

realization is tied up with the self-realization of the universe as a whole.⁹⁶ I would prefer to speak of "narratives," in the plural, to emphasize that today we must avoid duplicating modernity's quest for the one true story.⁹⁷

In working on their particular narratives, deep ecologists might benefit from addressing questions like the following. Can narratives of human potential and cosmic evolution simultaneously embrace the positive aspect of the emancipatory impulse of modernity; move beyond its dualism, anthropocentrism, and foundationalism; take into account contemporary scientific thought; encourage cultural diversity and human creativity; and promote new socioeconomic formations that both protect individual freedoms and encourage decentralized, non-authoritarian, communally responsive and environmentally sensitive economic practices? Since it will presumably require centuries for humanity to move beyond its current stage, what steps can be taken in the meantime to avoid wreaking irrevocable damage upon the ecosphere? How can such steps avoid reproducing the repressive social structures responsible for causing such damage? Is religious awe in the face of the beauty of this planet reconcilable with affirmation of humanity's ability not only to appreciate that planet, but also to intervene in its evolutionary destiny?

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⁹⁶ In *The Ecological Self*, Matthews offers a deep ecological version of such a narrative.

⁹⁷ In "The Case Against Moral Pluralism," *Environmental Ethics* 12 (1990): 99-124, J. Baird Callicott argues that while postmodern theorists are right that we must abandon hope for final "truth," we must continue searching for a viable new myth, "an intellectual construct that comprehends and systematizes more of our experience and does so more coherently than any other."

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Class, Race, and Gender Discourse in the Ecofeminism/Deep Ecology Debate

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While both ecofeminism and deep ecology share a commitment to overcoming the conventional division between humanity and nature, a major difference between the two is that deep ecology brings little social analysis to its environmental ethic. I argue that there are ideological reasons for this difference. Applying a sociology of knowledge and discourse analysis to deep ecological texts to uncover these reasons, I conclude that deep ecology is constrained by political attitudes meaningful to white-male, middle-class professionals whose thought is not grounded in the labor of daily maintenance and survival. At a micro-political level, this masculinist orientation is revealed by an armory of defensive discursive strategies and techniques used in deep ecological responses to ecofeminist criticism.

I. LIBERAL PATRIARACHALISM AND THE SERVICED SOCIETY

BOLESTIVT SPENOLIC (Salleh)

The separation of humanity and nature is the lynch pin of patriarchal ideology, and both deep ecology and ecofeminism share a desire to dislodge that pin. For deep ecologists, overcoming the division between humanity and nature promises a release from alienation. For ecofeminists, it promises release from a complex set of exploitations based on patriarchal identification of femaleness with the order of nature. Perhaps because most deep ecologists happen to have been men, and middle class, their environmental ethic has had difficulty in moving beyond psychological and metaphysical concerns to a political analysis of the "materiality" of women's oppression. Building on earlier exchanges between ecofeminism and deep ecology, in particular, "The Ecofeminism/Deep Ecology Debate: A Reply to Patriarchal Reason," I amplify the claim that deep ecology is held back from maturation as a Green philosophy by its lack of a fully rounded political critique.¹ To this end, I urge adherents of deep ecology to become more reflexively aware of the sociohistorical grounding of their discourse.

Although there are different emphases among women's groupings internationally, a growing number of ecofeminists now address capitalist patriarchy as an

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oppressive system of global power relations.² They situate both environmentalism and women's struggle against the instrumental rationality and dehumanizing commodity culture that comes with industrial production. Accordingly, ecofeminists of a socialist persuasion are disturbed to hear the father of deep ecology, Arne Naess, claim that "total egalitarianism is impossible," that some human exploitation will always be "necessary."³ Women's complex treatment as a sexual, reproductive, and labor "resource" is glossed over in the deep ecological agenda. Yet there are, and have always been, people who cultivate and prepare food, build shelter, carry loads, labor to give birth, wash and tend the young, maintain dwellings, feed workers, and mend their clothes. Whether in the First World or the Third World (which is two-thirds of the global population), women's labor "mediation of nature" serves as the infrastructure to what is identified as men's "productive economic" role. This subsumption of women's energies, most often by means of the institution of the family, is homologous to exploitative class relations under the capitalist system. The family is integrally connected with, and makes industrial production possible by "reproducing" the labor force, in the several senses of that word. However, as productivism intensifies with new technologies and the promise of ever greater profits, labor becomes increasingly removed from the satisfaction of basic needs. As a result, under the guise of "development," a new dimension is added to the women's role constellation—that of conspicuous consumer. Moreover, as the economic fetish penetrates personal culture, even sexual relations between men and women come to resemble relations between things, thereby deepening women's exploitation even further.⁴

Deep ecologists do not recognize that women have not been consulted about their interests in this system of social relations. Just as the environment is damaged by "development," women's lives are vitiated by men's systematic appropriation of their energies and time. Writing by Brinda Rao in India, Berit As in Norway, and Barbara Ehrenreich in the United States provides ample documentation of this appropriation.⁵ The work of Third World peasant women is fairly obviously tied to "natural" functions and material labor. These women grow most of the world's food and care for their families with a minimum of disruption to the environment and with minimum reliance on a cash economy. They labor with independence,

² For discussion of the international status of ecofeminism and its regional variations, see Ariel Salleh, "From Centre to Margin," *Hypatia* 6 (1991): 206-14.

³ Arne Naess, "The Shallow and the Deep, Long Range Ecology Movement," *Inquiry* 16 (1973): 95-100. A qualification of Naess' views appears in *Ecology, Community and Life Style: Outline of an Ecosophy*, trans. David Rothenberg (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989). Here, the impact of culture and personal experience on ethical intuition is acknowledged in a way that could serve as a model for other deep ecologists.

⁴ Ariel Salleh, "Epistemology and the Metaphors of Production," *Studies in the Humanities* 15 (1988): 136.

dignity, and grace—and those of us looking for sustainable models may soon want to take advice from such women. In contrast, in supposedly advanced industrial nations, women's maintenance work as housewives or imported guest workers is made dependent on and largely mystified by "labor-saving devices," such as dish-washing machines, blenders, and the like. Nevertheless, cultural assumptions concerning women's apparently universal role of mediating nature still hold. It is for this reason that reproductive rights remain contentious in the United States. Ecofeminists join Dave Foreman's cry to "free shackled river," but more than rivers remain shackled!

Deep ecologist Warwick Fox, who has wondered why ecofeminists have not discussed the class basis of deep ecology, has failed to note that my early ecofeminist criticism in "Deeper than Deep Ecology" refers repeatedly to women's labor as validation of their perspectives.⁶ As the sociology of knowledge teaches us, peoples' perception is shaped by their place in the system of productive relations. Nevertheless, the gulf between manual or sustaining productive labor and mental or conceptualizing work is especially profound in industrialized societies. A whole gamut of questions surrounding labor relations is ideologically suppressed, and in the United States it is clouded by the question of race as well. In late capitalism, the middle class, including academics, are "served" in their daily needs by hidden workers. Not surprisingly, deep ecology reflects the idealism and individualism of such a privileged group, its preoccupation being "cultural issues" such as meaning, the psychological, and "rights." However, even more invisible as labor, and not even recognized by a wage, are the domestic services of women. Michael Zimmerman's typically middle-class and white articulation of women's lot—he sees them enjoying "the advantages" of a consumer society—illustrates this standard oversight, though the fault is not entirely his, since it largely reflects the liberal feminist attitude he relies on to make his case against ecofeminism.⁷ It is not only women's socialization, the various belief systems which shape "the feminine role," but also the very practical nature of the labor which most women do that gives them a different orientation to the world around them and, therefore, different insights into its problems. In both North and South, this labor may include the physicality of birthing, suckling, and subsequent household chores, but is not restricted to such activities. Even in the public work force, women's employment is more often than not found in maintenance jobs—reflecting cultural attitudes to women as "carers."⁸

⁶ Warwick Fox, "The Deep Ecology-Ecofeminism Debate and its Parallels," *Environmental Ethics* 11 (1989): 14. Compare Ariel Salleh, "Deeper than Deep Ecology: The Ecofeminist Connection," *Environmental Ethics* 6 (1984): 335-41, especially points 3 and 4.

⁷ Michael Zimmerman, "Feminism, Deep Ecology, and Environmental Ethics," *Environmental*

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Radical feminist analyses of the psychodynamic underlying patriarchal social relations, again and again, return to the symbolic killing of mother/nature/woman as the root cause of the "masculine" will to objectify and control other forms of being. Zimmerman's writing is fairly symptomatic in this respect. Although ten or more pages of his "Feminism, Deep Ecology, and Environmental Ethics" are generously given to exposition of the feminist literature, and a concluding paragraph endorses its findings, his article is still querulous. The same observation applies to Fox's response to ecofeminist criticisms of deep ecology. While both Zimmerman and Fox cast doubt on the reality of patriarchal power, Zimmerman's ambivalent article also contains information about how ideology works to protect men from seeing the actual nature of social relations under patriarchy. He quotes the following remark of Naomi Scheman: "Men have been free to imagine themselves as self-defining only because women held the intimate social world together by their caring labors."⁹ Similarly, we know that the capitalist entrepreneur sees himself as a man of high achievement, blind to the fact that the wage laborer is responsible for the generation of his surplus. In the patriarchal perspective, self appears to be independent; yet, to quote Jim Cheney, "The atomistically defined self acts as a sponge, absorbing the gift of the other, turning it into capital." Cheney goes on: "This is one way of understanding the frequent feminist claim that males in patriarchy feed on female energy."¹⁰ Capital can be psychological and sexual as much as economic. On the positive side, the actuality of caring for the concrete needs of others gives rise to a morality of relatedness among ordinary women, and this sense of kinship seems to extend to the natural world as well. Consider the reasoning of an Indian peasant woman whose drinking water has been spoiled by village men moving across to a pumped supply for status reasons, or the sensibility of a woman who watches a tree grow over the grave of a child she has suckled. These understandings engraved in suffering make sharp contrast to the abstract philosophical formulations of deep ecology. For ecofeminism, the body is indeed an instrument of our knowledge of the world.¹¹

PROFESSIONAL VERSUS GRASSROOTS BASE

As I put it in an earlier critique, ". . . what is the organic basis of [the deep ecological] paradigm shift? . . . Is deep ecology a sociologically coherent

a veritable growth area for professional philosophers, thus, neutralizing the radical feminist impulse which originally politicized it.

⁹ Zimmerman, "Feminism, Deep Ecology, and Environmental Ethics," p. 31. The reference is to Naomi Scheman, "Individualism and the Objects of Psychology" in S. Harding and M. Hintikka, eds., *Discovering Reality* (Boston: Reidel, 1983), p. 234.

position?"¹² One of the most distressing things about the field of environmental ethics is the extent to which it has been taken over by paid professional specialists. What gives authenticity, validity, and "depth" to ecofeminism, in contrast, is that it is implicitly tied to a praxis rooted in life needs and the survival of habitat. Deep ecology is primarily concerned with identification, or rather, re-identification of the so-called "human" ego with nature. For deep ecologists, however, the recommended route for recovering this connected sensuous self is meditation or leisure activities, such as backpacking. How does such activity compare as an integrating biocentric experience with the hands-on involvement of the African subsistence farmer who tends her field with an astonishing knowledge of seeds, water habits, and insect catalysts—and whose land is the continuing staff of the children she has born out of her body? There is surely a large portion of illusion and self-indulgence in the North's comfortable middle-class pursuit of the cosmic "transpersonal Self." Despite Naess' careful reformulations, in an age of "me now," the deep ecologists' striving for "Self-realization" demands close scrutiny.

Many deep ecological difficulties in coming to terms with ecofeminism can be traced to the sociopolitical grounding of the deep ecology movement in bourgeois liberalism. Hence, it is probably no surprise that even as deep ecologists put forward their key concept of "ecocentrism" as "the way out" of our environmental holocaust, an implicit endorsement of the Enlightenment rationalist notion of ever upward progress threatens to collide with the principle. For instance, some deep ecologists believe that "anthropocentric" political critiques, such as socialism and feminism, can, in principle, be taken care of by the wider framework of ecocentrism. Fox writes, "Supporters of deep ecology hold that their concerns well and truly subsume the concerns of those movements that have restricted their focus to a more egalitarian human society."¹³ Not only is Fox's ambitious totalizing program spoiled by the serious gaps in deep ecology's theorization, it is also out of sync with his pluralist claim to respect the unfolding of "other voices" in the universe: the words of women, among others. Fox's attraction to "transpersonal psychology" hangs on the self-actualizing logic of middle-class individualism. Similarly, his assertion that self-interest is fused with that of Gaja as a whole, strikingly resembles the guiding hand behind Adam Smith's libertarian political economy, or Rawls' theory of justice. Despite a will to transcendence, there is an implicit positivism or naive realism in these formulations.¹⁴ Deep ecology has no

with political insight is made in Ariel Salleh, "On the Dialectics of Signifying Practice," *Thesis Eleven* 5/6 (1982): 72-84.

¹² Salleh, "Deeper than Deep Ecology," p. 339.

¹³ Fox, "Deep Ecology-Ecofeminism Debate," p. 9 (emphasis added). Since writing this piece, I have discovered that Jim Cheney explicates the totalizing implications of Fox's stand powerfully and eloquently in "The Neo-Stoicism of Radical Environmentalism," *Environmental Ethics* 14

sense of itself as spoken by a particular group lodged in history. Oblivious to its own cultural context, the deep ecological voice rings out as a disembodied absolute.

ABSTRACT ESSENCES VERSUS REFLEXIVITY

According to Rosemary Ruether, women throughout history have not been particularly concerned to create transcendent, overarching, all-powerful entities, or like classical Greek Platonism and its leisured misogynist mood, with projecting a pristine world of abstract essences.¹⁵ Women's spirituality has focused on the immanent and intricate ties among nature, body, and personal intuition. The revival of the goddess, for example, is a celebration of these material bonds. Ecofeminist pleas that men, formed under patriarchal relations, look inside themselves first before constructing new cosmologies have been dismissed, for example, by Fox, in "The Deep Ecology: Ecofeminism Debate and its Parallels," as a recipe for inward-looking possessive parochialism and, hence, ultimately war!¹⁶ But that would surely only be the case if deep ecologists failed to shrug off their conditioning as white-Anglo-Saxon-Protestant-professional property holders, which they assure us, they are very keen to do. Interestingly, the universalizing, cosmopolitan stance of this particular protest by Fox is somewhat at loggerheads with the deep ecologists' own professed commitment to bioregionalism.

In the name of "theoretical adequacy," Fox's article disregards history. Consequently, his prose blurs who has done what to whom, over the centuries and on into the present. To quote:

[Certain] classes of social actors have . . . habitually assumed themselves to be *more fully human* than others, such as women ("the weaker vessel"), the "lower" classes, blacks, and non-Westerners ("savages," "primitives," "heathens"). . . .

That anthropocentrism has served as the most fundamental kind of legitimation employed by *whatever* powerful class of social actors one wishes to focus on can also be seen by considering the fundamental kind of legitimation that has habitually been employed with regard to large-scale or high-cost social enterprises such as war, scientific and technological development, or environmental exploitation. Such enterprises have habitually been undertaken not simply in the name of men, capitalists, whites or Westerners, for example, but in the name of God (and thus our essential humanity . . .). . . . (This applies, notwithstanding the often sexist expression of these sentiments in terms of "man," "mankind," and so on, and not withstanding the fact that certain classes of social actors benefit disproportionately from these enterprises.)¹⁷

Toward an Ecocentric Approach (New York University at Stony Brook Press: 1992) perpetuates Fox's naive realism.

¹⁵ Rosemary Ruether, *Women and the Last Things* (New York: Basic Books, 1989), p. 100.

This passage is a sample of liberal-pluralist mystification in its most blatant form. Its author next goes on to mention Bacon and the rise of science, but without touching on the corresponding elimination of one class of social actors, namely, the six million women who perished as witches for their scientific wisdom. Fox believes that all modern liberation movements have had recourse to the same legitimating device—"humanity." Apparently, a belief that this label is available for the use of everyone is the reason why deep ecologists still use the term *man* so persistently.

Zimmerman, in turn, entirely misses the point of ecofeminism by portraying it as an argument about women being "better than men."¹⁸ Ecofeminism does not set up a static ontological prioritization of "woman." Instead, it is a strategy for social action. Equally, men in the Green and the eco-socialists movements, by examining the parallel exploitation of nature and women, are entering into a process of praxis, the results of which will unfold over time. Fox, in his own way, shelves the question of our political responsibility as historical agents by insisting that all people need to understand is that "evolutionary outcomes" simply represent "the way things happen to have turned out," nothing more. For someone concerned with "simplistic" and "facile" political theorization, his familiar charge against ecofeminism beats the lot. Notwithstanding earlier posturing about the "errors of essentialism" in ecofeminist thought, Fox soon emerges as a kind of Spencerian sociobiologist. In fact, the deep ecologists, for all their anxieties about "genetic doctrines" in feminism, seem to be strongly inclined this way. George Sessions too speaks favorably about "the recent studies in ethology and genetics which posit a basic human and primate nature."¹⁹ Is this the old double standard again?

TECHNOLOGY—PRODUCTIVE AND REPRODUCTIVE RELATIONS

When it comes to the question of technology, Zimmerman's text becomes as rudderless as the modern industrial apparatus itself. He notes that some feminists—"essentialists" he calls them, though they remain unnamed—are critical of science and technology, while other feminists, also unspecified, argue that it is not "intrinsically evil."²⁰ There are, indeed, differences among feminists on technology. Liberal feminists, like their brothers, the reform environmentalists, imagine that solutions to social and ecological problems can be found within "the advanced industrial technostucture." Liberal feminism should not be grouped with ecofeminism, however, any more than resource environmentalism should be grouped with deep ecology. Ecofeminists go further than both liberal feminists,

¹⁸ Zimmerman, "Feminism, Deep Ecology, and Environmental Ethics" p. 34

who see technology as emancipatory, and Marxist feminists who argue that technology is neutral and that it is all a matter of who controls it. Ecofeminists observe that the instrumental-rational mode of production inevitably trickles over into the sphere of consciousness and social relations. As a Heideggerian, Zimmerman should know that there are ample reasons for dismantling the technomaster, given its far-reaching impact into human phenomenology. Yet, he still seems to hold a neutralist thesis, claiming that "Modern science and technology are potentially liberating. . . ." Further, he asks: "While benefiting from the material well-being and technological progress made possible by masculinist science and industry, do women rid themselves of responsibility . . . ?"²¹ It is hard to believe that this "growth"-oriented statement should be made in defense of deep ecology. Perhaps Zimmerman genuinely does believe that societies accrue benefit from "advanced" technologies. Perhaps they do for the middle-class men who designed and sold them; nevertheless, the young Korean micro-chip worker steadily going blind at her bench and the California aerospace worker coming down with immune deficiencies have not experienced such well-being. The problem is, and this is a point well made in Don Davis' article, that deep ecology as a movement has no systematic analysis of multinational-corporate industrial society and its effects.²²

Equally innocent of the force of contemporary instrumentalism, Wittbecker writes that "human populations are plastic and could probably be decreased without fascism, by economic, religious, or cultural means." Deep ecologist Bill Devall's tone is similarly managerial, preoccupied as he is with population control.²³ The phenomenon of "overpopulation" does need to be seriously examined. However, given the ethical issues of eugenics-genocide and of a woman's right over her own body, the targeting of "population control" by white male environmentalists in the North has both racist and sexist dimensions. Observe how many Americans opposed to abortion in the United States endorse population control programs in Asia and South America. Even as a matter of social equity, where children provide supplementary farm labor for overworked mothers in the South, it is inappropriate for gray-suited international policy advisers to demand population control. Such programs originated in a post-World War II middle-class urban desire to protect the quality of life—that is, high levels of consumerism. These days the argument for population control is formulated more prudently in terms of protecting the Earth's "scarce" resources. Even this injunction, however, as it is applied to the Third World exclusively, is patently hypocritical. Each infant born into the so-called advanced societies uses about fifteen times more global resources during his or her lifetime than a person born

²¹ Ibid., pp. 40, 41-42.

²² Don Davis, "The Seduction of Sophia," *Environmental Ethics* 8 (1986): 151-62.

in the Third World. Population restraint may well be called for in the North, hopefully complemented by a scaling back of high technology excess. On the other hand, subsistence dwellers in the South are producers as much as consumers: as "prosumers" they are practical examples of human autonomy in a nonexploitative relation to the land. What much of this talk about population control may express is a projection and displacement of guilt experienced by those who continue to live comfortably off the invisible backs of working women in the Third World. Even deeper, the constant focus on population control may reflect some profound psychosexual fear of that "different" voice.²⁴

With regard to biotechnology, Fox agrees with the ecofeminist position that deep ecologists should oppose it; nevertheless, given deep ecology's lack of attention to industrialism and technological rationality, it is not consistently opposed by most deep ecologists. Sessions has said that he believes there "might be a point one day down the road when we can handle genetic engineering." Naess has also defended its use. For example, he has proposed that a genetically engineered microorganism be released in order to counter a mite infecting the eyes of African children.²⁵ This proposal is a very anthropocentric focus for an ecocentric theory, and it matches oddly with earlier claims by Naess and Sessions that it is better not to approach the nonhuman world reductionistically in terms of its usefulness to humans. Devall's fine tenet that "there is wisdom in the stability of natural processes" is violated here, as is Devall's and Sessions' "refusal to acknowledge that some life forms have greater or better intrinsic value than others." Concern about the unintended consequences of human "hubris" is one level of argument. Feminist critiques of patriarchal science are another. It might be also added, following the logic of Frances Moore Lappé, that if the standard of living—the "vital needs"—of African villages were not decimated by pressures from a predatory white-male dominated international economic order, such children might not succumb to malnutrition and disease in the first place. Given this line of reasoning, genetic engineering can scarcely be justified as a "vital need." In fact, there can be no emergence from this exploitative system as long as humans pursue expensive technological-fix panaceas, such as genetic engineering. Even so, according to Devall and Sessions, "cultural diversity today requires advanced technology, that is, techniques that advance the goals of each culture."²⁶ Is this why John Seed from the Council of All Beings can be seen traveling with a lap-top computer? What some deep ecologists seem to forget when it comes to the question of technology is that there is no such thing as a free lunch. While

²⁴ This paragraph is adapted from Ariel Salleh, "Living with Nature: Reciprocity or Control," in R. and J. Engel, eds., *Ethics of Environment and Development* (London: Pinter/University of Arizona Press, 1990), p. 251.