceable and interchangeable may seem outdated, but it is precisely the assumption in the "weak sustainability" concept in natural resource accounting (Chapter Nine: Environment and Development, section 3.4.1.5). Diversity in the otherized group ["biodiversity" in nature] is primarily recognized to the extent that it serves humans' socio-economic needs (Plumwood, 1997, pp. 340-341).

**(d) Denial, backgrounding**

Once the Other is set aside as separate and inferior, there is a tendency to background it. Nature is the backdrop against which we go about our daily affairs. Because consciousness of our dependence on it cannot quite be banished (Plumwood, 1997, p. 341), it is admitted into our discourse as a projected? "environmental vulnerability" against which we seek environmental security. Its "needs are systematically omitted from account and consideration in distributive decision making" (Plumwood, 1997, p. 341). Nature's metaphoric resistance to excessive human interference - expressed as mad cow disease or bird flu perhaps, or massive mudslides from deforestation – is denied as anything other than a problem requiring additional technology. There is [implicit] denial from powerful politicians such as the president of America that global warming is a threat serious enough that signing the Kyoto Protocol *should* outweigh American economic interests (Gleneagles G8 conference, June 2005).

**(e) Incorporation**

The Other is defined not as something in itself, but as something in relation to humans-in-the-*centre*. "Environment" is a telling anthropocentric word here: human beings in the centre, and everything else surrounding them.

**(f) Instrumental use of the Other-as-Nature: instrumentalism**

Instrumentalism towards nature means viewing it as means to human ends, human interests (Plumwood, 1991a, p. 143). The critique of instrumentalism is an important aspect of the critique of anthropocentrism, not only to improve human relations with nature, but human relations with humans too: "The traditional Western freedom of action with respect to nature is in part the product of an instrumental view of it; instrumentalism is a close associate of domination, not just for nature but for

human groups also, and the rejection of instrumentalism is part of a broader picture of reevaluating human hierarchy in nature and in human social systems" (Plumwood, 1991a, p. 144). The link is the "the account of the self as disconnected and egoistic, having no non-accidental or defining relations to others and treating others – whether human or nonhuman – as no more than means to its independently conceived ends" (1991a, p. 148). Plumwood makes a telling point, I think, when she notes that "The strategy of accommodating environmental concerns through a broadening of instrumentalism [as example, I would think, through the concept of "enlightened self-interest"] results from a failure to critique these framework conceptions of self and human identity" (1991a, p. 148).

To return to the centrist critique. The western liberal humanist view of Self as rational, and autonomous, together with radical exclusion and homogenization of Nature as Other, combine to "set up a polarized structure" (Plumwood, 1997, p. 337) between humans and nature, instead of emphasizing their continuity. There appear to be "two quite different substances or orders of being in the world" (Plumwood, 1997, p. 341). Although this is a socially and theoretically (p. 302) constructed ontological dualism, the discontinuity appears "natural". Nature's "agency and independence of ends [*telos*] are denied and are subsumed in, or remade to coincide with, those of the human" (p. 341). Exclusion of mind-like qualities from nature sets it up as mechanistic, hostile and alien, to be vanquished, overcome, conquered, used. There is both "an oppositional and value dualism" at work here (Plumwood, 1991b, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, p. 292). Separate natures explain, justify, and naturalize widely different "rights" or consideration of interests, or moral standing. Otherness as inferiority is the justification for domination, exploitation, transcendence or prudent use of nature as natural resources for human beings. This is the instrumental thesis: the "inferior side [viewed] as a means to the higher ends of the superior side" (Plumwood, 1991b, p. 298); the "use of the periphery as the means to the center's ends" (Plumwood, 1997, p. 352, footnote 13). Nature provides the means – resources - for human ends. It is also important that a strong distinction is made and maintained between the sphere of means and that of ends to maintain the sharp boundary/distance needed for instrumental use of particularly living things: how many of us would be prepared to visit a research laboratory utilizing animals?

#### *5.1.2 The advantages of the centric critique of anthropocentrism*

There are definite advantages, Plumwood argues, to seeing anthropocentrism as something other than only human-centeredness, as do the deep ecologists. I note just two:
(1) A "liberation model" of anthropocentrism would allow deep ecologists/the green movement to draw on the extensive theoretical work[60] already done in the fields of feminism and critical social theory on rationalism (Plumwood, 1991b, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, p. 303), to show how it engenders and maintains oppressions.
(2) The liberation/emancipation element of the centric model helps to close the gap between "ecophilosophy and ecopolitics". It is all very well to believe that the answer to anthropocentrism's human-centeredness is to pursue deeper philosophical or spiritual growth, but this does not provide a *practical* basis for ecological politics, ecological activism, or ecological education[61]. The liberation or "centric" model of anthropocentrism does[62], by revealing the "regime of mastery" (Plumwood, 1997, in Warren, 1997, p. 346) – justified by the assumptions of rationality - that the "centric" structure of anthropocentrism sets up (Plumwood, 1997, pp. 341-343). Birkeland, for example, has drawn on the ecofeminist androcentric critique to provide a "platform" for ecofeminist political action [section 6].

[60] However, Plumwood does acknowledge, and discuss, the limitations of the centric model when applied as a model for the liberation of nature (1997, in Warren, 1997, pp. 348-351). A particular theoretical problem for ecofeminism is "speaking for the other", rejected in liberation discourse as "insufferably arrogant" (p. 350). But seeing nature cannot speak in human language for itself, may we as humans speak for it?
[61] I disagree with Plumwood here – doesn't the deep ecology platform provide a good starting point?
[62] Plumwood (1997, in Warren, 1997, p. 342) provides an example of such a practical programme designed to combat the different elements of the centric structure

## 5.2 Developing an ecofeminist ethic (including a nature ethic): key features

As alternative to rationalist-based ethical theories, Warren (1990, pp. 138-141) has identified the "preliminary boundary conditions" of an ecofeminist environmental ethic. From her 12-page discussion, I have extracted next what I understand to be its key features.

### 5.2.1 Must meet "boundary conditions"

An ecofeminist ethic sets out "boundary conditions", but does not specify exactly what the content of the space within the ethical boundaries should be[63]. Any ethic wishing to be admitted to the ecofeminist ethical space as it were, must be clearly "anti-sexist, anti-racist, anti-classist, anti-naturist, and opposed to any "ism" which presupposes or advances a logic of domination" (Warren, 1990, p. 139). It must take the connections between the domination of women and the domination of nature seriously (p. 126).

### 5.2.2 Is contextualist and pluralist

An ecofeminist ethic is both contextualist and pluralist. Most nature ethicists[64], Kheel argues (1993, p. 255), debate environmental morality "on an abstract or theoretical plane". They ".... [wrench] an ethical problem out of its embedded context" and "sever... the problem from its roots.". We are confronted with dramatic choices in crisis situations: "Your daughter or your dog?" (Kheel, 1993, pp. 259-260[65]). Such examples of an adversarial approach are often found in environmental ethical literature. Donovan (1993, p. 184) writes: "... suppose one had to choose between a gnat and a human being. It is, in fact, precisely this kind of either/or thinking that is rejected in the epistemology identified by cultural feminism. In most cases, either/or dilemmas in real life can be turned into both/ands. In most cases, dead-end situations such as those posed in lifeboat ethicals[66] can be prevented." Wilson, too, notes that the ecofeminist "... care orientation seeks to find a perspective in which … mutually exclusive dichotomies do not arise" (Wilson, 1997, pp. 399-400). Kheel notes that little thought is given to either the history or the rich context of the choices posed as moral crisis (Kheel, 1993, p. 256; also Brown, 2004, p. 253). Most ecofeminists I think, would agree with Kheel's example from Iris Murdoch's view that the moral life is "not something that is switched off in between the occurrence of explicit moral choices. What happens between such choices [as I understand it, the particular, the contextual] is indeed what is crucial. ... at crucial moments of choice most of the business of choosing is already over" (Kheel, 1993, p. 256, citing Murdoch, 1970, p. 37).

An ecofeminist ethic is pluralist, because it sees ethical discourse and practice "as emerging from the voices of people located in different historical circumstances" (Warren, 1990, p. 139). It values diversity and difference. There is not "*one picture* based on a unity of voices" against which ethical values, beliefs, attitudes and conduct can be assessed, but a "*collage* or *mosaic,* a *tapestry* …..a *pattern…"* (Warren, 1990, p. 139, her italics) which emerges from the very different voices of people located in very different places. Ecofeminists support a variety of ethical positions [5.2.9]. Cultural context and pluralism do however become problematic for those ecofeminists, like Gruen (1993), and Adams (1996), who argue that moral vegetarianism is an ecofeminist necessity [section 5.4.4].

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[63] It is from this thought that I derived my start-up definition of "green" – its boundary conditions are non-anthropocentrism, and radical change to society, however these conditions allow for rich diversity within the enclosed green space

[64] Kheel (1993, p. 262, footnote 1) avoids the use of "environmental ethics", which on her view, reinforces "a dichotomous view of "humans" and "the rest of nature"

[65] Also the title of a paper by Deborah Slicer, 1996, in Warren, 1996, pp. 97-113, on the morality of animal use in research: "Researchers constantly tell us that we must choose between "us" (human beings) and "them" (animals), between our daughters and our dogs. They tell us it is either medical progress via the current, virtually unchecked rate and standards of animal sacrifice, or else a return to the Dark Ages..." (p. 97)

[66] This is a reference to Singer and Regan's (1985) *The dog in the lifeboat:: An exchange*. In this exchange, Regan (p. 57) "maintains that with four normal adult humans and one dog, it is the dog who must be sacrificed" (Donovan, 1993, p. 186, footnote 10)

### 5.2.3 Is a theory-in-process

An ecofeminist ethic sees ethical theory as theory-in-process. It does contain some generalizations, but these themselves represent a pattern which has emerged from different voices describing different concrete ethical situations in a specific set of socio-economic and historical circumstances, and within a specific worldview[67]. It is particularly admittance of first person narrative and storytelling as acceptable methodology in constructing an environmental-ethic-in-process, which ensures that change in the ethic may/will take place, as “the material realities” of women’s lives change. But doesn’t this room for change also open the door to environmental exploitation? No, because one of the boundary conditions for an ecofeminist environmental ethic, is that it must be anti-naturist.

### 5.2.4 Is inclusivist

An ecofeminist environmental ethic is inclusivist – it gives epistemological and moral preference and legitimacy to “the felt experiences and perspectives of oppressed persons” (Warren, 1990, p. 140), whose oppression is linked with the oppression of the land, for example, those peoples dislocated from their own productive land onto marginal land. The inclusivist boundary condition minimizes any possible bias in generalized ethical decision-making arising from a skewed, or too small, sample. Above all, an inclusivist ethic must take women’s experiences seriously, and make them central (Cuomo, 1992, p. 353, commenting on Warren).

### 5.2.5 Does not claim to be “unbiased”

An ecofeminist ethic does not claim to be unbiased in the sense that it provides a value-neutral or objective point of view, because it holds that such neutrality is not possible: “in contemporary culture there really is no such point of view” (Warren, 1990, p. 140). The twin domination of women and nature is the product of differing but value-laden historical and socio-economic circumstances (Warren, 1990, p. 143). However, whatever bias an ecofeminist ethic does have, is towards the “centralizing the voices of oppressed persons” (Warren, 1990, p. 140), it is therefore more inclusive, and less partial, than those ethics which exclude such voices.

### 5.2.6 Denies abstract individualism

An ecofeminist ethic presents a different view of what it is to be human. It denies “abstract individualism”, Alison Jaggar’s term (1980, pp. 42-44) for the [male rational] idea that “it is possible to identify a human essence or human nature that exists independently of any particular historical context” (Warren, 1990, p. 141). Moral conduct can only be understood within “networks or webs of historical and concrete relationships” (Warren, 1990, p. 141). An ecofeminist ethic argues for different start-up attitudes to self and others from those proposed in mainstream ethical theory. We may think of ourselves, for example, as selves in relation to other selves, and therefore “connected”; not as isolated individuals conceptualised as “rights holders”, “interest bearers” or “sentient beings” (Warren, 1990, p. 135). We may see ourselves not as atomist “Robinson Crusoe” individuals (Warren, 1990, p. 141, footnote 28), but *constituted* by our relationships with others. Relationships with nonhuman nature are also, in part, “constitutive of what it is to be human[68]” (Warren, 1990, p. 143). An ecofeminist ethic should recognize both continuity with nature, in the sense of recognizing “ties to nature which are expressive of the rich, caring relationships of kinship and friendship” with both people and the land (Plumwood, 1991b, in Zimmerman et al., 1993, p. 298), yet also respect the differences between our needs and those of nature.

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[67] I think here of Arne Naess’s example of the ethical difference between a woman from a rich industrialized society wearing a fur coat as status symbol, and an Eskimo wearing a fur coat as traditional protection against cold weather

[68] Compare this with just one statement from Relph’s (1976) discussion of place and placelessness: “A deep relationship with places is as necessary, and perhaps as unavoidable, as close relationships with people; without such relationships human existence, while possible, is bereft of much of its significance” (Relph, 1976, p. 41)

### 5.2.7 Takes the relationship itself seriously

Mainstream ethics tends to view a moral environmental relationship in terms of the moral rights, interests, points of view, and so, on that the human party to the situation may have, compared to the rights, or interests, or *telos*, or point of view, that the nonhuman party to the situation may or may not have, thus determining the latter's moral considerability (Warren, 1990, p. 137). An ecofeminist ethic argues that a moral relationship is not simply reducible to the values or rights or whatever, of each of the parties to the situation (Warren, 1990, p. 135 and footnote 15); it also recognizes *the relationship itself* as "a locus of value". Moreover, the *quality of the relationship* also counts (Kheel, 1993, pp. 260-261) – is it an "imposed conqueror-type" or mastery-type relationship or "an emergent caring-type" relationship (Warren, 1990, pp. 135-136)? While some ethical rule might pre-define the relationship, the ethic also grows out of, emerges from, how the relationship itself is defining what we are as individuals (Warren, 1990, p. 141, footnote 30) in that moment.

### 5.2.8 Makes central, values under-represented in traditional ethics

An ecofeminist approach to moral theory, ethics and education "provides a central place for values typically unnoticed, underplayed, or misrepresented in traditional ethics" (Warren, 1990, p. 140), e.g., intuition as a mode of knowing (Merchant, 1990a, p. 101), and the values of love, caring, sharing, friendship, and appropriate trust. This does not exclude "considerations of rights, rules, or utility" (p. 140), which may additionally be appropriate when dealing with issues such as contracts, property relationships, or cost-effectiveness (Warren, 1990, pp. 140-141). But rights, interests, and such like, cannot be the *only* values in moral theory, education or ethical behaviour. The ecofeminist ethic is an ethic of *care*.

### 5.2.9 But ecofeminists support a variety of environmental ethical positions

Within environmental ethics, Warren (1996, p. xvi) notes, "There are consequentialist (e.g. eco-utilitarian, utilitarian-based animal liberation) and nonconsequentialist (e.g. human rights-based, rights-based animal liberation, land stewardship) positions that extend traditional ethical considerations to animals and the nonhuman environment. There are also nontraditional approaches (e.g. holistic Leopoldian land ethics, social ecology, deep ecology, ecological feminism). Ecofeminists and ecofeminist philosophers who address environmental issues can be found defending each of these sorts of positions" (Warren, 1996, p. xvi). On Warren's view of a pluralistic ethic, the "sorts of considerations and actions that will be morally relevant to any given particular case will be ... a matter of context, although always based on an ability to care" (Brown, 2004, p. 250, footnote 11).

## 5.3 The ecofeminist "ethic of care"

> Ecofeminist philosophers reject the assumption that clinging to the rationalist concept of self and the instrumental view of nature that dominates Western philosophy is a viable way to frame a postpatriarchal environmental ethics (Spretnak, 1993, in Tucker & Grim, 1993, p. 184)

While an ecofeminist ethic may employ the discourse of rights in appropriate contexts, Warren notes that ecofeminism "involves a shift from a conception of ethics as primarily a matter of rights, rules or principles predetermined and applied in specific cases to entities viewed as competitors in the contest of moral standing" (Curtin[69] 1996, p. 66, citing Warren, 1990), to an ethic of care "based on human interconnectedness and responsibility to all life" (Gaard, 1993, p. 8, discussing Donovan, 1993, pp. 167-194). It is "... very different from the dominant instrumental ethic…", notes ecofeminist Diamond (1990, p. 209). It is the sense of connectedness which provides the motivation for the ecofeminist ethic of care [5.3.1], its locus of value [5.3.2], its scope [5.3.4], and its moral obligation [5.3.5]. I have

[69] Deanne Curtin is a male supporter of ecofeminist values, as is Jim Cheney

chosen to illustrate the ethic of care more concretely in the ecofeminist position[s] on animal ethics [5.4].

### 5.3.1 Motivation

The sense of caring connectedness with "the larger whole" for which ecofeminists call (for example, Kheel, 1990, p. 137) requires "the willingness to empathetically enter into the world of others ...." (Curtin, 1996, p. 72). Motivation inheres not in any sense of respect for rights, or obligation to perform duties, but in the ecofeminist "felt sense of connection" with the other (Kheel, 1990, p. 128):

> Unable to trust or draw upon a felt sense of connection, most environmental theorists endorse reason as the sole guide in our dealings 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[70]. [new paragraph] Both ecofeminism and deep ecology share in common an opposition to these value theories with their attendant notions of obligations and rights (Kheel, in Diamond & Orenstein, 1990, p. 128)... 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... (Kheel, 1990, p. 128).

It is the sense of self-in-relation that opens the door to caring, and then one must work on developing the capacity to care (Curtin, 1996, p. 74). The sense of relation or connection between Self and Other is deepened by concretely *experiencing* the actual context and conditions of the Other's lived reality. This transforms a general attitude of "caring about" into a specific "caring for" experience (Curtin, 1996, pp. 72-73).

### 5.3.2 Locus of value

The "new consciousness", "inward transformation" (Kheel, 1990, in Diamond & Orenstein, p. 128), or recognition of life as web-like relationality, does not necessarily lead though, to an ascription of objective, or "detached" intrinsic value to nature (Plumwood, 1991a, p. 140). Plumwood, for example, presents a non-instrumental, "relational" (1991a, p. 140) account of value in nature, "according to which value reduces neither to the valuers' personal taste or preferences nor to objective qualities of valued items, and hence is neither subjective nor objective". A promising criterion for moral considerability in nature is if the entity has an interest or good of its own, "not reducible to or dependent on that of humans" (p. 146). Plants, for example, "can be said to have to have needs, preferences, and interests[71], provided we do not try to pack into these concepts notions of consciousness" (p. 146) ... I find no great difficulty with the suggestion that we should respect rocks, mountains, and ecosystems, ... for what is wanted in these cases is not so much the notion of an item having a good or welfare of its own as the broader one of it having a teleology, a goal, an end, or direction to which it tends or for which it strives, and which is its own. ..." (1991a, p. 147).

Diamond and Orenstein (1990, pp. xi-xii) discern three broad ecofeminist positions on value in nature: (1) the "Earth itself embodies spirit and … the cosmos is alive" (Starhawk, 1990, p. 73), thus the Earth is "sacred unto itself" and has intrinsic value (2) human life and the life of the planet are intertwined, so the Earth is valued because it supports life[72] (3) an indigenous perspective in which both of the

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[70] Kheel, in 1993, (p. 249) writes that "Today, many nature ethicists conceive of themselves ... as the owners of value, which it is their prerogative to mete out with a theoretical sweep of their pens. ... If a part of nature is accorded high value (typically by being assigned a quality that humans are said to possess, such as sentience, consciousness, rationality, autonomy), then it is allowed entrance into the world of 'moral considerability'. If, on the other hand, it scores low (typically being judged devoid of human qualities), it is relegated to the realm of 'objects' or 'things', and seen as unworthy of 'interests' or 'rights'. The conferral of value in ethical deliberation is conceived as the conferral of power..."

[71] She illustrates this thus: "When a plant label says 'Prefers sunny, moist position', none of us has any difficulty in knowing what that means or acting on it" (Plumwood, 1991a, p. 146)

[72] This is the viewpoint that only a healthy planet can support social justice

above are true[73]: the earth is sacred, has intrinsic value, *and* has life-support value for human beings (Diamond & Orenstein, 990, pp. xi-xii).

### 5.3.3 Scope

Reminiscent of Stone's story from Carson McCuller's "A tree, a rock, a cloud" (Rodman, 1977, footnotes 80 and 82, p. 129, and Chapter Three, section 5.5), the ethic of care can include "anybody, anything, everything". On my understanding, it is also a non-issue in the care ethic, whether the focus should be individuals, species or ecosystems, living or non-living entities. The issue is rather, the quality of the relationship with the other.

### 5.3.4 The moral obligation[74]

Caring is the cardinal ethical consideration for most ecofeminists. In an ethical context of recognition of diversity and pluralism, and "attunement to complexity and context" (Wilson, 1997, p. 401), they call for "concrete, loving actions" towards particular, individual others (Kheel, 1990, p. 137), and "restraint toward nature as opposed to the unrestrained use of our skills" to dominate nature (Wilson, 1997, p. 401).

Not all ecofeminists agree completely with the care ethic; some advise caution. Cuomo (1992, p. 354-355, drawing on Card's work, 1990, pp. 100-218) suggests that (female) caring for others holds potential dangers. "In fact, female caring and compassion for oppressors are cornerstones of patriarchal systems. Women have forgiven oppressors, stayed with abusive husbands and partners, and sacrificed their own desires because of their great ability to care for others. Claudia Card has argued that in the context of oppression the care ethic actually causes moral damage in some women and that, therefore, caring is not always a healthy and ethical choice for a moral agent." (p. 355).

Reciprocity is an important question for those subscribing to the care ethic. While some ecofeminists, such as Nel Noddings argue that "the caring relation ... requires... a form of *responsiveness* or *reciprocity* on the part of the cared-for" to be a complete act of caring (Curtin, 1996, p. 73, citing Noddings, 1984, p. 150, her italics), other ecofeminist-oriented authors either find Nodding's argument "unconvincing" (Curtin, 1996, p. 73), or contrarily, express real pleasure in the absolute *indifference* of the other to themselves as persons [for example, Warren's oft-cited rock-climbing story, 1990, pp. 134-138]. This would allow an ethic of care to stretch beyond only sentient nonhuman animals to ecosystems and inanimate natural objects – rocks, buildings, landscapes, places. The only limit to the "ethic of care" is one's *own* [understood as person, or community of persons] limits, that is, in one's own "ability to respond lovingly (or with appropriate care, trust, or friendship)" to an other (Warren, 1990, p. 138). Besides, asks Curtin, "Is it really caring for if something is expected in return?" (1996, p. 73).

Retaining the principle that caring does not require reciprocity, Curtin suggests that "caring" can mean both "caring for" and "caring about" (Curtin, 1996, in Warren, 1996, pp. 72-74; and O'Neil (2000, pp. 186-187), discussing Curtin's distinction). He suggests that where "caring for" can be interpreted as caring for specific things/living beings with whom one is in personal relationship in a definite context, "caring about" can mean the sense of empathetic connection with the plight of living beings/things in remote contexts, caused for example by environmental disasters, or military devastation, which are not part of one's immediate, personal context. Ethical caring can then be part of a political agenda.

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[73] This can be seen as the source of many rituals of indigenous peoples around animals killed in the hunt, for example. See Abbot's (1990) paper exploring the idea that such rituals are designed to deal with the guilt feelings incurred by destroying - out of necessity - something sacred

[74] In ecofeminist context, this heading, with its connotations of rights and duties, is contentious; I retain it here to maintain cross-chapter comparison

I next consider the ecofeminist environmental ethic of care specifically applied to animals, because of Wall's assessment that fundamental to Green thinking "are the linked concepts of deep ecology and animal liberation ...." (Wall, 1994, p. 66).

## 5.4 Animal ethics

> "Animals are part of nature. Ecofeminism posits that the domination of nature is linked to the domination of women and that both dominations must be eradicated. ... (Adams, 1996, p. 114)

Despite Adam's contention above, animal ethics was initially a marginalized or ignored issue in ecofeminist anthologies (Gaard, 1993, p. 6 and p. 12, footnote 12). Ecofeminists now document the oppression of animals [5.4.1], theorize the interconnections between the domination of women and animals [5.4.2], critique the animal rights approach as a suitable ethic for animal liberation [5.4.3], hold ambivalent views on vegetarianism as an essential ecofeminist praxis [5.4.4], but generally condemn the same animal abuses as do animal rights theorists [5.4.5].

### 5.4.1 Documenting the oppression of animals

As do the animal rights theorists, ecofeminists document the domination, exploitation, shocking cruelty to, and moving suffering of animals, *inter alia*, in scientific animal experimentation; cosmetics, cleaning materials, and poison testing; and factory farming for meat and milk (e.g. Gruen, 1993, in Gaard, 1993, pp. 62-74; Adams, 1996, in Warren, 1996, pp. 121-123; Slicer, 1996, in Warren, 1996, p. 105). Where animals rights theorists attribute the oppression to speciesism, ecofeminists argue that androcentrism/patriarchy are the root causes.

### 5.4.2 Theorizing the connections between abuse of women, and abuse of animals

Different theoretical frameworks within patriarchal ideology are seen to justify the interlinked domination and abuse of women and animals. For example, Gruen (1993) sees women and animals serving the same symbolic function in patriarchal society [5.4.2.1]. Adams (1996) argues that patriarchal ideology has ontologized animals as edible bodies called "meat", rather than recognising such animals as beings in themselves. I present her argument at section 5.4.4.2.

Dixon (1996, p. 181) critiques such theorizing[75]. Without presenting her arguments, her basic position is that "Feminists have obligations to liberate animals to the degree that they have obligations to liberate any oppressed population, but not because there are either theoretical, practical, or symbolic connections between women and animals".

#### *5.4.2.1 Gruen's symbolic "to serve/be served up"*

Gruen (1993) claims that the categories "woman" and "animal"

> serve the same symbolic function in patriarchal society. Their construction as dominated, submissive "other" in theoretical discourse (whether explicitly so stated or implied) has sustained male dominance. The role of women and animals in postindustrial society is to serve/be served up; women and animals are the used. Whether created as ideological icons to justify and preserve the superiority of men or captured as servants to provide for [sic; "food" intended?] and comfort, the connection women and animals share is present in both theory and practice. ... (Gruen, 1993, in Gaard, 1993, p. 61).

Gruen identifies four different, but interwoven and mutually re-enforcing theoretical frameworks which separate man from woman and animals, and which "serve to justify" their oppression (1993, p. 62):

[75] Both Gaard and Gruen respond to her critique, in *Environmental Ethics*, *18* (1996), 439-441, and 441-444 respectively

(a) "the Myth of Man the Hunter". In this anthropological account of social evolution, the woman, because she was smaller, weaker, and reproductive, could not join in the hunt; this was construed as making her naturally inferior[76], and she, along with animals, was relegated to the sphere of non-culture (p. 62).
(b) The shift from nomadism to settled agriculture, and the domestication of animals. This is argued to have made "the recognition of the mechanics of reproduction" possible (p. 63). Men realized that women were not able to mysteriously and spontaneously produce life, but that they themselves were the seed carriers. "The keeping of animals would seem to have set a model for the enslavement of humans, in particular the large-scale exploitation of women captives for breeding and labor, which is a salient feature of developing civilizations" (Gruen, 1993, in Gaard, 1993, p. 63, citing Fisher, 1979, p. 197). It established the belief that "the natural world could be controlled and manipulated" and "permitted the conceptualization of animals as sluggish meat-making machines and reluctant laborers, and women as breeders of children" (p. 63).
(c) Religious practices[77] within the rise of agriculture also offered "a particularly pernicious construction of women and animals as 'others' to be used" (p. 64). Both were sacrificed by men in an attempt to appease unpredictable supernatural beings, and reduce crop loss through natural disasters. In an "obfuscation of language", Kheel notes that animals are said to be "sacrificed" at "the alters of science" [in laboratories], not killed (1993, p. 254).
(d) The mechanistic worldview which began with the scientific revolution of the sixteenth century, provided a fourth, and empirical theoretical framework for the manipulation of nature, women, and animals. "Epistemic privilege", based on male detached reason, "firmly distinguished man from nature, woman, and animals" (p. 64).

The key premise I think, of Gruen's argument, is that "While not often explicitly recognized, the theories that separate man from animal and man from woman inform virtually every aspect of daily life. Such ways of constructing reality ground patriarchal conceptions of the world and its inhabitants" (p. 64).

### 5.4.3 The critique of the rights-based ethic in animal liberation context

Though some ecofeminists [Adams[78], for example, and Kheel (Curtin, 1996, in Warren, 1996, p. 67)] follow rights-based views[79] on animal liberation, one forms the impression from the ecofeminist literature, that the critique of the rights approach is greater than its support (for example, Zimmerman[80], 1987, p. 34; Brown, 2004). It is argued that the discourse of rights and obligations is problematic for an ethic of care, on at least these grounds, taken primarily from Curtin[81]'s (1996) discussion of rights in an animal ethics context:

[76] Ecofeminist and animal activist Marthi Kheel (1990) has explored how hunting served, and continues to serve, male self-definition (Adams, 1996, p. 115)
[77] Here Gruen draws on the work of Daly (1973), (1978), and French (1985)
[78] "Not only is animal rights the theory and vegetarianism the practice, but feminism is the theory and vegetarianism is part of the practice" (Adams, 1989, p. 167, in Curtin, 1996, p. 67)
[79] I use "rights-based" in a non-technical way to mean, as Brown (2004) does, a theory that attaches "high significance to the notion of a moral right", and not any more technical meaning, such as right-based moral theory contrasted with duty-based theory (2004, p. 248, footnote 5, and p. 249), a distinction which I have not studied. Brown helpfully and non-technically for the purposes of her paper, understands "right" as a moral right, not a legal right; duty to refer to a moral obligation that follows from an other's rights, and obligation to mean those things one ought to do, whether or not they follow from an other's rights (2004, p. 249)
[80] On Zimmerman's summary (1987, p. 34), feminists critique the rights approach generally because it " (1) is androcentric, (2) regards nonhuman beings as having only instrumental value, (3) is hierarchical, (4) is dualistic, (5) is atomistic, (6) adheres to abstract ethical principles that overemphasize the importance of the isolated individual (7) denies the importance of feeling for informing moral behavior (8) fails to see the essential relatedness of human life with the biosphere that gave us birth."
[81] Brown (2004, pp. 249-254) usefully discusses, but not in a specifically animal ethics context, Curtin's summary of the anti-rights arguments. She goes on (pp. 254-265) to argue that rights-based moral theory can be re-interpreted to form a satisfactory basis for human relations with the nonhuman world including specifically animals; I do not however pursue her arguments here

(1) To look for, and find in animals, interests, sentiency, or rights, is to emphasize the **sameness, or identity of moral interests** between human and nonhuman animals (Adams, 1996, p. 130, footnote 2; Curtin, 1996, p. 69, p. 71). This conflicts with the ecofeminist values of **pluralism, diversity and difference**. Nonhuman nature's interests, including those of animals, are different to human interests. Ecofeminist "loving perception[82]" as opposed to "arrogant perception" is a perception of the Other, including nonhuman animals, which recognizes and maintains the other as "independent, dissimilar, different" to ourselves, but still an object of potential love (Warren, 1990, pp. 136-138). The ecofeminist ethic tends to emphasize 'continuity with' the other, rather than 'sameness'.

(2) Unlike the rights approach view of the **person as autonomous**, the ecofeminist approach conceptualises **personhood as relational** (Curtin, 1996, p. 70, p. 71). We are what our relationships make us; that is valid for our relationships with animals too.

(3) The rights approach is "formalistic", that is, it sets up **universal and context-neutral** criteria for moral considerability (Curtin, 1996, p. 70, p. 71). Ecofeminists reject the supposed universality underling the rights-based animal ethic. An ecofeminist animal ethic is bound first and foremost to take **particular relationships with specific animals in specific contexts** into account (Curtin, 1996, p. 92). The care ethic is situated in "deep relatedness"; caring for particular human and nonhuman animals, or ecosystems or places, "in the context of their histories" (Curtin, 1996, p. 73). But the "caring about" dimension of the ethic of care means that we are capable of empathetic care for all animals, not only those with whom we come into contact.

(4) The rights approach is **adversarial.** It accepts a dualistic epistemology and ontology as normative (Gruen, 1993, pp. 79-80). One has rights *against* someone, and calls on neutral justice to enforce them. An ecofeminist ethic assumes instead, dialogue rather than conflict, and seeks a **mutual accommodation of interests** (Curtin, 1996, p. 70). As dialogue in human symbolic speech with animals is only possible through signing or body language, I am assuming here that Curtin means we are capable of "empathetic projection into another's life" in non-people contexts (p. 71).

(5) The rights approach emphasizes **rationality, objectivity, and neutrality or impartiality in ethical judgements** (Curtin, 1996, p. 70). Recall Regan's citing reason as the basis for recognizing animal rights: "And since, in order to have the best theory of our duties to one another, we must recognize our equal inherent value, as individuals, reason – not sentiment, not emotion – reason compels us to recognize the equal inherent value of these animals and, with this, their equal right to be treated with respect." (Regan, 1985, in VandeVeer & Pierce, 1994, p. 82). But ecofeminism seeks to make central, just such values as **emotion and feeling**, sympathy and compassion, which have been "typically unnoticed, underplayed, or misrepresented in traditional ethics" (quote from Warren, 1990, p. 140; also Gruen, 1993, p. 80). "The emotional force of kinship or closeness to another is a crucial element in thinking about moral deliberations" (Gruen, 1993, p. 79). It is not that emotion must replace reason in our ethical consideration of animals, but that there must be "a kind of unity of reason and emotion", a "fusion of feeling and thought" (Kheel, 1985, p. 144[83]).

(6) Traditional rationalist-based ethics **downplay the body as moral agent** (Curtin, 1996, p. 70, p. 71). But feminists/ecofeminists have sought to **re-instate the devalued body half of the mind/body dualism** in moral discourse generally (Curtin, 1996, p. 70), and animal ethics

[82] Warren (1990, p. 136) writes that "Feminist philosopher Marilyn Frye [1983, pp. 66-72] distinguishes between 'arrogant' and 'loving' perception as one way of getting at ... [the] difference in the ethical attitudes of care and conquest."
[83] But see Zimmerman, 1987, p. 35, for some differing feminist views

specifically. Moral vegetarianism can be considered an ethic of care expressed through the body as moral agent.

### 5.4.4 Vegetarianism

> "...[Moral vegetarianism is] an example of a distinctively ecofeminist moral concern: our relations to what we are willing to count as food" (Curtin, 1996, p. 74).

A key question for ecofeminists is, where we *do* have choices, what should we be willing to count as food? Some ecofeminists see vegetarianism as "a distinctively ecofeminist moral concern", and "a core concept in an ecofeminist ethic of care" (Curtin, 1996, p. 74). They present arguments for vegetarianism [5.4.4.1], and theorize humans' consumption of meat [5.4.4.2]. There is however disagreement on whether vegetarianism is, or is not, an essential aspect of the ecofeminist ethic of care [5.4.4.3].

#### *5.4.4.1 Ecofeminist arguments for vegetarianism*

Ecofeminists present arguments for vegetarianism variously on (a) ecological grounds [for example, depletion of water supplies, demands on energy sources, contribution to methane gas in the atmosphere, damage to topsoil] (Adams, 1993, p. 214; Adams, 1996, pp. 118-121), (b) health grounds (Kheel, 1993, p. 270, footnote 58; Adams, 1996, pp. 118-121), (c) anti-elitist grounds: the effects of meat-eating are felt in oppressed and marginalized countries: a meat-based diet requires "six to seven times as much land as does a vegetarian diet" (Abbott, 1990, p. 39). This means that land once used to produced diverse subsistence crops is now converted to monocropping to produce beef for export, and (d) anti-violence and anti-killing grounds (for example, Curtin, 1996; Adams, 1996). I borrow Curtin's phrase "moral vegetarianism" (1996, p. 79) to describe this kind of vegetarianism, discussed next.

Some of the "care ethic" arguments sound familiar from Singer's sentience ethic, even though argued from different premises. Thus Curtin suggests that where choice is possible, not to follow contextual moral vegetarianism infringes the injunction to care by inflicting **pain** that "is completely unnecessary and avoidable"(Curtin, 1996, p. 76). Killing animals for food also infringes "the injunction to eliminate needless **suffering** wherever possible, and particularly the suffering of those whose suffering is conceptually connected to one's own" (Curtin, 1996, p. 76). "One would have to be hardened to know the conditions factory-farm animals live in and not feel disgust concerning their treatment" (Curtin, 1996, p. 76).

There are however some new elements in the ecofeminist arguments for "moral" vegetarianism, that is, vegetarianism not motivated by health reasons:

> (a) the argument **from relation or identification, which leads to solidarity:** "Identification means that relationships with animals are redefined; they are no longer instruments, means to our ends, but beings who deserve to live and toward whom we act respectfully ... 'The objectifying of women, the metaphors of women as pieces of meat, ... I resent that. I identify it with ways that especially beef and chickens also are really exploited. The way they stuff them and ruin their bodies...That is disturbing to me in the same way that I feel that I am exploited' ... 'When I thought that this was an animal who lived and walked and met the day, ... and could make attachments and had affections and dislikes [i.e. has social needs], it disgusted me to think of slaughtering that animal and cooking it and eating it' ..." (Adams, 1996, p. 117, p. 118, citing from women she'd interviewed, p. 131, footnote 5). An animal ethic based on the "politics of identification" "speaks to responsibility and relationships", rather than criteria for moral considerability (Adams, 1996, p. 131, footnote 6).

(b) **Violence** is argued as offensive to an ethic of care (Curtin, 1996, p. 76; Adams, 1996, p. 131, footnote 12[84]). The ecofeminist perspective argues that one's body *is* oneself, and being a silent co-partner in the violence of killing in order to eat meat, is to make "one's bodily self ... a context for violence" (Curtin, 1996, p. 76). The word "meat" itself, instead of "the dead body of an animal", obscures the true, violent, relationship between ourselves and the animals we kill to provide food for ourselves (Adams, 1996). Nonviolence demands vegetarianism.

(c) Some ecofeminists reject what they see as the **exploitation of the female capacity for reproduction, and "sexual politics" of meat** (Adams, 1990) encountered in intensive farming of terminal animals. "... 'Feminists realize what it's like to be exploited. Women as sex objects, animals as food. Women turned into patriarchal mothers, cows turned to milk machines. It's the same thing...' ..." (Adams, 1996, p. 117, citing from women she'd interviewed, p. 131, footnote 5). Animal welfare literature abounds with examples of sexually-named mechanical devices such as "rape racks", or "iron maidens" to extract the maximum economic benefit possible from the female reproductive capacity in animals. Some ecofeminists are thus vegans (Curtin, 1996, p. 76).

(d) Meat-eating is a patriarchal standard of what counts for food, **a symbol for masculinity** (Adams, 1987, pp. 51-55, in Gruen, 1993, p. 72). For example, in American advertising at least, "real men" are supposed to eat "real food", i.e. meat (Curtin, 1996, p. 77). That women don't quite make the patriarchal class, I suggest, is indicated by the presence of a "ladies steak" on most local menus. There are calls from some ecofeminists "to resist ideological pressures to conform to patriarchal standards" of diet (Curtin, 1996, p. 76). Adams presents a similar argument at 5.4.4.2.

(e) We should be **"getting closer to the effects of our everyday actions"** as they pertain to our choices around animals (Gruen, 1993, p. 79, and p. 89, footnote 59, a reference to Kheel's (1985) work). As does Kheel (1985), Gruen (1993, in Gaard, 1993, pp. 78-79) critiques animal rights theory as not only perpetuating the false dichotomy between reason and emotion, but allowing reason's customary abstraction from context, and denial of "embodied knowledge" (Adams, 1996, p. 132, footnote 13), to distance and insulate us from the effects of our everyday animal-related choices. We might decide on an abstract level, that we are justified in eating meat. But ecofeminist praxis would require us to "put our abstract beliefs to a practical test" (Kheel, 1993, p. 257). We could expose ourselves to the sights, sounds, and smells of intensive animal rearing, live transport, and the abattoir (Kheel, 1985, p. 145; Kheel, 1993, p. 257), for example, before deciding whether or not to count animals as food. Then at least, we would be taking co-responsibility for our participation in the "traffic in animals" (Adams, 1993, p. 197) – their production, transportation, slaughter and packaging (Adams, 1993, p. 197) - and not allowing its consequences to be mediated for us by others (Gruen, 1993, p. 79). Personhood is embodied, the food we eat becomes our bodies, and the mind-body, not only the mind, is a moral agent (Curtin, 1996). We can choose in favour of a non-abusive diet.

(f) All of the above arguments, in addition to arguments on the ecological and health consequences of animals as food, leads I think, to an important ecofeminist perspective: that **what we are willing to count as food, is not only a personal, but a moral, political, and economic statement (**Adams, 1993, in Gaard, 1993, pp. 195-218; Curtin, 1996, in Warren, 1996, pp. 66-81). A "politics of consciousness" is required – that is, concrete responses to the

[84] On the concept 'violence', Adams (1996, p. 132, footnote 12) says: "I use *violent* in the sense of the *American Heritage Dictionary's* definition: '[death] caused by unexpected force or injury rather than by natural causes.'"

oppression, and solidarity with the oppressed (Adams, 1993, pp. 212-213, drawing on Paolo Freire's work, 1972, 1978).

#### *5.4.4.2 Theory: The social construction of humans as predators, and animals as "meat"*

As an example of ecofeminist theorizing of meat-eating, Adams has argued (1993; 1996, pp. 123-125) that the western social construction of predation in nature as "natural", of humans as predators requiring meat for survival and health, and of animals as "edible bodies", all combine to portray meat-eating as "natural". Death by predation in the animal world measures around 5% only, Kheel notes (1993, p. 257, and p. 270, footnote 60); the remainder of animal deaths are from non-predatory causes. But "We are asked, under patriarchy, to model our behavior not after the vegetarian animals but after the predators" (Kheel, 1993, p. 257). Those animals who do kill by predation must do so to survive (Kheel, 1993, p. 258). In contrast, human history "indicates a very mixed message" about the human need to eat animals for survival (Adams, 1996, p. 124). Adams notes that "we eat corpses in a way quite differently from any other animals – dismembered, not freshly killed, not raw, and with other foods present ...." (p. 124). In addition, many of us know stories about young children who, for a while, or sometimes permanently, refuse to eat meat once they are capable of understanding its origin. What *is* actually "natural" about human predation, Adams (1996, p. 124) asks? It has been socially constructed as natural to boost the meat economy, and to help rationalize the violence and oppression involved. This is accomplished by "ontologizing" the animals concerned as "meat". In this social construction, the animal disappears. In Adams' phrase, the referent becomes absent, enabling us to forget about the animal whose body and life it was, to resist having these facts made present to us (p. 125), and to avoid acknowledging our agency in the animal's killing. Consumption has been successfully separated from production (p. 119).

Adams links this conceptual process [opaquely here, I think] to patriarchal ideology thus: "The absent referent results from and reinforces ideological captivity; patriarchal ideology establishes the cultural set of human/animal, creates criteria that posit the species difference as important in considering who may be means and who may be ends, and then indoctrinates us into believing that we need to eat animals. Simultaneously, the structure of the absent referent keeps animals absent from our understanding of patriarchal ideology and makes us resistant to having animals made present. This means that we continue to interpret animals from the perspective of human needs and interests: we see them as usable and consumable. Much of feminist discourse participates in this structure when failing to make animals visible" (p. 125). Elsewhere her argument is clearer: "To eat animals is to make of them instruments [the familiar ecofeminist argument against androcentrism's instrumentalising]; this proclaims dominance and power-over" (1996, p. 129, and 1993, p. 213, where she speaks of ontologizing animals as 'beings for another" as a mark of oppression). Vegetarianism is a topic which becomes immediately salient when organizing an ecofeminist conference for example – to serve or not to serve meat? (Ecofeminist Task Force recommendation, item 7, 1990[85]).

#### *5.4.4.3 Vegetarianism: An essential ecofeminist ethic?*

Ecofeminists have differing views on whether vegetarianism or veganism should be an essential aspect of an ecofeminist ethic (Adams, 1993, p. 195; 1996, p. 126). There is a resistance towards categorically condemning all animal killing, because an ecofeminist ethic supports pluralism [section 5.2.2], and refuses to absolutize, a position some ecofeminists consider consistent with authoritarianism and "power-over" (Adams, 1996, p. 126, referring to Warren's viewpoint on absolutizing).

Some argue against moral vegetarianism on the grounds that an ecofeminist ethic is contextual. Curtin (1996) agrees and disagrees. Ecofeminist moral vegetarianism is not an ethic of justice which responds

[85] Referred to by Adams (1993, pp. 195-196; p. 214; p. 215, footnote 4; p. 218, footnotes 58 and 59), and Gruen (1993, p. 89, footnote 66)

to some rationally-agreed on, universally present criterion for moral considerability, but a response to particular contexts and histories which may differ by locale, gender and class (Curtin, 1996, p. 74). In an ecofeminist ethic, it is not possible to say that eating meat is categorically wrong, in all circumstances, even though one is committed to moral vegetarianism (p. 75). Context as geographic locale also plays a role; some communities might not be able to grow food, and thus cannot have the option of vegetarianism (Curtin, 1996, p. 67). There might be cases[86] where it is justified. But where there is choice, it isn't.

There are cultural contextual grounds too. Many westerners watching the food channels on DSTV are struck by the Chinese willingness to consider almost any living thing as food. In what would be abhorrent for many meat-eating Westerners, it is possible in Chinese restaurants to choose from several different dog penis soups. Some ecofeminists argue that not to serve meat at feminist/ecofeminist gatherings, is to infringe on "the cultural traditions of women of color, for example". Gruen (1993, in Gaard, 1993, p. 82), citing Jane Meyerding (1982), critiques cultural deference to meat-eating: "... 'It is a contradiction for feminists to eat animals with whom they have no physical or spiritual relationship[87] except that of exploiter to exploited ... I think concern for the lives of all beings is a vital, empowering part of feminist analysis; I don't think we can strengthen our feminist struggle against one aspect of patriarchy by ignoring or accepting other aspects' ...". On Gruen's view (1993, p. 82), ecofeminists "argue that we need not and must not isolate the subjugation of women at the expense of the exploitation of animals. Indeed, the struggle for women's liberation is inextricably linked to abolition of all oppression". By failing to "take into account the plight of animals, ... [we act out] one of the deepest patriarchal attitudes" (1993, p. 82).

In relational hunting, the animal is argued to have agreed to its hunting and death[88] in order to sustain the human hunting it (Adams, 1996, pp. 126-129). "Killing animals in a respectful act of appreciation for their sacrifice, this argument proposes, does not create animals as instrumentalities" (Adams, 1996, p. 126); a reciprocal relationship is supposed (p. 126). Adams wonders how there can be talk of reciprocity – "What does the animal who dies receive in this exchange? The experience of sacrifice? How can the reciprocity of the relational hunt be verified since the other partner is both voiceless in terms of human speech and furthermore rendered voiceless thorough his or her death?" (1996, p. 127). She rejects relational hunting as "mystification" really (p. 127) of what is simply just another example of patriarchal ontologizing of animal bodies as meat (1996, pp. 126-127).

Some ecofeminists see an essentialist ecofeminist vegetarianism as an infringement of their autonomy (Adams, 1993, pp. 210-211; Adams, 1996, p. 129) [section 4.3.2.1]. On this issue, Adams notes that "The question 'Who decided that animals should be food?' remains unaddressed. ... We must see ourselves in relationship with animals. ... The subordination of animals is not a given but a decision resulting from an ideology that participates in the very dualisms that ecofeminism seeks to eliminate. We achieve autonomy by acting independently of such an ideology." (Adams, 1996, p. 129).

Others, like Nel Noddings, argue in defence of eating animals, provided that we ensure that their deaths are "physically and psychically painless" (Adams, 1993, p. 208, citing Noddings, 1991, p. 420). On Adams' view (1993, p. 208 and p. 217, footnote 43), this argument represents an "ignorance about the act of slaughtering", and a "flight from specificity", because no such practice is attainable.

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[86] It might for example be right to kill an animal if no other food exists for one's starving child (Curtin, 1996, p. 75)
[87] Meyerding is, I take it, referring to "relational" hunting, discussed in the next paragraph
[88] Abbott (1990, in Diamond & Orenstein, 1990, pp. 35-40) has argued that early shamanistic, animistic hunters had conflicted feelings about destroying the souls of the animals they hunted and killed, and developed religious rituals and beliefs to help deal with guilt, and ward off the animal's anger and revenge; one such belief being that the animal willingly "offers" itself as sacrifice

### 5.4.5 Other animal ethics issues

Without further discussion, I present here what could be considered a summary by one ecofeminist (Donovan, 1993, pp. 184-185) of animal ethics issues:

> ... it is clear that the ethic sketched here[89] would mean feminists must reject carnivorism; the killing of live animals for clothing; hunting; the trapping of wildlife for fur (largely for women's luxury consumption); rodeos; circuses; and factory farming; and that they must support the drastic redesigning of zoos (if zoos are to exist at all) to allow animals full exercise space in natural habitats; that they should reject the use of lab animals for testing of beauty and cleaning products (such as the infamous 'LD-50' and Draize tests) and military equipment, as well as psychological experimentation such as that carried out in the Harlow primate lab at the University of Wisconsin[90]; that they should support efforts to replace medical experiments by computer models and tissue culture; that they should condemn and work to prevent further destruction of wetlands, forests, and other natural habitats. All of these changes must be part of a feminist reconstruction of the world.

# 6. View of society

> "Ecofeminism is a value system, a social movement, and a practice, but it also offers a political analysis that explores the links between androcentrism and environmental destruction ..." (Birkeland, 1993, in Gaard, 1993, p. 18).

When are social and political issues, feminist/ecofeminist issues? Usually, suggests Warren (1997, pp. 5-6), when they are located at the juncture[91] of feminist concerns; science, development and technology; and indigenous/local knowledge concerns. But any issue is an ecofeminist issue, if understanding it helps end women's / nature's subjugation and promotes their liberation (Warren, 1990, p. 127).

In this section, I consider first an interpretation of the ecofeminist perspective at socio-political level [6.1], and then some ecofeminist social issues: militarism [6.2], technology [6.3], uncritical western-style development introduced in developing countries [6.4], (over-) population [6.5], and social justice [6.6]. Animal ethics as social issue was discussed in section 5.4.4.

## 6.1 Ecofeminist theory applied at socio-political level

### 6.1.1 "Manstream" vis-a-vis "the feminine principle" in green politics

Ecofeminist Janis Birkeland (1993, in Gaard, pp. 13-59) notes two basic orientations in green philosophy which inform political analysis, strategy, and programmes of action (p. 15, 16). Going beyond the usual left/right analysis, Birkeland identifies on the one hand what she calls "masculinist" or "manstream" green theory/ values, and on the other, a "feminist", or "feminine principle" system of values. She ties neither category exclusively to biological sex.

"Manstream" green philosophical theory she sees as divided into two streams, corresponding loosely to "left and liberal *strategies* for social change but *not* left and liberal ideology", a differentiation I don't pursue further (Birkeland, 1993, in Gaard, 1993, p. 15). The "leftish" strategic approach, which excludes Marxism[92], but includes social ecology [Chapter Five], and eco-socialism [introduced in Chapter Seven], considers structural change to precede personal change. The liberal strategic approach,

[89] As sketched in her paper, pp. 167-194, which entails "a fundamental respect for nonhuman life forms" (p. 184), is "life-affirming", and resists either/or thinking in choices between animals and people (p. 184)
[90] Department of Psychology
[91] If one imagines a Venn diagram of three overlapping circles, representing (1) feminism, (2) science, development and technology, and (3) native/indigenous/local perspectives respectively, then the area common to all three circles represents issues for eco-feminist philosophy and practice (Warren, 1997, pp. 5-6)
[92] Birkeland dismisses Marxist strategies as "inconsistent with green principles" (1993, in Gaard, 1993, p. 15)

which includes deep ecology [Chapter Four], considers worldview change in individuals as "the primary means toward social transformation" (p. 15). Where the former cannot adequately theorize the political dimensions of the personal, the latter cannot theorize the structural dimensions of power (p. 16). Birkeland's argument is that to the extent that both the "leftish" and the "liberalist" streams are "gender-blind and trapped in an androcentric prism" (p. 16), they fail in their green political analysis and strategies[93], and impede personal and social transformation toward the kind of radically different ecological society (p. 15) needed to resolve the environmental crisis. Birkeland (1993, pp. 19-20) believes that "... of the many shades of green thought, ecofeminism offers the most comprehensive and incisive socio-political analysis to guide both self- and social transformation at this point in history" (p. 16).

Ecofeminism's critique of androcentrism reveals the masculine, *power-over* orientation of the "pathological "isms" of modernity, including militarism, colonialism, racism, classism, sexism and capitalism. They all obtain their "legitimacy from the assumption that power relations and hierarchy are an inevitable part of human Society due to Man's 'inherent nature'. In other words, if Mankind is by nature autonomous, aggressive, and competitive (that is, 'masculine'), then psychological and physical coercion or hierarchical structures are necessary to manage conflict and maintain social order. Likewise, cooperative relationships, such as those found among women or tribal cultures, are by definition unrealistic and utopian" (Birkeland, 1993, in Gaard, 1993, p. 25). The male, supposedly gender-neutral, supposedly universal, understanding of the human Self, has removed "the *basis* of power relations... from the realm of political and social debate ..." (p. 26, my italics). The ideological basis of exploitative power structures is protected by appearing natural and inevitable.

But what needs to be changed in western society, is just the "Power Paradigm" (p. 17), that is, the *power* orientation of both personal relationships in our daily lives, and in structural relationships based on a "masculine" version of Self, which manifest as "Patriarchy[94]", and "hierarchy[95]" (Birkeland, 1993, in Gaard, 1993, pp. 16-17). How to motivate "power-driven men and molls to change their behaviour", Birkeland asks (1993, in Gaard, 1993, p. 53)?

For spiritually-inspired ecofeminists at least, political and social praxis is guided by the three key features of spirituality - immanence, interconnection, and community (Starhawk, 1990, p. 73):

> …when we start to understand that the Earth is alive, she calls us to act to preserve her life. When we understand that everything is interconnected, we are called to a politics and set of actions that come from compassion, from the ability to literally feel *with* all living beings on the Earth. That feeling is the ground upon which we can build community and come together and take action and find direction... (Starhawk, 1990, p. 74, her italics).

Birkeland is dubious. She argues that because

> ...of the realities of power relationships in Patriarchal society, we must recognize that policies will not change until people with power in the military, corporate and bureaucratic establishments cooperate of their own accord. ... Rationalist approaches that appeal to intellect and religious approaches that appeal to spirituality have proven inadequate. ... if we are to move beyond power-based relationships, we should work to expose and redress the personal insecurities and unconscious motives underlying the power drive

[93] She considers in turn (pp. 38-53), strategies for green change such as influencing leaders, influencing individuals to change their personal values, spiritual change, [deep ecology-like] "identification", and allowing one's self, or pressure group or party, to be co-opted in the hope of winning green concessions

[94] Birkeland (1993, p. 17) describes "Patriarchy" as "the male-dominated system of social relations and values" justified by the systematic devaluation of the feminine principle. As a "narrower" definition of patriarchy, Birkeland (1993, p. 55, footnote 6) cites Lerner's (1986, p. 239) definition of it as "the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general"

[95] Birkeland defines "Hierarchy" as the "relationships of command and obedience enforced by (Patriarchal) social structures and institutions" (1993, p. 17)

and *demystify the social conception of masculinity as power.* We should work to disassociate masculinity from the images of heroism, conquest and death defiance so familiar in militaristic fantasies; from the images of competitiveness, individualism, and aggression glorified in sport; from the images of objectivity, linearity, and reductionism exalted by science; and from the images of hierarchy, progress, and control entrenched in the technocracy.... (Birkeland, 1993, in Gaard, 1993, p. 53, her italics).

### 6.1.2 One version of ecofeminism's basic precepts at socio-political level

Birkeland (1993, in Gaard, 1993, p. 20) suggests that most ecofeminists would subscribe to the following "basic precepts" of an ecofeminist politics of reality:

1. Fundamental social transformation is necessary. We must reconstruct the underlying values and structural relations of our cultures. The promotion of equality, nonviolence, cultural diversity, and participatory, noncompetitive, and nonhierarchical forms of organization and decision making would be among the 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 biocentric view that 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 natural diversity.

5. Merely redistributing power relationships is no answer. We must change the fact of power-based relationships and hierarchy, and move toward an ethic based on mutual respect[96]. We must move beyond power.

6. We must integrate the false dualisms that are based on the male/female polarity (such as thought versus action, the spiritual versus the natural, art versus science, experience versus knowledge) in our perception of reality. The dualistic conception of Patriarchy supports the ethic of dominance and divides us against each other, our "selves", 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 our societies are reflected in our personal relationships, we must enact our values.

8. The personal is political. We must change the ideology that says the morality of the (female) private sphere has no application to the (male) public sphere of science, politics, and industry. We must work to rebalance the masculine and feminine in ourselves and society.

9. We cannot change the nature of the system by playing Patriarchal "games". If we do, we are abetting those who are directly involved in human oppression and environmental exploitation. We must therefore withdraw power and energy from the Patriarchy. (Birkeland, 1993, in Gaard, 1993, p. 20).

## 6.2 Institutionalized violence: militarism as example

Ecofeminists seek to expose the malestream worldview underpinning militarism and nuclearism[97] in an effort to end it. This particular analysis is based on that of Birkeland (1993, in Gaard, 1993, pp. 35-42). She argues, inter alia, that as 90% of violent crime is committed by men, and nuclear weapons are the product of male minds, a gender-neutral analysis will not successfully understand militarism (p.36).

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[96] I note that Birkeland does not refer either here, or in point 4, to the usual ecofeminist "ethic of care". However, it is unlikely that by her "respect" in point 5, she means the "respect" encountered for example, in Taylor's biocentrism [section 5.1.1 (a)]. One feminist interpretation I have found of an ethic of respect, is in Ebenreck's (1983, pp. 33-45) feminist partnership ethic in agriculture, based on respect, in which use does not mean destruction, but is a two-way process in which each returns to the other, something of value (p. 33, p. 41)

[97] Davion (1996) employs both Plumwood's and Warren's conceptual frameworks [section 4.2] to show the self/other dualism underlying the supposed rationality of "three mainstream discussions concerning the ethics of nuclear deterrence" (p. 181)

She notes how "masculinity" and "femininity" are concepts deliberately manipulated by the military. For example, basic training encourages men to distance themselves from their "feminine" side (Birkeland, 1993, p. 35, citing Spretnak, 1989, p. 134); peace activists are characterized as "poofters" and "sissies" (p. 35); advertising deliberately links weapons sales ["the world's largest business" (p. 37)] with power and sex. The "threatening and aggressive posturing" (p. 37) that accompanied the Cold War was "a deliberate marketing strategy of the corporate/industrial/military/bureaucratic complex" (Birkeland, 1986, cited by Birkeland, 1993, p. 36). Preventing war rather through pursuing world peace, she suggests, "has not really been tried. Perhaps this is partly because the armed forces really exist as an icon: they 'represent and defend the masculine ethic[98],' rather than life." (Birkeland, 1993, in Gaard, 1993, p. 36). An androcentric critique shows "the false dualisms that have been used by powerful interests to divide and rule ... These divisions are made plausible and encoded by "hierarchical dualism" – the organizing principle of Patriarchal thought." (Birkeland, 1993, in Gaard, 1993, p. 37).

### 6.2.1 Violence and aggression in environmental language

Some ecofeminists, such as Kheel, have documented the routine use of violence in language. She sees this, together with negative images of the female and nature, as symptomatic of "the aggressive establishment of the masculine self through its opposition to all of the natural world" (Kheel, 1993, p. 247). It is not difficult to produce general examples replicating violence in our language, strangely, even when talking about dealing with environmental problems. For example, William Baxter (1974, in VanDeVeer & Pierce, 1994, pp. 303-307), in his "People or Penguins: The case for optimal pollution" writes: "... trade-off by trade-off, we should divert our productive capacities from the production of existing goods and services to the production of a cleaner, quieter, more pastoral nation up to – and no further than –the point at which we value more highly .... the next unit of environmental improvement that the diverted resources would create. ... I insist that the proposition stated describes the result for which we should be striving – and again, that it is always useful to know what your target is even if your weapons are too crude to score a bull's-eye" (pp. 306-307).

## 6.3 Science and technology

Some of the ecofeminist critique of science was presented at section 3.3. Merchant showed that Bacon's "masculinization of the early development of science, ... paved the way for the advances of modern technology...". (Li, in Gaard, 1993, p. 286).

There are differences among feminists on the role of technology in the exploitation of both women and the environment[99] (McLaughlin, 2003, pp. Salleh, 1993, pp. 231-232). Eisler (1990, pp. 32-33) for example, praises technology as "part of the evolutionary impulse" (p. 32). Nor are only men capable of technological development: Li (1993, p. 287) notes the documentation of women's contributions by Mumford (1966, p. 144), and Stanley (1983).

Feminist/ecofeminist critique is mostly directed at the masculine transcendent worldview[100] within which technology is created. Feminist/ecofeminist Petra Kelly saw technology as expressing 'male' values (McLaughlin, 2003, p.p. 167-168). Some ecofeminists "observe that the instrumental-rational

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[98] Birkeland is citing here from Wajcman (1991, p. 146)

[99] "Liberal feminists, like their brothers, the reform environmentalists, imagine that solutions to social and ecological problems can be found within 'the advanced industrial technostructure' ... Marxist feminists ... argue that technology is neutral and that it is all a matter of who controls it" (Salleh, 1993, pp. 231-232)

[100] Ruether highlighted the *transcendence* in the dualisms of western [male] thought. Within the idea of transcendence, is also the idea of *infinitude*. In religion, it appears as the transcendence of death by life after death [women, it is argued, are by virtue of their biological makeup, more attuned to life as "coming-to-be-and-passing-away" than a search for transcendence]; in civilization, as the transcendence of nature's limited resources by ever more sophisticated science and technology (Li, 1993, p. 274, discussing Ruether's (1975) work). Zimmerman (1987, pp. 26-28) also discusses what Ruether calls the male "God project" as basis for the belief that one can transcend dependence on nature through technology

mode of production" through technology "inevitably trickles over into the sphere of consciousness and social relations." (Salleh, 1993, p. 232). King (1990, p. 109) notes that in both capitalist and socialist states, technology is applied within "the anthropocentric notion that humanity should dominate nature and that the increasing domination of non-human nature is a precondition for true human freedom" (King, 1990, p. 109). Many feminists/ecofeminists are critical of recent developments in biotechnology, genetic engineering and reproductive technology (McLaughlin, 2003, pp. 176-180). Some see it as just another example of the male patriarchal desire to control both women's and nature's generative capacity (Mies & Shiva, 1998, p. 486).

In a "partnership" model of society, the highest priority would be given to technologies designed "to sustain and enhance life" (Eisler, 1990, p. 33), not to dominate and oppress it. Even where appropriate technology is applied, it sometimes fails to take the [often female] user view into account. As a striking example of supposedly appropriate technology in African context, Warren (1997, p. 9) quotes from Helmut Mylenbusch (1979, p. 18): "In Africa where sunshine is abundant but oil, coal and wood are scarce and expensive, a solar stove should really mean utmost happiness to women…. Field tests [however] … showed what every … local woman could have predicted: in the African bush, meals are prepared in the morning or in the evening when the sun has not yet risen or has already set. Furthermore: which cook wants to stand in the scorching sun?…"

Another example is in the location and maintenance of rural water supply points: location is often decided by the local head-man with a view to enhancing his prestige and status, rather than taking into account how far the women must walk to the water point; men are usually given the maintenance training (idea from Warren, 1997, p. 9). Such patriarchal technology is part and parcel of what Third World ecofeminist and eco-activist Vandana Shiva calls "maldevelopment".

## 6.4 Third World 'maldevelopment'

Christopher Key Chapple (in Tucker, 1994, p. 121) sums up Shiva's 'maldevelopment[101]' concept thus:

> Vandana Shiva explicitly attacks the premises of third world development projects in her book Staying Alive, an eloquent appeal to reverse the drive for world homogenization based on the Western model. In addition to a more standard feminist critique, she also develops a theory of nature rooted in *prakrti* [the female principle] and *shakti* [strength – derived from biotic and abiotic nature e.g. from water in the river, or trees, or grass], thus using conceptual resources indigenous to Indian tradition. She points out that development policies often entail a shift from holistic, ecologically sound subsistence farming largely conducted by women to cash-crop farming of one product, often enhanced by technology, that is dominated by men. She refers to this practice as 'maldevelopment', stating that 'it ruptures the co-operative unity of masculine and feminine, and places man, shorn of the feminine principle, above nature and women, and separated from both…Nature and women are turned into passive objects, to be used and exploited for the uncontrolled and uncontrollable desires of alienated man'. She contrasts the instantiated immediacy of *prakrti*, which views all things as part of a living continuum, with the deadness of things other than human as perceived in the Cartesian-scientific-technological model, wherein they are regarded only for their potential to be transformed into consumable goods..." (Chapple, in Tucker, 1994, p. 121).

More specifically, Shiva argues that –

**(a) Development based on the Western economic model, is simply a continuance of pre-independence colonialism in disguise in Third World countries**

[101] Shiva's critique of western-style development is influential. Hayward (1995, pp. 104-106) who sums it up as comprising an instrumental attitude to nature, a continued male domination of women, and a continued domination of the values of a specifically western culture, uses it to illustrate an approach to development fundamentally at odds with environmental economics. Wenz (2002, pp. 399-401) bases much of his argument for multicultural anthropocentrism ["people should be free to accept or reject a foreign vision of human flourishing and a foreign path toward flourishing" (p. 399)] on Shiva's critique of western development's subordination of the poor, particularly women and children

"Development" remains on Shiva's view, a patriarchal concept at heart, entailing the exploitation of women and natural resources both at home and in faraway places to feed the techno-industrial machine. The only difference is that whereas natural resources were monopolized pre-independence by the colonial power, post-independence, it is the "new national elites … which mastermind … the exploitation on the grounds of 'national interest'" (Shiva, 1990, p. 190). " 'Development' transfers resources from the poor to the well endowed" (Bandyopadhyay and Shiva, 1982, 1988, in Shiva, 1990, footnote 2, p. 301)

**(b) 'Development' is based on supposedly universal, but actually western, economic concepts and assumptions**

For example, concepts such as 'poverty', 'productivity', and 'growth', and their assumptions, have been universalized into a global economic model with no regard as to their suitability for non-westernized, non-industrialized peoples.

Shiva critiques the western cultural assumptions underlying the view of subsistence living as 'poverty'. Subsistence economies which satisfy all basic and vital needs through self-provisioning, and which function in ecological harmony with their surroundings, she suggests, are not poor in the sense of real material poverty. "Yet the ideology of development declares them poor" (1990, p. 197), on the grounds that they are not participating in the market economy, and are not consuming "Western-style commodities produced for and distributed through the market" (p. 197). But by the time western-style development has removed land and water resources from sustenance needs through commercialization, and introduced western economy based developments such as cash crop production, commodity production, export production, technology, credit, surety and so on, increasing numbers of people, particularly the elderly, the women, the children, begin to experience *real* material scarcity and poverty, not culturally-defined poverty (pp. 197-200).

Shiva notes western construction of nature's "passivity" as non-productivity and unproductiveness. Any process or work which does not "produce profits and capital" (Shiva, 1990, p. 192) is called 'unproductive'. She argues that "the ideology of development is in large part based on a vision of bringing all natural resources into the market economy for commodity production" (Li, 1993, p. 280, citing Shiva, 1988, p. 9). Nature left to itself is understood not to be producing any goods or services which can be bought or sold in the marketplace. A clean river is not 'productive' unless it has been dammed; natural forests are not 'productive' unless they can somehow be brought into the market economy through the provision of genetic resources, or arts and crafts production – monoculture plantations of commercial species are by contrast, 'productive' (Shiva, 1990, p. 192), even though this practice severs forestry from its previously inter-related water management, agriculture and animal husbandry (Li, 1993, p. 289, on Shiva, 1988). Women's work in providing for their family's basic vital needs is not 'productive' (Shiva, 1990, p. 192). These are all Western assumptions on the meaning of productivity as production of commodities for profit (p. 192). For many non-Westernized peoples, productivity means rather, "producing life and sustenance" (p. 192). Local cultural food, music, stories and skills have value – are productive - only when they have been transformed into commodities such as "ethnic" food, music, folklore and objects for the tourist industry (Mies & Shiva, 1998, p. 485).

Gross National Product is not at all a measure of the growth of wealth or welfare. Shiva argues that once "commodity production as the prime economic activity is introduced as development", GNP becomes more and more an indicator of how the potential of both nature and women "to produce life and goods and services for basic needs"' (1990, pp. 194-195) is *decreasing*. This is because patriarchally-construed productivity and growth are ecologically destructive, a denial of the value of women and nature's 'passive' work, and a source of further gender inequality.

**(c) 'Maldevelopment' increases male/female inequality in Third World countries**
Western patriarchal-style development, devoid of the feminine principle[102], simultaneously subjugates women and nature, leaving both more impoverished than they ever were in their subsistence existence, and increases male/female[103] inequality. The logic of western style market-oriented development destroys the ready accessibility of women to those natural resources – food, fuel, fodder and water - from which they traditionally nourish their families. Instead, these resources are now controlled by male-dominated economic elites. Throughout the Third World, she suggests, "women, peasants, and tribal peoples are struggling for liberation from development as they earlier struggled for liberation from colonialism" (Shiva, 1990, p. 190).

**(d) Western-style development projects are resource and energy-intensive**
Western-style development projects "demand ever increasing resource withdrawals from the natural ecosystems" (1990, p. 195). They impair nature's "productivity and renewability" because their "ecological destruction of soil, water, and vegetation systems" (p. 191) leaves little from which nature can renew itself. This in turn affects women, who, more directly than men, rely on nature's continued production of renewable resources "for sustenance and livelihood" (p. 190, p. 197).

"Maldevelopment', Shiva suggests (1990, p. 200) will only become genuine development when it abandons the "sacredness" of its patriarchal assumptions, and recovers the feminine principle.

## 6.5 Population

Salleh considers that "the targeting of 'population control' by white male environmentalists in the North has both racist and sexist dimensions" (1993, p. 232). Many North Americans, she says, oppose abortion back home but "endorse population control programs in Asia and South America" (p. 232). Even the argument from the "scarcity" of the Earth's resources, is hypocritical if applied only to the Third World, because every child "born into the so-called advanced societies uses about fifteen times more global resources during his or her lifetime than a person born in the Third World" (pp. 232-233).

Ecofeminists do want to see women in control of their own fertility – they work against culturally-approved rape/early co-erced motherhood, and advocate women's right to choose their own sexual partners, and their right to pregnancy prevention methods and safe abortion[104] (McLaughlin, 1993, in Sessions, 1995, p. 88). They condemn the oppression they see in the growing numbers of homeless, abused, neglected, depressed, starving, mortally-ill, unplanned, children of the world, because they bear the heaviest environmental burden (Kurth-Schai, 1997, in Warren, 1997, p. 193).

Spretnak (1990, pp. 12-13) suggests that an ecofeminist response to the suffering brought about by population pressure in Third World countries would involve (1) a levelling off of the population growth everywhere and then decline (except for indigenous peoples under threat of extinction) (2) improved health and economic conditions for Third World women, because as child death rate goes down, so does birth rate (3) involvement of women at regional level in planning of population control programmes, health care, education and small-scale economic opportunities (4) ending political

[102] By the 'feminine principle', Shiva means "the conserving, ecological principle", the recognition of diversity as asset, not threat, the abandonment of reductionism, duality and linearity, the rejection of the alienation and subjugation of women and nature
[103] In contrast to UN Decade for Women expectations, women's impoverishment has increased further during post-independence western-style development (Shiva, 1990, pp. 190-191): the privatization of land which is part of western-style patriarchal development "displaced women more severely, eroding their traditional land-use rights", the introduction of cash crops "undermined food production" (p. 190), development projects removed land, water and forests from women's control, and made the collecting of food and fuel more time and energy intensive
[104] This issue was taken up strongly by the early Die Grünen (Chapter Seven)

struggles between indigenous cultural nations and the capitalist/socialist states around them, so that women of ethnic nations are not pressurized by their political leaders to have many babies so as to outnumber the enemy (5) the deconditioning, by governments and NGOs, of men from their patriarchal demand for several offspring to prove their virility.

## 6.6 Social justice; environmental justice

In section 4.3.2.3, I noted briefly the concerns that some feminists have with the implications of Gilligan's ethic of care, and how some have sought to re-articulate it as a public-political standard by which, for example, the state's care provision for its citizens, as well as its understandings of responsible citizenship, can be evalued, critiqued, and political change demanded (McLaughlin, 2003, pp. 83-89).

Ecofeminists intertwine social justice issues with environmental issues. Justice, equality and peace "cannot be achieved apart from the well-being of the Earth" (Diamond & Orenstein, 1990, p. xii); social justice and ecological stability are "intimately tied" (Shiva, 1990, p. 193). Recognizing and maintaining nature's harmony are "preconditions for distributive justice[105]" (Shiva, 1990, p. 193).

More often than not, it is the poor who are exposed to environmental hazards, and they who suffer most from environmental degradation (Starhawk, 1990, p. 82; Warren, 1999, pp. 151-153). The environmental justice movement seeks to simultaneously achieve social justice and ecological harmony. While it draws on elements of ecofeminism, it is also highly critical of it (e.g., Taylor, 1997). Taylor (1997) suggests[106] that while ecofeminists do "define… the theories, control and disseminate ideas, and craft political strategies" to address the woman/nature oppression, they otherwise match the "racial and socioeconomic profiles of traditional environmentalists, that is, they are predominantly white and middle class" (Taylor, 1997, p. 62). It is unsurprising that they haven't fully understood the issues of women of colour, nor do they "fully understand or accept the differences between white women and women of color" (p. 62).

Women-of-colour experience patriarchy differently to white women. Women-of-colour fight gender issues, but these are always intertwined with issues of racism as well. They face not only domination by white men, and men of colour, but by white women too. In addition, their men of colour are in turn dominated by white men. The whole experience is completely different. Besides which, ecofeminism is reluctant to discuss same-sex oppression of women (Taylor, 1997, p. 63).

Ecofeminism has been slow to take up racial equality as an issue. Fighting racial inequality is optional for white ecofeminists; it is not optional for women of colour. Ecofeminists have been critical of Marx's money and class dominance theory, arguing that gender is also a factor, but they have been slow to add race and colonialism as further factors of domination. When ecofeminists do mention these dominations, it is almost in passing; it has not taken root in the ecofeminist literature. Class *is* an issue for the environmental justice movement. Environmental degradation is particularly the lot of poor women of colour. Ecofeminists have pointed to the degradation of nature and linked it to "the degradation and devaluation" of women, but have not pointed to the capitalist, class and race basis of this nature degradation (Taylor, 1997, pp. 64-65). This failure provides a major reason why women of

[105] See Warren (1990) for "some ecofeminist worries" about environmental justice's distributive model

[106] Taylor (1997) for example also discusses differences between ecofeminists and environmental justice women of colour's understanding of religion and spirituality (pp. 66-67), takes some ecofeminists to task for using "dogmatic, totalizing language" (p. 68), cautions the ecofeminist movement to resist the imperialistic urge to co-opt the environmental justice movement (pp. 68-69), criticizes them for being more interested in the struggles of women in developing countries than in their own (p. 69), and expresses some doubt as to whether women of colour would be able to empower themselves and grow in the ecofeminist movement, because there, "ecofeminist beliefs, practices, and ideas are firmly under the control of white women…" (pp. 69-70). Taylor's position seems to be that while there is room for white ecofeminists in the environmental justice movement, it is best for women of colour to remain in the environmental justice movement

colour throw their lot in rather with men of colour, and rather in fighting for environmental justice, whose discourse is structured around racial equality (Taylor, 1997, p. 64).

# 7. Praxis

Ecofeminism considers itself a social movement (Birkeland, 1993, in Gaard, 1993, p. 18), a "politics of resistance" (Diamond & Orenstein, 1990, pp. xiv-xv; Quinby, 1990, in Diamond and Orenstein, 1990, p. 122), particularly at local level, combined with "creative projects" (Lahar, 1996, p. 15) against "ecological destruction and patriarchal power" (Quinby, 1990, p. 127). A basic principle of ecofeminist praxis, is that it must be "life affirming, consensual, and nonviolent" (Diamond & Orenstein, 1990, p. xii). Cuomo (1996, p. 50) however, notes that some ecofeminist activist practices are "decidedly 'in your face'...". Praxis includes group decision making and consensus (Gruen, 1993, p. 83) [7.1], direct action [7.2], a suggested consumer boycott of animal-related "products of pain" (Gruen, 1993, p. 83) [7.3], and what I have called "Self"-work [7.4].

## 7.1 Consensual process

Starhawk appealingly! explains consensual process as follows: "Now consensus can drive you out of your mind with frustration sometimes, but there is a very important principle in it. That is, everyone in the group has power, and everyone has equal power because everyone has value. That value is accepted, it's inherent, and it can't be taken away. [new paragraph]. Along with the decision-making process goes a real care for the process that we use with each other. We listen to each other, we let each person have a say and hear each other and recognize that different people's opinions may be important, even if we disagree with them. [We call it] feminist process…" and it is empowering (Starhawk, 1990, p. 77). Process works best in small groups, which ecofeminist political activists call 'affinity groups[107]'. Together the affinity groups form networks and coalitions which act together in larger ways, but the basis is always "a small community of people who know and value each other personally" (Starhawk, 1990, p. 77).

## 7.2 Direct action

Feminists and ecofeminists have been involved in grassroots political action protesting issues as diverse as nuclear power, nuclear arms, toxic waste dumps, pesticides and herbicide spraying, genetically modified food, and the use of indigenous forests to supply industrial timber requirements, utilizing direct action methods and practices such as street blockades, large-scale mobilization of people, sit-ins, marches, peace camps, spiritualistic rituals, myth and traditional story-telling, web-weaving [often weaving closed the doors of important civic buildings], performance art happenings and street theatre, creating gardens on vacant city lots, or bulldozed strips of land (Lahar, 1996, p. 3), growing organic food, "tree-hugging" [the Chipko Andolan movement] (King, 1990, p. 118), and community tree planting [for example, Ms Wangari Maathai's Kenyan greenbelt movement, in which rural women gather seeds from indigenous trees to ensure the continuance of the tropical forests on which they depend (Diamond & Orenstein, 1990, p. xi; Merchant, 1990, pp. 101-105; Nelson, 1990, p. 185; Starhawk, 1990, p. 75).

## 7.3 Abstention from consumption of "the products of pain"

Some ecofeminists advocate refusal "to consume the products of [animal-related] pain", such as those already summarized in section 5.4.5.

[107] An idea already encountered in Chapter Five on Social Ecology. It is also present in Die Grünen's thought/praxis [Chapter Seven, section 6.4.2.2]

### 7.4 "Self"-work

Ecofeminism has shown that androcentrism is a social construction. So, "There is hope. Men and women in Western societies are increasingly seeking liberation from their Patriarchal programming. All sexes can work to affirm the values of caring, openness, nurturing, and nondefensiveness and the possibility of creating societies in harmony with all living beings. What is needed is more elbow grease...." (Birkeland, 1993, p. 54).

## 8. Critique

Perhaps the most destabilizing critique is that of the ecofeminist theoretical linking of the oppression of women with the oppression of nature, based on an argued affinity of women with nature. Li (in Gaard, 1993, quote on p. 272, p. 288), for example, suggests this supposed affinity to be a "[non] transhistorical and transcultural phenomenon". She finds the reduction of ecological destruction to "traits associated with men (aggression, competition, and militarism), and ecological sensibility to traits associated with women (nurturing, caring, and compassion), reductionist (Li, 1993, p. 286), while acknowledging at the same time, that there does seem to be "a male-identified world view that is not necessarily shared by women" (p. 288). Li suggests that the ecofeminist praxis of seeking to end the interrelated –isms (classism, racism, sexism, naturism) has greater potential for cross-cultural applicability than its theorizing (Li, 1993, p. 289; Gaard, 1993, p. 10). Dixon (1996) critiques as unnecessary in the ecofeminist version of animal liberation, any theoretical, practical, or symbolic connection between women and animals [5.4.2].

Ecofeminists have also been critiqued for their theoretical inconsistency, and uncritical celebration of diversity [1.4]; their abandonment of Enlightenment legacies of reason [3.4], and their blindness to issues of importance for women of colour in the environmental justice movement [6.6]. Agarwal's critique of ecofeminist analysis of development is noted in Chapter Nine, Environment and Development (section 4.2.3).

## 9. Summary

I summarize here the contributing ecofeminism ideas to the meaning of "green", under a **THEME HEADING**, followed by a short description of the relative idea/ideas, and their location in this chapter.

**WORLDVIEW:** Ecofeminism provides anthropological and psychological explanations [2.2.2, 3.1, 4.1] for the dominant western cultural worldview, which it critiques as based on "masculinist" views on what it is to be a human being, a self in relation to others, and a self in relation to nature [4]. They call this a "malestream" worldview, and its accompanying value system and ethic [5], "androcentrism". The androcentric critique runs like a thread through all aspects of the ecofeminist worldview. Their alternative worldview, which pointedly makes no claim to homogeneity, is informed by a variety of sometimes contradictory feminist theories [1.4, 2.1], ecologism [1.2], and women's spirituality [2.2], of which the "feminine principle" and "partnership" are key expressions [4.3.2.4, 4.3.2.5]. The ecofeminism worldview includes "real-world" political analysis and praxis [6].

**LEGITIMATING NARRATIVE:** Androcentrism, defined as dominating, exploitative relations with the Other, particularly women, nature, and animals, is critiqued as the root cause of patriarchy, hierarchy, and the ecological crisis [2.3]. The ecofeminist project is to theorize the connections between all forms of oppression [1.3], two models for which are "the logic of domination", and the centric model [4.2]. The rhetoric is of liberation for all oppressed groups [2.4]. The solution to all forms of oppression, of which the environmental crisis is one manifestation, is an integrated Self, and

an interconnected sense of the Self/Other relationship. Metaphors such as “network”, “web”, and “tapestry” express ecofeminists’ key alternative idea of connection [2.4].

**EPISTEMOLOGY**: Ecofeminism presents a sustained critique of Western culture’s dominant rationalism, argued to be a “masculine”, and not a universal, way of knowing. Specifically, it is critiqued for its ontological dualisms, its harsh opposition to emotion, its justification for instrumental relationships with the Other, its ignoring of women’s knowledge, and of non-formal knowledge [3.4]. There is opposition to scientific epistemology in as far as it is guilty of this critique [3.3]. Alternative epistemologies not aimed at “power over” that which is researched, are advocated instead [3.3.1].

**ONTOLOGY**

**-View of the human being and nature:** Ecofeminist ontology usually deals integratedly with views of what it is to be a human being, the self/other relationship, and the self/nature relationship [4]. It criticizes in all these cases, malestream dichotomous and oppositional ontological views, and their inherent bias towards “power over” the other, whether from a model of oppression such as Warren’s “logic of domination” [4.2.2], or Plumwood’s “centric” model [4.2.1].

**-View of the human being:** The rationalist-generated malestream view of what it is to be a human being is criticized as a Self split between favoured “male values” and rejected or suppressed “feminine” values. Ecofeminists argue that the first step towards redressing inter alia, the ecological crisis, is a re-integration of the feminine into what it is to be a human being. Ecofeminists themselves are ambivalent as to whether to celebrate or reject a supposed feminine “essence” [4.3.2.3]. The “feminine principle” [4.3.2.4] however, appears unproblematic.

**-View of nature:** Few ecofeminists advocate a radical nondualistic ontology to replace male oppositionally-defined ontological views [4.3.1]. Mostly, they adopt a relational ontology of interdependence, which simultaneously recognizes connectedness and autonomy [4.3.2 and 4.3.2.2]. Autonomy vis-a-vis connectedness is a problematic issue for ecofeminists [4.3.2.1].

**THE ETHIC**

Ecofeminists believe that their ecofeminist ethic holds “the power and the promise” of ending all oppression, specifically the twin oppression of women and nature. They critique anthropocentrism as one expression of androcentrism [5.1]. They see their task as unveiling malestream bias in environmental ethical theories, and have set “boundary conditions” for an ecofeminist ethic [5.2]. Instead of rationalist-inspired ethics geared towards the abstract, the universal, and a rights approach designed to mediate adversarial, oppressive relationships, they advocate a relational ethic of care which recognizes the role of emotion [5.3]. A “felt sense of connection” provides motivation [5.3.1]. The ethic is not based on any axiological theory but on the quality of the relationship [5.3.2]. It applies to both living and non-living beings [5.3.3]. Perhaps the lead moral response could be described as a call for “concrete loving actions” towards the other, whether person, nature, or animals.

**- Animal liberation issues:** Ecofeminists have also sought to theorize the patriarchal connection between the twin oppression of women and animals [5.4.2]. Most reject rights-based approaches to animal welfare issues [5.4.3]. They point out the social construction of meat-eating in patriarchal society [5.4.4.2], and present ecological, health, anti-elitist, and moral arguments for vegetarianism [5.4.4.1]. Some argue for, and some against, moral vegetarianism as necessity in an ecofeminist ethics of care [5.4.4.3]. From different premises to those of the animal rights ethicists, they reject more or less the same animal-related malpractices: animals misused and abused in science, food, sport and entertainment [5.4.4.5].

**VIEWS ON SOCIETY**

Any socio-economic issue is a “women’s” issue if it contributes to understanding, and ending, women’s exploitation and domination. Ecofeminists claim that their worldview provides a real-world

basis for green socio-political critique and praxis, and a common ecofeminist political "platform" has been suggested [6.1].

Underlying the ecofeminist critique of militarism [6.2], technology [6.3], development [6.4], and moves towards population control [6.5] to reduce human environmental impact, is their critique of patriarchal values. While ecofeminists support environmental justice, they have been sharply criticized by their women-of-colour environmental justice sisters for their myopic misunderstanding of racism [6.6].

**PRAXIS:** Ecofeminist praxis includes consensual process [7.1], direct action [7.2], boycotting "products of pain" [7.3], and "Self"-work [7.4], the latter mainly understood as ridding oneself of patriarchal programming.