ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS BEYOND DUALISM:

AN ARGUMENT FOR MUTUALITY

by

SORCHA O'CONNOR

A THESIS

Presented to the Department of Philosophy
and the Robert D. Clark Honors College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Science

May 2022

An Abstract of the Thesis of

Sorcha O'Connor for the degree of Bachelor of Science
in the Department of Philosophy to be taken May 2022

Title: Environmental Ethics Beyond Dualism: An Argument for Mutuality

Approved: *Caroline Lundquist, PhD*
Primary Thesis Advisor

How have shared knowledge systems led to the global environmental crisis, and what alternative philosophical frameworks might exist that do not lead to a comparable level of unreasonable harm? Although thought is neither the sole, nor always the direct, determinant of behavior, it nevertheless plays a crucial role in facilitating our actions and decisions. To meaningfully address any problem, even one so complex as the environmental crisis, it is necessary to identify its conceptual foundations. This paper argues that the Human/nature dualistic framework prevalent within the dominant Western knowledge system, with features of hyper separation, one-way relational definition, and hierarchy, underlies and perpetuates the environmental crisis. Furthermore, the naturalization of dualistic logic within the dominant knowledge system makes it difficult for environmental philosophies aiming to address the crisis to escape dualistic assumptions. This paper examines two significant currents in mainstream environmental philosophy - the Cult of Wilderness, and the Gospel of Eco-Efficiency – and argues that their retention of dualistic assumptions limits their efficacy. This paper turns to environmental philosophies that originate outside of or challenge the dominant Western tradition as examples of non-dualistic ethical-epistemology frameworks. It examines

Kyle Powys Whyte's collective continuance, which draws from the indigenous Anishinaabe intellectual tradition, and Virginia Held's ethics of care, which is situated in the feminist philosophical tradition. What is common among these alternative philosophies is an underlying mutualistic ontology. This paper argues that ethical-epistemological frameworks founded in mutual relationality rather than dualism provide a robust foundation from which to address the global environmental crisis and guide ethical decision making for the future.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Caroline Lundquist, Dr. Barbara Muraca, and Dr. Daphne Gallagher for serving on my thesis committee and for providing me with incredible support and detailed feedback throughout this process. I would like to thank the Robert D. Clark Honors College and the University of Oregon Department of Philosophy for providing the coursework that has greatly informed my understanding of this topic and for equipping me with the crucial skills and structure to accomplish this thesis. I am incredibly grateful for the guidance of dedicated professors such as professor Lundquist and professor Muraca, as well as professors Kimberly Parzuchowski, Kenny Knowlton Jr., and Camisha Russell throughout my undergraduate career in philosophy, and I am especially grateful for the close involvement and support of my thesis committee throughout this difficult yet rewarding thesis process.

I'd also like to thank my parents Aislinn Adams and Tom O'Connor for their support in this process and their long-held belief in the value of a well-rounded and unique education. Finally, I would like to thank my friends Tillie Morris and Erica Rogers who have supported me not only throughout this process but over the past four years, and without whom I would not be where I am today.

Table of Contents

Introduction

For some decades now, we have become increasingly aware of the compounding negative impact our present production and consumption has on the global environment. Increased carbon emissions generated by the burning of fossil fuels and large-scale agriculture, combined with the depletion of carbon sinks is causing the global climate to warm with cascading ramifications. Ranging from harmful extractive industries and resource depletion, to biodiversity and habitat loss, to plastic and air pollution, the list of interrelated issues is extensive and evolving. We are witnessing an unprecedented global environmental crisis, the causes of which can be disproportionately attributed to the wealthiest of our population and the burdens of which are disproportionately felt by the poorest and most marginalized. The environmental crisis is an unimaginably vast, complex, and interwoven problem operating on the smallest and largest of scales. It is neither homogeneous nor simple and it has no single solution. How do we possibly tackle such an issue?

In treating any problem, it is important that solutions not only manage symptoms but also target the problem's source. Addressing the effects of climate change and pollution will make little headway while we continue to produce these problems at the same rate. At a fundamental level, the actions and decisions we make are based in assumptions that justify and facilitate those actions. Addressing the source of a problem, even one as complex as the environmental crisis, means examining its production at the level of thought. My thesis seeks to investigate the question: What ethical-epistemological frameworks facilitate the global environmental crisis and what

alternative frameworks might exist that do not lead to a comparable level of unreasonable harm?

The current environmental crisis and its many related issues of environmental injustice can be examined as a product of the dominant Western knowledge system. The dominant Western knowledge system operates through various ontological (concerning the nature of being), epistemological (concerning the nature and production of knowledge), and ethical (concerning principles of normativity and morality) frameworks. Ontological and epistemological frameworks fundamentally inform ethical frameworks of morality. Defining assumptions about the environment, people, and the relations between them provide the foundation for ethical structures and the parameters of ethical decision-making. Core assumptions, embedded in the very language of the dominant knowledge system, establish what *is* and crucially frame what *ought* to be. As such, the ontological and epistemological dimensions of the dominant Western knowledge system have *ethical* implications. Understanding present day environmental-ethical frameworks (and their production of the environmental crisis) requires analysis of the ontological and epistemological assumptions of the dominant knowledge system. This paper examines a pervasive ontological and epistemological framework within the dominant Western knowledge system known as the logic of dualism. Dualism crucially frames dominant conceptions of humans, nature, and the moral implications of the relations between them.

Chapter 1 of this paper examines the logic of dualism operative within a network of interrelated dualisms, focusing particularly on Human/nature dualism. It unpacks the characteristic features of dualistic logic including hyper-separation, hierarchy, one-way relational definition, objectification, and homogenization, providing examples of each. It examines the omissions and harmful implications of dualistic logic, particularly in their production of the environmental crisis and related structures of domination. Finally, it examines the naturalization of dualistic logic through which dualistic structures are embedded in culture, rendering them universal and eternal.

Chapter 2 acknowledges the need for environmental philosophies that both address the current environmental crisis and facilitate less harmful human-environment relationships moving forward. It examines two mainstream currents in environmentalism that seek to address the environmental crisis: the Cult of Wilderness and the Gospel of Eco-Efficiency. It unpacks the dualistic assumptions that persist within these environmental frameworks and demonstrates that the persistence of dualistic logic within environmental philosophies undermines their ability to effectively address the existing crisis and inform future action.

Chapter 3 argues that a robust environmental philosophy must be non-dualistic if it is to successfully integrate humans into the global ecosystem and facilitate constructive rather than destructive ways of living. It outlines the features of a non-dualistic framework as one that is non (or differently) hierarchical, dynamic, situated, and fundamentally *mutualistic*. Mutualism describes a quality of two-way or *mutual*

relation. A mutualistic ontology can be found in environmental philosophies that challenge or originate outside of the dominant Western tradition. Examples of mutualistic frameworks include Virginia Held's articulation of an ethics of care, originating in the feminist philosophical tradition, and Kyle Powys Whyte's collective continuance grounded in the indigenous Anishinaabe intellectual tradition. Both ethics of care and collective continuance offer alternative ways of structing inter-human as well as human-nonhuman nature relationships. They successfully incorporate non-dualistic features of mutuality, situatedness, and dynamic flexibility. Their underlying mutualistic ontology gives them the capacity to envision mutually beneficial relationships through complex webs of interdependence and reciprocal responsibility. I argue that a mutualistic ontology provides the necessary basis upon which an environmental ethical framework can present effective solutions to the present crisis, situate humans in our environment, and promote the collective flourishing of the ecosystem.

Chapter 1: Human/Nature Dualism

The dominant Western conception of nature is defined by and grounded in a web of interrelated dualisms. A dualism is a hierarchical relation between two opposing classes that is characterized by hyper-separation and naturalized in culture. In her book entitled *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, eco-feminist philosopher Val Plumwood writes,

> Dualism is a relation of separation and domination inscribed and naturalised in culture and characterised by radical exclusion, distancing and opposition between orders constructed as systematically higher and lower, as inferior and superior, as ruler and ruled…[1]

Dualism describes the relation of two distinct classes, for example reason and emotion, male and female, mind and body, humanity/civilization and nature. Unlike a simple dichotomy or duality, the separation is imbalanced such that one class is viewed as dominant or superior (e.g., reason, male, mind, civilization) and the other as lower or inferior (e.g., emotion, female, body, nature). Each class is defined by its opposition to the other, the lower class specifically defined by what it *lacks* compared to the higher. For example, humanity is routinely defined as including those who are capable of "reason" (classically only white Europeans and often only white men) and nature is defined as that which lacks this ability. As such, humanity is viewed as *that which is not nature* and vice versa. Because each class is defined by its exclusion from the other, dualism assumes overlap between classes is not possible. The classes are not only separated based on a distinction of one or two differences, but are thus *hyper-separated*, a phenomenon referred to by Plumwood as "radical exclusion".[2] Each class is treated as

[1] Val Plumwood, Feminism and the Mastery of Nature, New York, NY: Routledge, 1993, 47-48.
[2] Ibid, 49.

belonging to "radically different orders or kinds" which are opposite in every feature of significance.[3]

The logic of dualism is shared by an interrelated web of dualisms that define and reinforce each other.[4] To examine one dualism is to examine the characteristics of the network as a whole, and the ways in which certain dualisms are layered upon others. Reason-nature dualism is used to designate a long list of related dualisms.[5] Reason acts as the differentiating feature of the "superior" classes of human, culture, civilization, male, mind, master, and freedom. By exclusion from the classes of reason, "nature" is the umbrella under which matter, physicality, animality, emotion, female, body, slave, and necessity are relegated. The designations of "subject" and "self" are granted to the superior classes of reason while inferior classes are made "object" and "other" in relation. Civilization and men are in turn associated with production and the public realm, while nature is declared the domain of women, reproduction, and the private realm (e.g. family and the home).[6] As soon as one begins to question the conflicts and omissions within one dualistic relation, the very logic of dualism itself is called into question, and with it the whole network of dualisms. It quickly becomes clear that to effectively dismantle one dualism, on some level requires the dismantling of all the others. Properly unpicking the entire web of dualisms and its many dimensions falls outside the scope of this paper, but it is crucial to recognize that no dualism operates in isolation from the rest of the network.

[3] Plumwood, Feminism and the Mastery of Nature, 1993, 48.
[4] Ibid, 42-43.
[5] Ibid, 44.
[6] Ibid, 43.

Furthermore, the oppressive structures of domination that arise from one dualism are interwoven with and operate in tandem with others.

Human/nature dualism is heavily intertwined with race, gender, and class based oppressive structures. [7] In discussing human/nature dualism, it is crucial to recognize who is included in the term "human". Since the emergence of "modernity" around the 16th century, "humanity" has been limited by the dominant Western knowledge system to include only white Europeans.[8] The dualistic Enlightenment definition of "human" as inclusive of those possessing reason, and the exclusion of people of color and routinely of women from that ability, is foundational to constructions of race, structures of white supremacy, and gender-based oppression. When the concept of the "human" is discussed, it carries with it heavy implications of the *white* - and in the majority of cases *male* – human.[9] In the present day, the designation of "human" has been formally extended to all people, but the default characteristics of the human implicitly retain assumptions of whiteness and Euro-centricity. The dominant Western definition of humanity is the standard to which all those designated as "other" (people of color, indigenous people) are expected to assimilate or aspire to in order to attain full humanity and civilization. As such, the racial implications of human/nature dualism are not an afterthought to the

[7] Feminist and liberatory philosophers such as Val Plumwood and Maria Lugones have taken up the concept of "interlocking" or "interwoven" oppressions first popularized by The Combahee River Collective to describe the interrelated nature of oppressive structures. (Combahee River Collective. *The Combahee River Collective Statement: Black Feminist Organizing in the Seventies and Eighties*. Albany, NY: Kitchen Table, 1986.)
[8] Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument." *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003): 257–337, http://www.jstor.org/stable/41949874, 260.
[9] Ibid.

ideological foundations of the environmental crisis but are *central* within it.[10] The problematic features of the present human-nature relationship are not features of *all* human-nature relationships as such, but specifically of the relationship imposed by the dominant Western knowledge system. The issue lies not with humans generally, but with this particular knowledge system, its particular definition of human, and its particular definition of nature. To emphasize this point and acknowledge the exclusivity of the dominant definition of humanity, I will refer to the dualistic Western conception of the human as "Human" from this point forward. Alternatively, lower-case "human" will act as a general, species-inclusive descriptor that applies to all people.

The network of interrelated dualisms within which Human/nature dualism operates share a common "logic of dualism".[11] The logic of dualism homogenizes and over-simplifies the members of its bifurcated reality, denies relations of mutual dependence, and justifies structures of domination.[12] The essentialization of the logic of dualism invisibilizes its constructive activities, naturalizing it within culture and rendering its assumptions static, universal, and normative. The logic of dualism is characterized by hyper-separation, hierarchy, and one-way relational definition and is supported by "backgrounding", objectification, and homogenization.

[10] Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract,* Cornell University Press, 1997, 93.
[11] Plumwood, Feminism and the Mastery of Nature, 1993, 47.
[12] Plumwood names five features of the logic of dualism: backgrounding (denial), radical exclusion (hyperseparation), incorporation (relational definition), instrumentalism (objectification), and homogenization or stereotyping. (Plumwood, Feminism and the Mastery of Nature, 1993, 48 - 53.)

Hyper Separation

Hyper-separation, or radical exclusion, is based in the definition of a class as the exclusive opposite of its counterpart. It constructs difference between classes as fundamental and innate, such that overlap and movement between classes is not assumed possible. Plumwood writes,

> … dualistic construal of difference usually treats it as providing not merely a difference of degree within a sphere of overall similarity, but a major difference in kind, even a bifurcation or division in reality between utterly different orders of things.[13]

Exceeding mere distinction, radical exclusion isolates each class entirely from the other. It treats classes as insurmountably different, not simply by a few qualities within the same realm of "overall similarity", but in their fundamental and essential nature. Because each class is defined by its exclusion from the other, hyper-separation divides reality into two wholly separate worlds. It "denies continuity", leaving no room for existence in both spheres or for migration between them.[14]

In Human/nature dualism, hyper-separation defines Humanity as the radical opposite of, and superior to, nature. In a dualistic understanding, the qualities which characterize Humanity are those which grant Humans superiority and mastery over nature. Through reason, Humans are seen to be capable of transcending the inconsistencies of emotion and instinct. The dominant knowledge system may acknowledge that on a basic biological level all people are animals, but the ability to contemplate, understand, and to some extent transcend the limitations of biology is what

[13] Plumwood, Feminism and the Mastery of Nature, 1993, 50.
[14] Ibid.

elevates certain people to the status of *Human*. Those who are granted membership in Humanity are seen to be capable of developing reason and civilization, but those who are excluded from Humanity (people of color, women, non-human nature) are deemed fundamentally *incapable* of developing these qualities.[15] Thus, the classes of Humanity and nature are fixed. The technological products of Western science are seen to grant Humanity a degree of control over the material necessities that nature is wholly governed by. Civilization - the cumulative achievement of Humanity - is characterized by technologies which minimize our dependence on natural cycles and distance us from nature, at least in appearance and/or by degrees. For example, dominant Western economic structures distance people from the material processes they rely on (food, shelter etc.) through mass production, the division of labor, and chains of supply. Radical exclusion allows the role of Humans as integrated members of the ecosystem to be largely ignored. Human societal reproduction is distanced from both its dependence on, and impact within, the greater environment. Hyper-separation not only distances Humanity from the rest of the natural world, but also acts internally to distance Humans from aspects of themselves. Dualism distances the mind from the body and over-emphasizes the rationality of the Human self while denying emotion and sense-based Human experience.[16] To effectively construe classes as hyper-separate, the logic of dualism must work to minimize, invisibalize, and deny practical realities which contradict its narrative.

[15] Plumwood, Feminism and the Mastery of Nature, 1993, 44.
[16] Ibid, 43.

In practice, the logic of dualism requires the homogenization and oversimplification of opposing classes. In order to meet the radically exclusive assumptions of hyper-separation, differences *between* classes must be emphasized and inflated while similarities and relations of mutuality are minimized.[17] The separation between superior and inferior must be what feminist philosopher Maria Lugones describes as "split-separation" - the division of groups into pure, individually whole entities.[18] Impure separation (which she calls "curdle-separation") in which members partially belong in multiple classes or move between them, muddles the radically exclusive definition of each class as the opposite of its counterpart, and undermines the inherent superiority of the dominant class.[19] For example, the "radical exclusion" of women from men requires each gender to overemphasize their respective differences and minimize similarities, such that each class fits fully within its side of the binary.[20] Both men and women are thus oversimplified to fit within the dualistic structure. Individuals who challenge or exist beyond the gender binary are ignored and/or forcibly suppressed.

In Human/nature dualism, aspects of Human experience which bring Humans close to the side of "nature" such as reproduction, emotion, embodied experience, and material needs are minimized, alongside the groups who attend to such needs (e.g., women as traditional caretakers). Radical exclusion assumes an innate and inherently value-based difference between Humans and non-human nature, placing Humans at the

[17] Plumwood, Feminism and the Mastery of Nature, 1993, 49.
[18] Maria Lugones, "Purity, Impurity, and Separation." *Signs* 19, no. 2 (1994): 458–79, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3174808, 460.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Plumwood, Feminism and the Mastery of Nature, 1993, 32.

top of a pyramid of living creatures. It is important to emphasize that difference, distinction, or separation is not the issue, but rather the dualistic construal of separation which attributes differences to an innate hierarchy of value. In such a logical structure, the inferior class of nature is simplified and homogenized. Differences between members of the same class are minimized and their similarities are inflated so they may be reduced to a singular descriptive category. To recognize any internal variation or complexity within an "inferior" class would challenge its fixed position as other and object lacking agency. Non-human nature is viewed as the static background against which the foreground of Human history and development occurs. The Human subject is granted all the dynamic complexities of full personhood (or being-hood) which the classes of object (people of color, women, non-human nature) are denied. In oversimplifying non-human nature and constructing it as an agency-less mass of beings governed by fixed instincts, dualistic logic fails to comprehend the dynamic and interrelated complexity of global ecosystems.[21] Distancing and homogenization become particularly dangerous when they operate in tandem with dualism's hierarchical structure.

Because dualism is implicitly hierarchical, hyper-separation implies not only two separate spheres but an implicit *order* of higher and lower to which all members are confined. It allows the dominant class to distance itself from the qualities and members of the lower, and more easily justify structures of domination. In Plumwood's words, radical exclusion, "... naturalises domination, making it appear to be part of the nature of

[21] Plumwood, Feminism and the Mastery of Nature, 1993, 194.

each and in the nature of things."[22] Hyper-separation allows the dominant class to cease valuing, empathizing with, or considering the needs of members of the lower class. Members of the dominant class can detach themself from the harms experienced by the "other" because they see themselves as fundamentally superior, separate, and of a *different order*.[23] In the emergence of pseudo-scientific theories of race and racial superiority, the dominant Western knowledge system has sought tirelessly to inflate "biological" differences between white Humans and people of color in order to construe people of color as "nature" - therefore sub-human and deserving of domination.[24] Groups which challenge or live outside of societal structures deemed "civilized" by the dominant knowledge system are construed as "closer to nature" and "primitive".[25] Denying the personhood of large groups of people facilitates and justifies exploitative structures of domination such as colonization and patriarchy. Denying the subject-hood (or being-hood) of non-human nature justifies the exploitation of the land as "natural resource" without concern for the destruction of habitat, irreparable damage to the ecosystem, or the subsequent mass extinction of non-human species and suffering of humans alike. Structures of exploitation are not only justified by dualism but are *naturalized* - viewed as a normative *ought* stemming from the innate nature of the groups in question, rather than as the particular result of socio-historical and political constructions. The hierarchical structure of dualism can be further articulated in what Plumwood calls "incorporation" or "relational definition".[26]

---

[22] Plumwood, Feminism and the Mastery of Nature, 1993, 51.
[23] Ibid, 50.
[24] Mills, *The Racial Contract,* 1997, 60.
[25] Plumwood, Feminism and the Mastery of Nature, 1993, 42-43.
[26] Ibid, 52.

One-Way Relational Definition

Dualism's hierarchical structure is reinforced by a one-way relational framework which others and objectifies the "inferior" class. The lower class is defined in relation to the higher while the higher's dependency on the lower is ignored. The higher class is given the status of self and subject while the lower class is viewed as other and object. Plumwood writes,

> Although each [class] is dependent on the other for identity and organisation of material life, this relation is not one of equal, or mutual, or equally relational, definition. The master's power is reflected in the fact that his qualities are taken as primary, and as defining social value, while those of the slave are defined or constrained in relation to them, often as negations or lacks of the virtues of the centre.[27]

In each dualism, the lower class's relation to the higher is affirmed. The other is defined as that which is "other" than the self, and object is defined as that which is contemplated and used by the subject. Often, the lower class is viewed as the "negation" of the higher, defined by what it *lacks* in relation to the dominant class. In Plumwood's words, members of the lower class must set aside their own interests and become the "instruments" of the master, "a means to his ends".[28] The lower class is thus objectified, denied ends or purposes of its own.[29] Human/nature dualism reduces non-human nature to "natural resources" that are valued and defined in relation to human use. It is not considered possible for non-human nature to include subjects with ends or purposes of their own. Instead, nature is defined as the negation or lack of Human qualities of agency and reason, valuable only through Human appropriation and consumption. Land is seen not as an aspect of the ecosystem with independent value, but as potential made valuable through

[27] Plumwood, Feminism and the Mastery of Nature, 1993, 52.
[28] Ibid, 53.
[29] Ibid.

the application of Human labor.[30] While Dualism's relational definition affirms the lower class's relation to the higher, it systematically denies the fundamental dependence - both materially and definitionally - of the higher class on the lower. To acknowledge a two-way or mutual relation would undermine the dominance and superiority of the higher class. In order to establish and maintain its dualistic narrative, the dominant knowledge system must somehow reconcile this implicit contradiction.

Plumwood uses the term "backgrounding" to describe methods by which the dominant class denies mutual dependence.[31] Through backgrounding, the dominant class can quietly benefit from the support of the lower class while simultaneously ignoring its dependence on it, thus maintaining its dominance and superiority. Methods of backgrounding include, "making the other inessential" and "denying the importance of the other's contribution or even… reality."[32] In Human/nature dualism, the ingenuity, achievement, and ongoing "progress" of Humanity is continuously affirmed while the myriad activities of the rest of the natural world are consistently dismissed as unimportant or invisible. The contribution of non-human nature to the reproduction of daily Human life (in food, water, structures, materials etc.) is taken for granted as a feature of Humanity's status as subject and non-human nature's as object. Any activities of non-human nature which occur outside the sphere of Human relevance or use, are dismissed as unimportant or trivial. As a result, dominant Western society is justified in reproducing

[30] Ellen Meiksins Wood, "The Agrarian Origin of Capitalism." Essay In *The Origin of Capitalism*, 95–121, New York, NY: Monthly Review Press, 1999, 110-111.
[31] Plumwood, Feminism and the Mastery of Nature, 1993, 48.
[32] Ibid.

itself in ways that destroy, pollute, and treat as expendable the natural systems we depend on.

Backgrounding can also involve "mechanisms of focus and attention" in which the lower class is taken as the "background" to the dominant class's "foreground".[33] In Human/nature dualism, the role of non-human nature is excluded from the narrative of "history" (seen as pertaining only to Human development) despite the dependence of all Human development on the non-human natural world. Non-human nature is viewed as the passive "landscape" against which active Human history unfolds. The same method of backgrounding is regularly applied to groups of people relegated to the side of nature. The utter dependence of the rise of Europe - and subsequently of the United States - on the enslavement, subjugation, and exploitation of people of color in Africa, the Americas, and parts of Asia is invisibilized in the dominant historical narrative The great achievements of Europe are seen to have materialized as a result of its own independent skill and ingenuity, rather than as a product of its dependence on the resources and labor of "inferior" peoples.[34] Similarly, the activities of those who perform essential care tasks such as cooking, cleaning, and raising children (historically women), are taken for granted as background to the foreground of economic activity, scientific and cultural development, and general public life.[35] The denial of Human dependence on otherized groups and non-human nature serves to justify their exploitation.

[33] Plumwood, Feminism and the Mastery of Nature, 1993, 48.
[34] Mills, *The Racial Contract,* 1997, 34-35.
[35] Virginia Held, "The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global," New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007, 18.

The logic of dualism's one-way relational definition and denial of mutual dependence further justifies and facilitates structures of exploitation. The othering, objectification, and backgrounding of the "inferior" class reinforces the superiority of the dominant class and justifies its domination of the lower. The dominant class's denial of mutual dependence allows it to act as largely independent from the classes it exploits and destroys, thus remaining distanced from the harms and unintended consequences of such exploitation. The prime example of such a policy of willful denial is the production of the environmental crisis. Habitat loss and devastation is viewed as significant only insofar as it begins to affect (Western) Human economic activities and societal structures. Any loss which occurs beyond immediate relevance to human use or consumption is viewed as regrettable but acceptable. Dualism's fragmentation of the world into radically separated spheres of Human and nature fails to comprehend the vast interdependent complexity of the ecosystem.[36] Specific Human needs are continually prioritized at the expense of countless "others", facilitating the destruction of the ecosystem and the suffering and domination of countless species and human populations.

Naturalization

Dualisms are not simply pervasive hierarchies, but structures that have been naturalized in culture and made static, universal, and normative. Plumwood writes,

> Hierarchies… can be seen as open to change, as contingent and shifting. But once the process of domination forms culture and constructs identity, the inferiorised group (unless it can marshall cultural resources for resistance) must internalise this inferiorisation in its identity and collude

[36] Plumwood, Feminism and the Mastery of Nature, 1993, 194.

> in this low valuation, honoring the values of the centre, which form the dominant social values.[37]

Unlike hierarchies, which may shift or change over time, dualisms are embedded in culture such that their construction is invisibilized and they are taken as a-historical and apolitical truths. They act as the foundational assumptions, the invisible framework, upon which the dominant system of knowledge forms all other aspects of culture and identity. The dominant knowledge system works to impose the logic of dualism universally, enforcing it as the ontological and epistemological standard against which all other frameworks are measured. At the same time, the dominant knowledge system distances itself from this active construction, portraying dualisms as "natural" and independent of any particular socio-historical context. Dualisms are thus essentialized - construed as the natural, static, and universal essence of reality.

The naturalization of the logic of dualism imbues it with normative authority. Not only do dualisms describe how reality is, but they inform how reality *ought* to be. Plumwood writes,

> A dualism is an intense, established and developed cultural expression of such a hierarchical relationship, constructing central cultural concepts and identities so as to make equality and mutuality literally unthinkable.[38]

The naturalization of the logic of dualism justifies structures of domination, invisibilizes its particular socio-historical and political origins, and makes it incredibly difficult to challenge dualistic frameworks from within the language of the dominant knowledge system. As a result, many philosophies aiming to address the injustices of the dominant

[37] Plumwood, Feminism and the Mastery of Nature, 1993, 47.
[38] Ibid.

knowledge system fall prey to the same underlying assumptions which facilitate these injustices in the first place. The logic of dualism facilitates the joint exploitation of people and nonhuman nature, creating what has grown into a global environmental crisis. Adequately addressing problems such as the environmental crisis requires moving beyond dualistic logic entirely.

Chapter 2: Dualism in Mainstream Environmental Philosophy

The emergence of the present day environmental crisis has created a clear need for philosophies and frameworks that address environmental exploitation and degradation. Environmental-ethical frameworks have a two-fold purpose: addressing the existing harms of the environmental crisis and guiding ethical decision-making for the present and future. An effective environmental ethic must offer solutions which integrate humans into the global ecosystem and facilitate constructive rather than destructive relationships between people and their environment.

Unfortunately, the deeply ingrained naturalization of dualistic logic means that dualistic assumptions persist within many environmental philosophies aiming to address the environmental crisis. Two prominent schools of thought which have dominated mainstream environmental philosophy are the "Cult of Wilderness" and the "Gospel of Eco-Efficiency" - as labeled by Juan Martínez Alier in his book *The Environmentalism of the Poor: A Study of Ecological Conflicts and Valuation*.[39] Both the Cult of Wilderness and the Gospel of Eco-efficiency seek to address environmental exploitation facilitated by dualistic logic, but each retain dualistic assumptions about the relationship between humans and non-human nature. The persistence of dualistic structures within environmental philosophies limits their capacity to address the environmental crisis at a sufficiently deep level and puts them at risk of perpetuating the same harms they aim to ameliorate.

[39] Juan Martínez Alier, The Environmentalism of the Poor: A Study of Ecological Conflicts and Valuation, Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2002.

The Cult of Wilderness

The Cult of Wilderness aims to address the environmental crisis by focusing on the conservation of "pristine" wilderness spaces.[40] The Cult of Wilderness rose to prominence primarily in the United States through the romantic and transcendentalist movements of the nineteenth century. It is exemplified in the work of writers such as Henry David Thoreau, Aldo Leopold, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and John Muir, who describe a deep and profound love of, "vast, powerful landscapes where one could not help feeling insignificant and being reminded of one's own mortality".[41] The Cult of Wilderness centers around the protection of beautiful "pristine" wildlands - old growth forests, rivers, and mountains - a prime example being Theodore Roosevelt's push for conservation in the early 1900's and his expansion of the US National Park system. Since the 1960's, the Cult of Wilderness has gained scientific support in modern day conservation biology.[42] Going beyond environmental preservation for utilitarian purposes, the Cult of Wilderness views nonhuman nature as *sacred* and deserving of protection.[43] Although originating largely in the US, the Cult of Wilderness has taken hold in environmentalist movements worldwide.

The Cult of Wilderness, as its name describes, relies heavily on a dualistic concept of "wilderness" defined as that which is wild, "untouched", and devoid of Human presence or activity. The Cult of Wilderness features what Plumwood describes as an

[40] Alier, The Environmentalism of the Poor: A Study of Ecological Conflicts and Valuation, 2002, 1.
[41] William Cronon, "The Trouble With Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," American Society for Environmental History 1, no. 1 (1996): 7–28. https://doi.org/10.2307/3985059, 10.
[42] Alier, The Environmentalism of the Poor: A Study of Ecological Conflicts and Valuation, 2002, 2-3.
[43] Cronon, "The Trouble With Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," 1996, 10.

"uncritical reversal" of dualistic logic.[44] "Uncritical reversal" refers to a common method of challenging oppressive dualisms in which the hierarchy of opposing classes is reversed, while all the other elements of dualistic structure are retained.[45] The love of Wilderness, for example, emerged in Europe and the United States in response to widespread industrialization.[46] Unlike early dominant perceptions of Wilderness as the dark, satanic, and inferior "other" of Civilization, the Cult of Wilderness exalts nonhuman nature as a heavenly refuge from the "ugly artificiality" of modern civilization, and as the escape from its restrictions via the frontier.[47] In the eyes of the Cult of Wilderness, industrialized Human civilization takes on the role of baseness, immorality, and inferiority, while nonhuman nature is idolized as the realm of purity, freedom, and even godliness or the "sublime".[48] Despite its partial reversal of the Human/nonhuman-nature hierarchical order, the Cult of Wilderness continues to define Wilderness through hyper-separation and radical exclusion, retaining assumptions of nature as fixed and static. The Cult of Wilderness has grown popular in mainstream environmental philosophy, promoting conservation efforts that preserve the "wildness" of natural spaces.

Wilderness in modern mainstream environmentalism is routinely built around the dualistic assumption that once nonhuman nature is "touched" by Human civilization, it ceases to become "wild" and therefore ceases to become "nature". In his paper "Environmental Philosophy after the End of Nature", Steven Vogel articulates how

[44] Val Plumwood, Feminism and the Mastery of Nature, New York, NY: Routledge, 1993, 31.
[45] Ibid, 33.
[46] Cronon, "The Trouble With Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," 1996, 15.
[47] Ibid, 9; 13.
[48] Ibid, 9.

human interference is seen to transform the ontological status of nonhuman nature from pristine wilderness into human "artifact".[49] In his paper entitled, "The Trouble With Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature" William Cronon criticizes such a view, writing,

> ...wilderness embodies a dualistic vision in which the human is entirely outside the natural. If we allow ourselves to believe that nature, to be true, must also be wild, then our very presence in nature represents its fall.[50]

Such a view is encapsulated by Bill McKibben in his book *The End of Nature*. McKibben's central thesis is that human activities and their impacts have become so ubiquitous that no part of the natural world remains untouched, and therefore nature - as pristine Wilderness - is literally and figuratively dead.[51] Such a conception of nature as "Wilderness" is contradictory, ironically anthropocentric, and largely mythical when examined in historical context.

The concept of "Wilderness" as a space entirely devoid of human presence or impact is a tenuous concept, and in the vast majority of geographic regions and contexts, a fabricated myth. The idolization of pristine "empty" Wilderness spaces, particularly in the Americas, ignores the ongoing and historical presence of indigenous peoples. In the US, the Wilderness areas now preserved in national parks and conservation areas were made "empty" only by the systematic removal of Indigenous people.[52] Such a glaring

[49] Steven Vogel, "Environmental Philosophy after the End of Nature." Environmental Ethics 24, no. 1 2002: 23–39. https://doi.org/10.5840/enviroethics200224139, 25.
[50] Cronon, "The Trouble With Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," 1996, 17.
[51] Bill McKibben, The End of Nature. New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2006.
[52] Cronon, "The Trouble With Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," 1996, 15-16.

contradiction is reconciled in part by the erasure of indigenous peoples, and of Wilderness itself, from the dominant historical narrative.

Cronon writes,

> Indeed, one of the most striking proofs of the cultural invention of wilderness is its thoroughgoing erasure of the history from which it sprang. In virtually all of its manifestations, wilderness represents a flight from history.[53]

Wilderness is dualistically presented as external to the passage of history which is limited to the narrative of (Western) Human development. Employing the logic of dualism, The Cult of Wilderness naturalizes the concept of Wilderness, rendering it static, eternal, and independent of time or historical context. In doing so, the Cult of Wilderness distances itself from the historical construction of Wilderness and preserves its illusion.

Cronon continues,

> The flight from history that is very nearly the core of wilderness represents the false hope of an escape from responsibility, the illusion that we can somehow wipe clean the slate of our past and return to the tabula rasa that supposedly existed before we began to leave our marks on the world.[54]

The externalization of Wilderness allows environmental movements to externalize responsibility for the environmental crisis by writing off civilization as a lost cause and placing their hope in the preservation of "pristine" spaces yet untouched. Wilderness is seen as a perfect "tabula rasa", unpolluted by the corrupting forces of civilization and frozen in time.[55] Such a conception of Wilderness, however, is almost entirely mythical.

[53] Cronon, "The Trouble With Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," 1996, 16.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid.

Genuine wilderness areas entirely devoid of human presence or impact remain few and far between. Most regions of the globe have by now been inhabited or impacted by human populations, and it could be argued that the effects of human-produced global climate bring human influence to even the most remote regions. True "Wilderness" has been gone for a very long time.[56]

In addition to erasing the construction of Wilderness from history, the fabrication of empty Wilderness draws from the underlying dualistic assumption that indigenous peoples and people of color never constituted Human civilization in the first place, and therefore are themselves a part of the "Wilderness". Forms of cultivation and land use that fall outside the dominant Euro-centric understanding of "agriculture" (which the Cult of Wilderness considers Human and therefore unnatural) are written off as part of the natural landscape.[57] The "uncritical reversal" of the Human/nature (or civilized/primitive) hierarchy, which white environmentalists in the Cult of Wilderness are so prone to, does not alter the objectification and homogenization of those placed on the side of nature. Cronon asks, "Why in the debates about pristine natural areas are "primitive" peoples idealized, even sentimentalized, until the moment they do something unprimitive, modern, and unnatural, and thereby fall from environmental grace?"[58] The idealization of indigenous people and traditional knowledge systems homogenizes and restricts tribal people to fixed stereotypes that lie outside the passage of Human history and time. By portraying "authentic" indigenous peoples only as historical stereotypes, the

[56] Vogel, "Environmental Philosophy after the End of Nature." (2002), 28.
[57] Wood, "The Agrarian Origin of Capitalism." Essay In *The Origin of Capitalism*, 1999, 111.
[58] Cronon, "The Trouble With Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," 1996, 21.

logic of dualism permanently situates indigenous peoples in the past, further erasing them from the present. In this way, Human/nature dualism and its homogenization of nonhuman nature heavily intersects with strategies of colonization. Any deviation from their imposed role challenges Indigenous people's ahistorical purity and "naturality", causing them to "fall from environmental grace"[59] The Cult of Wilderness thus perpetuates colonial structures of oppression and excludes real indigenous peoples (with full personhood, complexity, and diversity existing on their own terms in the present day) from environmental considerations and solutions.

A further contradiction within the Cult of Wilderness is the emphasis on human conservation efforts to preserve "wild" spaces. The Cult of Wilderness focuses heavily on biological conservation and environmental management that directly contradicts with the definition of Wilderness as "untouched" and free from Human interference. If the goal of environmentalism is to preserve Wilderness, and Wilderness is defined by the exclusion of Humanity, then Human conservation of habitat and biodiversity definitionally destroys that which it seeks to protect. For example, removing invasive plants and animals and reintroducing native species destroys the "wildness" of these spaces, destroying the essential quality of Wilderness itself. Furthermore, conservation assumes one static version of wilderness as the "correct" version to which the ecosystem must be returned, rather than recognizing the continual evolution and transformation of ecosystems over time. The Cult of Wilderness thus struggles to reconcile its ideological foundations with its primary environmental policy.

[59] Cronon, "The Trouble With Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," 1996, 21.

As a result of its underlying dualistic foundations, the Cult of Wilderness fails to adequately address the many varied dimensions of the environmental crisis. The Cult of Wilderness over-emphasizes the protection of "remote" locations - ignoring issues of environmental justice affecting human populations - and failing to envision the integration of Humans into the environment in a constructive way. The Cult of Wilderness largely views the environmental crisis as a problem concerning non-human nature. As Cronon writes,

> ...the convergence of wilderness values with concerns about biological diversity and endangered species has helped produce a deep fascination for remote ecosystems, where it is easier to imagine that nature might somehow be "left alone" to flourish by its own pristine devices.[60]

The Cult of Wilderness focuses on areas that it perceives to be the last remaining vestiges of intact "pristine" nature, untouched by the polluting influence of industrialized civilization. Hence it envisions positive environmental outcomes to be the flourishing of diverse ecosystems, "left alone" and protected from the corrupting impacts of Humanity.[61] By focusing on "pure" Wilderness spaces, The Cult of Wilderness neglects environmental injustices affecting human populations and occurring in urban centers.

In their paper entitled "Ethics of Caring in Environmental Ethics: Indigenous, and Feminist Philosophies" Kyle Powys Whyte and Chris Cuomo write,

> Ironically, environmental thinkers such as Aldo Leopold, Edward Abbey, and Arne Naess, who did call for more effective caring for nature, seem to

[60] Cronon, "The Trouble With Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," 1996, 18.
[61] Ibid.

> neglect or underestimate the importance of caring for other human beings as a way of caring for nature.[62]

Whyte and Cuomo argue that humans, as members of the ecosystem, are also part of nature and deserving of care. The Cult of Wilderness fails to comprehend the intersection of environmental harm with related systems of oppression (e.g., global poverty and structures of colonization) which lead over-exploited nations, poorer populations, and people of color to experience a differential level of environmental harm. Cronon writes that in setting, "...too high a stock on wilderness, too many other corners of the earth become less than natural and too many other people become less than human, thereby giving us permission not to care much about their suffering or their fate."[63] Issues such as a lack of access to clean water or air and the exposure of communities to harmful pollutants cannot be addressed solely through the preservation of wild lands.

Of course, there is still a clear relationship between the conservation of "Wilderness" and positive outcomes for human populations. For example, protecting water sources within designated conservation areas secures access to clean water for human populations downstream. Protecting forests and other carbon sinks helps mitigate global warming and prevents vast stretches of the planet from becoming uninhabitable for humans. However, focusing solely on the preservation of wild lands can only go so far. Cronon writes that, "By imagining that our true home is in the wilderness, we forgive ourselves the homes we actually inhabit."[64] The Cult of Wilderness offers no framework

[62] Kyle Powys Whyte, and Chris J Cuomo, "Ethics of Caring in Environmental Ethics: Indigenous and Feminist Philosophies." Essay in The Oxford Handbook of Environmental Ethics, edited by Stephen Mark Gardiner and Allen Thompson, 234–47. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019, 235.
[63] Cronon, "The Trouble With Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," 1996, 20.
[64] Ibid, 17.

for environmental sustainability within the urban landscapes in which the majority of people actually live. As of 2018, the United Nations reported that 55% of the world's population lives in an urban area, with 68% projected to live in urban areas by 2050.[65] Furthermore, in many instances, attempts to conserve "Wilderness" spaces come at the expense of local populations who live within them and/or rely upon them. The export of American notions of Wilderness as the key to environmental preservation, can quickly become a form of cultural imperialism.[66] One example of this includes the prevention of the Blackfeet people from hunting within Glacier National Park - lands which they are indigenous to - despite their right to hunt being a provision of the treaty in which they ceded the park's lands to the US Government.[67]

Due to its focus on protecting "pristine" wilderness from human degradation, the Cult of Wilderness fails to imagine the integration of Humans into our environment in a way that is constructive rather than destructive, leaving environmentalists with little actual recourse. Cronon writes,

> ...if nature dies because we enter it, then the only way to save nature is to kill ourselves. The absurdity of this proposition flows from the underlying dualism it expresses. Not only does it ascribe greater power to humanity that we in fact possess - physical and biological nature will surely survive in some form or another long after we ourselves have gone the way of all flesh - but in the end it offers us little more than a self-defeating counsel of despair.[68]

---

[65] United Nations, "68% Of the World Population Projected to Live in Urban Areas by 2050, Says UN." United Nations | Department of Economic and Social Affairs, May 16, 2018. https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/population/2018-revision-of-world-urbanization-prospects.html.
[66] Cronon, "The Trouble With Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," 1996, 18.
[67] Ibid, 15.
[68] Ibid, 19.

Ironically, defining nature as the dualistic opposite of Humanity and bestowing upon Humans the ability to destroy nature with our mere presence is quite anthropocentric, despite the popularity within mainstream environmentalism of promoting biocentrism over anthropocentrism.[69] If nature necessarily dies when Humans enter it, then there is no way for environmental movements to "save" nature except by removing ourselves from the picture. Vogel writes,

> There's no room here for positive environmental policies to be developed, or for the possibility of a new or changed approach toward the environing world; the only response possible to the situation is regret, and nostalgia, and perhaps some sort of efforts toward penance and reparations.[70]

Such an extreme and hyper-separated understanding of nature leaves no possibility for the integration of humans into the environment in a positive way. The Cult of Wilderness thus falls prey to the idea that all humans are necessarily and essentially destructive, rather than recognizing the particularity of the dominant Human/nature relationship and the existence of alternative ways of living. Such a view restricts the capacity of environmental-ethical frameworks to fully comprehend the complexity of the environmental crisis and to offer more comprehensive solutions.

The Gospel of Eco-Efficiency

In more recent years, the Cult of Wilderness has been joined by a second prominent current in mainstream environmental philosophy which has grown dominant in political and economic policy.[71] The "Gospel of Eco-efficiency" aims to address gaps

[69] Vogel, "Environmental Philosophy after the End of Nature." 2002, 25-26.
[70] Ibid, 28.
[71] Jouni Korhonen, "Reconsidering the Economics Logic of Ecological Modernization." Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space 40, no. 6 (June 2008): 1331–46. https://doi.org/10.1068/a38363, 1331.

in previous environmental movements, such as the Cult of Wilderness, and mitigate the environmental crisis by promoting sustainable forms of economic growth and the efficient use of nature as "natural resources".[72] This "second current" of environmentalism considers the effects of economic growth not only on pristine Wilderness but on the broader agricultural, industrial, and urban economy.[73] It aims to coordinate long term environmental and economic interests, defending economic growth in the form of "sustainable development", "ecological modernization", and the "wise use" of natural resources. [74] Advocates of the Gospel of Eco-Efficiency typically refer to nature as "natural resources", "environmental services" or "natural capital".[75]

In their book entitled *Eco-Efficiency: The Business Link to Sustainable Development*, Livio DeSimone and Frank Popoff write that "eco-efficiency"

> …has been developed by business for business. The first word of the concept encompasses both ecological and economic resources— the second says we have to make optimal use of both. One important aspect of eco-efficiency in practice is resource productivity— doing more with less. Reducing waste and pollution, and using fewer energy and raw material resources, is obviously good for the environment. And making better use of inputs translates into bottom-line benefits.[76]

Eco-efficiency is a policy created "by business, for business" seeking to improve environmental outcomes as well as "bottom-line benefits". It seeks to minimize waste, pollution, and resource use in the interest of protecting ecosystems along with "long

[72] Alier, The Environmentalism of the Poor: A Study of Ecological Conflicts and Valuation, 2002, 5.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Livio D. DeSimone, Frank Popoff, World Business Council for Sustainable Development,, and Desimone,. *Eco-Efficiency : The Business Link to Sustainable Development*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000. Accessed May 14, 2022, ProQuest Ebook Central, 3.

term economic and social development."[77] It frames the environmental crisis through the lens of business strategy as an issue of quantitative "productivity" – aiming to produce greater profits with less cost and waste.

As a largely economic model, the gospel of eco-efficiency promotes sustainability through economic incentives. DeSimone and Popoff write,

> More and more companies— around the world and in a variety of industries— are… discovering opportunities to achieve environmental improvement and gain business benefit. Their efforts… are driving the new competitive reality, whether this be through sustained pollution prevention programs that create cost advantage or new products that create enhanced customer value and reduced environmental impact.[78]

Eco-efficiency emphasizes the business benefits for companies that adopt sustainable practices. It promotes eco-efficiency as creating long-term cost advantages (in the protection of essential and potential resources) and short-term cost advantages (in the attraction of customers and the avoidance of governmental policies increasingly hostile to environmental waste and pollution). Eco-efficiency considers public perception of environmental concerns, recognizing the tendency of consumers to buy products they view as sustainable.[79] Furthermore, the integration (or perceived integration) of values of sustainability into company models are seen to give both employees and customers a "common sense of purpose" and promote overall business success.[80] As a result, eco-efficiency "builds value" for customers and stakeholders alike, driving "the new competitive reality" of business.[81]

---

[77] DeSimone, Popoff, *Eco-Efficiency : The Business Link to Sustainable Development*, 2000, xix.
[78] Ibid, 2.
[79] Ibid, 7.
[80] Ibid, 11.
[81] Ibid, xx.

The Gospel of Eco-Efficiency focuses heavily on the sustainable management of natural resources but has little concern for the loss of "intrinsic values of nature".[82] Unlike the Cult of Wilderness, the Gospel of Eco-Efficiency does not view nonhuman nature as sacred and inherently deserving of protection. Alier writes, "Disappearing birds, frogs or butterflies 'bioindicate' that something is amiss, as did canaries in coalminers' hats, but they have not by themselves a self-evident right to exist."[83] A focus on the value of nature as "resource" is evident in DeSimone and Popoff's writing.

> …examples of serious environmental problems are deforestation, destruction of coral reefs, introduction of aggressive new predators, and other human activities that are making many species extinct… As a result we may be losing potential sources of drugs, useful plant genes, and other resources.[84]

Environmental degradation is framed not only as an existing threat to economic and social development, but as the loss of potential sources of future profit. Diminishing biodiversity means the loss of "potential sources of drugs, useful plant genes, and other resources."[85] Environmental conservation efforts are motivated by the reliance of Human economic and societal structures on limited natural resources which must be carefully managed to preserve the present economic system and secure its continuing expansion in the future.

The Gospel of Eco-efficiency perpetuates dualistic assumptions in its structuring of the human-environment relationship as a fundamentally subject-object relationship. It recognizes the mutual dependence of humans and the environment to a limited degree but continues to view the relationship between Humans and nonhuman nature as hyper-

[82] Alier, The Environmentalism of the Poor: A Study of Ecological Conflicts and Valuation, 2002, 5.
[83] Ibid.
[84] DeSimone, Popoff, *Eco-Efficiency : The Business Link to Sustainable Development*, 2000, 2.
[85] Ibid.

separated and hierarchical, as between subject and object. Eco-efficiency employs the "one-way relational definition" of dualistic logic by valuing non-human nature in relation to Human use and consumption, placing (specific) Human needs and the continued growth of the dominant global economy above the wellbeing of the rest of the ecosystem. Nonhuman nature is commodified as "natural capital" and "natural resource".[86]

In his paper entitled, "Reconsidering the Economics Logic of Ecological Modernization" Jouni Korhonen recognizes that the core position of eco-efficiency includes "putting a monetary value on nature, natural resources, and ecosystem services."[87] Eco-efficiency thus becomes a quantitative measure concerning the ratio of value generated per unit of environmental impact (in resources consumed and waste produced).[88] The commodification and "merchandising" of nonhuman nature is presented as a net good because it provides economic incentive for resource protection and "wise" management.[89] However, in framing the environmental crisis and its solutions as a purely economic problem, the gospel of eco-efficiency fails to comprehend the broadly interrelated causes and impacts of environmental issues. Korhonen argues that the quantitative model of eco-efficiency excludes qualitative issues such as, "Biodiversity, species connectance, local ecosystem species type, material and energy flow types (eg toxic vs nontoxic), social and cultural issues including community, social bonding, trust, organizational cultures and learning, human rights, working conditions, or local cultural

[86] Alier, The Environmentalism of the Poor: A Study of Ecological Conflicts and Valuation, 2002, 5.
[87] Korhonen, "Reconsidering the Economics Logic of Ecological Modernization." 2008, 1336.
[88] Ibid, 1333.
[89] Alier, The Environmentalism of the Poor: A Study of Ecological Conflicts and Valuation, 2002, 9.

heritage".[90] As such, eco-efficiency is a fundamentally limited framework for approaching complex environmental problems. Furthermore, in preserving the dominant economic model, it perpetuates social injustices and environmental exploitation.

In basing environmental policy around economic incentives, the gospel of eco-efficiency often prioritizes economic growth for some, at the expense of the ecosystem's well-being (including many groups of humans). If ever economic and environmental concerns come into conflict, the protection of nonhuman nature comes secondary to the securing of Human interests. As Alier warns, the "merchandising of biodiversity is a dangerous instrument of conservation."[91] Short-term monetary incentives fail to capture the coevolution of biodiversity over tens of thousands of years. Aspects of the ecosystem which do not offer sufficient economic returns are dismissed and excluded from eco-efficiency's system of valuation and protection. At its basis, the Gospel of Eco-Efficiency continues to be an exploitative framework and does little to challenge the economic structures which have contributed greatly to producing the crisis in the first place.

The persistence of dualistic structures within mainstream currents of environmentalism such as the Cult of Wilderness and the Gospel of Eco-Efficiency limits their capacity to address the environmental crisis at a sufficiently deep level and causes them to replicate the same exploitative structures that largely facilitate the crisis. The "uncritical reversal" of dualistic hierarchies, as seen in the Cult of Wilderness, fails to

[90] Korhonen, "Reconsidering the Economics Logic of Ecological Modernization." 2008, 1336.
[91] Alier, The Environmentalism of the Poor: A Study of Ecological Conflicts and Valuation, 2002, 9.

eliminate the problematic features of the dualistic structure itself. Attempting to reverse the dualism by privileging nonhuman nature and/or sentimentalizing groups placed on the side of nature (such as indigenous people) does not challenge the naturalized hyper-separation, one-way relational definition, and homogenization of opposing classes. The Gospel of Eco-efficiency continues to structure the Human/environment through a one-way relational definition that objectifies nonhuman nature. In both the Cult of Wilderness and the Gospel of Eco-efficiency, Humans remain hyper-separated from nature. A hyper separated framework fails to comprehend an environmental ethic that facilitates the integration of people into the ecosystem and a constructive relationship between people and the environment. The question then follows, what would an effectively non-dualistic environmental framework look like? What features would it have and how might it structure human-environmental relationships?

Chapter 3: Mutualistic Alternatives

A *non-dualistic* environmental framework is needed to effectively address the existing environmental crisis and guide ethical decision-making for the present and future. Such a framework must integrate humans into the global ecosystem and facilitate constructive rather than destructive ways of living. A successfully non-dualistic framework is non (or differently) hierarchical, dynamic, situated, and fundamentally *mutualistic*. In place of hyper-separation and radical exclusion, it must recognize the impure, blended, and inextricably *relational* nature of separations/differences. Specifically, it must recognize two-way, mutual relations, rather than operating through one-way relational definition and denial. It must be non (or differently) hierarchical, relinquishing the concept of a value-hierarchy that is fixed and innate. It must accommodate complexity and dynamism - in living beings and societies, as well as in ethical-epistemological frameworks themselves - rather than enforcing oversimplification and static fixity. Finally, it must remain historically, politically, and ecologically situated rather than becoming naturalized as universal and eternal.

Many of these qualities can be found in environmental philosophies that challenge or originate outside of the dominant Western tradition. This paper examines two examples of non-dualistic philosophy as an entry point into non-dualistic alternatives: feminist care ethics as framed by Virginia Held; and Kyle Powys Whyte's "collective continuance," drawing from the Anishinaabe intellectual tradition. Many care-based feminist frameworks and indigenous philosophical frameworks - such as collective continuance - crucially share an underlying mutualistic ontology which makes them strong alternatives

to dualistic frameworks. A mutualistic ontology creates the fundamental basis upon which the qualities and principles of a robust environmental ethic can be built.

Ethics of Care

In her paper entitled "The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global" feminist philosopher Virginia Held articulates the central focus of an ethics of care as being "...the compelling moral salience of attending to and meeting the needs of the particular others for whom we take responsibility."[92] The ethics of care argues for an ethical framework that is centered around, rather than exclusive of, the knowledge formed through relationships of dependence. Rather than dismissing the emotional ties, differential interests, and particular responsibilities that arise in relationships of care, it defends their "compelling moral salience" and ethical weight. The ethics of care is foundationally based in the ontological understanding that we exist because of and within relationships of interdependence.

The ethics of care is fundamentally based in a mutually relational ontology. Held writes,

> The ethics of care… characteristically sees persons as relational and interdependent, morally and epistemologically. Every person starts out as a child dependent on those providing us care, and we remain interdependent with others in thoroughly fundamental ways throughout our lives. That we can think and act as if we were independent depends on a network of social relations making it possible for us to do so.[93]

[92] Virginia Held, "The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global," New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007, 10.
[93] Ibid, 13-14.

The ethics of care recognizes the ontological quality of interdependence as well as its moral and epistemological implications for all living persons. It acknowledges that all people begin life dependent on their parents and continue to live as adults thanks to interdependent relationships with other people (and nonhuman beings). Rather than viewing morality as solely involving matters of justice concerning independent, autonomous, rational individuals (as dominant moral frameworks largely do) the ethics of care recognizes relation and interdependence as *preconditions* of life and independence.[94] Furthermore, it recognizes the "compelling moral salience" of these relationships of care, arguing for the formation of an ethical framework centered around them.[95]

Care ethics offer a non-dualistic expression of self/other relationships in which the goal is mutual flourishing rather than the promotion of the self's interests at the expense of the other. Held writes,

> Persons in caring relations are acting for self-and-other together. Their characteristic stance is neither egoistic nor altruistic; these are the options in a conflictual situation, but the well-being of a caring relation involves the cooperative well-being of those in the relation and the well-being of the relation itself.[96]

An ethics centered around the moral salience of caring relations takes neither a purely egoistic (acting for self) nor altruistic (acting for other) stance. Instead, it focuses on the cooperative or *mutual* well-being of those in relation, and crucially, of the relation itself. Rather than framing morality as concerning the interaction of separate independent parts,

[94] Held, "The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global," 2007, 10.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid, 12.

the ethics of care gives weight to the *relation between* persons. It recognizes the epistemological weight of caring relations as entities in and of themselves, more than the mere summation of their composite parts or participants. The caring relation cannot be reduced solely to the caretaker or the dependent but is constituted by the qualities and responsibilities of the relation between then. Considering the well-being of relations creates a framework for examining what qualities of relationship are "healthy" or desirable. For example, qualities such as reciprocity and trust could be argued to foster healthy mutual relations. Through the articulation and selection of certain qualities of relationship, care ethics offers a unique approach to gaining autonomy within relations of dependence. Although responsibilities and obligations are preconditions to life and not "freely" chosen in the classical liberal sense, ethics of care does offer a framework for autonomy through the choice of qualities of relationship and particular responsibilities in caring relations. Rather than structuring morality solely around the individual "rights" of independent individuals, an ethics of care centers the networks of responsibility and obligation that structure human life. For example, it considers the relationship between parent and child, care-taker and those dependent on care such as the elderly and disabled, and other forms of caring relationship between families, friends, and communities. An ethics of care recognizes that relations of care are integral to all life and creates a framework for ethical decision-making centered around the mutual wellbeing of caring relations and those within them.

Care ethics offer a salient non-dualistic environmental framework when principles of interdependence and ethical frameworks centered around relationships of care are

extended to include human and non-human relations. In an essay entitled "Ethics of Caring in Environmental Ethics: Indigenous and Feminist Philosophies." Kyle Powys Whyte and Chris J Cuomo acknowledge that, "Care ethics question canonical conceptions of nature as passive or inert and express anticolonial ethics and epistemologies based on the wisdom of relation-centered traditions and practices.[97] Care ethics provides a framework in which the agency and contribution of non-human nature can be recognized as essential within human-nonhuman relationships of dependence. Care ethics operates through a "relation-centered" mutualistic ontology. Whyte and Cuomo describe how feminist care ethics involve moral orientations that,

> (1) understand individuals, including human selves and other beings, are essentially embedded and interdependent, rather than isolated and atomistic, even if they also exercise some degree of autonomy;
>
> (2) take mutually beneficial caring relationships to be foundational and paradigmatic for ethics;
>
> (3) highlight the common association of care work with females and subjugated peoples;
>
> (4) emphasize the virtues, skills, and knowledges required for beneficial caring relationships to flourish;
>
> (5) are attentive to the contexts of moral questions and problems; and
>
> (6) recommend appropriate caring and caretaking as remedies for addressing histories of harm and injustice, and as necessary counterpoints to the overemphasis in some cultures on impersonal, abstract ethical judgments."[98]

Care ethics recognizes the "interdependent" and "embedded" nature of individuals, both of humans and nonhuman beings. Specifically, care ethics emphasizes mutually

[97] Whyte and Cuomo, "Ethics of Caring in Environmental Ethics: Indigenous and Feminist Philosophies," 2019, 235.
[98] Ibid, 241.

beneficial caring relationships which benefit both self and other within a caring relationship. Crucially, care ethics recognizes that responsibilities of care and care work (cooking, cleaning, parenting) have historically been assigned to women and subjugated peoples. Rather than arguing that the imbalanced assignment of such roles is natural or essential, care ethics aims to recognize the value of care tasks, and those who perform them, that has historically been backgrounded and denied in dominant moral theories. As a feminist framework, ethics of care recognizes the unique perspective and knowledge of those historically assigned care work, and seeks to apply the knowledge formed through relationships of care within broader contexts and groups. As a result, care ethics offers frameworks for addressing harm and injustice as "necessary counterpoints to the overemphasis in some cultures on impersonal, abstract ethical judgments."[99] Ethics of care remains situated in particular historical and interpersonal contexts, rather than operating as an abstract and universally applicable ethical framework. The non-dualistic principles of interdependence, mutually beneficial relation, and situatedness present in ethics of care also arise in indigenous ethical-epistemological frameworks such as Kyle Powys Whyte's collective continuance.

Collective Continuance

In his paper entitled, "Settler Colonialism, Ecology, and Environmental Justice" Potawatomi scholar Kyle Powys Whyte connects three concepts from the Anishinaabe

[99] Whyte and Cuomo, "Ethics of Caring in Environmental Ethics: Indigenous and Feminist Philosophies," 2019, 241.

intellectual tradition in the ecology of "collective continuance".[100] In the term "Anishinaabe", Whyte invokes intellectual traditions connecting Ojibwe, Potawatomi, Odawa, and Mississauga peoples indigenous to what is now called the "Great Lakes region" of the Northern United States and Southern Canada. Whyte acknowledges the "diverse contemporary and ancient linguistic, cultural, social, and political connections…" of Anishinaabe peoples, which often occur, "...in contexts connected to and in dialogue with neighboring peoples, including the Menominee, Miami, Haudenosaunee and numerous others."[101] Whyte acknowledges the inadequacy of a broad designator such as "Anishinaabe" (and the inappropriateness of its English-spelling) at capturing the diverse range of Anishinaabe peoples and traditions, but uses it as a general descriptor throughout his paper.[102]

Whyte defines collective continuance as, "...a society's capacity to self-determine how to adapt to change in ways that avoid reasonably preventable harms."[103] Collective continuance is similar to Western concepts of social resilience and adaptive capacity, although its foundations in Anishinaabe intellectual traditions predate such conceptions. Collective continuance connects three concepts in the Anishinaabe tradition: interdependence, systems of responsibilities, and migration.[104]

[100] Kyle Powys Whyte, "Settler Colonialism, Ecology, and Environmental Injustice," Environment and Society 9, no. 1, 2018: 125–44. https://doi.org/10.3167/ares.2018.090109, 126.
[101] Whyte, "Settler Colonialism, Ecology, and Environmental Injustice," 2018, 126.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid, 131.
[104] Ibid, 126.

Interdependence describes the mutual dependence of two or more parties on each other. Interdependence, as Whyte describes, is centered in the understanding that humans, nonhuman beings, and other elements of the environment fundamentally exist through relations of reciprocity and mutuality.[105] Interdependence is both an ontological description and a prescriptive statement. Whyte writes,

> The concept of interdependence includes a sense of identity associated with the environment and a sense of responsibility to care for the environment. There is also no privileging of humans as unique in having agency or intelligence, so one's identity and caretaking responsibility *as a human* includes the philosophy that nonhumans have their own agency, spirituality, knowledge, and intelligence.[106]

In Anishinaabe traditions, people are understood to exist in interdependent relationships with the environment that engender a sense of identity and responsibility. Humans are not viewed as superior or unique in possessing intelligence and agency. In fact, nonhumans are regarded as having their own "agency, spirituality, knowledge, and intelligence" which humans can crucially learn from. As such, the responsibility to care for the environment is mutually respectful, rather than a paternalistic reduction of nonhuman nature to object or resource. Interdependence is exemplified in the view held by Anishinaabe elders such as Tobasonakwut and Chief Ayeeta-pe-pe-tung that the people are *made of the land* rather than the owners of it.[107] In Anishinaabe traditions, relationships of care between humans and the environment are reciprocal (or both-way) rather than one-way. Whyte describes how beings such as water and plants are viewed as having responsibilities to care for people and other nonhuman nature just as people have

[105] Whyte, "Settler Colonialism, Ecology, and Environmental Injustice," 2018, 128.
[106] Ibid, 127.
[107] Ibid.

responsibilities to care for them.[108] The principle of reciprocity is based in the fundamentally interdependent nature of existence.

Not only is interdependence an "intrinsically valuable" source of identity, community, and spirituality, but it is also "instrumentally valuable" as a source of sustenance and guidance in caring for ecosystems and biodiversity.[109] Whyte explains that, interdependence is, "…a means to motivate humans to exercise their caretaking responsibilities to their relatives, human and nonhuman, which helps motivate these relatives to exercise their reciprocal responsibilities to nourish and support one another in diverse ways."[110] Interdependence motivates sustainable and caring relationships between humans and nonhuman nature, as well as between groups of humans. In recognizing the reciprocal dependencies structuring and supporting all life, people become more inclined to respect and care for the relationships in which they participate, and the beings they depend on. By recognizing these relationships as reciprocal, there exists a pattern of give and take, as opposed to only take, which contributes to the mutual flourishing of those involved.

Building upon a foundation of interdependence, collective continuance is supported by "systems of responsibility". Whyte writes,

> In Anishinaabe traditions, reciprocity is also systematized. That is, environmental identities and responsibilities are coordinated with one another through complex social, cultural, economic, and political

[108] Whyte, "Settler Colonialism, Ecology, and Environmental Injustice," 2018, 128.
[109] Whyte and Cuomo, "Ethics of Caring in Environmental Ethics: Indigenous and Feminist Philosophies.", 2019, 237.
[110] Whyte, "Settler Colonialism, Ecology, and Environmental Injustice," 2018, 128.

> institutions. Interdependence suggests a much larger system of "reciprocities" that characterize many hundreds of relationships of interlocking/intersecting relationships across entire societies.[111]

In Anishinaabe traditions, responsibilities refer specifically to "relationships with reciprocal expectations," as opposed to one-sided individual rights, duties, or contracts.[112] Such responsibilities are systematized through complex societal institutions which structure and coordinate networks of interlocking relationships. Identities and responsibilities are established through years of study, practice, observation, and experimentation, and are maintained through teaching, tradition, and ceremony.[113] A prime example of systems of responsibilities is the traditional Anishinaabe 'seasonal round' system of governance. Whyte writes, "A 'seasonal round' is a type of governance in which the major social, cultural, economic, and political institutions of a society shift in shape, size, and organizational structure throughout the year."[114] In seasonal round governance, the roles and responsibilities of society members are structured according to the relative needs of the particular season and place in which a group is living. The seasonal round is not an "accidental arrangement of responsibilities" but a "way of life passed down by the generations" requiring, "study, observation of the natural world, experimentation, relationships with other living beings on the earth, and knowledge-generating labor"[115] As ways of knowing, such systems of responsibilities create continuity across generations, while also promoting flexibility and adaptation over time.

---

[111] Whyte, "Settler Colonialism, Ecology, and Environmental Injustice," 2018, 128.
[112] Ibid, 128, 132.
[113] Ibid, 128.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Brenda J. Child, *Holding Our World Together: Ojibwe Women and the Survival of Community.* New York: Penguin, 2012, 30, cited in Whyte, "Settler Colonialism, Ecology, and Environmental Injustice," 2018, 128.

The third concept informing Whyte's collective continuance is migration. Like interdependence, migration is both an ontological description and prescriptive statement. Migration acknowledges the continual transformation and evolution of natural systems and describes the need for societal systems to adapt in response to this continual transformation. Whyte writes,

> Migration suggests that relationships of interdependence and systems of responsibility are not grounded on stable or static relationships with the environment. Rather, these relationships arise from contexts of constant change and transformation.[116]

Migration acknowledges that interdependence and systems of relationships cannot be fixed or static because they arise within "contexts of change and transformation" to which they must continually adapt.[117] Even the most robust system of relationships within a particular context will have a low degree of collective continuance if it is unable to change in response to vanishing and emerging needs. Whyte argues that having relationships which are continually shifting does not "sacrifice the possibility of continuity".[118] Rather, continuity through transformation can be captured in the concept of persisting and emerging responsibilities.

Persisting responsibilities are responsibilities that societies "seek to continue into the future" that are maintained by teaching, tradition, and ceremony.[119] Emerging responsibilities are, "those that societies create through innovation to respond to new issues."[120] Whyte describes tribes hiring scientific staff (often tribal members themselves)

[116] Whyte, "Settler Colonialism, Ecology, and Environmental Injustice," 2018, 129.
[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Ibid, 131.
[120] Ibid.

to monitor and protect wild rice and water health as an example of an emerging responsibility within sacred Anishinaabe practices of wild ricing.[121] Scientific staff are, "guided by elders, involve all generations of the community in their research and education, participate in tribal life, and ensure through events and other opportunities that they are held accountable by the community."[122] In this way, the use of scientific tools in practices of wild ricing is an example of emerging responsibilities guided by the persisting responsibilities Anishinaabe peoples have to wild rice. Traditional practices and systems of relationship, and their critical role in forming identity and maintaining nutritional and environmental health, are thus continued over time via transforming methods. It is adaptation - or migration - that allows for continuity over time in the continuation of crucial values, practices, and systems of relationship.

Whyte argues that principles of interdependence, systems of responsibilities, and migration facilitate a society's collective continuance - or its ability to adapt in a self-determining way and "continue" as a society, without causing "reasonably preventable harms".[123] Collective continuance is the capacity of societies to adapt and continue through relationships that minimize harm for all parties involved and maximize mutual benefit. Whyte argues that certain *qualities* of relationship have developed in Anishinaabe traditions over time which foster interdependence and inform dynamic and robust systems of responsibilities. These qualities are consent, diplomacy, trust, and redundancy.[124] Whyte argues that these qualities make it possible for reciprocal responsibilities to

[121] Whyte, "Settler Colonialism, Ecology, and Environmental Injustice," 2018, 131.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Ibid.
[124] Ibid, 132.

achieve outcomes such as, "…freedom, sustainability, cultural integrity, economic vitality, and so on."[125] The first of these qualities is trust.

According to Whyte, trust refers to, "...a quality of relationships among people in the community in which each party or relative, human and nonhuman, takes to heart the best interests of the other party or relative."[126] When the quality of trust is fostered in relationships, and it strengthens them and makes them better equipped to withstand the pressures of environmental threats and social conflict.[127] When people in a community trust that each party in the community (and particularly those in leadership), "take to heart the best interests" of each community member, it facilitates a high degree of cooperation that strengthens the community.[128] Trust facilitates effective collaborative responses in the face of challenges, promoting the sustainability and mutual flourishing of members of a society.

Consent refers to, "...people's capacity to approve or veto the actions of others that may affect them."[129] Traditions of consent within systems of relationships foster freedom and agency for those involved. Both trust and consent are formed in Anishinaabe traditions through vetting processes and ceremonies to assure that members are qualified to take on particular roles, and to demonstrate the consent of the community in their exercising of such responsibilities.[130] Traditions and mechanisms of consent allow

[125] Whyte, "Settler Colonialism, Ecology, and Environmental Injustice," 2018, 132.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Ibid, 133.
[128] Ibid, 132.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Ibid.

members of a society to have agency over the structures and decisions that affect them. Like trust, the quality of consent strengthens the collective continuance of a society and helps ensure the mutual flourishing of those within it.

Diplomacy is the, "quality of being able to engage in productive relationships with others without being forced to disclose matters that are sacred or that make one unacceptably vulnerable (and hence exploitable, especially by a more powerful party)."[131] To effectively foster qualities of trust and consent requires mechanisms that allow members to engage in a relationships without being required to disclose matters that are sacred to them or that otherwise place them in an imbalanced position of vulnerability.[132] Diplomacy allows parties to navigate relationships productively while protecting sacred practices and retaining a quality of self-determination. Whyte writes, "If each kin is confident in the safety of whatever it is that they do not want to disclose, then they can move forward together knowing that their consent to share what they are comfortable with is protected."[133] The ability to choose what is protected and what is disclosed facilitates the freedom and agency of groups and preserves cultural integrity. Diplomacy can occur internally within communities and externally between communities.[134] Consent, trust, and diplomacy are further strengthened by the quality of redundancy.

[131] Whyte, "Settler Colonialism, Ecology, and Environmental Injustice," 2018, 132.
[132] Ibid.
[133] Ibid, 133.
[134] Ibid.

Redundancy is a "...quality that refers to states of affairs of having multiple options for adaptation when changes occur and for being able to guarantee sufficient opportunities for education and mentorship for community members."[135] A society with high redundancy has multiple methods of sustaining itself and shares knowledge and teachings widely so that practices and responsibilities, and thus the society itself, are maintained through challenges and disruptions. Redundancy makes a society adaptable and thus affords it a high degree of collective continuance. Qualities of trust, consent, diplomacy, and redundancy reflect principles of interdependence and migration and foster systems of responsibilities that are reciprocal and robust, strengthening the collective continuance of a society.

As an ethical-epistemological framework, collective continuance guides both an effective adaptive response to environmental threats resulting from the environmental crisis, and the structuring of environmentally sustainable relationships in present and future decision-making. Whyte describes collective continuance as an *ecology*, writing,

> The qualities of relationships and responsibilities that make up collective continuance are the bonds that create interdependency between human institutions (e.g. lodges, ceremonies, offices) and ecosystems (e.g. habitats, watersheds). In this way, I am describing an ecology, that is, an ecological system, of interacting humans, nonhuman beings (animals, plants, etc.) and entities (spiritual, inanimate, etc.), and landscapes (climate regions, boreal zones, etc.) that are conceptualized and operate purposefully to facilitate a collective's (such as an Indigenous people) adaptation to change.[136]

[135] Whyte, "Settler Colonialism, Ecology, and Environmental Injustice," 2018, 132.
[136] Ibid, 133-134.

Collective continuance is not merely a human ethical framework, but an *ecological system* of interacting "humans, nonhuman beings… and entities, and landscapes…".[137] It is an ecology that purposefully operates to, "facilitate a collective's… adaptation to change."[138] Collective continuance combines descriptive ontological and epistemological statements of the interdependent nature of being with guiding ethical principles for structuring robust, mutualistic, sustainable societies. Connecting principles of interdependence, systems of responsibilities, and migration, with qualities of trust, consent, diplomacy, and redundancy, collective continuance offers an ethical-epistemological framework situated in the ecosystem and focused on the mutual flourishing of its members.

Collective continuance is an effective non-dualistic framework. It is centered around dynamic, reciprocal systems of relationship that are situated in particular environmental, cultural, and historical contexts and reflect a fundamentally mutualistic ontology of interdependence. As an environmental philosophy, it engenders a sense of responsibility for maintaining sustainable, caring relationships between humans and nonhuman nature without reducing the agency or value of those in relation. It envisions the integration of humans into the ecosystem in a way that is reciprocally constructive rather than destructive. Finally, it not only retains the capacity to change over time but facilitates the active adaptation of humans within an ecosystem, in ways that minimize harm, as a central feature of survival. Collective continuance's primary underlying

[137] Whyte, "Settler Colonialism, Ecology, and Environmental Injustice," 2018, 133-134.
[138] Ibid.

principle of interdependence facilitates reciprocal systems of responsibilities. Without an underlying ontology of mutual relationality, the concept of reciprocal systems of relationships could not be effectively built. The mutualistic principle of interdependence that is central to both Held's articulation of an ethics of care and Whyte's collective continuance creates environmental-ethical frameworks that effectively address the environmental crisis and inform ethical decision-making for the future.

Conclusion

The current environmental crisis presents not only an incredible existential threat to humans and many other species, but incomprehensible suffering for humans and nonhuman nature alike. Environmental exploitation and degradation interlocks with economic and colonial structures of domination, each facilitated and perpetuated by the dualistic logic embedded in the dominant Western knowledge system. Dominant conceptions of Humanity (exclusive of people of color, indigenous people, and often women), of nature, and of the relationships between them are defined by an interrelated web of oppressive dualisms. Dualisms share a logic of hyper separation, hierarchy, one-way relational definition, and denial that homogenizes and instrumentalizes the "inferior" class within a bifurcated reality. Dualism denies relations of mutual dependence and frames structures of domination not only as justified by as *natural*. An environmental-ethical framework seeking to mitigate the vast and ever-deepening environmental crisis must go beyond the logic of dualism entirely to structure separations and relationships in fundamentally different ways. Such a shift requires leaving behind the dominant dualistic definition of Humanity that excludes and dehumanizes so many people and denies our role in the greater ecosystem.

A non-dualistic environmental ethical framework is needed if we are to properly address existing harms and injustices and prevent ongoing devastation. Mainstream environmental philosophies that retain dualistic assumptions, such as the Cult of Wilderness and the Gospel of Eco-Efficiency, offer limited solutions to the environmental crisis and perpetuate harmful structures of domination. An effectively

non-dualistic framework must relinquish innate value-hierarchies and remain grounded in a mutualistic ontology of interdependence. Virginia Held's ethics of care and Kyle Powys Whyte's collective continuance offer examples of mutualistic frameworks centered around reciprocal relationships and mutual flourishing. Ethics of care and collective continuance demonstrate principles of interdependence, reciprocity, systems of responsibility, and migration. They each remain situated in particular historical, political, cultural, and ecological contexts. In examples such as ethics of care and collective continuance, it becomes possible to envision ways of living that center relationality as an ontological precondition of existence, and promote the mutual benefit of people, plants, animals, and ecosystems. If we are to continue as a society, such a shift is morally and existentially imperative.

Bibliography

Alier, Juan Martínez. *The Environmentalism of the Poor: A Study of Ecological Conflicts and Valuation*. Northampton , MA: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2002.

Child, Brenda J. Holding Our World Together: Ojibwe Women and the Survival of Community. New York: Penguin, 2012.

Combahee River Collective. *The Combahee River Collective Statement: Black Feminist Organizing in the Seventies and Eighties*. Albany, NY: Kitchen Table, 1986.

Cronon, William. "The Trouble With Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature." American Society for Environmental History 1, no. 1 (1996): 7–28. https://doi.org/10.2307/3985059.

DeSimone, Livio D., Popoff, Frank, World Business Council for Sustainable Development,, and Desimone,. *Eco-Efficiency : The Business Link to Sustainable Development*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000. Accessed May 14, 2022. ProQuest Ebook Central.

Held, Virginia. *The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Korhonen, Jouni. "Reconsidering the Economics Logic of Ecological Modernization." Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space 40, no. 6 (June 2008): 1331–46. https://doi.org/10.1068/a38363.

Lugones, Maria. "Purity, Impurity, and Separation." *Signs* 19, no. 2 (1994): 458–79. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3174808.

McKibben, Bill. *The End of Nature*. New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2006.

Mills, Charles W. *The Racial Contract,* Cornell University Press, 1997.

Plumwood, Val. *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*. New York, NY: Routledge, 1993.

United Nations, "68% Of the World Population Projected to Live in Urban Areas by 2050, Says UN." United Nations | Department of Economic and Social Affairs, May 16, 2018. https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/population/2018-revision-of-world-urbanization-prospects.html.

Vogel, Steven. "Environmental Philosophy after the End of Nature." Environmental Ethics 24, no. 1 (2002): 23–39. https://doi.org/10.5840/enviroethics200224139.

Whyte, Kyle Powys. “Settler Colonialism, Ecology, and Environmental Injustice.” Environment and Society 9, no. 1 (2018): 125–44. https://doi.org/10.3167/ares.2018.090109.

Whyte, Kyle Powys, and Chris J Cuomo. “Ethics of Caring in Environmental Ethics: Indigenous and Feminist Philosophies.” Essay. In The Oxford Handbook of Environmental Ethics, edited by Stephen Mark Gardiner and Allen Thompson, 234–47. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019.

Wood, Ellen Meiksins, “The Agrarian Origin of Capitalism.” Essay. In *The Origin of Capitalism*, 95–121. New York, NY: Monthly Review Press, 1999.

Wynter, Sylvia. “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument.” *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003): 257–337. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41949874.