

TERRA FEMINA



Insights

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PARTNERSHIP ETHICS EARTHCARE FOR A NEW MILLENNIUM

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The women's tent at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro bustled with activity. Stands of colorful scarves and saris from India, intricately decorated bowls and wooden utensils from the Pacific islands, and woven bags from Africa lined the tent's entryway. Tables of literature on population, women's rights, forest restoration, agriculture, and water purification surrounded the huge central amphitheatre, its rows of chairs occupied by hundreds of brightly dressed women from all over the world. A microcosm of the world's women, their collective problems, achievements, and energy, the tent was christened Planeta Fêmea (the female planet) by Brazilian Women's Coalition. It had organized the women's portion of the Global Forum - the NGO (non-

governmental organizations) conference running parallel to the Earth Summit. Tape-recorders, translation headsets, and microphones hummed with the sounds of human voices emanating from the speakers' table in front. The speakers' words, processed into many languages and common understandings, were finally interpreted by those eagerly listening to the reading of the final women's documents arrived at after months of preparatory conferences and two hot, exciting weeks of negotiations in Rio.

Planeta Fêmea, a remarkable event by one of the most diverse groups of women yet assembled on a global scale, put forward the political dimensions needed for a new partnership ethic of earthcare. The need for a new ethic had been

building out of the experiences of women in Third World countries for over a decade through the recognition that women and nature together bore the brunt of malconceived development programs. Women all over the globe in both North and South began to insist that women's issues and environmental issues be addressed in the same context. Allowed to attend development conferences, but not involved in policy formation and planning, women saw vital questions affecting their livelihoods, resources, and security ignored and neglected. Realizing that women's concerns would not be a part of the preparation for the Earth Summit unless they themselves seized the initiative, they drew on their experiences, history, and political skills to place their issues on the agenda. But while they succeeded in many of their aspirations for inclusion in the process and many of their demands appear in the resulting documents, concrete results remain as yet elusive and difficult to evaluate. Hoped-for outcomes have yet to be realized.

Planeta Fêmea was the culmination of more than a decade of advancement on the roles of women in environment and development. While women had barely been acknowledged in development programs in the 1960s, their

contributions to agriculture in the Third World households gained recognition as part of a Women in Development (WID) approach in the 1970s. The United Nations Decade for Women, which concluded with a 1985 conference in Nairobi, brought women into development through access to education, resources, and grants that would help to eliminate poverty. As development agencies began to incorporate gender analysis into their programs in the late 1980s, women's concerns were added onto mainstream agency approaches in a shift to Gender and Development (GAD). An explicit environmental strand in development, Women, Environment, and Development (WED) gradually emerged from the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972 and within the subsequent United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP). After the completion of the 1987 United Nations report, *Our Common Future*, chaired by Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland, and in preparation for the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, the emphasis changed to sustainable development, or "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs."³

In order to present the policy recommendations of women at the Earth Summit, two back-to-back conferences were held in Miami Florida in November 1991. The first, the Global Assembly of Women and the Environment - Partners in Life, presented environmental case studies of the ways in which women throughout the world were managing and conserving resources to achieve sustainability. The second, the World Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet, attended by 1500 women from 83 countries, presented case studies of the impacts of past development projects on women and the environment to an international tribunal of female judges. Through an outstanding exercise in cooperation and consensus, the conference formulated the Women's Action Agenda 21 (an agenda for the twenty-first century, to be brought to the Earth Summit).

The Planeta Fêmea conference, organized in cooperation with the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) in New York City, co-chaired by former Congresswoman Bella Abzug, was attended by representatives from women's and environment organizations from all over the world, as well as a constant stream of well-known female heads of state and local governments. After examining and debating the

themes of the Miami Women's Action Agenda 21, the women's tent adopted the "Global Women's Treaty for NGOs Seeking a Just and Healthy Planet," which was incorporated into the Global Forum's final NGO treaty.

At the official Earth Summit held simultaneously in Rio Centro, the second document to emerge from the preparatory process was also adopted. "The Global Action for Women Towards Sustainable and Equitable Development," was included as Chapter 24 of the UNCED's final document, *Agenda 21* (the 500 page agenda for the twenty-first century ratified at the Earth Summit). Moreover, women's interests were part of the Rio Declaration, the Earth Summit's 27 point proclamation replacing the intended Earth Charter that was to have enunciated far-reaching ethical principles on human-human and human-environment relations. Item 20 of the Rio Declaration stated that "women have a vital role in environmental management and development. Their full participation is therefore essential to achieve sustainable development."

A prominent plank in the Miami Women's Action Agenda, to which a session was devoted at Planeta Fêmea, was the "Code of Environmental Ethics and Accountability." The

code asserted that "the women's global environmental model is cooperative rather than competitive, values women's roles, work, and participation, and acknowledges the responsibility that accompanies power and is owed to future generations." Drawing on the work of women economists, such as Marilyn Waring's *If Women Counted*, it made a number of specific recommendations for economic and ethical accountability, such as including the full value of women's labor, the value of environmental resources and pollution, and the intrinsic value of biodiversity in national accounting systems and international trade.

The women's "Code of Environmental Ethics and Accountability" exemplifies the first prong of what I have called a partnership ethic of earthcare; the second is the autonomy of nature itself. Partnership ethics differs from the three major forms of environmental ethics that currently dominate human-environment relations—egocentric, homocentric and ecocentric. These three forms of environmental ethics can be exemplified by three major interests represented at the Earth Summit: GATT, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade; UNCED, the United Nations Commission on Environment and Development; and many environmental

organizations attending the Global Forum. I shall first illustrate the assumptions of egocentric, homocentric, and ecocentric ethics and then show how a new transcendent ethic of earthcare emerges out of the women's "Code of Environmental Ethics and Accountability."

The Uruguay round of GATT, which began in 1986 and by 1995 was concluded and had been ratified, assumes a free market model of world trade and an egocentric ethic. Based on the idea of trickle-down economic benefits, and egocentric ethic is the idea that what is good for the individual, or the corporation acting as an individual, is good for society as a whole. Nature comprises resources that can be turned into commodities for trade. It consists of free goods from an inexhaustible tap whose wastes go into an inexhaustible sink. Following the model of a factory, nature is conceptualized as a dead machine, isolated from its environment, whose parts are manipulated for assembly line production. Resource depletion (the tap) and environmental pollution (the sink) are not part of the profit-loss accounts, hence there is no accountability to or for nature. Because of the individual, or individual corporation, is free to profit, there are no ethical restraints on nature's "free" goods or on free trade. The result is the Hobbesian Good Society and the egocentric ethic.

GATT's egocentric ethic, like that of NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement), eliminates barriers to trade and with it environmental and consumer-safety measures, despite the possibility of environmental side-agreements. For example, in 1990, the United States, in response to a consumer boycott of tuna caught in drift nets that trapped and killed dolphins, enacted an embargo on Mexican tuna. Mexico protested and a GATT review panel ruled that no country can restrict import on the basis of methods of production, essentially invalidating a U.S. law protecting dolphins (the Marine Mammal Protection Act).⁹ GATT harmonizes environmental and consumer safety standards to the lowest common denominator worldwide. It increases corporate control and decreases local control. Communities and resources are forced to comply with the demands of the global market. This approach essentially removes control from local communities, homelands, and indigenous and tribal peoples over their own resources. In addition, tropical and temperate old-growth forests suffer along with marine mammals and other components of local ecosystems. GATT further externalizes environmental costs and penalizes sustainable technologies that attempt to internalize costs.

GATT's egocentric ethic promotes Trans-National Corporations (TNCs) and limits democracy in these industries. The successful completion of GATT's Uruguay Round is the dream of the self-made man, the darling of Reagan-Bush-Thatcher economics, and the ethic of capitalist patriarchy. The Women's NGO treaty, adopted by the Global Forum, contains an indictment of GATT as a major cause of environmental degradation.¹⁰

In contrast to GATT's egocentric ethic, the ethic of UNCED's sustainable development program is a homocentric ethic. It is a utilitarian ethic based on the precept of the greatest good for the greatest number of people. Developed by Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill in the nineteenth century, utilitarian ethics became the conservation ethic of Theodore Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot during the Progressive Era in the early twentieth century with the addition of the phrase "for the longest time." The idea of "the greatest good for the greatest number for the longest time," is a public-interest, social-interest ethic that considers conservation of natural resources to be consistent with the needs and interests of the majority over those of the individual. In Bentham and Mill's formulations it promotes the general good, the greatest happiness for the greatest number, and

freedom from pain and suffering. In its purest form, it is the ethic of federal and state agencies, acting free of political forces and private lobbyists on behalf of the people for the common good. The utilitarian calculus of benefits and costs, rather than the bottom line of its profits, guides the ethical choices made. In reality, however, homocentric ethics are always in conflict with the pressures of the egocentric ethic from the influence of private interests and lobbyists on government officials and the confluence of state/monopoly capitalist interests. Conflicts of interest therefore develop, one example of which is the ethics of GATT versus the ethics of UNCED.

For the homocentric ethic of UNCED, as for the egocentric ethic of GATT, nature is viewed primarily as a resource for humans and a source of commodities. But in contrast to GATT the United Nations is dedicated to promoting the general good of all nations and all peoples in the world community. Its policies reflect the principle of the greatest good for the greatest number. Like the Progressive Era's conservation ethic, UNCED's sustainable development ethic adds the principle of the longest time. Sustainable development that fulfills the needs of the present generation without compromising the needs of future generations. This principle brings future

generations into the accountability calculus. The Earth Summit's goal is to promote greater democracy for more people for a longer time by developing and conserving resources sustainably.¹¹

Many (but not all) environmentalists attending the Earth Summit, subscribed to the assumptions of a third ethic - ecocentrism. Developed by ecologist Aldo Leopold, who formulated the land ethic in the 1940s, and elaborated as ecocentric (and biocentric) ethics by environmental philosophers over the past three decades, ecocentrism includes the entire biotic and abiotic world. Leopold's land ethic expanded the human community to include "soils, waters, plants, animals, or collectively the land." "A thing is right," Leopold said, "when it tends to preserve the integrity, beauty, and stability of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise." Ecocentrism, as elaborated in the 1970s and 1980s, went a step further to assert that all things have intrinsic worth - value in and of themselves - not just instrumental or utilitarian value. Because biota have evolved over millennia, all organisms have a right to exist and should be preserved for future generations. Biodiversity is necessary not only for utilitarian and humanitarian reasons (for maintaining the present and future health of the

entire biosphere, for enhancing the quality of life, and for aesthetic enjoyment), but for its own sake. Ecocentrism expands the good of the human community to embrace and include within it the good and the biotic community. From an ecocentric point of view, accountability must include the rights of all other organisms, such as those in a rainforest, to continue to exist.¹²

Ethical dilemmas occur when real world situations produce conflicts among the three forms of ethics. Acting on the basis of GATT's egocentric ethic, with the goal of maximizing profits through free trade in natural resources, transnational corporations harvest rainforests for timbers and turn cutover areas into range lands for grazing cattle. Acting on the basis of ecocentric ethics, with the goal of saving rainforests and endangered species, environmentalists engineer debt-for-nature swaps that preserve and value whole ecosystems. Both ethics, however, can negatively affect communities of indigenous peoples by forcing them out of long-inhabited areas onto marginal lands, where they increase their populations to obtain the labor to survive, or migrate to cities where they end up jobless and homeless. In this example, the social-interest ethic of these communities to fulfill their basic needs conflicts with the egocentric ethic of transnational

corporations and the ecocentric ethic of nature preservationists. From one point of view nature is victimized at the expense of people, from another people are victimized at the expense of nature.¹³

The three dominant forms of environmental ethics all have conceptual and practical shortcomings. Egocentric ethics are criticized for privileging the few at the expense of the many (narcissistic, cut-throat individualism), homocentric ethics for privileging majorities at the expense of minorities (tyranny of the majority, environmental racism), and the ecocentric ethics for privileging the whole at the expense of the individual (holistic fascism). Egocentric and homocentric ethics are often lumped together as anthropocentrism (by deep ecologists, for example). But this approach masks the role of economics and particularly of capitalism, placing the onus on human hubris and domination rather than the capitalist appropriation of both nature and labor. Moreover, it fails to recognize the positive aspects of the social-justice approach of homocentric ethics. On the other hand, the ecocentric approach of many environmentalists suggests the possibility of incorporating the intrinsic value of nature into an emancipatory green politics.¹⁴

An alternative that transcends many of these

problems is a partnership ethic. A partnership ethic sees the human community *and* the biotic community in a mutual relationship with each other. It states that "the greatest good for the human and the nonhuman community is to be found in their mutual, living interdependence."

A partnership ethic draws on the principles and advantages of both the homocentric social-interest ethic and the ecocentric environmental ethic, while rejecting the egocentric ethic associated with capitalist exploitation of people and nature. The term partnership avoids gendering nature as a mother or a goddess (sex-typing the planet), avoids endowing either males or females with a special relationship to nature or to each other (essentialism), and admits the anthropogenic, or human-generated (but not anthropocentric, or human-centered) nature of environmental ethics and metaphor. A partnership ethic of earthcare means that both women and men can enter into mutual relationships with each other and the planet independently of gender and does not hold women alone responsible for "cleaning up the mess" made by male-dominated science, technology and capitalism.

Just as egocentric ethics is grounded in the principle of self-interest, homocentric ethics in the

concept of utility, and ecocentric ethics in intrinsic value, so partnership ethics is grounded in the concept of relation. A relation is a mode of connection. This connection may be between people or kin in the same family or community, between men and women, between people, other organisms, and inorganic entities, or between specific places and the rest of the earth. A relation is also a narrative; to relate is to narrate. A narrative connects people to a place, to its history, and to its multileveled meanings. It is a story that is recounted and told, in which connections are made, alliances and associations established. A partnership ethic of earthcare is an ethic of the connections between a human and a nonhuman community. The relationship is situational and contextual within the local community, but the community is also embedded in and connected to the wider earth, especially national and global economies.¹⁵

A partnership ethic has four precepts:

1. Equity between the human and nonhuman communities.
2. Moral consideration for humans and non human nature.
3. Respect for cultural diversity and biodiversity.

4. Inclusion of women, minorities, and nonhuman nature in the code of ethical accountability.

A partnership ethic goes beyond egocentric and homocentric ethics in which the good human community wins out over the good of the biotic community (as in egocentric and homocentric ethics). It likewise transcends ecocentric ethics in which the good of the biotic community may take precedence over the good of the human community. In contrast to Leopold's extensionist ethic, in which the community is extended to encompass nonhuman nature, partnership ethics recognizes both continuities and differences between humans and nonhuman nature. It admits that humans are dependent on nonhuman nature and that nonhuman nature has preceded and will postdate human nature. But it also recognizes that humans now have the power, knowledge, and technology to destroy *life as we know it* today.

For millennia, Nature held the upper hand over humans. People were subordinate to nature and fatalistically accepted the hand that nature dealt. Since the seventeenth century, the balance of power has shifted and humans have gained the upper hand over Nature. We have an

increasing ability to destroy nature through mechanistic science, technology, capitalism, and the Baconian hubris that the human race should have dominion over the entire universe. In the late twentieth century, however, the environmental crisis and developments in postmodern science and philosophy have called into question the efficacy of the mechanistic worldview, the idea of Enlightenment progress, and the ethics of unrestrained development as a means of dominating nature.

A partnership ethic calls for a new balance in which both humans and nonhuman nature are equal partners, neither having the upper hand, yet cooperating with each other. Both humans and nature are active agents. Both the needs of nature continue to exist and the basic needs of human beings must be considered. As George Perkins Marsh put it in 1864, humanity should "become a co-worker with nature in the reconstruction of the damaged fabric," by restoring the waters, forests, and bogs "laid waste by human improvidence or malice." While thunderstorms, tornados, volcanos, and earthquakes represented nature's power over humanity to rearrange elementary matter, humans equally had the power "irreparably to derange the combinations of inorganic matter and

of organic life, which through the night of aeons she had been proportioning and balancing..."¹⁶ In the 1970s, Herbert Marcuse conceptualized nature an opposing partner, emphasizing the differences, as well as the continuities that people share with nature. Nature is "an ally," not mere inorganic matter, - a "life force in its own right," appearing as "subject-object." Nature as subject "may well be hostile to man, in which case the the relation would be one of struggle; but the struggle may also subside and make room for peace, tranquility, fulfillment." A nonexploitative relation would be a "surrender, 'letting-be', acceptance."¹⁷

A partnership ethic therefore has two components - a homocentric social-interest ethic of partnership among human groups and an ecocentric ethic of partnership with nonhuman nature. The first component, the idea of a partnership among human groups, is reflected in both the preamble to UNCED's *Agenda 21* of "a global partnership for sustainable development" and in the opening paragraph of the "Rio Declaration on Environment and Development" proclaiming that the conference met "with the goal of establishing a new and equitable global partnership through the creation of new levels of cooperation among states, key sectors of societies, and people." Article 7 of the Rio Declaration

asserts that "States shall cooperate in a spirit of global partnership to conserve, protect, and restore the health of the Earth's Ecosystem." The concept of partnership is also called forth in the title of the Miami "Global Assembly of Women and the Environment-Partners in Life."¹⁸ The document from the second Miami conference, the World Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet, exemplifies ways of actually putting the human side of the partnership into practice:

First, as they would apply to the sphere of production, the Women's Action Agenda 21 and its Code of Environmental Ethics and Accountability hold (among other things) that:

- Fulfillment of basic needs takes precedence over profit.
- Depletion and pollution are part of individual and corporate accounts and should be paid by the producer and polluter.
- Resources should be replenished, environments restored, and biodiversity maintained by all industries and businesses, especially transnational corporations.
- Air, water, and soil should be left clean and healthy.
- Corporations, institutions, organizations, states, and nations are accountable to the public.
- Environmental audits and impact

assessments must be made for all proposals before funding.

Second, as they would apply to the sphere of reproduction, the Women's Action Agenda 21 and its "Code of Environmental Ethics and Accountability" hold (among other things) that:

- Voluntary birth control should be managed by women for women. Contraception should be safe and legal.
- Reproductive healthcare and family planning should be available to all women.
- Education, sex education, job education, and old age security should be available to all women.
- Men should participate in childcare.

The second component of the new partnership brings nature into an active relationship with humans and entails a new consciousness of nature as equal subject. Postmodern science reconstructs the relationship between humans and nature. While mechanistic science assumes that nature is divided into parts and that change comes from external forces (a billiard ball model), ecology emphasizes nature as continuous change and process. Chaos theory goes a step further, suggesting that the human ability to predict the outcome of those processes is limited. Disorderly

order, the world represented by chaos theory, is the second component of the partnership ethic.¹⁹

While a certain domain of nature can be represented by linear, deterministic equations, and is therefore predictable (or can be subjected to probabilities, stochastic approximations, and complex system analysis), a very large domain can be represented only through nonlinear equations that do not admit of solutions. The closed systems and determinism of classical physics described by Isaac Newton and Pierre Simon Laplace gives way to a postclassical physics of open complex systems and chaos theory. These theories suggest that there are limits to the knowable world. This is not the same as saying there is a non-knowable noumenal world behind the phenomena. It says there is a real, material, physical world; but a world that can never be totally known by means of mathematics. It is a world that is primarily chaotic and unpredictable and therefore cannot be totally controlled by science and technology. Science can no longer perform the god-trick - imposing the view of everything from nowhere. It cannot offer the totalizing viewpoint associated with modernism, the Enlightenment, and mechanistic science. The real world is both orderly and disorderly, predictable and unpredictable,

controllable and uncontrollable, depending on context and situation.²⁰

Chaos theory challenges two basic assumptions of ecology as it developed in the 1960s and 1970s and formed the basis of environmental management - the ideas of the balance of nature and the diversity - stability hypothesis. The historical concept of a balance of nature which humans could disrupt implied that people could repair damaged ecosystems with better practices. The idea that biodiversity led to ecosystem stability meant that species conservation and ecological restoration could improve ecosystem health. Yet chaos theory suggests that natural disturbances and mosaic patches that do not exhibit regular or predictable patterns are the norm rather than aberration. Moreover, the seemingly stable world that is the object of socially-constructed representations can be destabilized by human social practices (as when pesticides produce mutant insects or antibiotics produce resistant bacteria). Such theories undercut assumptions of stability at the root of Leopold's land ethic and a holism as a foundation for ecocentrism. They reinforce the idea that predictability, while still useful, is more limited than previously assumed and that nature, while a human construct and a representation, is

also a real, material, autonomous agent. A postclassical, postmodern science is a science of limited knowledge, of the primacy of process over parts, and of imbedded contexts within complex, open ecological systems.²¹

This disorderly, ordered world of nonhuman nature must be acknowledged as a free autonomous actor, just as humans are free autonomous agents. But nature limits human freedom to totally dominate and control it, just as human power limits nature's and other humans' freedom. Science and technology can tell us that an event such as a hurricane, earthquake, flood, or fire is likely to happen in a certain locale, but not when it will happen. Because nature is fundamentally chaotic, it must be respected and related to as an active partner through a partnership ethic.

If we know that an earthquake in Los Angeles is likely in the next 75 years, a utilitarian, homocentric ethic would state that the government ought not to license the construction of a nuclear reactor on the fault line. But a partnership ethic would say that, we, the human community, ought to respect nature's autonomy as an actor by also limiting building and leaving open space. If we know there is a possibility of a 100 year flood on the Mississippi River, we respect human needs for

navigation and power, but we also respect nature's autonomy by limiting our capacity to dam every tributary that feeds the river and build homes on every flood plain. We leave some rivers wild and free and leave some flood plains as wetlands, while using others to fulfill human needs. If we know that forest fires are likely in the Rockies, we do not build cities along forest edges. We limit the extent of development, leave open spaces, plant fire resistant vegetation, and use tile rather than shake roofs. If cutting tropical and temperate old-growth forests creates problems for both the global environment and local communities, but we cannot adequately predict the outcome or effects of those changes, we need to conduct partnership negotiations in which nonhuman nature and the people involved are equally represented.

Each of these difficult, time-consuming ethical and policy decisions will be negotiated by a human community in a particular place, but the outcome will depend on the history of people and nature in the area, the narratives they tell themselves about the land, vital human needs, past and present land-use patterns, the larger global context, and the ability or lack of it to predict nature's events. Each human community is in a changing, evolving relationship with a nonhuman community that is local, but also

connected to global environmental and human patterns. Each ethical instance is historical, contextual, and situational, but located within a larger environmental and economic system.

Partnership ethics draws on feminist theory and on women's experiences of and historical connections to the environment, but it does not claim that women have a special knowledge of nature or a special ability to care for nature. Partnerships can be formed between women and women, men and men, women and men, people and nature, and North and South to solve specific problems and to work toward a socially-just, environmentally-sustainable world. Partnership ethics also draw on social and socialist ecology in making visible the connections between economic systems, people, and the environment in an effort to find new economic forms that fulfill basic needs, provide security, and enhance the quality of life without degrading the local or global environment. Finally, partnership ethics draws on work in the sciences that suggests possibilities for non-dominating relationships between humans and nonhuman nature.

As in all cases of applied ethics, the implementation of partnership ethics is not easy. Problems stem, for example, from the meaning of the term sustainable development and its

relationship to power. Defined by the Brundtland Report as "development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" and as "meeting the basic needs of all and extending to all the opportunity to satisfy their aspirations for a better life," sustainable development can be used either to mean sustained economic growth or fulfillment of basic needs. Secondly, sustainable development cast as a partnership between North and South obscures existing, uneven power-relationships. The debt burden of Third World countries, imbalances between the G-7 and G-77 nations, the role of militarism, the export of military technology and toxic wastes, and the power of aid organizations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the economic power vested in TNCs and GATT are all implicated by their egocentric, self-interested ethical and power relationships.

Rather than sustainable development, which reinforces dominant approaches to development, women's environmental groups, and many other NGOs, have substituted the term "sustainable livelihood." Sustainable livelihood is a people-oriented approach that emphasizes the fulfillment of basic needs - health, employment, and old-age

security, the elimination of poverty, and women's control over their own bodies, methods of contraception, and resources.²²

A second potential problem for the implementation of partnership ethics comes from relationships among women's groups themselves. Some women of the South criticize the consumption-oriented lifestyles of many of those in the North and of elites in the South. At the same time, they point out the burden on poor women of the South from Third World indebtedness to the North, the effects on women's bodies of poor health and nutrition, involuntary sterilization, and "population control" programs; and the effects of environmental exposures to pesticides and toxics from cash crop production by TNCs. From this perspective, the poor woman of the South is in a privileged position to criticize maldevelopment and the many Northern environmental groups who blame the environmental crisis on women's reproduction of large numbers of children. Moreover, if a woman's body is her primary environment, the desperate need for food, water, and fuel just to stay alive would seem to preclude the possibility of a partnership with nonhuman nature. Women of the South focus instead on subsistence, healthcare, and security as the primary needs. The

approach of the South is not inconsistent with partnership ethics, however, and a reconciliation of North-South differences might be achieved from other perspectives.²³

From the perspective of socialist ecofeminism, for example, the key causes of the crisis are the twin impacts of production on ecology and of production and reproduction. Production oriented toward profit-maximization, sanctioned by the egocentric ethic, undercuts the conditions for its own perpetuation by destroying the environment from which it extracts "free" resources. Production threatens biological reproduction by driving people onto marginal lands and into urban areas where they produce children as a labor asset to survive, while also threatening social reproduction by creating homelessness, poverty, crime, and political instability. Historically produced colonialism and capitalism in First World/Third World relations results in the expansion of profit-oriented market economies at the expense of basic-needs oriented local/subsistence economies. An analysis of the role of colonial and capitalist forms of production in the larger system of historically-generated power relations can illuminate common problems and suggest new strategies for change.

Thus to place the blame for the environmental

crisis on the evolution of domination and Western dualism (as do some social ecologists and social ecofeminists) or on anthropocentrism (as do deep ecologists), or on the primacy of power relations and enlightenment rationality (as do some postmodernists) is insufficient. These approaches tend to ignore or downplay the critical role played by capitalism (as well as state socialism). They can be helpful, however, when integrated into an economic analysis of the capitalist exploitation of people and nature. The emphasis placed by many environmental groups on "overpopulation" in the South and "overconsumption" in the North neglects the crucial role of production that underlies and unites both causes of degradation. Instead, reduction of production for profit and its reorientation toward fulfillment of basic needs and human security would go a long way towards creating sustainable livelihoods and stabilizing populations.

A framework based on the dialectical, historical, structural, and systemic relations among the conceptual levels of ecology, production, reproduction, and consciousness can integrate these approaches into a comprehensive analysis and propose strategies for revolutionary transformation. Such strategies would analyze past and present power relations; identify the

weak points in the system, and draw on the energy and vision of new social/ecology movements and NGOs to bring about a sustainable world.

If the goals of economic production were reoriented toward the reproduction of human and nonhuman life (rather than the reverse as is presently the case), many of the problems that promote exponential population growth, unlimited economic expansion, and environmental degradation would wither away. Such an ecological revolution could realize the goals of the Global Forum's Planeta Fêmea by implementing a partnership ethic of earthcare and a movement toward a sustainable world for the new millennium. Perhaps "the gaping void, chaos," Gaia, "the ancient earth-mother," and their offspring, "the world and the human race" could once again be reunited.²⁴

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5. "NGO's Meeting in Rio Adopt a Global Women's Treaty for a Just and Healthy Planet," and "Agenda 21 Defines the Role of Women in Sustainable Development," *Global Assembly of Women and the Environment-Partners in Life*, Washington, D.C.: WorldWIDE, Issue 4 (July 1992): 5-9; Michael Grubb, Matthias Koch, Abby Munson, Francis Sullivan, and Koy Thomson, *The Earth Summit Agreements: A Guide and Assessment* (London: Earthscan, 1993), p. 137; Braidotti, et al, *Women, the Environment and Sustainable Development*, p. 127.

6. Marilyn Waring, *If Women Counted: A New Feminist Economics* (London: Macmillan, 1988); IPAC, Official Report, *World Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet*, p. 17.

7. On egocentric, homocentric and ecocentric ethics see "Environmental Ethics and Political Conflict," in Merchant, *Radical Ecology* (NY: Routledge, 1992), pp. 63-82.

8. Environmental News Network, "GATT, the Environment, and the Third World: An Overview," (Berkeley, CA: The Tides Foundation, 1992); "GATT vs. UNCED: Can Free Trade and Sustainable Development Coexist?" (San Francisco, CA: Rainforest Action Network, 1992); World Wide Fund for Nature, "The GATT Report on Trade and Environment: A Critique" (Gland, Switzerland: WWF International, 1992); Third World Network, *Earth Summit Briefings*, (Penang, Malaysia, 1992); Marcia Stepanek, "GATT Group Turns up the Heat," *San Francisco Examiner*, 7 August 1994, B-1-9; Kristin Dawkins, *NAFTA, GATT and the World Trade Organization: The Emerging World Order*, (Westfield, N.J.: Open Pamphlet Series, 1994).

9. Heinz Greijin, "GATT, Environment, and Development," *Earth Island Journal*, 7 (June 1992): 11-12.

10. The Global Women's Treaty contained the following paragraph: "We recognize the failure of governments to either

NOTES

This chapter is a revision of a paper presented at the Global Forum (The Nongovernmental Organizations' Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro) at the Women's Planeta Fêmea conference, in the session on the "Code of Ethics and Accountability."

1. Rosiska Darcy de Oliveira and Thais Corral, *Planeta Fêmea: a Publication of the Brazilian Women's Coalition* (Rio de Janeiro, IDAC, 1993); Rosiska Darcy de Oliveira and Thais Corral, eds. *Terra Fêmea* (Rio de Janeiro: Companhia Brasileira de Artes Gráficas, 1992).

2. Rosi Braidotti, Ewa Charkiewics, Sabine Häusler, and Saskia Wieringa, *Women, the Environment, and Sustainable Development* (London: Zed Books, 1994), pp. 78-80; Ester Boserup, *Women's Role in Economic Development* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1970).

3. Braidotti, et al, *Women, the Environment, and Sustainable Development*, pp. 86-87; Sue Ellen M. Charlton, *Women in Third World Development* (London: Westview Press, 1984); Irene Dankelman and Joan Davidson, *Women and Environment in the Third World: Alliance for the Future* (London: Earthscan, 1988); Sally Sontheimer, ed., *Women and the Environment: A Reader, Crisis and Development in the Third World* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1988); Vandana Shiva, *Staying Alive: Women, Environment, and Development* (London: Zed Books, 1989); Waafas Ofosu-Amaah,

address the true causes of the planetary crisis or reach agreement on urgent action to save our planet. We believe that the chief causes lie in militarism, debt and structural adjustment and trade policies being promoted by multinational corporations and international financial and trade institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). The policies of these institutions are causing the degradation of human and natural environments, leading to the growing impoverishment of the majority of the world's people, perpetuating the inequity of the existing world order, and contributing to the continuing and intensified pressure on natural resources. We condemn these policies and call for the immediate adoption of alternative policies based on principles of justice, equity, and sustainability." "NGO's Meeting in Rio Adopt a Global Women's Treaty," *Global Assembly of Women and the Environment*, No. 4 (July 1992), p. 8.

11. The Preamble to UNCED's Agenda 21 states: "[t]he integration of environment and development concerns and greater attention to them will lead to the fulfillment of basic needs, improved living standards for all, better protected and managed ecosystems and a safer, more prosperous future. No nation can achieve this on its own; but together we can - in a global partnership for sustainable development." Quoted in Michael Grubb, et al, *The Earth Summit Agreements: A Guide and Assessment* (London: Earthscan, 1993), p. 101.

12. On Aldo Leopold's land ethic and ecocentric ethics more generally see Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1949); J. Baird Callicott, *In Defense of the Land Ethic: Essays in Environmental Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989); Holmes Rolston III, *Philosophy Gone Wild: Essays in Environmental Ethics* (Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1986).

13. Harold Gilliam, "The Real Price of Free Trade," and Gilliam, "The Bottom Line for Indigenous Cultures," *This World*, San Francisco Examiner, January 2, 1994, pp.13-14.

14. On the land ethic as a case of "environmental fascism," see Tom Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1983), p. 262. For a response see J. Baird Callicott, *In Defense of The Land Ethic* pp. 92-4 and Callicott, "Moral Monism in Environmental Ethics Defended," *Journal of Philosophical Research*, 19 (1994): 51-60, see p.53. On ecocentrism as the ground for an emancipatory green politics, see Eckersley, *Environmentalism and Political Theory: Toward an Ecocentric Approach* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992).

15. The idea of a partnership between women and men as the basis for a new society, but without explicit attention to

environmental ethics, has been developed by Riane Eisler in *The Chalice and the Blade* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988). The concept of relation as a foundation for ecofeminism and the relational self has been developed by Val Plumwood in *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (London: Routledge, 1993). On the connections between ethics and narrative, see Jim Cheney, "Postmodern Environmental Ethics: Ethics as Bioregional Narrative," *Environmental Ethics*, 11 (1989): 117-34. On the importance of seeing the local community as connected to a global capitalist system see James O'Connor, "Socialism and Ecology," *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism*, 2, no. 3 (1991): 1-12.

16. George Perkins Marsh, *Man and Nature* (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1864), pp. 35, 36.

17. Herbert Marcuse, "Nature and Revolution," in *Counterrevolution and Revolt* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972, pp. 59, 65, 69.

18. "Preamble to Agenda 21 and "The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development," in Grubb, et al, *The Earth Summit Agreements*, pp. 101, 87.

19. On the chaos theory see, James Gleick, *Chaos: The Making of a New Science* (New York: Viking, 1987) Edward Lorenz, *The Essence of Chaos* (Seattle, WA.: University of Washington Press, 1993); N. Katherine Hayles, *Chaos Bound: Orderly Disorder in Contemporary Literature and Science* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990); N. Katherine Hayles, ed. *Chaos and Order: Complex Dynamics in Literature and Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Ralph Abraham, *Chaos, Gaia and Eros*, (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1994). On the difference between chaos theory and complexity theory, see Mitchell Waldrop, *Complexity: The Emerging Science at the Edge of Order and Chaos* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992).

20. On the god-trick of seeing everything from nowhere, see Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges," in Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), pp. 183-201, esp pp. 189, 191, 193, 195.

21. For the diversity-stability hypothesis, see Eugene P. Odum, *Fundamentals of Ecology* (1953) and Odum, "The Strategy of Ecosystem Development," *Science*, 164 (1969): 262-70. On shortcomings of equilibrium theories in ecology, see Seth R. Reice, "Nonequilibrium Determinants of Biological Community Structure," *American Scientist*, 82 (September-October 1994): 424-35. On the history and disruption of the balance of nature theory, see Daniel Botkin, *Discordant Harmonies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); S.T.A. Pickett and P. S. White, eds. *The Ecology of Natural Disturbance and Patch Dynamics* (Orlando, FL:

Academic Press, 1985). On the problem of a stable world behind socially constructed representations, see Elizabeth Ann R. Bird, "The social Construction of Nature: Theoretical Approaches to the History of Environmental Problems," *Environmental Review*, 11, no.4 (Winter 1987): 255-64. On the history of chaos theory in ecology see Donald Worster, "Ecological of Order and Chaos," *Environmental History Review*, 14, no. 1-2 (Spring/Summer 1990): 4-16.

22. Braidotti, et al, *Women, the Environment, and Sustainable Development*, pp. 132-34, 90. World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future* (Brundtland Report) (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 43-44.

23. Braidotti, et al, *Women, the Environment and Sustainable Development*, pp. 116-22, 134, 166-67. Environmental groups from the South include DAWN (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era), headed by Peggy Antrobus of Barbados, Vandana Shiva's Research Foundation for Science, Technology, and Resource Development in Dehra Dun India, and the Regional Assemblies of women in Africa; the West Asia/ Arab World; Asia/Pacific; and Latin America/Caribbean, comprising the Global Assembly of Women and the Environment - Partners in Life.

24. See Charlene Spretnak, *Lost Goddesses of Early Greece: A Collection of Pre-Hellenic Mythology* (Ann Arbor, MI: Moon Books, 1978), pp. 30-1, quoted above, Chapter 1, p.33.

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