$ 4.00

UNDERCURRENTS

A JOURNAL OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

Nature, Culture, Self

volume 2, 1990

Undercurrents

A Journal of Critical Environmental Studies

Volume 2. 1990

Table of Contents

Introduction, The Editors....1

Speaking Animals: Notes on the Human Voiceover in Wildlife Documentaries, by Margot La Rocque....3

Towards An Urban Ecological Consciousness: Experiencing Wild Places in the City, by Jean-Marc Daigle....9

Poetry, by Louise Fabiani and Isabella Colalillo Katz....18

The Intertwining Wildness of Flesh-Child Becoming, by Paul Nonnekes....20

Three Visions of an Ecological Self, by Jacqueline Pearce....28

The Moral Status of Animals: Ethical Crossroads, Dead Ends and the Road Not Taken, by Nancy O'Sullivan....35

The Journal Committee
Karen Birkemeyer
Paul Manley
Mark Meisner
Joanne Nonnekes
Andrew Satterthwaite
Paul Senez
rolf struthers
Tom Weegar

The Editorial Board
Karen Birkemeyer
Mark Meisner
Joanne Nonnekes
Paul Manley
Paul Senez

Editorial Assistants
Peter Kohnke and Glenn Mikkelsen

Publisher
The Editorial Committee, Undercurrents

Undercurrents is published annually.
Date of Issue-April 1990

To contact **Undercurrents** for submission guidelines and information please write:

Undercurrents
Faculty of Environmental Studies
Third Floor, Lumbers Building
York University
4700 Keele Street
North York, Ontario
Canada M3J 1P3
(416) 736-5252

Printed by:
Our Times Publishing Ltd.
(a worker co-operative)
390 Dufferin Street
Toronto, Ontario

Copyright © of all materials held exclusively by the authors and artists. All rights reserved.
(ISSN 0843-7351)

The views expressed in these papers do not necessarily correspond to those of the members of the Journal Committee.

Acknowledgements:
Undercurrents and Jean-Marc Daigle would like to gratefully acknowledge **The Trumpeter** and Harvey Taylor for permission to reprint his poem "Full Circle."

The publication of **Undercurrents** was made possible with the financial support of the *Environmental Studies Student Association; The Faculty of Environmental Studies; The Graduate Student Association; The Provost's Office of York University; The Faculty of Graduate Studies*, and, of course, our readers.

Undercurrents is printed on recycled paper.

Artwork: Front cover illustration by Jacqueline Pearce; back cover illustration by Louise Fabiani; uncredited artwork by Karen Birkemeyer, Louise Fabiani, Mark Meisner, and Jacqueline Pearce. Jacqueline Pearce recently received her Master in Environmental Studies from York University. Karen Birkemeyer, Louise Fabiani and Mark Meisner are Masters Canditates in The Faculty of Environmental Studies, York University.

Introduction

Hello, and welcome to volume two of **Undercurrents**.

For this issue we have chosen the theme "Nature, Culture, Self." With this broad theme we hope to embrace three converging domains whose relationships to each other constitute the principal focus of inquiry within the interdisciplinary field of critical environmental thought. In attempting to explore and articulate a new view of the human place in nature, ecophilosophers and activists are frequently led to questions of the self and its relation to the world. This often includes questions of culture and its role in changing how we perceive of our relationship to non-human nature. These are difficult and uncertain questions, but ones with direct relevance to contemporary social and ecological urgencies.

The response to our call-for-papers was encouraging, and eclectic. The papers we have chosen for this issue reflect some of the variety of approaches to social change. In addition to the papers there is some artwork and poetry that we think will contribute to a further understanding of the relationships implied in our theme.

The issue begins with Margot La Rocque's paper on human voice-overs in wildlife documentaries. By revealing the bad anthropomorphism of much of the narration within this genre, she points out that though these works appear to represent a sympathetic relation between humans and the rest of nature, often they merely continue to subvert the non-human.

In his paper, Jean-Marc Daigle reflects on his experience with a local project in order to discuss the importance and potential of urban wild places to inspire the growth and unfolding of human bonds with, and sensitivity to, the earth.

Paul Nonnekes' paper is one which rewards effort. His poetic evocation of the child's experience of the earth is written in a style which complements the creative challenge of his message.

Jacqueline Pearce's paper is a comparative discussion of how three of the transformative branches of the environmental movement -- deep ecology, social ecology and eco-feminism -- conceptualize an "ecological self."

In her paper, Nancy O'Sullivan provides a critical assessment of the different approaches that have been taken toward establishing an ethical position for the relationship of humans to animals. She argues that conventional philosophical approaches are inadequate to the task.

Once again there are a number of people who deserve thanks for their assistance in getting **Undercurrents** published. We therefore would like to sincerely acknowledge the support of Dean Edward Spence and the Faculty of Environmental Studies for giving us a home, Frances Chan for her guidance through the computer maze, and André and the folks at **Our Times** for their friendly and professional printing services. Kim Armitage, Julia Murphy, Jackie Pearce, Craig Naherniak and Judith Fraser all worked on the journal committee until other commitments took them away from us, and we thank them for the time they gave to **Undercurrents**.

Finally, we would like to thank you for reading and supporting **Undercurrents**. We have received a substantial number of supportive letters from those of you who read volume one. This encouragement has meant a lot to us. We appreciate your critical and constructive comments; they help us guide **Undercurrents** in a direction that will allow us to make student work accessible and relevant to a wider audience of activists, scholars and concerned people. Graduate students interested in contributing to **Undercurrents** should consult the editorial policy in the inside back cover.

Undercurrents is published and administered entirely by graduate student volunteers, operating on the principle of group consensus in decision making. There is no editor-in-chief, and no hierarchy of responsibilities; the journal is published with a process that reflects the social vision **Undercurrents** seeks to promote. This is not easy, but the group feels that process is just as important as the results of our work.

We hope you enjoy this issue. Please tell your friends and colleagues about us.

Speaking Animals:

NOTES ON THE HUMAN VOICEOVER IN WILDLIFE DOCUMENTARIES

by Margot La Rocque *

Nature conservationists have often credited wildlife documentaries with doing much to awaken public environmental concern. But these assertions have given too little critical thought to what I take to be a central problem: the failure of such programs to address what we might term issues of ideology. Wildlife documentaries present a view of the world in which such issues are deliberately kept underdeveloped, and are isolated conceptually from other social and political domains. We need then to ask the following questions: In what ways do these documentaries serve to legitimate existing human relationships with the nonhuman? And how do they affect our perception of, and our willingness to take action on, environmental problems?

Unfortunately, the history of wildlife filmmaking remains largely undocumented--conspicuously absent from historical and critical studies of film, television, and environmentalism. To begin this discussion, I have therefore chosen to focus rather narrowly on the function of the human voiceover to suppress a serious inquiry into patterns of human domination, while simultaneously claiming to speak *on behalf of* the nonhuman. I will attempt to sketch the various ways in which this voice authorizes and sustains a limited number of relationships between human and nonhuman nature: by speaking *through* animals, *about* animals, or *for* animals, but rarely *as* animal.

* * *

The very concept of 'wildlife' is both a product and an expression of the physical and cultural marginalisation of the nonhuman in our society. 'Wildlife' names nature as wild, as *Other*--not only as other than domesticated life, but as other than human life. As Roderick Nash has noted in his history of the idea of wilderness:

> Until there were domesticated animals it was impossible to distinguish them from wild ones. Until there were fenced fields and walled cities 'wilderness' had no meaning. Everything was simply habitat, which man shared with other creatures.[1]

The notion of a wildlife film or wildlife television documentary (and I am going to collapse the two media here for brevity's sake) serves then to underscore at least two disjunctures: the gulf between *wild*life, on the one hand, and *human* life and social practices on the other, and the gulf between this highly conventionalized genre and other types of programming.

It may seem odd to begin a discussion of wildlife documentaries by privileging the audible over the visible, and the human over the nonhuman, but let us consider the following points. First, the disembodied (usually male) voiceover is most characteristic of this genre. It is this voice, I would argue, that is primarily responsible for guiding the apparent haphazardness of natural events toward an intended meaning. As Mary Ann Doane has noted of the voiceover in television documentaries and news programs in general, it normally "carries the burden of 'information' while the impoverished image simply fills the screen."[2] Second, this voiceover tends to establish a 'complicity' between itself and the spectator: together they understand and thus *place* the nonhuman as subject to the human. Indeed, the term 'voice*over*' names a particular hierarchical relation not only between sound and image, but

* Margot La Rocque is completing her Master in Environmental Studies at York University. She teaches part-time in the Division of Social Science at York, and part-time in the Film and Television Program at Humber College. She worked for a number of years as a documentary filmmaker -- most recently as a researcher for the National Film Board's *Who Gets In? An Inside Look at Canada's Immigration System* (1989).

This paper was first presented at the *15th Annual Conference on Social Theory, Politics and the Arts*, co-sponsored by York University and the University of Ottawa (Glendon College, Toronto, October 6-8, 1989). It is abbreviated from a work in progress tentatively entitled *Imaging Animals: Essays on the Representation of the Nonhuman in the Twentieth Century*.

between human and nonhuman. When confronted with the essential muteness of the nonhuman--a condition which we as *speaking* animals are very likely to interpret as a condition of lack--three major modes of address emerge (as I have suggested above):

> (1) To speak *through* animals: here the human voice substitutes for the non-human voice, effectively erasing it, in order not to speak of Nature, but rather of human society;
>
> (2) To speak *about* animals: here the human voice subjects the nonhuman to naming and questioning; and
>
> (3) To speak *for* animals: here we endeavour to speak on behalf of those who are 'needy' and cannot speak.

I will concentrate in this abbreviated paper on the first mode.

Speaking Through Animals

Walt Disney's *Bear Country*, an Academy award-winning live-action short subject produced in 1953 as part of the *True-Life Adventure* series (and recently re-released by the Disney corporation) seems to offer a virtual textbook illustration of *speaking through animals*. Here the voiceover turns animals into *human* characters that are not unlike characters of the silent cinema, with their exaggerated gestures and 'voices' severed from the image of their bodies.

Briefly, *Bear Country* tells the story of two years in the life of two male bear cubs, beginning with their emergence from the den a few weeks after birth in early spring, and ending with their achievement of adulthood in the late autumn of their second year. The narrative is organized around the centrality of the family unit, with the mother bear mediating between the cubs and the rest of the world. (Father bear is all but absent, but more on that in a moment.) The natural world envisioned here is merely a clever disguise for the human world, in which rules for child-rearing have been translated into 'laws of nature.'

The process of growing up proceeds in fits and starts, as the cubs enter into conflict with many other species, and with various external circumstances. Out of a condition of union with all species ("the young of all species get along" claims the narrator), through close encounters with coyotes, a rattlesnake, and a mountain lion--to name just three--the cubs gain enough experience and training from their mother in order to understand their difference from, and even opposition to, other species. The film ends with the mother bear chasing her yearling cubs out onto a limb, literally, and abandoning them, counting on two years of discipline to keep them there. At first, the cubs wait obediently for Mother to return, but torn between their fear of her reprisal and growing hunger pangs, they eventually gain enough confidence to consider their own needs over their mother's wishes, and climb down from the treetop. This descent marks their clear achievement of adulthood, as their sense of self is now delineated not only in opposition to other species, but finally in opposition to Mother as well. The passage from infancy to adulthood--with its recurrent feelings of struggle, empowerment, abandonment, and nostalgia--is thus condensed for the young human spectator not only to a period of two years, as in a bear's life, but further digested to fit the twenty minutes or so it takes to view the film.

Now, in the course of viewing this film, the voiceover steers the young human spectator through two distinct phases that are somewhat analogous to the developmental phases of the maturing bear cubs. First, it encourages the child to identify with all the species presented on the screen, and then it orients *him*[3] toward a more 'objective' perception of reality. Let me elaborate.

In the early part of the film, *bear country* is presented primarily as *like-human country*, with its requisite cast of stereotypical characters and human-like occurrences. For the young human spectator, the process of *self*-recognition is aided by the cubs' natural affinity for play, and the insistence of the voiceover on the similarity of all animal young. It is only through the cumulative information provided by the commentary that the young spectator slowly learns to distinguish the characteristics of bears from other nonhuman species, and ultimately from his own species.

For example, as the film progresses, the actions of the bears become more and more exaggerated and corny--indeed, *sub*human like. The commentary increasingly mocks the young cubs, comparing them in one long sequence for instance to heavyweight wrestlers:

> These contenders seem to be battling for the heavyweight title. The cham-

pion meanwhile watches from the sidelines. 'Dead-lock', 'hammer-lock', 'half-Nelson'--they've got all the holds down pat. The title holder views the proceedings with bored disdain. But the small-fry watch with the fascination of hero worship. And whenever they get the chance, they're quick to try the tricks of the trade on each other.

The cubs never completely grow up. In the final scene I have described above, where the cubs have been abandoned by their mother, a lullaby rocks the young bears to sleep in their "tree-top cradles" despite the commentary's insistence that they *have* achieved adulthood.

Bear Country offers the young spectator a mirror of a part of himself that he is longing to outgrow, at the same time that it encourages him to make fun of the antics of those who will *always* be even sillier than he is. The drawing power of a film like *Bear Country* may thus be seen to lie in this twin capacity to engage the young spectator in a process of identification *with* the young cubs at the same time that it provides the vehicle for him to be able to stand *outside* or, more precisely, *over* the nonhuman, in a relation that cannot help but feel like one of mastery.

"To cast the rest of nature in our image", as the naturalist John Livingston observes--even, I might add, the image of an eight year old child--of course virtually guarantees the supremacy of the *human* species. Livingston writes:

> We judge wildlife species by human standards *in order to find them wanting in human qualities* so that they may be appropriately ranked and filed. Because our standards are specific to us, no other species can possibly meet them. Man is thus the rational measure of all things; the proof is universal, and the perceived hierarchy is firm.[4]

Bear Country is doubly interesting from our present point of view in that such an evolution from infancy to adulthood--or from a magical *identification with* other species to all-knowing *master of* all species --also parallels a progression in the history of wildlife documentaries from Disney, let us say, to David Attenborough, and an informal hierarchy within wildlife programming (where we rank films which appeal to science as *higher than* films which sentimentally pursue human likeness in the nonhuman).

In *Bear Country*, the authority of even the mother bear is ultimately supplanted by the authority of the human male: a rational, disembodied voice able to interpret the actions of both mother and cubs --indeed *all* species--and thus able to claim omniscience. (The absent Father bear only aids this supersession.)

When we 'progress' from speaking *through* animals to speaking *about* animals, we shift from a voice that freely describes the ways in which nature is *like-self*, to a voice which names for us a nature which is more *like-object*.[5] To speak *about* animals, then, is to submit that a neutral state of language exists, from which would flow other, inferior languages, such as the anthropomorphic language of *Bear Country*, or those mediated by individual consciousness. Our inclination then is to accept this seemingly neutral or transparent language as the superior one, and employ it even when we attempt to speak on behalf of, or *for*, the nonhuman.

Vulpes vulpes

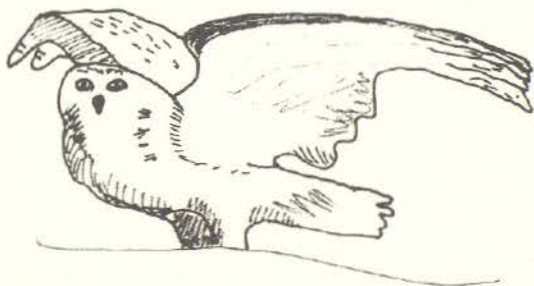
Speaking For Animals

"I think the birds here in Massachusetts disappeared *simply* because of civilization," says an 'expert' in a film on the reintroduction of bald eagles.

"Without such forests, many creatures would *simply* cease to exist," claims Marlin Perkins in an episode of *Wild Kingdom*.[6]

We, as individuals, are innocent, then. As Graeme Turner argues in an uncommon article on wildlife television documentaries, the depredations of humankind become natural forces like flood and fire. "The threat to the species is seen as the mechanism of nature in remorseless operation, something for which no one person can be held responsible, and something which flows from the domination of the species, not the individual."[7] On the rare occasion where specific destructive acts are spoken of, they are inevitably the actions of citizens of 'developing' countries. According to Turner, the species under threat is then offered sympathy and token help: zoos, nature reserves, etc. Turner compares these sorts of ameliorative gestures to a humanist act which, like the taking of refugees, tries to avoid the political act: "dealing with the source of the refugees."[8] The source of the problem here, of course, lies primarily in the conflict between the *needs* of the nonhuman and the *wants* of people. But these are precisely the sorts of issues which are deflected by vague notions of the "fragility" and "interrelatedness of Nature." The voiceover denounces "Man" just enough to pay lipservice to biological conservation, but fails to truly serve conservation by offering us a critique of, for instance, the consumer ethos, scientism, or the notion of progress.

Insofar as it is generally issued from the field of corporate sponsorship, under the pretext of objective knowledge, the voiceover must refrain from identifying the actions of any particular person or group--the documentary could therefore not be trusted. The voiceover must not age; it must be incontestable. What speaks then is what Pascal Bonitzer terms the "*anonymity* of 'public service,' of television, of information in general."[9] It "neither is supposed to be, nor can be, a burning voice," writes Bonitzer of such a voice.[10] A near empty plea vaguely reiterates the great abstractions of "Man" and "Nature." But it is not truly charged with representing the nonhuman in its otherness; on the contrary, it is charged with fixing it. It censors questions of why this destruction occurs (for they are variable and exist only in human consciousness) and concentrates only on what we cannot doubt: the number of square kilometers a certain creature requires, for instance. The frequently used closing image of some threatened creature soaring majestically against an expanse of sky shows *nothing* of the exploitation of the nonhuman world; it is only a glimpse of a world which can exist today *only* on the screen.

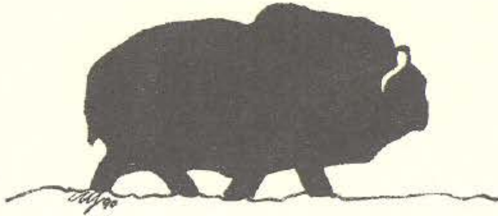


* * *

Looking back at the numerous claims that have been made about the capacity of the wildlife genre to be yoked to the efforts of conservation and its contemporary variant, environmentalism, what I find striking is the enormous consistency in statements spanning over eight decades of unmitigated, incessant environmental destruction. One of the principal tenets of our society, as David Ehrenfeld notes, is the belief that "all problems are soluble"--and, more specifically, all problems are soluble by people.[11] To the long list of humanistic and technocratic assumptions Ehrenfeld cites, clearly we must add the assumption that the *media can be used to solve the ecological crisis*. However, one further observation is in order to temper this blind optimism.

At its core, the yearning to make wildlife documentaries--and to watch and listen to these documentaries--seems to be an urge to *make nature whole*: to disengage ourselves from the whole complex of social and natural relationships, and project a phantasy of unity and even purity onto the natural world.

But this desire leaves us with a number of dilemmas (indeed, environmentalism is *riddled* with such dilemmas). How can we confront an external reality--i.e. speak of environmental destruction--while simultaneously wanting to take refuge in this increasingly illusory unity? How can we take pleasure in the wildlife spectacle without becoming egoistically thrilled with the grandeur of our own sweeping vision? And finally, how can we speak on behalf of those who cannot speak, without erasing their voices, or mastering them? I will briefly address this last question now.



From the stories of Ernest Thompson Seton through to the cinematic tales of a fierce and savage Africa, and the more tame specular entertainment of Disney, virtually all early attempts to bring 'nature' to a *mass* audience have been indicted for their failure of objectivity--for the imposition of human feelings, ambitions, and fears onto the nonhuman world. Indeed, it was often argued that the very success of a popular nature movement hinged on the construction of a *better*--i.e. more objective, *more grown up*--way of seeing the nonhuman, divested of all narrative or poetic elaboration. Doubtless there was merit in the critique of sham natural history, given the banalities that have been levied on the nonhuman world. But doubtless there was also comfort to be found in the drawing of analogies between human and nonhuman worlds--in what the naturalist-writer John Burroughs described nostalgically as the "pretty little anthropomorphic view of things."[12]

Clearly, Disney's *Bear Country* was the material product of an era of filmmaking in which heavy cameras and insensitive film stocks demanded a well-lit, studio-like situation, and therefore trained, or at the very least, captive, animals. In the context of most contemporary work, it appears the relic of a period characterized by the unscrupulous bending of natural facts and rampant anthropomorphisms, despite the film's insistence that "Nature is the dramatist" here.[13] But what are we to make of the fact that these *True-Life Adventures* are oft-recollected with fondness and vividness by biologists and non-specialists alike? Paradoxically, a type of film which is disdainfully rejected by modern sensibilities for being the epitome of falsehood or childishness, would seem to have engendered an empathetic relationship with the nonhuman world of such potency that many specific scenes are often recalled decades after they were originally viewed.[14] In opposing cinematic truth to anthropomorphic representation then--as films which profess to speak *about* nature do--we may be guilty of the same perverse logic as Samuel Scudder was in 1870, when he declared in the annual report of the Boston Society of Natural History that professionals "should 'popularize science'--not by degrading it but by divesting it of its mysteries, by elevating the popular knowledge to our own standard."[15]

Granted, the cinematic apparatus was dreamt of and invented under the shadow of positivism. It supported the premise that nature is knowable, objectifiable, *uncontaminated* by human vision. But *as a language*, the dominant cinema developed in a way that we can only describe as fundamentally anthropomorphic: based on human dimensions of time and space, and the spectator's fascination with his or her likeness on the screen. As such, the imperatives of wildlife documentaries drag us in two contradictory directions: toward scientism and objectivity on the one hand, and toward anthropomorphic representation on the other. However, if we are to respond more adequately to the current ecological crisis--although I am not sure there *is* an adequate response--the challenge would seem to me to lie not in speaking *about* animals (concerned filmmakers often claim what is needed is "better science"), or even in speaking *for* animals, but rather in attempting to subvert the discourses of human mastery, and learning to speak *as* animals.

* * *

I would like to digress for a moment, to close with matters of more practical concern.[16] I have gathered a number of recommendations here, drawing in many instances on the unpublished proceedings of the International Wildlife Film Festival (IWFF), held annually on the University of Montana campus at Missoula. I hesitate to set them forth, for I am afraid they are so small and ultimately what is required is something far greater than *better* representations; but to suggest nothing can be done to speak effectively *as animals* is to shy away from the challenge.

First, I believe we need programs that do not separate the human and nonhuman, and that seek out relationships between the two that are lived, not abstracted. As I have suggested above, a reevaluation of the concept of anthropomorphism would likely lead us to more engaging representations of the nonhuman. When our ideas of the nonhuman are saturated with scientific fact, is it no wonder that we turn to images of alien creatures and Care Bears to mirror

ourselves?

Secondly, we need to hear the *burning* voices of people privileged to live in close contact with the natural world. As the deep ecologist Arne Naess has argued:

> When biologists refrain from using the rich and flavorful language of their own spontaneous experience of all life forms--not only of the spectacularly beautiful but of the mundane and bizarre as well--they support the value nihilism which is implicit in outrageous environmental policies.[17]

If we *must* have celebrities and exemplary witnesses as authorities to guide our mediated explorations of the natural world, then at least let them be selected from those who have written lovingly, knowingly, and intimately of the natural world.

A third suggestion is that we need to hear from completely *other* voices. For instance, in his introduction to an address by Edward Abbey at the IWFF in 1982, Doug Peacock asked the audience to imagine "a Blackfoot film on bison made a hundred years ago."[18] Our continuing fascination with the lone white male in the wilderness suggests that we have yet to come up with a satisfying model for 'nature loving' in our documentaries.

A final suggestion is that we need to have more programs that seek to address some of the *root* causes of the ecological crisis. I offer that a truly radical conservation documentary would construct and counterpose a voice that is simultaneously burning and lucidly argued, intensely personal and political. Of work already produced, I believe the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's 1985 series *A Planet for the Taking* comes the closest to achieving these objectives.

There are, of course, many other possibilities, but to go on at length here with these prescriptions would be to suggest that I believe that there *is* a solution to environmental problems through mediated communication--i.e. through *better* representations, *better* programming, etc.--and that we do not ultimately want to wrap ourselves in a blanket of technology, of which the film and television industry is surely a part.

Notes

I would like to thank Ray Parker for his helpful comments on this paper.

1. Roderick Nash, **Wilderness and the American Mind** (3rd ed.; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), p. xiii.

2. Mary Ann Doane, "The Voice in the Cinema: The Articulation of Body and Space," **Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader**, ed. by Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 341. Originally published in **Yale French Studies**, no. 60 (1980), pp. 33-50.

3. I am assuming a male spectator, for clearly the film, with its focus on two *male* bear cubs, does.

4. John A. Livingston, **The Fallacy of Wildlife Conservation** (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1981), pp. 75-76.

5. Neil Evernden makes this distinction between 'nature-as-self' and 'nature-as-object'. See his "Nature in Industrial Society" in **Cultural Politics in Contemporary America**, ed. by Ian Angus and Sut Jhally (New York: Routledge, 1989), pp. 151-164.

6. The italics in these quotes are an attempt to reflect the emphases of the narrators.

7. Graeme Turner, "Nostalgia for the Wild: Wildlife Documentaries on TV," **Australian Journal of Cultural Studies**, 3:1 (1985), pp. 62-71.

8. Ibid.

9. Pascal Bonitzer, "The Silences of the Voice," **Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader**, p. 325. Originally published in **Cahiers du cinema**, no. 256 (February-March 1975).

10. Ibid.

11. David Ehrenfeld, **The Arrogance of Humanism** (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 16-17.

12. John Burroughs, **The Writings of John Burroughs**, vol. 3 (Boston: Houghton, 1904-23), pp. 225-26. Cited by Bruce Piasecki in "American Literary Environmentalism before Darwin," **Teaching Environmental Literature**, ed. by Frederick O. Waage (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1985), p. 15.

13. The opening of **Bear Country** includes the following title card: "This is one of a series of True-Life Adventures presenting the strange facts about the world we live in. In the making of these films, Nature is the dramatist. There are no fictitious situations or characters."

14. For a discussion of some of the rewards of anthropomorphic relationships with the nonhuman, see Leesa Fawcett, "Anthropomorphism: In The Web of Culture," **Undercurrents**, 1:1 (1989), pp. 14-20.

15. Samuel H. Scudder, "Annual Report of the Boston Society of Natural History for 1869-1870", p. 326. Cited by Sally Gregory Kohlstedt, "From Learned Society to Public Museum: The Boston Society of Natural History," p. 386.

16. This final section was added at the request of the editors of **Undercurrents**.

17. Arne Naess, "Intrinsic Value: Will the Defenders of Nature Please Rise?", **Conservation Biology**, ed. by Michael E. Soule (Sunderland, Mass.: Sinauer Associates, Inc., 1986), p. 512. Cited by Leesa Fawcett in "Anthopomorphism and Children's Relationships with Animals" (unpublished Masters Thesis, Faculty of Environmental Studies, York University, 1988), p. 45.

18. Doug Peacock, International Wildlife Film Festival, April 17, 1982, Missoula, Montana.

Towards An Urban Ecological Consciousness:

EXPERIENCING WILD PLACES IN THE CITY

by Jean-Marc Daigle *

> The chaos of weeds growing in an 'empty' lot is now recognised for its essential, almost intelligent role in the planetary homeostasis....We begin to glimpse something of the uncanny coherence of enveloping nature, a secret meaningfulness too often obscured by our abstractions. This wild proliferation is not a random chaos but a coherent community of forms, an expressive universe that moves according to a diverse logic very different from that logic we attempt to impose.[1]

I. Introduction

The "Green City"[2] has in recent years emerged as an integrated conceptual framework with which to respond locally to the global environmental crisis. In theory, a Green City is "in harmony with ecosystems that support it, and...contains a populace that considers itself a part of the biosphere and acts accordingly."[3] The concept, in short, addresses the need for our society to respectfully build with, rather than impose upon, the land and the natural world.

The restoration, rehabilitation, and preservation of natural diversity and complexity within urban/suburban open spaces[4] is gradually becoming an accepted means to literally "green" the city. To this end, an ecological approach is used in the design and maintenance of open spaces, resulting in what some have called an ecological landscape or "aesthetic."[5] Through this approach, natural processes determine the spirit, character, and appearance of urban open spaces. This, of course, goes against the philosophy of traditional landscaping practices. These employ a strictly maintained, horticulturally defined and designed order which suppresses the land's and people's natural impulses. Werner Nohl reveals the tensions and implicit values that underlie the contrasting approaches to the creation of urban landscapes:

> Open spaces that are presented as valuable and unalterable works of art will always remain somehow alien... [E]nvironments in which we do not allow nature to intervene continuously may express the "genus architecti," but the genus loci will certainly be absent. It is the interplay between users and natural processes that gives a place its special character. Together, they successfully produce an impression of the totality of nature in urban open spaces.[6]

A natural urban open space, free to evolve outside of human domination and manipulation, aquires a quality that transcends appearances. It becomes wild. As such, wild places are not merely aesthetic adjuncts to the human and humanized urban environment; they are intrinsically valuable expressions of the natural world that so often disappear beneath the pavement and beyond our consciousness. Wild urban places offer people the opportunity to experience nature within the context of their own lives, in proximity of their homes, rather than in special faraway places. A wild place within the city may be sensed or experienced as an expression of the natural world which, in turn, envelops the city. Through such encounters, we begin to acquire insights into our existence in the natural world where we must learn to dwell.

It has been suggested that the preservation of wild places in the context of the Green City represents one means of undertaking the "process of reconciliation between humans and nature."[7] In this paper, I explore this possibility and seek to develop a philosophical rationale for creating wild places in the city. The discussion emerges from my own reflections and experiences as a landscape architect and environmental "thinker" and educator involved in a project

* Jean-Marc Daigle is a graduate student at the Faculty of Environmental Studies, York University, and is currently working with Donna Havinga on the Green Campus Project. He lives on the 16th floor of a crumbling apartment tower in Toronto. This paper is based on research that was partially funded by a Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation scholarship.

oriented towards the preservation of a wild place in the City of North York, Ontario.

II. Towards an Ecological Consciousness

The global ecological crisis is, I think, essentially a crisis of consciousness underlying present human/nature relations. Within our Western culture we have philosophically, morally and consciously extricated ourselves from nature. We perceive ourselves as a separate and dominant species. Armed with our objective, "value free" scientific view of the world, nature is rationalized so that "it is now possible to regard the world as a composite of neutral material."[8] This view represents a conscious denial of nature's eternal presence as "a substantial surrounding reality, ...that is palpable as well as mystical, creative, life-producing, and life-sustaining."[9]

From our pedestal, the natural world becomes but a collection of objects, a storehouse of resources and space needed for the development of a "progressive", humanized world. Consequently, we no longer perceive ourselves as dwelling in a whole, living, interconnected and natural world. As John Livingston suggests, we have lost our sense of place in nature:

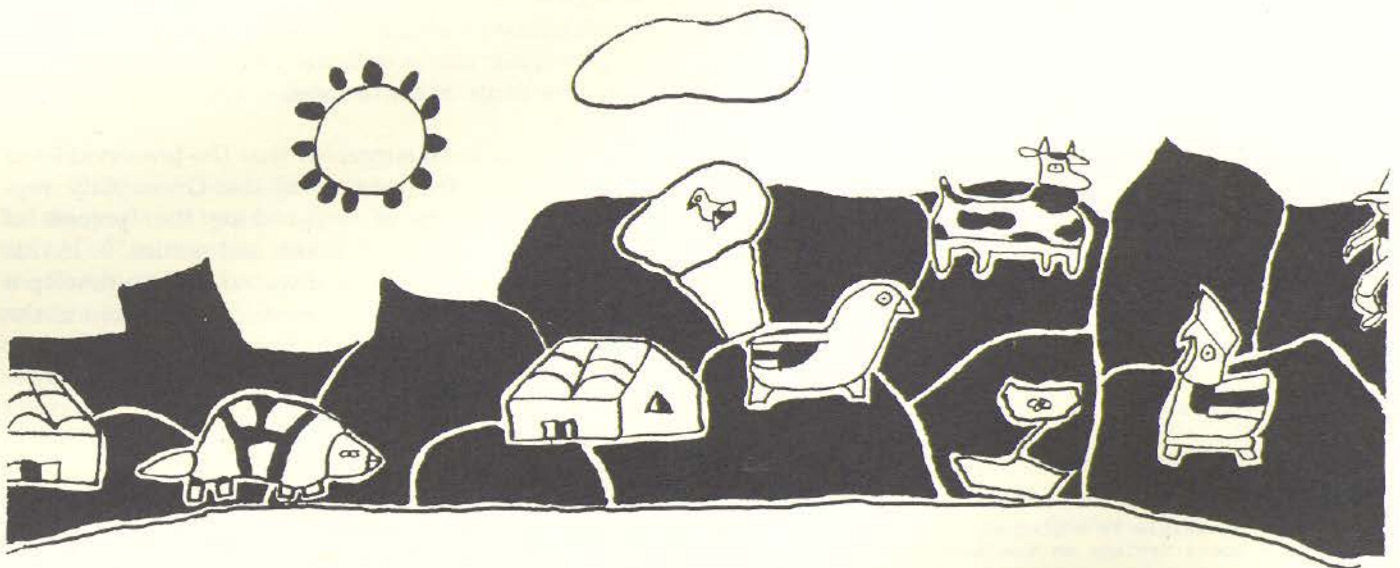
> [O]ur sense of belonging in nature, our sense of a place in nature, has been utterly destroyed...having wilfully abdicated our place in the life process, we can no longer remember that "place" means "belonging", and that belonging is what living is all about.[10]

The deleterious effects of our loss of place are now clearly evidenced in the many manifestations of environmental degradation. Clearly, our survival, and that of all other life forms, now depends on our ability to collectively move towards a more careful, respectful, and meaningful existence on the land and in nature. This may be possible through the cultivation of "an ecological consciousness."[11]

At the core of an ecological consciousness lies a profound, empathetic and spiritual sensitivity to the natural world in which we are immersed. The cultivation of an ecological consciousness is a process of,

> ...becoming more aware of the actuality of rocks, wolves, trees, and rivers --the cultivation of the insight that everything is connected....It is learning to be more receptive, trusting, holistic in perception, and is grounded in a vision of non-exploitive science and technology.[12]

An ecological consciousness is attuned to the natural rhythms, cycles and processes of the land and "the continuum of Nature, and...only when we are consciously aware of this shared continuum and actively engaged in its processes can we attain all that life has to offer to our existence."[13] This heightened awareness allows us to exist in, rather than apart



from or above, nature, and we become "'plain citizen[s]' of the biosphere, not its conqueror[s] or manager[s]."[14] Through the process of acquiring an ecological consciousness, we undertake the long journey back to our place in nature.

As our sense of place in nature grows, it becomes possible to structure a mode of dwelling grounded in a sensitive, caring, and careful existence. In what he calls the "Human Homecoming", Joseph Grange defines this mode of dwelling as,

> ...an essential and authentic way of being human. That way is an existence that opens itself to nature rather than aggressively reconstructing it according to personal ends. [W]e seek to dwell so that we can move nearer to that which resides hidden at the center of our selves: *being itself which speaks to us through the hiddenness of earth and the openness of world.*
>
> To come home is therefore to undertake a way of relating to nature that allows nature to show itself to us and that encourages us to abide and take up residence in that meaning. Home is the concernful region where earth, body and the world *work* to gather into nearness that which requires our preserving care. This is the journey unto care that every human being must undertake.[15] [author's emphasis]

The Urban Dilemma

An ecological consciousness is grounded in a lived awareness of the natural world as an enveloping totality. Nature is not merely encountered intellectually, as an abstract idea, but empathetically, as a subject--a living, interconnected and interdependent whole. Within cities, it is difficult to know nature in this way. The city is generally depicted as an entirely human entity separate from and void of nature. For example, Jerry Mander paints a rather bleak picture of the city in his discussion on the "walling of awareness":

> [W]hen we live in cities, no experience is directly between us and the planet. Virtually all experience is mediated in some way. Concrete covers whatever would grow from the ground. Buildings block the natural vistas. The water we drink comes from a faucet, not from a stream or the sky. All foliage has been confined by human considerations and redesigned according to human tastes. There are no wild animals, there are no rocky terrains, there is no cycle of bloom and decline. There is not even night and day.[16]

Mander's description of our mediated experiences within urban environments suggests that the city is not likely to inspire a shift towards an ecological consciousness. This very real and disturbing possibility creates the urban dilemma: urban dwellers, who are most strongly encouraged by the popular media and other institutions to "care" for the "environment", are least likely to conceptualize the "environment" as whole nature and hence a subject worthy of care.[17]

Nature is indeed obscured and suppressed by the humanized urban world. Yet, to believe that nature can be known only outside of the city, in entirely natural environments or in wilderness, fuels the misconception that cities exist outside of nature. Nature can, and often does manifest itself in the city, in those untended places so often dismissed as vacant, empty, undeveloped, or unused, where wildness has rooted.

Here, in a moment of willingness and openness, nature can be experienced in its totality. If the city dweller is to develop a care and concern for nature through the cultivation of an ecological consciousness, such experiences must be encouraged. But first, the person must learn to see and know nature in all of its manifestations, in commonplace and seemingly insignificant embodiments.

III. Knowing Nature

Within our culture, nature has become an abstract concept, too often associated only with those special, exemplary embodiments that seem to exist only outside of the city and the human influence. Nature, known this way, is an object, the sum of its objects.

From this perspective, we quantitatively and qualitatively evaluate natural landscapes according to their specialness on the basis of objective, scientific,

aesthetic, geological or other criteria. For example, in the Province of Ontario, "natural areas" worthy of preservation are labelled "Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest", and are defined as,

> ...environmentally sensitive or significant areas...that have been chosen by the Ministry of Natural Resources as most significant from a provincial perspective....In a practical sense, natural areas are usually good examples of vegetation communities or wildlife habitat, or areas where one or more rare species or geologically significant landform features of some kind are found.[18]

We must indeed preserve such areas, for they are powerful and evocative reminders of the natural world and the life-force. We must not, however, take the totality of nature to be wholly contained within the objective qualities of its most significant embodiments, nor should we deny other, seemingly less significant manifestations their intrinsic worth.

Unfortunately, I fear that many urban people who visit conservation areas will mistakenly conceptualize nature as the objective contents of these special, rare, or unique places. Nature will be seen and conceived as objects on the landscape rather than experienced as a whole, enveloping totality that transcends the arbitrary boundaries of the conservation area. These people will return to the city where, in the absence of these specially designated landscapes, nature will be out of sight and, I presume, out of consciousness. Known solely through its objective qualities, nature is thus denied its wholeness as the context for our existence.

In order to see and know nature whole, we begin by exchanging our role as passive, objective landscape viewers for a subjective and participatory mode of encounter. Our feelings, emotions, impressions, and insights become as relevant and important as the objective qualities which elicit these responses.

By looking/experiencing beyond the superficial objective, physical qualities of a wild landscape's features, we begin to perceive wildness. It is this expression of the life-force that flows through and beyond the landscape, linking the past with the future through the present.

A natural landscape need not be special, unique, or rare to elicit such a sensory and conscious awareness of nature. While wilderness areas are indeed magnificent, they are of the same essence which inspires a "weed" to set roots in pavement--both are of the same life-force. To know the weed this way, as an embodiment of the totality of nature, we cannot simply encounter it as a meaningless, troublesome object; we must experience it as a subject, not merely as it meets the eye, but as it touches the soul.[19]

The Experience of Nature as Subject

From within contemporary Western culture, the natural world is known as a collection of economic, scientific, aesthetic or recreational resources whose value and potential is defined solely by human needs and preferences. In the process, we have, as Evernden puts it, transformed "the planet from a world of living subjects to one of extended matter, passive porridge to be rearranged by human dictate."[20] John Fowles suggests that this need to derive some form of use or "personal yield" from these resources contributes to our alienation from nature:

> [W]e shall never fully understand nature (or ourselves), and certainly never respect it, until we disassociate the wild from the notion of usability. For it is the general uselessness of so much of nature that lies at the root of our ancient hostility and indifference to it.[21]

This conscious denial of nature's subjectivity and intrinsic worth is a consequence of the tendency to base our understanding of nature upon scientific abstraction and the study of nature's objective qualities. The foundations for this empirical view of the natural world, Evernden suggests, lie in "Galileo's demand that nature be known through mathematics rather than merely through human experience and sensation."[22] We must, in essence, emotionally extirpate ourselves from nature in order to study, understand, and use it.

Thus removed from, and insensitive to, nature's subjects, we are hard pressed to nurture a caring and respectful attitude towards the natural world. As geographer Allen Carlson suggests, "the landscape contains many objects that have determinate forms, [and] if the attention is directed specifically to them, we no longer have what...is called the love of nature."[23]

We can begin to care for and love nature only when we become aware of ourselves as part of its totality. Nature is not just "out there" in the objective landscape; nature, in its essence, resides within us. After all, we and the natural world are of the same, living stuff. This insight into our own nature becomes possible when we can, in moments of clarity and openness, "strip our consciousness of its rational presuppositions,"[24] so that we may begin,

> ...to see the interrelations that span and connect human being and nature. We are not "outsiders" looking in, nor are we intellectual voyeurs "peeping" at nature through our analytic tools. We are first of all being human--an activity that involves intimacy with nature since we, too, are natural.[25]

Through subjective experiences as insiders, we begin to know the natural world as the context of our existence, wherein we may dwell in place. Known this way, nature becomes a subject of our care and respect.

In a subjective experience, we see beyond our "rational presuppositions." We encounter the world as it presents itself to us in our own experiences. This, of course, is in direct contrast to the present situation where we "no longer trust personal observation, even of the self-evident, until it is confirmed by scientific or technological institutions."[26] The subjective experience is entirely personal: "[T]he person works to discover the world for himself [sic], to meet it authentically: his [sic] aim is to see the world as it is in his [sic] own fashion--not as other people tell him [sic] it is."[27]

A subjective experience is characterized by moments of "heightened contact" wherein the person's conscious attention and awareness is directed entirely towards the world at hand. In such moments,

> ...the person feels a serenity of mood and a vividness of presence; his [sic] awareness of himself [sic] is heightened, and at the same time, the external world seems more real.[28]

Such instances of heightened awareness and clarity of insight have been, over the ages, the stuff of poetic imagination for people seeking truth and meaning through environmental encounters. In the subjective experience, a person can develop "a deep appreciation of the unique qualities of landscapes, although achieving its fullest possibilities requires creative effort and the exercise of imagination."[29]

In subjective experiences of nature, the objective landscape is transformed. We become aware of the natural world as a place of other beings' experiences. As momentary insiders in this other world of natural places and rhythms, we begin to understand something of our own nature. Such insights are not, in and of themselves, derived simply from our admiration of natural things; they emerge from a profound awareness of the life-force that underlies nature's embodiments and the totality of the natural world.

Wilderness, Wildness, and the Life-force

The life-force is an essence and therefore not directly seen in the landscape, nor is it entirely contained in or by natural objects. Rather, it is that which gives rise to, and hence underlies, all that is naturally manifested and embodied, including ourselves. The life-force is that which unifies the whole natural world and is perhaps best understood as the mystery of nature, life and the universe.

Through the rise of the sciences, the life-force has been denied its mystical and mythical meaning. It has been explained away and dismissed as those natural processes that allow the natural world, as a clockwork mechanism, to unwind. This perpetuates a narrow conception and understanding of nature. From a scientific point of view, the life-force is irrelevant, and is obscured by our obsession with objects. The life-force, as a unifying principle, reappears only when we experience the natural world's wildness.

Wildness, here, must not be confused with wilderness. A wilderness is a landscape in which nature fully embodies and expresses itself, as "a complex of natural relationships where plants, animals, and the land collaborate to fulfill their environments."[30] A true wilderness, if there remains such a thing, exists only in the absence of any human imprint upon the land. In the absence of true wilderness, there remains only degrees of wilderness. As Roderick Nash, in **Wilderness and the American Mind** suggests, "the presence of an occasional beer can, cabin, or even road would not disqualify an area but only move it more slightly toward the civilized pole."[31] Wildness, on the other hand, flows through, between and beyond the wilderness landscape and its place-bound beings, as an expression of life and the life-force.

In an experience of wilderness as a subject, the natural world becomes something other than a lifeless, meaningless and intrinsically purposeless resource warehouse. The wilderness's wildness expresses an intrinsic sense of purpose independent from, and essentially indifferent to human will and intent. Here, enveloped by wildness and wilderness, we become aware of the "transhuman otherness of the world"[32] as a manifestation of the life-force and the wholeness of nature.

Wildness is not, however, wholly contained within wilderness landscapes or in officially ordained natural areas. In subjective experiences of the world, wildness transcends all boundaries, and becomes manifested in the enveloping totality of the natural world. Even within the staunchest of urban environments, wildness manifests itself. Harvey Taylor, in his poem "Full Circle", shares his insights on the wildness of the world:

The ground was scraped
barely level
by dull bulldozer blades,
then covered with concrete
asphalt, and
cement,
as if the life-force could be
held down by
sidewalks,
patios
backroads,
driveways, and
parking lots.

But,
little shoots break through,
tiny cracks widen,
air-borne seeds make themselves at home,
tree roots heave slabs aside.

The world insists on being wild.[33]

Wildness captivates the soul only when our objective mode of knowing and evaluating a natural thing, as a weed, is replaced by our subjective sense of it, as a living, subjective being. Taylor's experience renders invalid Mander's assertion that "when we live in cities, no experience is directly between us and the planet."[34] In moments of heightened contact, the totality of nature reveals itself in all manifestations of wildness.

The city exists in a natural world imbued with wildness and the life-force. Thus, in the city's forgotten, undeveloped, or purposely untended landscapes, wildness once again prevails. These vacant spaces become wild places. Though so often rendered insignificant or undesirable by our aesthetic tastes, they are in fact rich, interrelated and interdependent places in which plant, animal and insect communities dwell. Wild places, in and of themselves, are literal embodiments of a life-force independent from human will or intent. When juxtaposed against the surrounding city, they encapsulate the reality of an "other" universe of other beings' existences and experiences. As Fowles suggests, these wild places allow us "a constantly repeated awareness of the mysterious other universe of nature....A love, or at least a toleration, of this other universe must reenter the urban experience."[35]

Through our subjective experiences of urban wild places, we can begin to understand something of our own nature. In those moments of clarity and heightened awareness this "other" world is trans-

formed into an extension of self. In this "person-world mergence,...the person feels joined and akin to the world."[36]

IV. Wild Places And Environmental Education

Environmental educators who seek to inspire a shift towards an ecological consciousness should recognize the importance of wild urban places as a context for the experience of nature and environmental learning. This conclusion is drawn from two separate streams of thought within the field of environmental education and the study of nature: the importance of subjective experiences of the natural world, and the need to undertake the education process from within our own places.

Environmental educators are gradually awakening to the importance of the subjective experience as a valid means to know nature. In a recent environmental education report entitled **Breaking the Barriers: Linking Children With Nature**, the value of such encounters is clearly stressed:

> To have a relationship with nature, young children must have meaningful personal experiences with natural elements and other species. These interactions should evoke a sense of wonder, magic, and connection with the world, as well as a feeling of kinship and interrelation with other beings. The intensity of the relationship, physically, emotionally, and mentally, is the foundation for caring for the world and the basis for responsible action.[37]

The report goes on to note that such encounters with the natural world should be encouraged by giving children ample opportunities to experience natural environments. Children who live in urban areas need "ready access to natural settings where they can explore and experience other life forms."[38]

Traditionally, the natural settings for such experiences are located outside the city, in environmental education centres. Jacqui Stearn, in an article titled "Whatever is Environmental Education Coming to?" calls into question this practise of countryside education. She reveals a recent evolution in environmental education towards "working from where people are," as,

> ...a reaction to mere field trips to those separate, special places....It is not that field trips are actually wrong, but the dissociation of learning that takes place there, from the home--frequently urban--experience, which is.[39]

In the synthesis of these two concepts, I have drawn the conclusion that environmental educators should encourage those subjective experiences within the context of the city. Through encounters with wildness in our neighborhoods and backyards we can begin to dispel the illusion that nature exists only out there, in those remote and spectacular landscapes seen on TV, or in conservation areas. In urban wild places, our lived-experiences extend into the natural world, and we begin to know nature as an enveloping totality.

V. Case Study: The Green Campus Project

In the present context of urban development, the will to preserve and restore wild places is somewhat lacking. Whereas the naturalist or environmental educator may perceive the totality of nature in a wild place, the planner or developer, I fear, sees only vacant open space and hefty economic returns. In the context of the Green City, our development values must clearly be reconsidered.

The Green Campus Project calls into question some of these existing values. The project, devoted to the preservation of a landscape of wild places on the York University Campus, reflects our attempts to inject some "ecological sensibility"[40] into current university planning and development practices. Along with the preservation proposals, we have also recommended that an inner city environmental education and learning centre be created within this landscape. In the remainder of this paper, I will discuss the Green Campus Project in the context of these two proposals.

The York Campus: Revealing a Hidden Landscape

York University sits on a 600 acre tract of mostly undeveloped land in the City of North York, on the outskirts of Metropolitan Toronto, Canada's fastest growing urban area. With over 450 acres of "open space," the land, given its urban context, is a valuable economic resource. In order to unlock its vast economic potential, a new campus development masterplan was recently unveiled. If developed as recommended, the existing campus landscape will be transformed from "open space" to urban space.

A "landscape resource" inventory was conducted prior to the preparation of the masterplan.[41] This document and its maps supposedly identify the land's existing natural features so that they may be incorporated into the masterplan.

The document directs our attention to four mature woodlots covering approximately 15 acres of land. These woodlots should be preserved, the document suggests, for their aesthetic appeal, as a "gateway:" They will "create a natural and symbolic eastern entrance to the Campus."[42] Aside from the woodlots, the inventory reveals little else of the landscape, characterizing the remaining 400 or so acres of undeveloped land as undifferentiated space, as "unused open field."[43] This economically biased analysis of the land becomes a licence to develop it, as recommended by the masterplan.[44]

Unfortunately, the inventory failed to reveal York's "hidden landscape." As a result, the masterplan, if implemented as proposed, will lead to the eradication of some 50 acres of untended pioneer homesteads and farmland, gone wild. Though not a wilderness, the hidden landscape is imbued with wildness, and our sense of that wildness is accentuated through its juxtaposition against the urban realm.

Where farmers once cleared and subdued the land, there are now meadows positively bristling with the energy of flowers, insects and birds. In some fields, young trees have rooted themselves, in the now untilled soil. A number of untended and overgrown remnants of orchards continue to bear plentiful fruit. Forgotten and now politically irrelevant hedgerows tell stories of past land divisions; though planted by humans, they are now very much a part of nature's continuum. Nestled among the trees, old house and barn foundations, too, have gone wild as they crumble under the passage of time; the spaces between their walls are now home to elm trees and sumac.

Though not threatened by development, even the favoured woodlots are a part of the hidden landscape. Viewed from our cars, the woodlots, as gateways to the campus, remain obscure and meaningless things on the aesthetic landscape. Only when we experience them from within do we know them differently, as wild, living places. Here, amidst aged and majestic trees and their offspring, we enter an "other" world of nature's rhythms, smells, sounds and sensations, a world of other beings' places.

From an official, "provincial" perspective, the hidden landscape in an aesthetic or scientific sense, is not particularly significant: there are no prominent geographical features, nor is the land inhabited by any rare or unusual plant or animal species. But there is wildness in which we can learn to dwell.

The preservation of the hidden landscape and its inherent wildness underlies our efforts in the Green Campus Project. We have been working with the campus planners to incorporate the hidden landscape into the development masterplan. But the project is much more than an exercise in planning and greening; there is also a strong educational component in our work. As the site for a proposed ecological education and learning centre, the hidden landscape would provide an experiential basis for ecological literacy and the cultivation of an urban ecological consciousness.

The need for such a place within the city became abundantly clear to me on a recent visit to the Mono Cliffs Outdoor Education Centre. Located in a conservation area some 80 kilometres outside of the city, this facility caters to children who attend schools in North York. At Mono Cliffs, the value of subjective experiences of nature is clearly recognized; children are encouraged to encounter the naturalized farmland setting as they will, in their own way.

During my stay at the Centre, I was startled to learn that the children in attendance were from the Driftwood Public School, which is located on the western boundary of the York Campus, directly adjacent to the hidden landscape. While educators are willing to send 200 children out to the country to learn about nature, they are oblivious to its presence in their own backyard. These children, as a result, receive mixed messages. Nature encountered in countryside landscapes is somehow more valuable than that which is manifested in the city. We preach preservation and conservation to our children, and yet, in the case of the hidden landscape, we also propose to eradicate nature that manifests itself in the midst of our places. In the resulting confusion, the child, I fear, will fail to understand nature as an enveloping totality; nature, the child learns, is known according to its parts, and valued only in those special landscapes. This schism of values sustains the urban dilemma.

If we are to move towards the Green City and an urban ecological consciousness, we must find ways to resolve this dilemma. It will begin with a willingness to preserve urban wild places. While we all share responsibility in this undertaking, it is also clear that environmental educators and planners have

to work together towards a common vision for the city and our relationship to the natural world. Through the Green Campus Project we have hopefully initiated that process of co-operation.

Notes

1. David Abram, "The Perceptual Implications of Gaia," **The Ecologist**, 15:3 (1985), p. 98.

2. For a British perspective on the Green City Movement, see: David Nicholson-Lord, **The Greening of the Cities** (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987); for a Canadian perspective, see **City Magazine**, 11:1 (1989), which is devoted entirely to the Canadian Green City Movement.

3. Jim Savage, "Greening the City", **Probe Post**, 9:1 (1987), p. 22.

4. Open space, in the context of this discussion, includes: parkland, playgrounds, school yards, open areas around buildings, and undeveloped land.

5. See, for example: A.D. Bradshaw, and J.F. Handley, "An Ecological Approach to Landscape Design," **Landscape Design**, 138 May (1982), pp 30-34; O.D. Manning, "New Directions 3: Designing for Man and Nature", **Landscape Design**, 140:November (1982), pp. 30-32. Other authors incorporate social processes with natural processes in their discussions on the ecological aesthetic. See, for example, Anne Whinston Spirn, "The Poetics of City and Nature:Towards an Aesthetic for Urban Design", and Jusuck Koh, "An Ecological Aesthetic", in **Landscape Journal**, 7:2 (1988).

6. Werner Nohl, "Open Space in Cities: Inventing a New Esthetic," **Landscape**, 28:2 (1985), pp. 39-40.

7. Savage, p. 25.

8. Neil Evernden, **The Natural Alien**, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), p. 19.

9. J. Stan Rowe, "What on Earth is Environment?", **The Trumpeter**, 6:4 (1989), p. 123.

10. John A. Livingston, **The Fallacy of Wildlife Conservation**, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1981), pp. 84-85.

11. The cultivation of an ecological consciousness is one of the fundamental principles underlying a deep ecological and critical environmental perspective on our environmental problems. The ideas have been, and continue to be explored in a number of publications, including: Bill Devall and George Sessions, **Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered**, (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith Books, 1985), and **The Trumpeter**, a journal "dedicated to the exploration of and contributions to a new ecological consciousness."

12. Devall and Sessions, **Deep Ecology**, p. 8.

13. Vern Weber, "The Secularization of Consciousness and the Artificial Environment", **The Trumpeter**, 5:4 (1988), p. 153.

14. Bill Devall, as quoted in Evernden, **The Natural Alien**, p. 29.

15. Joseph Grange, "On the Way toward Foundational Ecology", **Soundings**, 60:1 (1977), p. 148.

16. Jerry Mander, **Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television**, (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1978), pp. 55-56.

17. Rowe, in "What on Earth is Environment?", identifies the confusion surrounding the word "environment", and suggests that we must come to concieve environment as "something real and substantial, as the enveloping four-dimensional Ecosphere." p. 126.

18. Stewart G. Hilts, et al., **Islands of Green: Natural Heritage Protection in Ontario**, (Toronto: Ontario Heritage Foundation, 1986), p. 15.

19. This is a variation on John Ruskin's suggestion that "You do not see with the lens of the eye; you see through and by means of that, but you see with the soul of the eye", as quoted by Edward Relph in "To See with the Soul of the Eye", **Landscape**, 23:1 (1979), p. 28.

20. Neil Evernden, "The Ambiguous Landscape", **The Geographical Review**, 71:2 (1981), p. 149.

21. John Fowles, "Seeing Nature Whole", **Harpers**, 259:1554 (1979), p. 54.

22. Evernden, "The Ambiguous Landscape", p. 149.

23. Allen Carlson, "Appreciation and the Natural Environment", **The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism**, 37:3 (1979)

24. Grange, "On the Way toward Foundational Ecology", p. 144.

25. Ibid.

26. Mander, **Four Arguments for the Elimination Of Television**, p. 54.

27. David Seamon, **A Geography of the Lifeworld: Movement, Rest, and Encounter**, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), p. 124.

28. Ibid., p. 111.

29. Edward Relph, "To See with the Soul of the Eye", p. 28.

30. Joseph Meeker, "Wisdom and Wilderness", **Landscape**, 25:1 (1981), p. 16.

31. Roderick Nash, **Wilderness and the American Mind**, (New Haven, Con., Yale University Press, 1967) p. 7.

32. Meeker, "Wisdom and Wilderness", p. 16.

33. Harvey Taylor, "Full Circle", **The Trumpeter**, 6:1 (1989), p. 35.

34. Mander, **Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television**, p. 55.

35. John Fowles, "Weeds, Bugs, and Americans", **Sports Illustrated**, December, 1970, p. 102.

36. Seamon, **A Geography of the Lifeworld**, p. 124.

37. The Roger Tory Peterson Institute of Natural History, **Breaking the Barriers: Linking Children and Nature**, (New York, RTPI, 1989), p. 5.

38. Ibid., p. 6.

39. Jacqui Stearn, "Whatever is Environmental Education coming to?", **Urban Wildlife**, 2:1 (1988), p. 21.

40. The phrase "ecological sensibility" is used by John Rodman in his article "Four Forms of Ecological Consciousness Reconsidered" in **Ethics and the Environment** eds. Donald Scherer and Thomas Attig, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1985). In the context of our work, we have used the term in expressing to university administrators the need to incorporate ecological knowledge and sensitivity in land development practices.

41. **York Campus Master Plan: Landscape Resources**, p. 3, fig. 3.

42. Ibid., p. 12.

43. Ibid., p. 8.

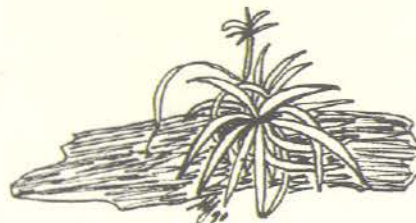
44. **York Campus Master Plan: Structure Plan**, p. 3, pp. 19-20.

Poetry

by Louise Fabiani and Isabella Colalillo Katz *

MANIFESTATION

Where there is an open door
I will walk through it,
to find that place uncontained,
that space undefined
    by walls or floors or ceilings - the only border
made by the limits of my own skull.



My feet - unshod
by pavement - will know where to tread:
on fallen twigs and needles,
avoiding mouse and flower and spider web,
even if eyes are closed
to allow smell and hearing to savor,
to guide most wisely and willingly
as if following a map
    woven into the genetic code.

And there you will find gods:
hearts pulsing with every
murmur and thump and flutter,
blood coursing red and green through miles of vessels,
breath coming the howling, moaning wind
    and the sighs of pine boughs.

Then I will let all this wrap around me,
wrap me into it,
and open myself around it, my hands
ever caressing tenderly what invisible
corporeal form I give it, knowing
its infinite topography
    as well as a lover's.

And, when at last I need to rest,
I shall lie
with my ear to the ground.

L.F.

TO DANTE FROM 1981

We are oft
without centre
computerized
in the medulla oblongata of living
suffering poets of life...

What are the stars
but light?
Oneiric waves of eternal flowing;

to our eyes
a great becoming among
Beings
of wisdom.

The
Universe
unfolding
in rose
petals
of Light.

I.C.K.

*Louise Fabiani is in the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York University, where she concentrates on environmental thought, particularly cultural attitudes toward nature. Drawing and poetry since childhood, she now investigates the role of symbols and myth in 'nature art'.
Isabella Colalillo Katz is a graduate student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

ONE AFTERNOON IN THE ORINOCCO BASIN

No eye can penetrate
the green dark but the mind
ventures, a road forms;
the road welcomes machines, fire,
and, within hours, there is enough clearing
for a million human eyes
to see
nothing.

The vertical systems - an eon of adaptation -
are brought to earth, destroying
the "cancer cures," the "new crops," the "contra-
ceptives;" through the sudden , yellow light they tumble
into a more permanent darkness. We mourn
but our loss: the collector's regret at the trophy unknown,
the mystery unsolved. The phenomenon of life
is the ultimate abstraction.

Through complexity, these lives co-evolved.
Through stupidity, they cease existence,
rotting quickly under the blind eye of the sun,
glare unfiltered by the emerald canopy,
the anchored clouds. To dust
they return - fertilizer
for grazing meat.

In the held-breath silence of destruction's wake,
a voice emerges: a creature sings its own elegy:

My nose searches the air
for the scent image of my mate,
but she is covered in smoke. My cries
echo across the hollow forest. She is long gone -
a shard of shattered jewel,
a thread from the tattered tapestry.
My seeds will die - lonely - within me.
Our children are sawdust.
Our entire species
is me.

L.F.

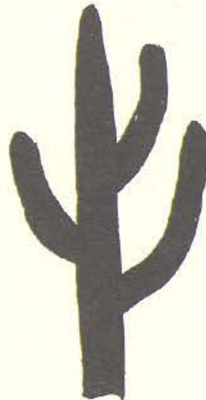
ENLIGHTENMENT

Profusely
confused
I reach to the afternoon
wind.
Time clenched
between my teeth,
music
rises
to syllabus of tears.

Cleaning day arrives.

Laughter melts
the face of fear.
Tourbillion of touching
known.
Enlightenment comes
lickety split.

I.C.K.



The Intertwining Wildness Of Flesh-Child Becoming

by Paul Nonnekes *

Let us explore two central facts of the child's experience: first, that it has a *body* and second, that it exists on the *earth*. Let us do so with the help of a third term, called the *flesh*, which can mediate between these two experiences. Let us further explore the nature of the interaction between earth, body and flesh by way of the concept of *intertwining* calling attention to a constant interpresencing of elements, and also by way of the concept of *wildness* calling attention to an absence of artificially imposed boundaries.

The Problem of Development

The child becomes in an anti-development because its becoming is *of* the flesh.[1] Development is a stagist drama worked out within the illusions of civilized unremembering, a severe trope of forgetfulness born out of the fear of death and absence, a fear of mortality. In beginning a journey of flesh envelopment, the child has no need for the phallocentric sky-gods of society, that vast simulation of reproductions of reproductions which synchronically slides from reified signifier to reified signifier only to fold back on itself in an eternal recurrence of the same, a movement that generates the domination of Symbolic Law.[2] No denigration of its fleshly existence compels the child to seek completion within the prison-house of civilized pedagogy. Anti-pedagogy pervades the child's being, for pedagogy is a poison of anti-flesh in its rise above the flesh into the ordered heaven of the Symbolic Law, the always ever structuring.

The child laughs in remembrance of the phallocentric rise of the Symbolic Law wrapped in the loins of the ever so boring monologue and fixity of forgetfulness. With an imageless hearty bellow, the child chases away the bad dream of fixed space-time co-ordinates, the up-down, rise-fall, vertical-horizontal quag-mire of disciplined ego adaptation. These co-ordinates are not stabilizing concepts, productive of knowing, but fetishized horrors of order, a reified hardening of perception into the staticized mannequins of culture.

The child dreams its own dreams and not the father's (the fearful, punitive super-ego) within the *wildness* of becoming, not wildness as chaos, but a wildness generating stability through diversity, complexity and the absence of fixed, completing limits, in this way circumventing the dictates of power/order. It is fully body-flesh, body-earth, flesh-earth, earth-body-flesh, as a movement, not in linear time and homogenous space, but within the interstices of the wild itself, an ecstatic dance of forms that lies both within and beyond language.

These forms are not organs. The wild flesh-child is anti-organ. Organs are an illusory trope of medicalized practice designed to inflict a disciplined pain on the wild flesh of the child. Opposed to all organicity, the ecstatic forms of the flesh-body of the child reach out as innumerous invisible threads to the flesh of the world, as auras of sensibility, ingathering and outgathering in a pulsion of growth that is neither an inside nor an outside, but an *intertwining*.[3] The intertwining flesh is the to and fro space of transition, the creative realm of paradox.

Thought of as stability and completion by its own praisers, civilization instead constitutes a burden of image-structure on the wild flesh-child. With a pompous pretence, civilization seeks to impose a divisory schema on the flesh, a severe either/or: either you submit to order in the form of civilized pedagogy or you will be left in a destructive, unproductive chaos of perverse, instinctual passions. Here, the Hobbesian formulation of the problem of order[4] has made thinkable state-making as a construction of acceptable boundaries, boundaries not just geographical, but boundaries of the flesh itself, where the subject as citizen becomes the effect of a fateful ordering, a law and órder-bound processional constitutive of what our omnipresent social therapists like to call ego-strength.

* Paul Nonnekes is a PhD Canditate in the Sociology Department at York University. He is presently nearing completion of a dissertation on children's play. His interests include the many dimensions of the child's experience of body and earth especially as they concern the socially and politically charged issues of family, gender and sexuality.

The wild flesh-child, as a being with no abstractly simulated boundaries, is rendered a pathology by this power/order processional of state-making. We observe an ascension or a falling upward into a heaven-bound hegemonic space. This in turn generates a fear of the ever-free, ever-creative rising descent of spirit into the gay and festive carnival of dancing, devilish flesh. Within this movement, our liberal state-makers wear the fateful masks of pedagogues and therapists, moralizing over the anti-social destructiveness of the flesh.

The Figuration of Meaning

The new-born flesh-child is a fully *graced* being. As we approach this child what is required of us is a respect not unlike a divine reverence, for we encounter here in a most fundamental and primordial way the mystery of Being, a mystery which does not call out from us the mastery of explanation but a measure of dignity in our understanding. With its first breath, a *profane* journey has begun for the flesh-child, a journey in which an individualized human world arises in growth from within the intertwining, interpresencing of the flesh as home, ground, earth, a distinctively concentrated creative moment of the flesh in its quest for expression in the wild and free variety of individuality.

The child is the flesh; the flesh is the child. The child loves the flesh; the flesh loves the child. The child abides in the flesh as a *thankful* being. Its project of becoming is a *holy* project. As Rudolf Steiner reminds us: "The child is given up to its environment and lives in the external world in reverence and prayerful devotion. . . .the blood circulation, breathing and nourishment process are praying to the environment."[5]

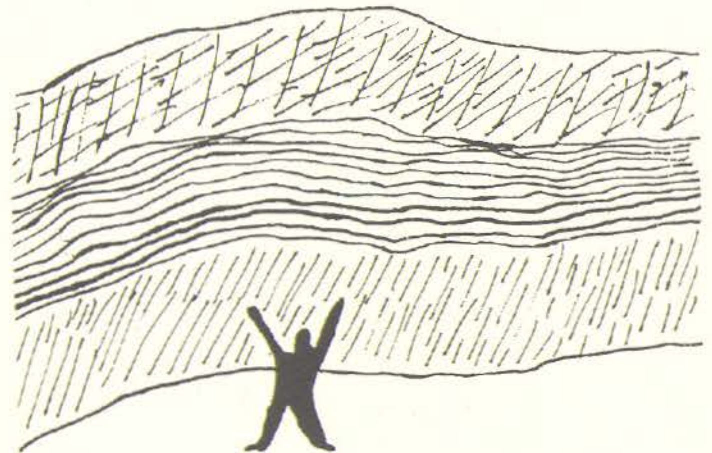
In being *of* the flesh, the child participates in an original figuration of phenomenon. As Owen Barfield informs us, there is "an awareness of an extra-sensory link between the percipient and the representations."[6] Barfield goes on to say that with respect to this ongoing figuration, "there stands behind the phenomenon and on the other side of them from me a represented which is of the same nature as me."[7] This means that the flesh-child in the very act of being brings into play the being of the world, figurates it in an originary sense, as its sensibilities are extended out as innumerable invisible threads to the world surrounding it and joins them, couples them, in a common destiny.

The Body/Earth as Idol

Thinking about the child is skewed when, as in Western discourse, this being is posited as having to develop an ego, an alien, disciplinary, structuring symbolic that must come to inhabit a chaotic realm of body as object, earth as object.

The body as object is an *idol*, and this kind of thinking is *idolatry*. It leads to the felt experience, so common in the West, of a non-participated world, a blinding habitus of forgetfulness of our original participation in and figuration of the world. As civilized adults armed with this unremembering idolatry, we turn to the child's experience as if the child too were surrounded by a world of unparticipated idols, a world of objects not of the same nature as that which we feel is substantially us: humanity conceived as an ordered, structured symbolic. In this civilized processional, grace comes only through an ascended structure; the fleshly body of the child is always outside of grace, perverse and ugly, and in need of ego-control.

It would be a mistake, though, to think of this ego-control--standing over against a world of idols--as constitutive of individuality. The formation of the ego in the Western oeuvre is not individuation, but is instead a power construct isolated by a social code which has granted itself the privilege of naming that which is "freedom" and that which is "autonomy." The child can come to graduate into the structuring, command-work of signifiers only through an early submission to the ordering and disciplining powers of pedagogy and therapy, the "free" and "autonomous" ego constituting the end-point of a stagist drama of development prescribed and continually governed by teachers, doctors, social workers and therapists.



The civilized social code of power seeks to institute a fall upwards in the flesh-child, a tumbling ascent out of the interpresencing of the flesh. Its goal is to push the flesh-child into a spirit of forgetfulness of its originary intertwinement within the flesh as true home, a home surrounded by the gay and festive laughter of interpenetration. The flesh as home is the ceaseless and perpetual between which we can know. The fixed and ordered social code of power is an illusion, a dreadful nightmare which we need to awaken from through a concentration of imagination.

The Profane Flesh

The child's becoming is a *profane* experience, yet one that is at the same time fully graced. For the child to unbecome in the pain of pedagogy is *sacred*. This mix-up of sacred and profane allows us to account for the potential of the flesh-child to move from original participation in either an individuating rising descent within the flesh itself or a falling ascent into civilized unremembering. For Western pedagogy, the founding myth for the child's growth is that of a fall upwards into a differentiated psyche or non-participating consciousness. It is a myth that seeks to structure the child's experience into a divisory either/or: either we stake our humanity on the heavenly ascent of order or else, so the story goes, there will be nothing but the chaos of animal, earth and flesh, a dis-order unfit for human habitation.

The profane mythopoeic of Western discourse begins with the Greeks in Plato's Ideal realm and Aristotle's form/matter distinction and continues in orthodox, exoteric, Christian practice (although there is a more liberating esoteric Christian counter-tradition that subverts this development). This mythopoeic represents a massive simulation of order and fixity. By removing itself from interpresenced participation in the flesh, civilized pedagogy can only speak of the life of the child from the far-away heavenly Hades of its self-fetishized prison-house of order. Speaking in a monotone voice of monologue, it can only see the being of the child according to a fearful tunnel-vision. There is a fear of the becoming of life in the child engendered by a carnivalesque recital of growth which is a continuous creative force of death and rebirth.

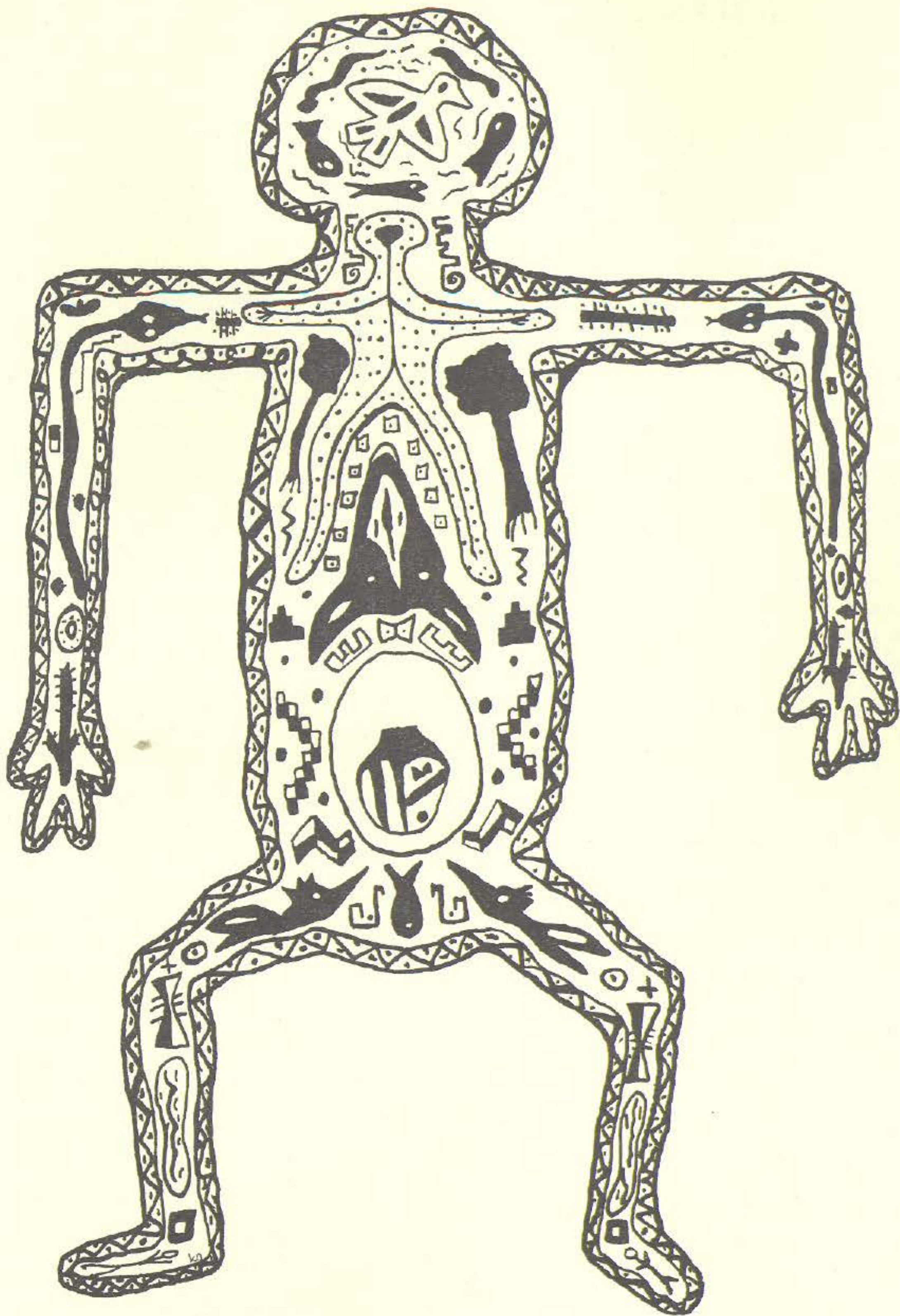
The Open of the Earth

The flesh-child's becoming, as a holy and sacred practice is the craftful building up of a *temple* from within the *earth*.[8] This creative work is not a phallocentric, heaven-bound rise above the earth, its ground, but a formation from within an *Open* in the earthly being of the child itself, a constant descent in earthly reverberation rather than ascent to heavenly heights.[9] But at the same time, this descent is not a devouring or swallowing up, but always a rising descent, for the temple as a world of meaning is lighted from within the sheltering darkness. Lightness of opening and darkness of sheltering are inseparable as two oscillating moments in a dialogical process of becoming that constitutes the child's world.

Respect must be given to the sheltering moment in the growth of the child as temple, for the earthly being of the child will rebel against any attempt to hold mastery over it through a phallocentric penetration. As Heidegger tells us: "Earth thus shatters every attempt to penetrate into it. It causes every merely calculating importunity upon it to turn into destruction."[10] For the wild growth of the child as temple is a dignified process which spurns any claims to a fast-paced time-table of ascent. The templechild's earthly ground is most fundamentally a "self-secluding."[11] It allows the beauty of the templework to come to be in the most striking and breathtaking way when thankful homage is paid to its sure and sound pace. Everything in due time for the growth of the child as temple, time not as an ordered, linear clock-work of agendic stages that pyramidically funnel to the top, the ego, but a weaving of a garment in which the complex ingathering of a multitude of strands come together to dance in a carnival of beauty that is a craft-enacted meaning for the child.

The Speech of Earth-Body-Flesh

It is at this point that we realize that it is in the very ingathering movement of the child's creativity that the fleshly texture of the world, which is the always ever in-between of body and earth, comes to gain expression. There is no mind-ego that needs to develop in the child that must then imagistically come to terms with a reality "outside" of it. The child is *of* the flesh. The ingathering individualizing movement of language enacted by the child happens from within the interstices of the flesh as an originary interpresenced intertwining wholeness. Barfield's comments are significant: "Speech did not arise as the attempt of man to imitate, to master or explain 'nature'; for speech and nature come into being along with one another."[12] The roots of language in the child do not descend from a stable social symbolic,



but arise from the flesh of the world striving for expression in the child. As Barfield says, "Roots are the echo of nature herself sounding in man."[13]

There is a unity of sound and meaning at the level of the child's initiatory speech which is an originary figuring that brings into being the play of the world. This has been forgotten by a civilized pedagogy bent on severing language from a fleshly figuring and reifying it into a set of abstract signifiers typographically mechanized into mannicanized characters bound within the ordered processional of book technology. Here, the child is burdened with a capital-ism of letters, a foot-note, end-note, chapter by chapter indexing of expression into a controlling and therefore controllable science-text of power.

The speech of the child is a fully earth-grounded phenomenon that arises from within the texture of the flesh itself. Embedded within the texture of the flesh of the world as a participatory being, the child begins to articulate a sound-symbolism through which the flesh itself gains its expression. In its burgeoning speech the child is participating in the awe-inspiring mystery of the original figurating power of language as Word. We can discover, says Barfield, "in the consonantal element in language vestiges of those forces which brought into being the external structure of nature, including the body of man; and in the original vowel-sounds, the expression of that inner life of feeling and memory which constitutes his soul."[14] It is a grave mistake, then, to portray the child's speech as a Symbolic structuring needed to give order to a world without order. The child's speech is a participation in and reenactment of an originary Word that emanates from the very lining of the flesh and begins to craft a meaningful world for itself.

The sounds that are uttered by the child are sounds that have life and colour and tone. They have shape. "We feel these shapes," says Barfield, "not only as sounds, but also, in a manner, as gestures of the speech organs--and it is not difficult to realize that these gestures were once gestures made with the whole body--once--when the body itself was not detached from the rest of nature after the solid matter of today, when the body itself was spoken even while it was speaking."[15]

The task of the child in crafting an individualized style of being for itself is a task of the imagination. It involves a concentration of imagination where the potential meaning lying dormant in the flesh is ingathered through sound-symbolism--living metaphor--to form a unique and particular style of being that genuinely can be called a Self. This Self crafted by the child is not a substance, as Western metaphysics from the Greeks onward would have it. It is not an ego "adapted" to a world ever always structured in the prison-house of society. The Self of the child is anti-substance, an anti-order of Open-ing descent, for this Self comes to be only as engendered from within the Eternal Play of Being, always flowing through the cycles of death and rebirth, always becoming in a creative dance of new forms.

The Elemental Language of the Flesh

The woven garment of the flesh that is the world for the child has its stability in variety and complexity. The flesh abhors and rebels against the unitary monoculture that civilized unremembering seeks to impose upon it. It laughs in gargantuan derision at this foolhardy attempt by the sky-gods of culture to wash over the multitudinous profusion of forms of the flesh with the smooth and fixed trajectories of assembly-line productivity. The flesh knows the inherent unstability of life based on the fear of diversity, on the unitary tic-tic-tic pumping-out of sameness.

The world of sameness is not the world the flesh-child loves. It provides no stability for the child to grow in, but an artificially simulated and fear induced weakness of fixed and static monocultural structure. The flesh-child loves the world of freedom and creativity, the world of ecosystem diversity, from which comes the Real stability and continuity of life as lived. This is the world of the flesh, the intertwining wildness of becoming.

It is in this spirit that the French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty brings us his reflections on the significance of the flesh for human

becoming. Merleau-Ponty's central insight is that human being in-the-world is caught up inextricably with the life of the flesh, that every individual being "is of it."[16] What lines all our beings, he says, is "a continuous tissue of exterior and interior horizons."[17] As we observe the new-born child's initial movements in and through the fleshly texture of the world, we begin to realize that "there must exist some relationship by principle, some kinship." There is an "initiation to and opening upon a tactile world."[18]

This kinship is established by the very mode of interaction the child has with the world, an interaction which reveals an inherent *reversibility* in its being. What is this reversibility? As Merleau-Ponty tells it: "Since the same body sees and touches, visible and tangible belong to the same world."[19] There is, in his eyes, "a thickness of flesh between the seer and the thing."[20] This thickness of flesh "is not an obstacle between them, it is their means of communication."[21]

The "thickness of the body" of the child does not stand over against the world, in competition with it, such that it must establish its rights by control and domination, but is, in fact, says Merleau-Ponty, "the sole means I have to go unto the heart of things, by making myself a world and by making them flesh."[22] The child's body, then, is quite literally "caught up in the tissue of things."[23]

This means that it is impossible for a truly meaningful world to be formed by the child as the project of a developing consciousness that in its interaction with the flesh of the world "surveys it from above." The child needs to "co-exist with them in the same world."[24] Conscious individuality only arises for the child from within the kinship of Being such that its budding vision forms from "the surface of a depth, a cross-section upon a massive being, a grain or corpuscle borne by a wave of Being."[25]

Human knowing, as a burgeoning relationship of wonder that constitutes the Self of the child in its meaningfulness comes to be from within the body/-flesh, knower/known kinship as a mode of *concentration* such that the child's body "concentrates the mystery of its scattered visibility."[26] As a knowing that comes to be through a kinship, we may just as well say, with Merleau-Ponty, that it is "the world that thinks itself" through the growing child. We come to the realization "that each calls for the other."[27]

There is no distancing or divisory separation for the knowing child, but a concentration of the mystery, for we see that the visibles of the fleshly world,

> are about it, they even enter into its enclosure, they are within it, they line its looks and its hands inside and outside. If it touches them and sees them, this is only because, being of their family, itself visible and tangible, it uses its own being as a means to participate in theirs, because each of the two beings is an archetype for the other, because the body belongs to the order of things as the world is universal flesh.[28]

The child participates in this universal flesh because its body is *of* it. We need to reverse our common understanding of the relationship between inside and outside for the child. The child's body does not come to enter and penetrate the world from an outside and independent point and the world does not then come to impinge upon the child's body and demand of it some accommodation. It is important for us to avoid the phallocentric language of penetration. Rather, it is better for us to speak, as Merleau-Ponty does, of an "intertwining of one in the other."

The child begins to grow in meaningful knowledge and wisdom when it realizes itself as a tangible, a visible, and precisely because of this, it is able to, says Merleau-Ponty, "turn back upon the whole of the visible, the whole of the tangible, of which it is a part" such that there occurs a Visibility which belongs "neither to the body qua fact nor the world qua fact," for it turns out that "each is only a rejoinder of the other, and which therefore form a couple, a couple more real than either of them."[29]

Due to the indissoluble kinship between knower and known, child and world, the known reverberates back to become knower, knows itself in and through the child's knowing and the child as knower intertwines itself within that which it is knowing becoming always ever a known, inextricably part of the fleshly stuff of life. Merleau-Ponty tells us that "since the seer is caught up in what he sees, it is still himself he sees; there is a fundamental narcissism of vision."[30]

The child is of the earthly world and the earthly world is of the child, forming a vast connective tissue of bonding threads and rays called the flesh. This flesh is not a substance, a là Western metaphysics, but an "element" as it used to be spoken in pre-Socratic language of earth, air, water and fire. These four elements of the world correspond in a vast series of resemblances to the four elemental humours of the child's bodily being: sanguine, choleric, melancholy and phlegmatic. This has no relation to what in modern psychology has become the "personality." The static personality of modern psychology is a clinical label arising out of a therapeutic intent. The four elemental humours are instead a constantly intertwining process where the child, with a particular crafted style of being, is not only alive but open, extending out and back, outgathering and ingathering, never fixing itself at any particular point, but gayly sliding from one threaded relationship to another.

No development of "cognition" occurs in the flesh-child, no development of a purely "mental" life that seeks to form abstract "ideas" about a world independent from and outside of the ongoing cycles of life. What grows in the child is the ability to gather in a unique style, a unique individuality from within its thankful participation in the kinship of Being. This is a feat which comes through a concentration of the imagination, a "central vision" says Merleau-Ponty, "that joins the scattered visions, a unique touch."[31] There is:

> a bursting forth of the mass of the body toward the things. . . .a vibration of my skin. . . .a magical relation, this pact between them and me according to which I lend my body in order that they inscribe upon it and give me their resemblance. . . .a constant style of visibility from which I cannot detach myself.[32]

This is a long way from the divisory either/or, order/chaos of civilized pedagogy. "The flesh," Merleau-Ponty tells us, "is not contingency, chaos, but a texture that returns to itself and conforms to itself."[33]

We may say that as a child comes to form an individualized world for itself from within the kinship and texture of the flesh, as it comes to form a unique crafted style of being, there occurs an Open-ing up of a dimension that can never again be closed. This dimension, says Merleau-Ponty, is the "invisible of this world, sustains it, and renders it visible, its own and interior possibility the Being of this being."[34] The child then truly grows and becomes through an intensified participation with its whole crafted style in a "natural light that illuminates all flesh."[35]

The child's style of being is an inner light imagination, an imatio Christi, that brings into play the Word become flesh,[36] "an operative Word," says

Merleau-Ponty, "whence comes the instituted light."[37] In the kinship between between inner light and natural light, through an imatio Christi within fulfilling the Word that was always ever there from the beginning, there is, Merleau-Ponty tells us, "a reversibility of the speech and what it signifies, the signification is what comes to seal, to close, to gather up the multiplicity of the physical, physiological, linguistic means of elocution, to construct them into one sole act."[38]

As the child descends within the dark intertwining of the flesh to reside in the light of language--which does not overcome the darkness but co-exists with it--it participates in an originary power of signification, an originary power of naming. In this embodied activity of the child is restored and kept alive the primordial rememberance of "a wild meaning. . . .language is everything since it is the voice of no *one*, since it is the very voice of the things, the waves and the forest."[39]

Notes

1. Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, **The Visible and the Invisible**, Ed. Claude Lefort, Translated by Alfonzo Lingis. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), p. 131.

2. For an analysis that deals with the complicated problem of phallocentrism see Jacques Lacan, **Ecrits: A Selection**, trans Alan Sheridan, (New York: Norton, 1977), especially his essay, "The Signification of the Phallus;" also Jane Gallup, **The Daughter's Seduction: Psychoanalysis and Feminism**, (Ithica, New York: Cornell University Press, 1982); and, Jessica Benjamin, **The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism and the Problem of Domination**, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988). For insights into the question of simulations see Jean Baudrillard, **Simulations**, trans. Paul Foss, Paul Patton and Philip Bartchman, (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983). For a discussion of the problem of reification and the return of sameness as they are set within the context of a post-Enlightment discourse of domination see Max Horkheimer and Theodore Adorno, **The Dialectic of Enlightment**, trans. John Cumming, (New York: Continuum Books, 1982), and also the essays of Walter Benjamin collected in **Illuminations**, edited with an intro. by Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zorn, (New York: Schocken Books, 1969).

3. Merleau-Ponty, p. 131.

4. The Hobbesian formulation of the problem of order states men are naturally egoistic and controlled by a chaos of passions which will lead them to constant warfare as they each pursue their purely individual interests in total disregard for the other. In this situation what is needed is a Sovereign power of discipline and regulation that will hold in check these egoistic and passion-ridden interests.

5. Rudolph Steiner, **Essentials of Education** (London: Rudolph Steiner Press, 1968), pp. 33, 34.

6. Owen Barfield, **Saving the Appearances: A Study in Idolatry** (London: Faber and Faber, 1957), p. 34.

7. Ibid., p. 42.

8. Martin Heidegger, **Poetry, Language, Thought**, Trans. Alfred Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 41.

9. Ibid., p. 46.

10. Ibid., p. 47.

11. Ibid., p. 47.

12. Barfield, p. 123.

13. Ibid., p. 123.

14. Ibid., p. 124.

15. Ibid., pp. 124-125.

16. Merleau-Ponty, p. 131.

17. Ibid., p. 131.

18. Ibid., pp. 132-133.

19. Ibid., p. 134.

20. Ibid., p. 135.

21. Ibid., p. 135.

22. Ibid., p. 135.

23. Ibid., p. 135.

24. Ibid., p. 136.

25. Ibid., p. 136.

26. Ibid., p. 136.

27. Ibid., p. 136.

28. Ibid., p. 137.

29. Ibid., p. 139.

30. Ibid., p. 139.

31. Ibid., p. 145.

32. Ibid., p. 146.

33. Ibid., p. 146.

34. Ibid., p. 151.

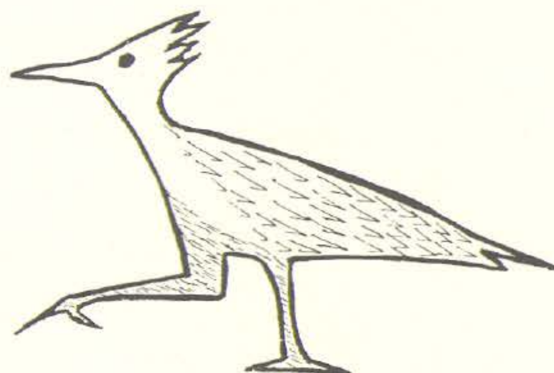
35. Ibid., p. 142.

36. See the opening to the Gospel of John in the Christian Bible.

37. Ibid., p. 151.

38. Ibid., p. 151.

39. Ibid., p. 151.



Three Visions Of An Ecological Self

by Jacqueline Pearce *

Envisioning the possibility of an ecologically appropriate society involves being able to imagine, not just a different way of living, but also a different way of being. Deep ecology, social ecology and ecofeminism are approaches which both critique the current dominant society and attempt to envision how this society might look and behave, given a more ecologically appropriate self-understanding.[1]

"Self," as we understand it today, is a relatively recent concept born with the emergence of humanism in seventeenth century Europe. Before this time, identity was rooted in community and place, and meaning was found in God rather than in individual humans. Today we take for granted notions of individual identity and individual rights. Such concepts would have been meaningless before the seventeenth century. Yet today they underlie Western culture's most basic values and principles.[2]

In developing their visions of an ecological society, deep ecology, social ecology, and ecofeminism all look to our understanding of self as the critical element determining how we live and relate to the world around us. All three recognize the dominant society's definition of self as narrow and limiting. Yet their proposals for a new definition of self involve very different assumptions about what it means to be human and what it means to be in relationship with other species.

While the dominant worldview regards humans as fundamentally different and separate from nature, deep ecologists regard humans to be continuous with the rest of nature and not as superior or more important. Deep ecologist Bill Devall distinguishes between the "minimalist self" whose goal is merely immediate survival, and the "ecological self" whose goal is personal growth through empathy and solidarity with other beings.[3]

For deep ecologists individual maturation and self-realization requires that we not only grow to identify ourselves with other humans, but with the nonhuman world as well:

> Traditionally the **maturity of self** has been considered to develop through three stages, from ego to social self, comprising the ego, and from there to metaphysical self, comprising the social self. But Nature is then largely left out in the conception of this process.[4]

In an attempt to redress the omission of nature from traditional theories of self development, Arne Naess (who originated the term "deep ecology") proposes the concept of "ecological self." An ecological self is expanded beyond the narrow sense of individual ego, because of an identification with others, human and nonhuman. Thus, with growing maturity and growing identification, the self is widened and deepened.[5] Deep ecologists have also explained this growing maturity as "self-realization," involving a realization of both the individual self and the larger Self of which everything is a part.

Australian deep ecologist Warwick Fox suggests "there is no bifurcation in reality between the human and the non-human realms."[6] To suggest that there are no divisions and no boundaries between entities is not to suggest that there are no individuals and no differences. The deep ecology "norms" of self-realization and biocentric equality require that:

> all things in the biosphere have an equal right to live and blossom and to reach their own individual forms of unfolding and self-realization within the larger Self-realization.[7]

This understanding that we are unique individuals yet connected to a larger whole, is arrived at mainly through an intuitive or spiritual feeling which many deep ecologists have experienced at some time. Naess recognizes that if one has not had such

* Jacqueline Pearce is a recent graduate of the Faculty of Environmental Studies, York University. This paper is part of a larger work which explores deep ecology, social ecology, and ecofeminism as potential expressions of muted reality.

an experience of connection or extended identification, "one is not easily drawn to become involved in deep ecology."[8] For this reason, it is perhaps the deep ecology notion of "extended identity" and of no boundaries between humans and nonhuman nature that is most unsettling for, and most often misinterpreted by, critics of deep ecology. Some feminists, for example, feel that the deep ecology notion of extended identity and "no boundaries" ignores women's struggle for autonomy and individuation.[9] They warn that any call to extend identity which does not incorporate a critique of patriarchal culture's association of human identity with the masculine will further negate and subjugate the female self to the male self. This criticism, however, overlooks deep ecology notions of self-realization and diversity, which may potentially have liberating implications for women. As Naess explains:

> Self-realization is the realization of the potentialities of life. Organisms that differ from each other in three ways give us less diversity than organisms that differ from each other in one hundred ways. Therefore, the self-realization we experience when we identify with the universe is heightened by an increase in the number of ways in which individuals, societies, and even species and life forms realize themselves. The greater the diversity, then, the greater the self-realization.[10]

Identification "with the universe" does not entail the erasure of individual identity and autonomy. For deep ecology, individuality and connection are not mutually exclusive dualisms. Overcoming the culturally imposed dichotomies between self and other, individual and whole, receptivity and activity, etc. entails a balance, or relationship, between the two "sides" rather than a negation of one by the other.

In contrast to accusations that deep ecology is attempting to wipe out the self, Devall and Sessions claim that deep ecology asks:

> What does it mean to be a unique human individual? How can the individual self maintain and increase its uniqueness while also being an inseparable aspect of the whole system wherein there are no sharp breaks between self and the other?[11]

Devall explains that "exploring ecological self is part of the transforming process required to heal ourselves in the world."[12] This process of healing and developing a "transpersonal self" begins with self-awareness. Devall proposes that growth to a transpersonal self frees us from the need for constraining ethics:

> As we discover our ecological self we will joyfully defend and interact with that with which we identify; and instead of imposing environmental ethics on people, we will naturally respect, love, honor and protect that which is our self... No moral exhortation or dogmatic statement of environmental ethics is necessary to show care for other beings--including rivers or mountains--if our self in this broad and deep sense embraces the other being.[13]

For deep ecologists it is from the expanded identification of self with the rest of nature (human and nonhuman) that transformation to an ecological society will flow.

Social ecology also recognizes the importance of the development of the self in the achieving of an ecological society:

> We often speak of self-management and self-activity as our ideals for a future society without recognizing often enough that it is not only the "management" and "activity" that has to be democratized; it is also the "self" of each individual--as a unique, creative, and competent being--that has to be fully developed.[14]

Social ecologist Murray Bookchin criticizes the Western mode of perception which "traditionally defines selfhood in antagonistic terms."[15] This definition perceives the self as an ego which is not only distinguished from the external "other," but also "seeks to master these others and to bring them into subjugation." Bookchin suggests that self development entails a recognition of the self as distinct from the "other" (rather than as continuous with, or extended to include the other, as deep ecology suggests). However, this distinction need not require an antagonistic or domineering relationship to the other. Whereas hierarchical society tends to rank differences hierarchically, social ecology values difference as an end in itself. This attitude extends to differences in

nature, between people, and to different potentialities within the individual self.

Bookchin points out that in a hierarchical society, such as our own, severe constraints are put on "each individual's potentiality for consciousness, reason, selfhood, creativity, and the right to assert full control over her or his daily life."[16] Bookchin refers to the "abortion of each individual's potentiality" as a warping of "destiny."[17] He calls for an extension of our notion of freedom "beyond any concept we have held of this notion in the past."[18] In other words, we must not only recognize the unfreedom which results from class hierarchy, we must also recognize the unfreedom which is created by hierarchy and domination in **any** form. To liberate the individual self, every level of experience--personal, political, economic, ecological, etc.--must be freed of domination. In this way, each individual human can be free to discover his or her own potential and pursue her or his own choices: to "manage" his or her own life and act directly upon it.[19] For Bookchin, then, "self-realization" is not achieved through an expanded conception of the self, as in deep ecology, but through an expanded conception of freedom.

Bookchin criticizes the capitalist notion of individualism, which "does not produce individuals" but competing "atomized egoists."[20] He suggests that the social ecology understanding of individual self-actualization "presupposes existential relations with others of a like kind who are loving and mutually supportive."[21] Individual freedom exists in a social realm, and thus, does not become "privatized hedonism."[22]

While recognizing that the individual is grounded in the human community and in nature, Bookchin feels there is a danger in suggesting a blurring of the boundaries between self and the surrounding context. He suggests that identification with a single universal "Self" leads to passivity and openness to outside manipulation. He suggests that it is only from the perspective of conscious recognition of ourselves as different from nature that we can **choose** to redevelop our connection to nature. Bookchin explains that in his view "humanity had to be expelled from the Garden of Eden to attain the fullness of its humanness."[23] He suggests that, while it was the dissolution of "early humanity's mutual reciprocity with the natural world" that led to today's environmental problems, this dissolution also led to the achievement of a "rich wealth of mind, personality, technical insight, culture, and self-reflective thought." Thus, for Bookchin, humanity's

"separation" from nature was a necessary step in social evolution. To return to the past, or to limit any of the choices open to modern humans (even when the limitation seems based on ecological necessity) would be to impose unfreedom and limit human potentiality:

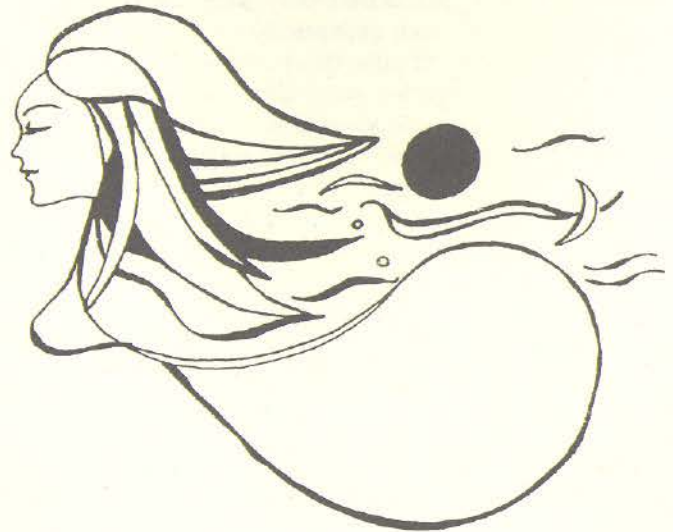
> To leave humanity's latent capacity for actualizing the fullness of reason, creativity, freedom, personality and a sophisticated culture only partially or one-sidedly fulfilled is to deny the rich dialectic of the human condition in its full state of realization and even of nature as life rendered self-conscious.[24]

This warning brings out two important aspects of the social ecology definition of self: the notion (already discussed) that self-realization is linked to individual freedom of choice, and the notion that humanity, through the evolution of mind, is "nature rendered self-conscious." The idea that humanity is nature rendered self-conscious is linked to the social ecology understanding of natural evolution. For Bookchin, the goal of natural evolution is the development of increasing complexity and diversity culminating in the development of the human mind:

> nature moving in a cumulative thrust toward ever-greater complexity, ever-greater subjectivity, and finally ever-greater mind with a capacity for conceptual thought, symbolic communication of the most sophisticated kind, and self-consciousness in which natural evolution knows itself purposively and wilfully.[25]

For Bookchin, humans are this complex mind, this self-consciousness through which natural evolution knows itself. He suggests that consciousness gives humanity both the ability to wipe out nature's diversity (as we are currently doing) or to nourish it (as we would in an "ecological" society). Thus, social evolution is now capable of joining with natural evolution in the project of creating greater and greater diversity. The self-actualization of nature can then become informed by human consciousness. It is through this active symbiosis that humanity and nature become "reharmonized" for social ecologists, not through any "mystical and passive" merging of the human self with nature.

For ecofeminism, an understanding of the self involves the recognition that in patriarchal culture



the "authentic self" has been defined as male, and the female has been used as the symbol representing what the authentic self must overcome. Rosemary Radford Ruether explains that in the dominant understanding the self is divided into the "masculine" ego and the "feminine" unconscious.[26] The characteristics associated with the ego (initiative, reason, the capacity for autonomy and what our culture has deemed "higher virtues") make up the "authentic" self in our society over and against the qualities of the unconscious self (passivity, sensuality, irrationality and dependency). Ruether traces the development of negative female imagery and its internalization in the split human psyche, and calls for a healing process which takes into account the different healing needs of men and women in Western culture.

Ruether points out the significance of sexual symbolism to an understanding of the construction of self and of the dominant reality in general:

> Sexual symbolism is foundational to the perception of order and relationship that has been built up in cultures. The psychic organization of consciousness, the dualistic view of the self and the world, the hierarchical concept of society, the relation of humanity and nature, and of God and creation--all these relationships have been modelled on sexual dualism.[27]

Ruether suggests that originally female symbolism was positive. Societies which interacted daily

with nature and were directly dependent on nature for survival recognized that they were the children of the earth, which was represented by a mother-goddess. However, gradually this positive symbolism was subverted into negative symbolism as the importance of women's role as life-giver and centre of the family-centred economy gave way to the growing power of the male sphere of politics, economics (now pulling away from the home), and the military. At the same time, dependence on nature was also being rejected, and nature too was taking on negative symbolism.

The traditions Western culture eventually inherited were those of patriarchy and dualism. These two traditions came together in the dualistic experience of self and body, and of transcendent plane and material world, which projected the lower half of each dualism onto the sexual other--woman. The repressive view of the alien female is also "the model for the inferiorization of other subjugated groups, lower classes, and conquered races."[28] The "other" is required as the antithesis over which "authentic" (male) selfhood is defined and the position of the male elite is justified.

Thus, in Western culture, Ruether summarizes:

> consciousness arose in a one-sided, antagonistic way by making one half of humanity, not the partner in the struggle, but the symbol of the sphere to be transcended and dominated. . . . The psychodynamics of self-knowledge have been spurred by negation of, rather than cooperation with, the "other."[29]

While deep ecology and social ecology recognize the limitations our culture has put on the development of certain human capacities and potentials, ecofeminism points out the crucial role female symbolism and the repression of women has played in this limitation. Thus, in order for self-realization to occur for either sex, women (and that part of the self associated with femaleness and nature) must be freed from negative imagery and subjugation. This does not mean a revalorization of the old mother-nature or goddess symbolism. Woman must cease to be a symbol for anything, positive or negative, and instead each woman must be recognized as an individual containing all the possibilities of personhood.

For ecofeminism, self-realization can not occur without a reconstruction of relationships based on muted conceptions of mutualism and integration:

> Women seek a reconstruction of relationships for which we have neither words nor models: a reconstruction which can give each person the fullness of their being stolen from them by false polarization . . . Authentic relationship is not a relation between two half selves, but between whole persons, when suppression and projection cease to distort the encounter. We seek a new concept of relationships between persons, groups, life systems, a relationship which is not competitive or hierarchical but mutually enhancing."[30]

Ruether explains that at this point in our culture the development of wholeness must move in opposite directions for men and for women. While men need to recover their repressed "female" unconscious, women need to nurture their repressed rationality, autonomy, and self-definition.[31] While deep ecology speaks to the dominant definition of (male) self when it calls for a move away from the narrow definition of self as ego, ecofeminism speaks to the muted and undefined female self when it calls for a nurturing of ego and self-definition. When taken together with a recognition of the differing needs of male and female maturing selves, these two calls are complementary (provided they are not interpreted as in opposition). The move to broaden the male self to incorporate the other does not entail the elimination of the ego, while the move to strengthen the female ego does not entail the elimination of connection with the other or with the unconscious. What is required for wholeness is the dissolution of all hierarchical dualisms, and a balance of all human potentialities rather than an emphasis on any one more than another:

> Without sex-role stereotyping, sex-personality stereotyping would disappear, allowing for genuine individuation of personality. Instead of being forced into a mold of masculine and feminine "types," each individual could shape a complex whole from the full range of human psychic potential for intellect and feeling, activity and receptivity.[32]

Ruether suggests that a society no longer bent on "conquering the earth" might have more time for "cultivation of interiority, for contemplation, for artistic work that celebrated being for its own

sake."[33] However, she also stresses that this individual interiority would not be cultivated at the expense of the community:

> It would be a cultivation of the self that would be at one with an affirmation of others, both our immediate neighbours and all humanity and the earth itself, as the "thou" with whom "I" am in a state of reciprocal interdependence.[34]

Social ecology, deep ecology and ecofeminism all express concern over the limitation and distortion of the self which occurs in the dominant culture. In our hierarchical society certain human potentialities (for experience, thought and feeling) are muted. In the transformations proposed by social ecologists, deep ecologists, and ecofeminists, each individual is theoretically free to chose from the whole continuum of human potentialities. Devall and Sessions suggest a redefinition of the self so that self-understanding and self-realization include not just the individual self but also the extended self-in-nature (with the understanding that the larger Self is made up of a variety of individual selves). In other words, deep ecologists attempt to challenge the humanistic individualized conception of self on which our current way of looking at the world is based (unfortunately, however, the metaphor of extended identity continues to imply that the individual self is the focus of care and identity, since it is only through extending the self that care and identification are extended).

Bookchin limits his definition of self to the human individual, but calls for a new, complementary understanding of the relationships between the individual self and others, including nonhuman nature (he presents no challenge to the ideology of humanism).

Ruether suggests that the potentialities which have been muted in women differ from those which have been muted in men. While men may need to nurture their sense of connection to others, women may need to nurture their sense of self-definition. In general Ruether, like Bookchin, suggests that a new harmony between humanity and nature will come about through a reconstruction of the relationships between humans and nonhuman nature, rather than through a redefinition of the self to include the nonhuman as deep ecology suggests (however, ecofeminist Elizabeth Dodson Gray does explicitly suggest that a larger sense of self is needed which entails a larger self-interest encompassing the non-human world).

All three celebrate the possible uniqueness of human consciousness, but each draws slightly different implications from this uniqueness. Deep ecology, in a sense, draws no implications. In other words, deep ecology celebrates human consciousness and leaves it at that. It does not assume that human consciousness means anything in particular for the rest of nature. Deep ecology assumes a position of humility regarding our ability, as humans, to understand the rest of nature, let alone know what is best for nature. Social ecology, on the other hand, draws the implication that human consciousness can and should work for the rest of nature, and that because humans are "nature rendered selfconscious" they can know what nature wants and needs, and can act more effectively on nature's behalf than can nature itself (humans can rehabilitate damaged ecosystems, for example, more quickly than natural processes). This view advocates one kind of "freedom" for humans and another kind for nonhumans.

Ecofeminism seems to fall more in the middle between deep ecology and social ecology. Ruether criticizes the tendency to elevate consciousness to "supernatural apriority," recognizing that our identity is also gained through embodiment, yet, like Bookchin, she suggests that humans can make nature into a "garden," implying humans have the understanding and moral justification to alter and "improve" nature.[35] While her confidence in human consciousness and its ability to successfully "cultivate" nature is similar to Bookchin's, her description of human consciousness as continuous with the "radical energy of matter throughout the universe"[36] has similarities to the deep ecology conception of continuity between humans and the rest of nature. Like deep ecologists, Ruether recognizes the possibility of experiencing a spiritual continuity with other beings and with nature as a whole.

The visions of self expressed by social ecologists, deep ecologists, and ecofeminists accomplish two things: they point to the limitations of the dominant Western conception of self, and in so doing, they enable us to see possibilities which have been repressed or unrealized in our cultural conceptions of self. Each may have problems and limitations which require critical attention, but their promise lies, not in their specific outlines of potential self, but in their challenge to our current conceptions of self. What emerges from the positions when taken together is a concept of being which affirms the individual self and is at the same time rooted in a context of relationships and interdependence.

Notes

1. For basic outlines of deep ecology, social ecology and ecofeminism see, for example, "Deep Ecology: A New Philosophy for our Time?" by Warwick Fox in **The Ecologist** vol.14 no.5-6, 1984; "The Deep Ecology Movement" by Bill Devall in **Natural Resources Journal** 20:(1980); "Feminism and Ecology: Making Connections" by Karen Warren in **Environmental Ethics** 9:1 (1987); "Ecofeminism: Our Roots and Flowering" by Charlene Spretnak in **Woman of Power**, Spring 1988; "What is Social Ecology?" (an interview with Murray Bookchin) in **Alternatives** 12:3-4,(1985). In this essay I look mainly to Murray Bookchin as representative of social ecology, Bill Devall, George Sessions and Arne Naess as representative of deep ecology, and Rosemary Radford Ruether as representative of ecofeminism. Although Ruether does not call herself an "ecofeminist" (her book **New Woman New Earth** was written before the term was coined), her ideas are often quoted by ecofeminists, and her exploration of the concept of self is clearly developed.

2. See **The Arrogance of Humanism** by David Ehrenfeld (1978) for an elaboration of the historical emergence of the ideology of humanism. See **Words and Values** by Peggy Rosenthal (1984) for an outline of the historical development of the word "self" from neutral pointer to substantive noun.

3. Devall, Bill, **Simple in Means, Rich in Ends: Practicing Deep Ecology** (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith Books, 1988), p. 42.

4. Naess, Arne, "Self-Realization: An Ecological Approach to Being in the World" in **The Trumpeter,** 4:3 (1987), p. 35.

5. Ibid.

6. Devall, Bill and George Sessions, **Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered** (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith Books, 1985), p. 66.

7. Ibid., p. 67.

8. Ibid., p. 76.

9. See, for example, "Deeper than Deep Ecology: the Eco-Feminist Connection" by Ariel Kay Salleh in **Environmental Ethics** 6:(1984), and "An Eco-feminist looks at Deep Ecology" by Janet Biehl in **Kick it Over**, Winter (1987) (Biehl's criticism may also be prompted by a socialist's suspicion of the spiritual connotations of "extended identity").

10. Naess quoted in Devall and Sessions, **Deep Ecology**, p. 76.

11. Ibid., p. 65.

12. Devall, **Simple in Means, Rich in Ends**, p. 42.

13. Ibid., p. 45.

14. Bookchin, Murray, **Towards an Ecological Society** (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1980), p. 47.

15. Ibid., p. 265.

16. Ibid., p. 15.

17. Ibid., p. 16.

18. Ibid., p. 15.

19. Ibid., p. 47.

20. Iibd., p. 253.

21. Ibid., p. 262.

22. Bookchin, Murray, **The Ecology of Freedom** (Palo Alto, CA: Cheshire Books, 1982).

23. Bookchin, **Towards an Ecological Society**, p. 26.

24. Ibid., pp. 24-25.

25. Bookchin, Murray, "Social Ecology vs. Deep Ecology" in **Kick it Over** (Winter 1987), pp. 4a-8a. See p. 8a.

26. Ruether, Rosemary Radford, **New Woman New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation**, (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), p. 4, 157.

27. Ibid., p. 3.

28. Ibid., p. 4.

29. Ibid., pp. 25-26.

30. Ibid., p. 26.

31. Ibid., p. 29.

32. Ibid., p. 210.

33. Ibid., p. 211.

34. Ibid.

35. Reuther, Rosemary Radford, "Toward an Ecological-Feminist Theology of Nature" in **Healing the Wounds**, Judith Plant, ed. (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1989) pp. 145-150. See Elizabeth Dodson Gray's **Green Paradise Lost** (1979) for an ecofeminist perspective which is critical of the paternalism and arrogance in suggestions that humans are "stewards" of the earth.

36. Ibid., p. 146.

The Moral Status of Animals:

ETHICAL CROSSROADS, DEAD ENDS AND THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

by Nancy O'Sullivan *

If ethical thinking is an evolutionary process, as Aldo Leopold, the father of modern environmental ethics, thought it was,[1] then today we stand at a crossroads in that discipline. Or is it instead, a dead end? For thousands, if not tens-of-thousands of years, human beings have despotically ruled the rest of the animal kingdom. Believing ourselves to be superior, other species were categorized as existing "merely as a means to an end,"[2] a human end, that is. Animals, other than humans, held no moral status.[3]

Amidst growing lists of extinct and endangered species, this view has been philosophically attacked with increasing vigor since the 1970's. It brings into play the question of what the status of animals is, as well as what the role of humanity is in its relationship to them. This paper will examine these questions from the ethical standpoint of three current theories which attempt to establish the moral status of animals. It will argue that: traditional ethical foundations, as expressed in Tom Regan's rights view and Peter Singer's utilitarian theory, cannot be logically extended to include animals, based as they are, on atomistic and anthropocentric starting points; and that, although the holistic approach of Aldo Leopold attempts to break new ethical ground, the radical shift in thinking it entails, carries us beyond the realm of ethics altogether.

"Ethical theories attempt to specify what 'the right reasons' are for judging acts right, wrong and obligatory."[4] This seems a simple enough statement, but there is so much disagreement on the foundations for an ethical theory as it applies to non-humans, that the task of finding one appears doomed from the start. Tom Regan, for example, upholds a rights view and bases his theory on considered beliefs or reflective intuition:

> We are to begin by considering our pre-reflective intuitions--those beliefs about right and wrong that we happen to have. We then make a conscientious effort to make the best review of these judgments we can, and we do this by striving to purge our thoughts of inconsistency and unquestioned partiality, and by thinking as rationally and coolly as we can, with maximum conceptual clarity and on the basis of the best relevant information we can muster. Those moral beliefs we hold after we have made an honest effort to meet these requirements are our considered beliefs, our reflective intutions, and any ethical theory that fails to match our considered beliefs, in a broad range of cases, cannot be reasonably judged the best theory, all considered.[5]

Peter Singer, however, disagrees with this position: "Our moral convictions are not reliable data for testing ethical theories. We should work from sound theories to practical judgments, not from our judgments to our theories."[6] His utilitarian position is based on the principle of equality: "...the interests of every being that has interests are to be taken into account and treated equally with the like interests of any other being."[7]

These positions both follow from traditional ethical starting points. Others, such as those proposed by Paul Taylor and Aldo Leopold attempt to forge new paths in ethical theory and to establish the moral status of animals within a wider context. Taylor[8] broadens his scope to include all living things and bases his theory on an attitude of respect for life:

> ...the biocentric outlook recommends itself as an acceptable system of concepts and beliefs to anyone who is clearminded, unbiased, and factually enlightened, and who has a developed capacity of reality awareness with

* Nancy O'Sullivan is a former philosophy student and TA at Brock University. She is currently in between degrees and living somewhere in a Carolinian wood.

> regard to the lives of individual organisms. This, I submit, is as good a reason for making the moral commitment involved in adopting the attitude of respect for nature as any theory of environmental ethics could possibly have.[9]

Aldo Leopold's 'Land Ethic' similarly embraces the entire 'biotic community,' but it goes even further by requiring a fundamental shift in thinking. Commenting on Leopold's book **A Sand County Almanac**, John Rodman says of the 'Land Ethic':

> ...we cannot simply abstract from the last part of this carefully-composed book the notion of extending ethics to the land and its inhabitants. The land ethic emerges in the course of the book as an integral part of a sensibility developed through observation, participatory experience, and reflection. It is an 'ethic' in the almost forgotten sense of a 'way of life'. For this reason it would be pretentious to talk of a land ethic until we have let our curiosity follow the skunk as it emerges from hibernation, listened with wonder at the calls of the wild geese arriving at the pond, sawed the fallen ancient tree while meditating its history, shot a wolf (once) and looked into its eyes as it died, recognized the fish in ourselves, and strained to see the world from the perspective of a muskrat eye-deep in the swamp only to realize that in the end the mind of the muskrat holds for us a mystery we cannot fathom.[10]

Essentially, the theories offered for the moral status of animals fall into two camps--those that follow traditional ethics, and those that do not. The traditional positions of rights and utilitarianism tend to focus on the animals themselves, in an attempt to fit them into ethical structures designed for human beings; while those of thinkers like Taylor and Leopold focus attention on <u>our thinking</u> and attempt to create new ethical frameworks designed to encompass a wider understanding of our application of moral status for animals and for the environment generally. In order to assess the relative merits and difficulties of such theories, and to determine their viability, a closer examination of the fundamental arguments in Regan, Singer and Leopold will follow.

The theory that human beings possess certain natural and inalienable rights (such as rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness) gained wide acceptance at the time of the French and American revolutions and as a result were embodied in their constitutions. It remains today even more widely accepted, as is implied in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights.[11]

If it can be established that animals have natural rights in the same way human beings have, then it follows that we have certain obligations and duties toward them. If, for example, the chicken in my coop has a right to life in the same way my neighbours have, then I am obliged not to kill that chicken and eat it for dinner, just as I am obliged not to kill my neighbours and make a meal of them.

The question, however, of whether or not human beings truly possess natural or moral rights (no matter how widely accepted) is itself a difficult one. Philosophers such as Jeremy Bentham argue that the right to life and other rights are <u>legal</u> rights. The existence of moral or natural rights "is simple nonsense; natural and imprescriptable rights, rhetorical nonsense--nonsense upon stilts."[12]

Nevertheless, those who support the popular view (influenced largely by Immanuel Kant) that "all persons (that is all rational, autonomous individuals) have a distinctive kind of value, a unique worth or dignity,"[13] believe that rights exist for individuals based on their nature as such:

> ...moral rights follow directly from our recognition of persons as direct objects of moral concern, as entities worthy of moral consideration, as loci of intrinsic value, or, in Kant's terminology, as ends in themselves... human beings have moral rights in virtue of being moral objects, these rights follow from their nature...[14]

Moral rights, therefore, belong to moral agents by virtue of the fact that they have unique inherent value.

The case for animal rights, as Tom Regan argues it in **The Case For Animal Rights**, attempts to place (at least some) animals within this moral framework. Regan chooses a rights view because in his mind it best meets with the requirements for a valid ethical theory, that is, it conforms with our institutions, and

> (1) systematizes the maximum num-

> ber of our considered beliefs, thereby having maximum scope; (2) systematizes them in a coherent fashion, thereby achieving consistency; (3) does this without compromising the degree of precision it is reasonable to expect and require of any moral principle(s); (4) and satisfies these other criteria of evaluation while making the fewest possible assumptions necessary to do so, thereby meeting the criteria of simplicity.[15]

The task for Regan is to demonstrate that animals, like humans, are objects of moral concern and therefore possess basic moral rights. His rights view states that all moral agents and patients have moral rights which are natural, inalienable, universal and equal.[16] Hence, the first several chapters of Regan's book are devoted to establishing animals as moral patients. A moral patient is distinct from a moral agent in that the latter is capable of performing right or wrong acts as well as experiencing the consequences of others' actions. Normal adult human beings are moral agents. Moral patients, however, can neither do right or wrong, but they can be on the receiving end of the actions of moral agents.[17] Very young children and mentally handicapped individuals are examples of moral patients. "We have reason to regard" these humans, Regan argues, "as...moral patient[s] on all fours, so to speak, with animals."[18]

The establishment of animals as moral patients is arrived at by way of a rather thorough examination of their mental lives, which concludes that at least some animals (mammalian animals of a year or more) have fairly complex and sophisticated mental lives as well as experiential lives, comparable in many ways to those of human beings:

> Both animals and humans have preference--and welfare--interests, some biological, some psychological, some social: both are capable of acting intentionally in pursuit of what they want; both may be benefitted or harmed and, if the latter, harmed either because of what they are made to experience (harms as inflictions) or because of what they are denied (harms as deprivations); both have lives that are characterized by pleasure or pain, satisfaction or frustration; and the overall tone or quality of the life of each, to a greater or lesser degree, is a function of the harmonious satisfaction of those preferences that it is in the interests of each to have satisfied.[19]

The argument following from this must determine whether or not moral patients are owed duties or obligations by moral agents directly. This involves Regan in showing that the principle that it is wrong to harm an object of moral concern, whether agent or patient, conforms with our reflective intuitions. It is wrong to harm animals because as moral patients they possess inherent value. "If...we postulate inherent value in the case of moral agents, then we cannot non-arbitrarily deny it of moral patients."[20]

This postulate, however, needs theoretical support which is offered by the 'subject-of-a-life criterion':

> Individuals are subjects of a life if they are able to perceive and remember; if they have beliefs, desires, and preferences; if they are sentient and have an emotional life; if they have a sense of their own future; if they have a psychological identity over time; and if they have an individual experiential welfare that is logically independent of their utility for, and the interests of, others.[21]

Animals as understood according to Regan's analysis of them clearly meet this criterion and therefore possess inherent value. Following from this, in keeping with "the formal principle of justice...we are required to give equal respect to those who have equal inherent value, whether they be moral agents or moral patients, and if the latter, whether they be humans or animals."[22] We can therefore account for our direct duty not to harm animals, by the principle that they are owed respect as individuals who possess inherent value.[23] "Regan concludes...[on the basis of his findings] that it is wrong to raise animals for food, to hunt or trap them, commercially or for sport, and to use them for research."[24]

Several objections have been raised against Regan's theory, both specifically and more generally against any theory that attempts to ascribe or extend moral rights to animals. The first entails a logical problem. In spite of Regan's appeal to rational thinking and conceptual clarity, the basis of his theory is intuition. He moves from the "considered belief" that because a moral patient is in possession of inherent value, he/she/it ought to have respect

and therefore rights. But there is no logical connection between the fact that animals have inherent value and the judgment that they ought to have rights. The logical gap between statements of fact and decisions or judgments about the future (or what should be) has been a problem in moral theory since Hume drew attention to it in the mid-eighteenth century. In fairness to Regan, he has acknowledged this obstacle in his theory, but one critic has said "It is difficult to see how we could have a useful notion of inherent value without first solving these traditional problems of moral theory."[25]

Furthermore, as Michael Fox has pointed out, the realm of moral institutions is a uniquely human one: "since the only species we know of that has developed the notions of rights and obligations (and the institutions associated with them) is *Homo sapiens*, there must be something about this peculiar sort of social being that accounts for the phenomenon..."[26] Extending moral rights to animals, therefore, does not in any real sense provide them with moral status as, say, extending basic rights to Blacks and women does. It would however change our moral status in relationship to them, by extending and increasing our duties and obligations to others--a move some think will only serve to denegrate and weaken the legitimate human rights movement.[27]

Finally, one last objection to Regan's theory is in order before moving on to Peter Singer's argument. It is a somewhat surprising charge against his anthropocentrism. It is surprising because Regan himself does not recognize it. His fight, as he puts it, is against "...human chauvinism--the conceit that we (humans) are so very special that we are the only conscious inhabitants on the face of the earth."[28] But Regan's analysis of the inherent value of animals is "decidely anthropocentric."[29] Their value is not determined by what is characteristically theirs, instead they are compared with human beings to determine whether they share with us the qualities that give us value. Those who share with humans enough of the required characteristics for inherent value are afforded rights ("mentally normal mammals of a year or more"),[30] those who do not, are denied rights.

Paul Taylor agrees that a rights-based view is anthropocentric: "It would be less misleading if we simply dropped the language of moral rights concerning [animals]...because the language of moral rights has come to be well-established in our assertions about the rights of persons, especially in first person assertions about our own rights."[31] In criticism of our treatment of animals, Regan comments, "You don't change unjust institutions by tidying them up,"[32] and it may well be that we can not change a traditional rights view by 'tidying it up' either.

Peter Singer's perspective on the moral status of animals disagrees with a view (such as Regan's) which ascribes rights (to animals or humans) according to a list of required qualities: "Our concern for others must not depend on whether they possess certain characteristics."[33] Rather, Singer agrees with Jeremy Bentham's position in his concern for animals: "The question is not, Can they reason? nor Can they talk? but Can they suffer?"[34]

The task for Singer then, in establishing the moral status of animals, is to determine whether or not they suffer, for:

> If a being suffers, there can be no moral justification for refusing to take that suffering into consideration, and, indeed, to count it equally with the like suffering (if rough comparisons can be made) of any other being.[35]

As a utilitarian, Singer is concerned with the equal interests of all sentient beings, whether they be animal or human, and in particular, with their equal interest in being free from suffering.[36] Moral agents are duty-bound in his view to ensure the least amount of suffering and the greatest amount of pleasure for all beings concerned.

If it can be demonstrated, for example, that animals raised on factory farms as food for human consumption, or animals used in psychological experimentation and toxicity research, are all suffering under these circumstances, then these practices are morally wrong and human beings are obliged to stop them.

In his article "Animal Liberation," Singer argues at great length against these practices on the grounds that the animals involved suffer. In his mind there is no doubt that animals can, and do, suffer:

> Nearly all the external signs which lead us to infer pain in other humans can be seen in other species, especially 'higher' animals such as mammals and birds. Behavioural signs--writhing, yelping, or other forms of calling, attempts to avoid the source of pain,

and many others–are present. We know too that these animals are biologically similar in the relevant respects, having nervous systems like ours which can be observed to function as ours do.[37]

The argument that only human beings with the use of a developed language feel pain is dismissed by Singer, primarily on the grounds that use of language has nothing to do with feeling pain. Ability for conceptual thought and having intention are not required in order to feel pain, as is the case with human infants, and the fact that someone can say they are in pain is not a definite indication that they truly are. Hence, Singer accepts that "behavioural signs and knowledge of the animal's biological similarity to ourselves together provide adequate evidence that animals do suffer."[38]

So far, Singer's argument for the moral status of animals seems simple enough: we know that animals suffer; suffering is against a being's interests; as beings that suffer, animals have an interest in being free from suffering; we as moral agents must therefore act to reduce animal suffering as much as possible.

Not as simple is the question: Which animals suffer? Do they all, insects included? Singer determines that some animals suffer because they share with us a like nervous system which can stimulate pain response, and a similar brain capacity for negative feelings and emotions such as fear, anxiety and stress.[39] Now, "it remains to consider how far down the evolutionary scale this analogy holds."[40]

All mammals and birds, who share with humans the most anatomical and behavioral similarities, definitely do suffer and are therefore conscious. For all vertebrates (reptiles and fish) "the analogies are sufficiently close to suppose that they too possess consciousness,"[41] although the analogy does grow weaker the further down the evolutionary scale we go. Crustaceans, for example, make the list of con-

scious beings, aware of the pain they suffer and with an interest in being free of it, and therefore have moral status. But oysters, because they lack a sufficiently complex nervous system, probably do not feel pain and are therefore not conscious of suffering in any sense.[42] "Oysters," as one commentator on Singer has put it, "so different from us, are fair game for the gumbo."[43]

This, in essence, is Singer's theory. "Straightforward" as it is, he hoped it would have wide appeal and increase public awareness, but he also admits to using this line of argument because he was more certain about the wrongness of suffering than he was about the issue of killing animals. His continued defense of the practicality of a moral theory based on the capacity for suffering is cleverly underlined in a recent paper entitled "Animals and the Value of Life". In this paper, Singer seeks to address the wrongness of taking animal life by adopting and examining theories such as Regan's, which attempt to establish the value of animal life and thereby, their right to life.

At the conclusion of the paper, his findings leave him no less uncertain on the issue of killing, indeed, the theoretical conclusions which his inquiry brings leave both Singer and the reader dismayed about the exact nature of the right to life. In order to determine the value of animal life, it must meet with certain criteria derived from the value of human life. These criteria amount, in Singer's estimation, to a status of personhood (one who is self-conscious and rational), a status which he argues must theoretically be denied some humans. Even a utilitarian approach cannot solidly establish a theory of a right to life, unless it can be shown that "the loss of pleasure caused by the killing of one being can [not] be made up for by the creation of another being."[44]

The practical conclusion of this paper is that the issue of killing cannot be understood in isolation from the other realities, such as suffering, in a given situation. Animals that are killed for one reason or another, also suffer, through pain, or deprivation, or fear, or anxiety and so on. <u>This</u> knowledge should be our guiding principle in determining the moral status of animals. "To maintain that the lives of most animals are of less value than the lives of most humans is not to excuse what humans do to animals or to diminish the urgency of the struggle to end the callous exploitation of other species by our own."[45]

A serious objection raised against Singer's theory, is really a criticism of utilitarianism in general. Although its great appeal lies in its uncompromising egalitarianism, the kind of equality it applies is not the sort extended to individuals themselves, but rather to the sum total of individual interests. The consequences of moral acts are what count. The goal of utilitarianism is to bring about the best balance of satisfied interests over dissatisfied interests. That one or a few individuals (or many as the case may be) will be left with dissatisfied interests, is a consequence utilitarianism accepts.

For this reason utilitarianism is criticized as being "incompatible with the ideal of justice,"[46] which is based on individual rights. "Utilitarianism has no room for the moral rights of different individuals because it has no room for their equal inherent value or worth."[47]

Used as a basis for the moral status of animals, such a view toward animal interests is bound to come into insurmountable conflict with individual rights, particularily those of human beings whose rights are also protected by law. Such conflicts have already arisen between animal welfare groups and researchers and would be dramatically intensified if all meat producers and, indeed all individual meat eaters, suddenly interpreted <u>their</u> rights as being violated.

Singer's theory does not go far enough, therefore, in establishing solid ground for the moral status of animals. This, of course, may not deny the moral validity of his position, but it does indicate the serious difficulty one would have in adopting it as a workable ethic.

Another objection, more particular to Singer's theory, is of the same variety as raised against Regan's rights view, namely, that it is anthropocentric. Once again the criticism is surprising, because Singer spells out specifically that speciesism, defined as "a prejudice or attitude of bias toward the interests of members of one's own species and against those of members of other species,"[48] is the main target of his arguments.[49]

But while Regan makes mental analogies to humans, Singer refers to human behavioural and biological analogies as his measure of whether a particular species suffers and therefore qualifies as having moral status.

It is surprising in fact, that Singer does not recognize in some of his statements, his own brand of prejudice:

> It is not arbitrary to hold that the life of a self-aware being, capable of abstract thought, of planning for the future, of complex acts of communication, and so on, is more valuable than the life of a being without these capacities.[50]

As David Quammen has said of both Singer and Regan: "Make no mistake: Man [sic] is still the measure, for Singer and Regan. ...Instead of asking *Is the creature a human?*, they simply ask *How similar to human is similar enough?*"[51] This same critic has also said of these men, that they "show some shocking limitations of vision."[52] In fairness to both Regan and Singer, I think the true limitations of their attempts to formulate a workable ethic in regard to animals, stem from the traditional foundations of their theories.

Both men are locked into traditional frameworks conceived primarily to guide human individuals and human relationships. As a result, both are anthropocentric at their roots, and both are too narrowly focused on either individual rights or individual interests (albeit as a collectivity), and fail to address the problem within the wider context in which it exists. Bryan G. Norton sums up the most critical objection to both Regan's and Singer's theories, their 'moral atomism,' and suggests the need for a wider vision:

> The animal liberation movement is based upon an analogy between human and animal suffering and its main thrust is not to provide a means to adjudicate between conflicting demands that human individuals make on the environment, but rather it introduces a whole new category of demands--the demands of animals. ...Expanding the number and type of rights holders does not address the problem of which individual claims have priority over others--it only increases these demands and makes it more and more difficult to satisfy them. The basic problem, then, lies precisely in the emphasis on individual claims and interests. An environmental ethic must support the holistic functioning of an ongoing system.[53]

Holistic theories have responded to the recognition that traditional ethics meet with too many limitations when applied to animals and the environment generally. They represent a movement that is calling for a new way of doing ethics; for a radical shift in "our ideas about what kinds of action are moral and which are criminal."[54] They also require a change in human values, what John Rodman refers to as a 'paradigm change,' brought about not by "exhortation, threat, or logic, but a rebirth of the sense of wonder that in ancient times gave rise to philosophers but is now more often found among field naturalists."[55]

Unlike Singer's and Regan's views, holistic theories attempt to guide moral action within a much broader framework of relationships. The moral status of animals is established, not on the basis of their individual similarities to human beings, but according to their interdependence within the ecological community.

Most proponents of 'ethical holism' have either been influenced or inspired by the classical expression of the theory found in a chapter entitled "The Land Ethic," in Aldo Leopold's **A Sand County Almanac**, written over forty years ago. Leopold's 'land ethic' recognizes that all biological life thrives within a complex community of interdependence and that the natural systems in which they thrive (forests, oceans, mountains, swamps, etc.) are just as much a part of that interdependence as the life therein, and just as morally significant. Thus, the 'land ethic' "enlarges the boundaries of the [moral] community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals or collectively, the land."[56]

Viewed as a living organism in and of itself, the biotic community, as a whole (i.e. with all its constituent parts), becomes the object of moral concern. Its healthy maintenance and welfare are therefore the measure of moral action: "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends to do otherwise."[57]

This guiding principle, though simply stated, has wide ranging implications. It means, for example, that: endangered and rare species would be given preferential treatment because they contribute to the diversity and therefore stability of the community; certain species such as the honey bee, whose function in the natural economy is critical, would have a greater claim to moral attention, than say a rabbit or a mole; hunting of certain species in certain areas may be morally obligatory in order to offset population explosions; plant life, so important in many ways to the biosphere, would be protected; predators would be nurtured and preserved as valuable mem-

bers of the community; and the human population would have to be brought under control.[58]

These implications, which only begin to scratch the surface, reflect the dramatic change in values necessary in order to implement the 'land ethic.' Individual and equal rights and interests in 'the land' would have to be abandoned. An attitude of respect for all life and for the community itself would be fundamental and imperative of all its members. Most importantly, the "land ethic changes the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land community to plain member and citizen of it."[59]

Leopold offers no logical arguments, in general, to support the proposal of his 'land ethic.' He believes that such an ethic is an 'ecological necessity' and in time will evolve "in the minds of a thinking community" requiring "love, respect, and admiration for land, and a high regard for its value."[60]

Logic and rationality appear to have little to do with the understanding and acceptance of Leopold's ethic. As J. Baird Callicott has observed:

> Whatever the strictly logical connections between the concept of a social community and a moral responsibility, there appears to be a strong psychological bond between that idea and conscience. Hence, the representation of the natural environment as, in Leopold's terms, "one humming community,"...brings into play, whether rationally or not, those stirrings of conscience which we feel in relation to delicately complex, functioning social and organic systems.[61]

John Rodman agrees that somehow, the grasp of the 'land ethic' defies logic: "such arguments could not persuade anyone who still looked at nature as if it were comprised of objects or mere resources, and such arguments are unnecessary for those who have come to perceive nature as composed of subjects."[62]

This change in perception is necessary and is the key underpinning of the 'land ethic,' for with a sufficient change in our perception, respectful conduct will seem 'natural' and the means by which we have traditionally understood ethical consideration (as rights and duties) will no longer be required or indeed, have a place.[63]

As radical as this shift in thinking may be, in terms of ethical theory, its acclimation in our minds is rather more subtle. John Rodman describes it as an 'ecological sensibility,' and in the following passage eloquently describes how it unfolds during a reading of Leopold's book:

> [we are] invited to accompany Leopold as he follows the tracks of a skunk in the January snow, wondering where the skunk is heading and why; speculating on the different meanings of a winter thaw for the mouse whose snow burrow has collapsed and for the owl who has just made dinner of the mouse; trying to understand the honking of the geese as they circle the pond; and wondering what the world must look like to a muskrat eye-deep in the swamp. By the time one reaches Leopold's discussion of the land ethic, one has grown accustomed to thinking of different animals--and (arguably), by extention, different natural entities in general--as subjects rather than objects, as beings that have their own purposes, their own perspectives on the world, and their own goods that are differentially affected by events. While we can never get inside a muskrat's head and know exactly what the world looks like from that angle, we can be pretty certain that the view is different from ours. What melts away as we become intrigued with this plurality of perspectives is the assumption that any one of them (for example, ours) is privileged.[64]

With respect to the moral status of animals then, the 'land ethic' offers a kind of all or nothing proposition. If we are to accept its position on the moral status of animals, then we must accept its position on our moral standing and the moral standing of the environment as well.

Once again, our traditions hamper us. Not only are our Western systems of moral philosophy anchored in logic and rational application, so too are our thought patterns and our entire World-view. Such a radical shift in the perception of the human experience strikes fear in the minds of those opposed to holistic theories and places them, not within the realm of ethics, but in a category with mysticism.

One of the most frequent arguments against

holistic theory, is that it denies "claims, rights, interests, the value of the individual, and so on,"[65] all of the foundations upon which traditional ethics are built.

Some philosophers go so far as to interpret holism as being anti-human because it implies that "massive human diebacks would be good. It is our species' duty to eliminate 90 percent of our numbers,"[66] they warn. In a similar vein, Tom Regan exaggerates the clash between what he terms 'environmental fascism' and the rights view, in this passage:

> If...the situation we faced was either to kill a rare wildflower or a (plentiful) human being, and if the wildflower, as a 'team member,' would contribute more to "the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community" than the human, then presumably we would not be doing wrong if we killed the human and saved the wildflower.[67]

These arguments (and anxieties) illustrate the underlying principle objection to holism: that it is at best theoretically unclear, and at worst, incoherent as an ethical theory. Even in the minds of proponents, holism is considered "still-emergent."[68] In their existing presentation, and this is especially true of Leopold's 'land ethic,' they are interpreted by conservative minds as being more akin to the 'primitive' North American native's respect for nature,[69] than to a comprehensible ethical system. As such, their acceptance requires visionary thinking, a leap of faith, and a journey back to the starting point out of which our traditional ethics once grew. It is a task for scholars, Aldo Leopold says:

> Ability to see the cultural value of wilderness boils down, in the last analysis, to a question of intellectual humility. The shallow-minded modern who has lost his [sic] rootage in the land assumes that he [sic] has already discovered what is important; it is such who prate of empires, political or economic, that will last a thousand years. It is only the scholar who appreciates that all of history consists of successive excursions from a single starting point, to which man [sic] returns again and again to organize yet another search for a durable scale of values. It is only the scholar who understands why the raw wilderness gives definition and meaning to the human enterprise.[70]

The fact that the 'land ethic' is not to be understood in logical terms, but rather as an evolutionary process of sensibility, involving more than just our reason, leaves it open to possibilities. But for the moment, the moral status of animals, as holistic theories would apply it, remains outside our current understanding of ethics and on a path of thought that we have yet to explore.

Ultimately, the hinderance to assigning a moral status to animals stems from our limited framework of ethical understanding. Attempts by traditional rights and utilitarian theories to cross-over from human to non-human application, admirable as they may be, are hampered by their anthropocentrism and their moral atomism. They attempt to logically apply moral status to animals and fail. There is no room within such narrow ethical systems for animals other than humans. Both Regan's and Singer's theories lead us to dead ends.

Holistic theories seek to address these limitations by taking us in a new direction, perhaps even returning us to a very ancient and fundamental understanding of ourselves and our place on this planet. They lead us, frighteningly, into the realms of an entirely different existence, beyond the boundaries of current ethical understanding. As philosophers continue in their search for an ethical system that will include animals, they may discover that the fences of logic and reason no longer hold them, and that, as the pioneers of 'ethical holism' found, the future of ethics is on the road not taken.

Notes

1. John Passmore, **Man's Responsibility for Nature** (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974), pp. 3-4.

2. Immanual Kant quoted in Mary Midgley, "Persons and Non-Persons", in **In Defense of Animals**, ed. Peter Singer (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1985), p. 57.

3. This is an interpretation only of Western attitudes and Western moral philosophy. Eastern traditions, in the main, hold different views.

4. Tom Regan, **The Case For Animal Rights** (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), p. 147.

5. Ibid., pp. 148-149.

6. Cited in Edward Johnson, "Treating the Dirt", in **Earthbound**, ed. Tom Regan (New York: Random House, Inc., 1984), p. 342.

7. Peter Singer, "Animal Liberation", in **Environmental Ethics**, ed. K.S. Shrader-Frechette (Pacific Grove: The Boxwood Press, 1985), p. 104.

8. Unfortunately Taylor's theory will not be included in further discussion. It is included here as an example of an attempt to break with ethical tradition, but does not go far enough to be considered holistic. In some respects

it maintains tradition, especially in its continued respect for the individual.

9. Cited in Edward Johnson, "Treating the Dirt", p. 348.

10. Cited in Edward Johnson, "Treating the Dirt", p. 356.

11. Bernard E. Rollin, **Animal Rights and Human Morality** (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1981), p. 69.

12. Ibid., p. 70. This position is not difficult to accept when we consider the ease with which we have entered into war and thereby legally killed our enemies --individuals who supposedly possess a natural right to life as well. This is not to say that war is right in any sense, it merely illustrates the difficulty human beings have had in upholding moral as opposed to legal rights.

13. Tom Regan, "Introduction", in **Earthbound**, ed. Tom Regan (New York: Random House, Inc., 1984), p. 29.

14. Bernard E. Rollin, **Animal Rights and Human Morality**, p.73.

15. Tom Regan, **The Case For Animal Rights**, pp. 148-149. Regan has been critized for being "too cerebral" (see p. 25, **In Defense of Animals**, Singer) and admits himself that his notion of inherent value limits the criteria of simplicity. See p. 264, in **The Case For Animal Rights**.

16. Tom Regan, "Introduction", in **Earthbound**, pp. 30-31.

17. Tom Regan, **The Case For Animal Rights**, p. 193.

18. Ibid., p. 154.

19. Ibid., p. 119.

20. Ibid., p. 240.

21. Ibid., p. 264.

22. Ibid., pp. 263-264.

23. Singer has unfairly criticized Regan's theory as not allowing a subject of a life to be killed, even if it meant saving a greater number of lives. (see p. 360 in "Animals and the Value of Life" in **Matters of Life and Death**, ed. Tom Regan (New York: Random House, 1986)) This is not the case. The right to respect may be overridden by the Miniride Principle. See p. 328 in **The Case for Animal Rights**.

24. Alastair S. Gunn, "Preserving Rare Species", **Earthbound**. ed. Tom Regan (New York: Random House, 1984) p. 308.

25. Edward Johnson, "Treating the Dirt", pp. 344-345.

26. Michael A. Fox, **The Case for Animal Experimentation** (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p. 56.

27. Ibid., p. 59.

28. Tom Regan, **The Case for Animal Rights**, p. 33.

29. David Quammen, **Natural Acts** (New York: Dell Publishing, 1985), p. 140.

30. Ibid., p. 139.

31. Paul Taylor, **Respect for Nature** (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 254.

32. Tom Regan, "The Case for Animal Rights", in **In Defense of Animals**. ed. Peter Singer (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1985), p. 13.

33. Peter Singer, "Animal Liberation", p. 104.

34. Ibid., p. 104.

35. Ibid.

36. The term "suffering" is used by Singer primarily in reference to physical pain, but it also applies to the experience of animals under emotions of fear, anxiety, stress, and so on.

37. Peter Singer, "Animal Liberation", p. 105.

38. Ibid., pp. 105-106.

39. Peter Singer, "Animals and the Value of Life", pp. 344-345.

40. Peter Singer, "Animal Liberation", p. 106.

41. Peter Singer, "Animals and the Value of Life", p. 345.

42. Ibid., pp. 344-345. Singer admits that lack of knowledge about the lower forms of life, require that we remain "agnostic about whether they are capable of suffering." see p. 106 in "Animal Liberation".

43. David Quammen, **Natural Acts**, p. 140.

44. Peter Singer, "Animals and the Value of Life", p. 372.

45. Ibid., p. 375.

46. James Rachels, **The Elements of Moral Philosophy** (New York: Random House, 1986), p. 94.

47. Tom Regan, "The Case for Animals Rights", p. 19.

48. Michael A. Fox, "Animal Liberation: A Critique", in **Environmental Ethics**, ed. K.S. Shrader-Frechette (Pacific Grove: The Boxwood Press, 1985), p. 114.

49. Peter Singer, "Animals and the Value of Life", p. 353.

50. Cited in Michael A. Fox, "Animal Liberation: A Critique", p. 118.

51. David Quammen, **Natural Acts**, p. 140.

52. Ibid., p. 136.

53. Cited in Edward Johnson, "Treating the Dirt", p. 358.

54. Cited in John Passmore, **Man's Responsibility for Nature**, p. 5.

55. John Rodman, "Four Forms of Ecological Consciousness Reconsidered", in **Ethics and the Environment**, eds. D. Scherer and T. Attig (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1983), p. 90.

56. Aldo Leopold, "The Land Ethic", in **Ethics and the Environment**, eds. D. Scherer and T. Attig (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1983), p. 7.

57. Ibid., p. 8.

58. J. Baird Callicott, "Animal Liberation: A Triangular Affair", in **Ethics and the Environment**, eds. D. Scherer and T. Attig (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1983), pp. 61, 64-65.

59. Cited in J. Baird Callicott, "In Search of an Environmental Ethic", in **Matters of Life and Death**, ed. Tom Regan (New York: Random House, 1986), p. 408.

60. Aldo Leopold, "The Land Ethic", pp. 7-8.

61. J. Baird Callicott, "Animal Liberation: A Triangular Affair", p. 62.

62. John Rodman, "Four Forms of Ecological Consciousness Reconsidered", p. 90.

63. Ibid., p. 90.

64. Ibid., p. 89.

65 Edward Johnson, "Treating the Dirt", p. 359. See also, Taylor, **Respect for Nature**, pp. 118-119, 286.

66. J. Baird Callicott, "In Search of an Environmental Ethic", p. 410.

67. Tom Regan, **The Case for Animal Rights**, p. 362.

68. John Rodman, "Four Forms of Ecological Consciousness Reconsidered", p. 82.

69. Douglas H. Strong and Elizabeth S. Rosenfield, "Ethics or Expediency: An Environmental Question", in **Environmental Ethics**, ed. K.S. Shrader-Frechette (Pacific Grove: The Boxwood Press, 1985), p. 10.

70. Aldo Leopold, **A Sand County Almanac**, (New York: Ballantine Books, 1966), p. 279.

UNDERCURRENTS EDITORIAL POLICY

The aim of Undercurrents is to provide a forum for the presentation of interdisciplinary papers which might not otherwise have a venue for publication. This is not a mainstream or single discipline publication. We are looking for innovative critical discussions which challenge traditional conceptions of the relationships between human and non-human nature. We recognize that the exploration of problems and questions regarding the relationships between nature, culture, and self may draw from a variety of disciplines, and we encourage submissions from any field, providing links are made to the natural environment.

It is the wish of the journal committee to present a vision of humans as part of nature, rather than apart from or over nature. We are therefore seeking papers which do not discuss nature or elements of nature solely as a resource, whether economic or aesthetic. We feel that other journals exist which publish traditional approaches to planning, development, resource conservation etc.

We would like articles to be written in accessible language (clear rather than cryptic or jargon filled), and we may be forced to reject articles on the basis of inaccessible writing style. Articles may be edited to exclude sexist or racist terminology.

Contributions must be 5000 words or less. We ask that a copy be submitted on disc, preferably Word Perfect, if possible, in addition to three "hard" copies.

We will also consider black and white drawings (submit copies pending acceptance), poetry, and prose vignettes, such as journal entries or mini-essays. Be creative!

Publication is open to current graduate students in Canada.

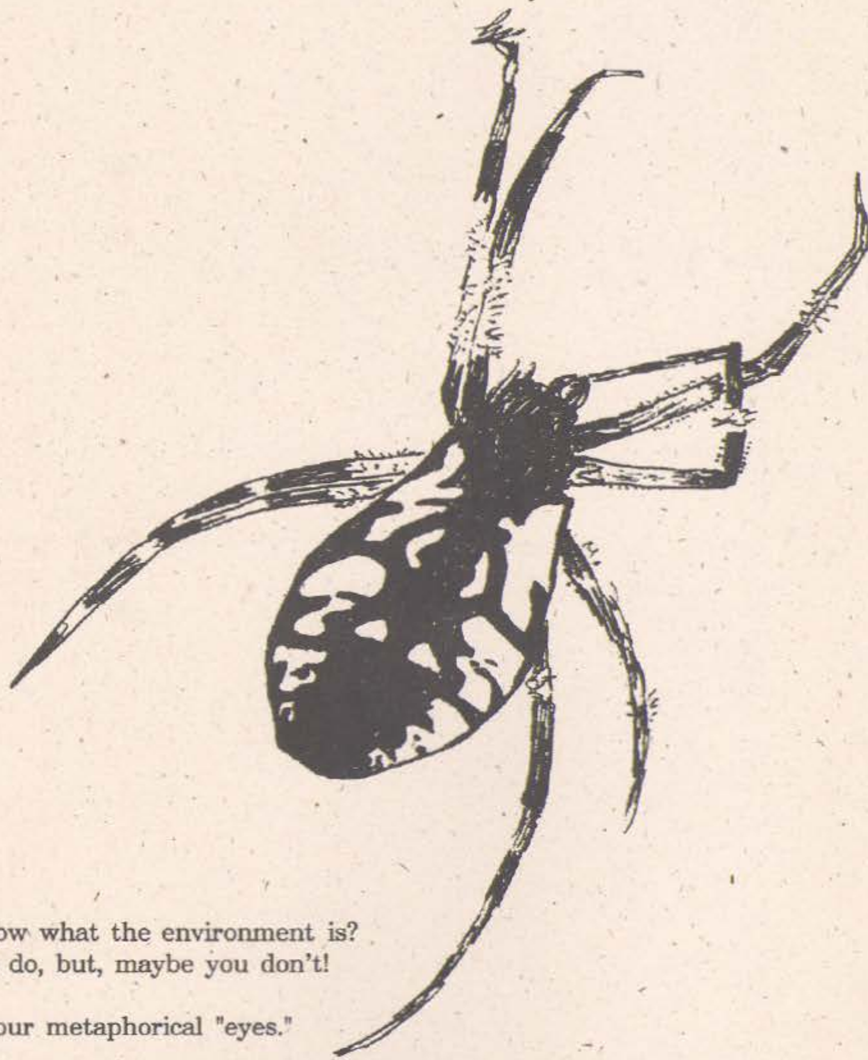
Undercurrents is produced by graduate students within, but independent of, the Faculty of Environmental Studies, York University. The Faculty of Environmental Studies offers an interdisciplinary and self-directed program for "environmental studies" in the widest possible sense of the term. Studying environmentally, students pursue work in the broadly related areas of built, social, organizational, and, of course, natural environments.

The Faculty of Environmental Studies provides a place for studies along the following lines:

* Environmental thought
* Urban planning and design
* International and regional development
* Action research
* Organizational environments
* Resource management
* Women and environments
* Environmental behavior
* Quality of Working Life
* Housing and cooperative management
* Biological conservation
* Human services and health
* Social policy
* Communication and advocacy
* Environmental policy
* Environmental politics
* Native/Canadian relations
* Environmental education
* Tropical studies
* Northern studies

For more information contact:

The Faculty of Environmental Studies
York University
4700 Keele Street
North York, Ontario
Canada M3J 1P3



Do you know what the environment is?
Maybe you do, but, maybe you don't!

So, close your metaphorical "eyes."

Can you smell, hear, feel and taste the environment? Are you **in touch** with the wild places in the city? Can you **feel** the flesh-child inside your Cartesian skin? Can you **smell** animals or **hear** their calls? What's your sense of place and natural rhythm?
In other words, Who are **you**?

Read on, gentle reader, read on. . .