WEEK FIVE

Shadow Places and the Politics of Dwelling

Val Plumwood

The Problem: Place Discourse and Ecological Consciousness

Much contemporary environmental theory, especially in the eco-humanities, focuses on place as a locus of continuity, identity, and ecological consciousness, and on 'place education'. Recovering a storied sense of land and place is a crucial part of the restoration of meaning. But if commodity culture engenders a false consciousness of place, this meaning can be fake. There is a serious problem of integrity for the leading concepts of much contemporary place discourse, especially the concept of heimat or dwelling in 'one's place' or 'homeplace', the place of belonging. The very concept of a singular homeplace or 'our place' is problematised by the dissociation and dematerialisation that permeate the global economy and culture. This culture creates a split between a singular, elevated, conscious 'dwelling' place, and the multiple disregarded places of economic and ecological support, a split between our idealised homeplace and the places delineated by our ecological footprint. In the context of the dominant global consciousness, ideals of dwelling compound this by encouraging us to direct our honouring of place towards an 'official' singular idealised place consciously identified with self, while disregarding the many unrecognised, shadow places that provide our material and ecological support, most of which, in a global market, are likely to elude our knowledge and responsibility. This is not an ecological form of consciousness.

Ostensibly place-sensitive positions like bioregionalism evade rather than resolve the problem of the split by focussing exclusively on singular self-sufficient communities, thus substituting a simplistic ideal of atomic places for recognition of the multiple, complex network of places that supports our lives. If being is always being towards the other, the atomism and hyper-separation of self-sufficiency is never a good basic assumption, for individuals or for communities. Communities should always be imagined as in relationship to others, particularly downstream communities, rather than as singular and self-sufficient. An ecological re-conception of dwelling has to include a justice perspective and be able to recognise the shadow places, not just the ones we love, admire or find nice to look at. So ecological thought has to be much more than a literary rhapsody about nice places, or about nice times (epiphanies) in nice places. And it must crucially, as a critical ecological position, be able to

reflect on how nice (north) places and shadow (south) places are related, especially where north places are nice precisely because south places are not so nice.

I want to argue that dematerialisation in commodity culture engenders *a false consciousness of place* whose deconstruction must be a crucial part of any ecojustice approach to environmental degradation. It is not, as some Marxists claim, that an emphasis on place is simply bourgeois romanticism, or that place is un-important. The place dimension is vitally important. It is rather that this false consciousness is expressed in a literature that treats attachments to place in dematerialising ways as unified, innocent, and singularistic, the environmental project simplified down to one of increasing attachment to and care for 'one's place'. I think this is over-singularised, and much like suggesting that celebrating the beauty of wives is the answer to gender inequality and oppression, the Song of Solomon as the answer to women's liberation. Contemplation of the agency, power and mystery of places potentially has a lot to contribute to understanding our relationships to the earth (see especially Rose, 'Dialogue'). But unless further elaborated, I think place-based discourse is open to some very adverse interpretations, and its tendency to replace a more clearly focussed body of ecological and environmental critique and awareness may become a matter for concern.

So I want to ask two questions especially of current place-based discourse:

> 1: What (more?) do we need to add to place awareness/encounter/attachment projects or discourses about SENSE OF PLACE to have them converge with an ecological awareness or environmental justice projects?
>
> 2: Can discourses of place and belonging marginalise denied, dislocated and dispossessed identities, privileging 'the self-identical and well-rooted ones who have natural rights and stable homes'? (Haraway 215; Plumwood, 'Environmental', 23) Is the ability to maintain access (unproblematically) to a special homeplace and to protect it not at least partly a function of one's privilege/power in the world?

We need to replace loose discourse about 'sense of place', I suggest, by *place-based critique*, that can make room for the power analysis of an environmental justice perspective. To resolve problems of NIMBYism in place and situate place in terms of an ecological consciousness, we need an ethics and politics of place, where the latter are to be understood in Nancy Fraser's terms not as disconnected, as in the story told by the usual suspects, but as importantly related. Such a critique must aim to replace the consumer-driven narratives of place that mark our lives by different ones that make our ecological relationships visible and accountable. This has been one of the aims of bioregionalism, and the critical place project I am advocating can alternatively be seen as a critical reworking or reframing of bioregionalism. Critical bioregionalism, on my reading, must

help make visible north/south place relationships, where the north/south pole operates as a correlate of (various different kinds of) privilege,[1] exemplifying certain relationships of domination metaphorised as place, especially sacrificial and shadow or denied places.

Provided it is not treated in bland and over-simplifying ways, there are a lot of very important things we can do with a critical discourse of place. Developing a politics and ethics of place has great potential to clarify, focus and connect environmental and ecojustice concerns. Just as in the gender case, an important missing ingredient in the bland 'celebration' of 'sense of place' is a consideration of power relationships—whose place is made better, whose worse, and what patterns can be discerned? Discerning patterns of sacrificial and shadow places, based on the power and privilege—or lack of it—of the human communities associated with places is a major focus of critical geography and of studies of environmental racism (see for example Hayden; Bullard). Similarly, an anti-colonial critique can mobilise the inappropriate sense of place and the false consciousness of place typical of colonialism to press home an important critique of contemporary settler cultures and their maladaptation to the land, in which illusions about settler identity are linked to illusions about 'our place', or 'Home'.[2]

This kind of place critique holds out the prospect of developing the understanding of place in a way that connects with and supplements the ecofeminist critique of nature, as a category defined by a dualistic narrative of splits. In its critique of western dualisms, ecofeminism has certainly provided a good basis for understanding a kind of erasure of place that has resulted from its fragmentation by the mind/body, reason/emotion, respect/use and other splits characteristic of contemporary western culture. *The dissociation of the affective place (the place of and in mind, attachment and identification, political effectiveness, family history, ancestral place) from the economic place* that is such a feature of the global market is yet another manifestation of the mind/body dualism that has shaped the western tradition. Concepts and practices that erase these aspects of place help to erase an awareness of nature as part of our lives. Contemporary market-based practices that effect a dissociation between affective/identity places and places of production reduce and fragment place, stripping it of meaning. This analogue of the mind/body split in the contemporary structure of place presents serious problems of integrity for much contemporary place discourse and can greatly limit its usefulness for ecological concerns.

Dematerialisation and Place

Dematerialisation (a term I owe to Barbara Ehrenreich), applied to cultures, traditions as well as processes, is the process of becoming more and more out of touch with the *material conditions (including ecological conditions) that support or enable our lives*. Losing track of them means making more and more exhausting

and unrealistic demands on them, and being deluded about who we and others are. This means losing track of the labour of others that supports our lives and the labour and agency of nature, of earth others—what some socialist feminists call the sphere of reproduction in contrast to production. The flight from the material is the political and economic and cultural process that corresponds to the mind/body and spirit/matter dualisms of the western tradition and encourages their elaboration into the dematerialising frameworks that govern our lives, especially in the global economy.

One aspect of dematerialisation is the division between mind people and body people—expressed increasingly in both class and gender terms. 'To be cleaned up after, says Ehrenreich, 'is to achieve a certain magical weightlessness and immateriality'—or rather the illusion of these modes of being (Ehrenreich 103). This is in part the foundation of what has been known as class-consciousness—think of people who are used to having servants and who act as if the associated services are beyond their attention. Another closely related form of denial is to be able, as privileged nations, to ignore, neglect or deny our energy use and pollution trail, one kind of ecological footprint—'being picked up after' by the biosphere. Real humans labour mentally, and material work, bodily labour, is increasingly and ideally the sphere of machines, except for a few holdovers like giving birth and suckling.

Dematerialising political structures erase the agency of the more-than-human sphere, cause us to misunderstand our lives, and thus engender a false consciousness that justifies appropriation. The illusions and irresponsibility resulting from the underlying cultural problematic of dematerialisation have intensified with increasingly globalised and commodified relationships to nature and place. Another aspect of dematerialisation, which I also discussed in my last book (Plumwood, 'Environmental'), is remoteness from ecological consequences and illusions of our independence of nature and of the irrelevance of nature.

The logical end-point of the striving to deny and devalue the sphere of the body, nature, labour and matter is the retreat of the affluent from these spheres into a state of remoteness , of virtual existence and 'ghostly pursuits like stock-trading, image making, and opinion polling; real work, in the old-fashioned sense of labour that engages hand as well as eye, that tires the body and directly alters the physical world tends to vanish from sight' (Ehrenreich 103), and thus, of course, from responsibility. So, I would add, does our ecological footprint, and what can be thought of as the supporting labour of nature required to hold up that foot. The process of heedless dematerialisation in our culture may end in our final dematerialisation, in the sense of vanishing act, from the earth.

Attachment to Place

Place wisdom usually sees salvation in attachment to place, and enjoins us to care for 'our place'. There is much to be said for love for a specific individual, animal or place. Love can develop capacities for perception and sensitivity that might otherwise be stunted, and can provide a basis to spread its virtues of attention, compassion and care to a wider field. Love for a specific earth place can provide a basis to care for other (similar) places. Participating regularly in contexts of neighbourhood can counter anthropocentric ways of thinking and disrupt human self-enclosure. Local nature study and observation can foster respectful disclosure and friendship, mutual knowledge and care, as well as understanding of the ways and needs of non-human neighbours. Whether local knowledge makes footprint relations more visible is contextually variable and contestable, but not the need for a place-sensitive culture whose institutions and customs can support a deep, rich connection to land and place.

But place attachment is developed and exercised in the context of dominant market cultures which commodify land and place, and of markets in labour usually requiring individual workers who have few or portable attachments (such as the nuclear family or less). Place attachment is the first and most basic casualty of this attachment-minimizing system, while the commodification of the land presupposes an instrumental model of land relationship that makes attachment to place hard to sustain. Since the industrial revolution, attachment to place has been punished in the economic and employment systems of late globalised capitalism, and current examples are either hangovers from an incompletely realised project or practises of resistance. Dominant commodity culture marginalises nature and place, and what measure of land attachment it permits persists in spite of institutions like the market.

It may be vital to love, but in these conditions, individual love for place is unlikely to be innocent, may register false consciousness and be exercised at the expense of other places, and fostering individual attachment must be incomplete as a strategy. So it is crucial for the integrity of place discourse that it give more consideration to its own limits and potential for misuse. Included here is considering the usefulness of indigenous models of place relationship for contemporary western contexts and for ecological concern. Some of these limits of application arise for the west as result of the fragmentation and malformation of place by the mind/body, reason/emotion and respect/use and other splits characteristic of western culture. It is these splits that frustrate place discourse as a genuine ecologically-aware discourse. A more unified place relationship, as in indigenous examples, can be a wonderful instrument or voice for communication with and sensitivity to the earth and other humans. But current proposals (like bioregionalism and self-sufficiency) for reunifying place for the west will miss the connection with environmental problems unless they take

better account of the splits, especially the mind/body split in its place manifestations.

These splits register in the way we try to define or characterise place. Place is thicker and more concrete than mere location, and story helps makes it concrete; but it is not enough to say that place is the intersection of multiple narratives—we can say this of anything at all. I think we need to keep our feet on the ground here (literally), and avoid overly dematerialising place concepts: place can be focussed widely or narrowly in relation to different frameworks, but in a materially-embodied life has ultimately to locate a piece of ground, a piece of the earth.[3] But these problems about place are minor in comparison to those that beset the rest of the place-lovers' apparatus, the concept of giving honour to place in terms of celebrating '*one's own place*' or *'one's place'*. Bioregionalists urge that this must be 'the watershed', the basic place that commands our identity and loyalty. But we need to be sensitive to the nuances, the *kinds* of attachment involved. Here I fear that the influence of Heidegger may be sending a promising place critique in the wrong direction, through an excessively singularised focus on a central, set-apart home-place or One True dwelling place, producing a Cosy Corner or 'Inside the Beltway' account of place that obscures ecological issues and north/south relations.

The Heideggerian singularity of focus legitimates a narrowing of place relationship to a special place, in a way that supports a concept of the home property of a (national) self that is strongly set apart from and above other places, in terms of care and priority. Centric place ideals of military empire and colonial privilege, as expressed in the motto *Deutschland Uber Alles*, and in the image of the moated or hill-placed castle or the defensively hedged or fenced colonial 'big-house', rest on the subordination or instrumentalisation of other places. Perhaps it is less Heidegger's anti-modernism (as critics like Hay have claimed) we should associate with Nazi ideology than this ideal of a pure home, an ideal, strong hyperseparate seat of self. This One True Place can easily become a national-cultural home, a special place, elevated above all others, whose purification demands the eviction of alien elements. This discourse can legitimate projects of perfecting and purifying home at the expense of other, lesser homes—those of 'less civilised' indigenous others who do not 'dwell', whose ties to the land do not take the form of cultivation labour, and whose places can be deemed degradable under the guise of improving civilisation.

A One True Place account like this is quite compatible with the dwellers' continued participation in environmental degradation. Attachment to the One True Place is no guarantee of honour to other places, and certain modes of attachment may even require the degradation of other places. The British Royal Family loves Balmoral, and they see to the protection and improvement of this place, but their care is made possible by the fact that they have their money

invested in a swag of companies that are despoiling systematically other people's places, and relations of power embedded in the commodity ensure that they need neither know nor care about those places.

For a sounder and more illuminating way to understand 'one's place' or home I think we should listen to some indigenous advice from Bill Neidjie. 'You got to hang onto this story because the earth, *this ground, earth where you brought up, this earth he grow you*' (Neidjie, 'Story', 166), and he repeats the point elsewhere: '*This piece of ground he grow you*' (Neidjie, 'Story', 61). This piece of ground that grows you (in the same way, he insists, as it grows a plant or a tree) would also usually be identified by indigenous people as '*country*', the place of one's clan or community, is also connected to other countries in various cross-cutting ways. Neidjie's wisdom reflects a view of nature and place as, to a much greater extent than in western culture, an active agent in and co-constituter of our lives,[4] but also a view of 'growing up' as a process in which the energy of others is actively invested.[5] But it also reveals some important ways in which indigenous concepts of 'place' or 'country' might be thought of as integrated in a way that those of the dominant culture may be thought of as fragmented. The average Australian moves 13 times, and 'country' can be multi-sited. Which bit are we selecting as 'your place'? The answer may be well an abstraction, something like 'a vaguely identified nation-state', rather than a specific piece of the earth.

This assumption of singularity can be used to privilege a place of consciousness and self-identity over the materially-supportive but denied places of the other, conceived as absent referent. There are strong resonances of mind-body dualism in these constructions, with their privileging of a mind which is dependent on but unaware of a maternal, material body it is depleting. Such constructions are inimical to any self-reflective project of interspecies negotiation and accommodation.

The most serious problem for the integrity of current discourses of 'one's place' is the split between the land of attachment, one's self conscious identity place (usually the home), and the economic place, or rather economic *places*, those places on earth that support your life. Writing the land of attachment, in a recent collection for example, professes a singular ideal of 'a story alive with *one place* on earth, a place that calls us home', 'I would piece you together from what you tell me of home' (Tredinnick 31, 28). The editor has sought stories that 'sing into life a place that is sustaining, sacred, special to a writer who lives in it or remembers it well, a place where deep attachments rest, a storied place' (31). In the vast majority of cases in the contemporary global context, a singular concept of place has to be a dematerialised and false consciousness of place—hence not an ecological concept of place or self.

The story of One True Place the contributors are required to tell may also be seen as an attempt to bring over into white culture indigenous ideals of country.

The problem is that in the context of the dominant global consciousness, such ideals encourage us to direct our honouring of place towards an 'official' singular idealised special place consciously identified with self or soul, while disregarding the many unrecognised places that provide the material support of self, most of which, in a global market, are likely to elude knowledge and responsibility. This split between a singular, elevated, conscious 'dwelling' place and the multiple disregarded places of economic support is one of the most important contemporary manifestations of the mind/body split (incorporating also elements of reason/emotion dualism). Thus expressed, the mind/body split permeates the global economy, and is inseparable from our concepts of identity, economy and place.

What makes such a singular discourse of 'country' and self-place honest and life-sustaining in the indigenous case and a dishonest and life-defeating expression of false consciousness in the consumerist case is precisely that in the indigenous case *the places of attachment that form your country of the heart are the very same places that do 'grow you', that support your material as well as your emotional life*. In the consumer case they are usually (*perhaps even necessarily, to the same extent that production is a degrading process*) different places, are multiple. *For Neidjie, 'this ground, earth where you brought up, this earth that grows you'*—all these concepts can coincide, be unified, in 'country', the place of attachment and mutual life-giving, which eventually even recycles the human as sustenance for other life-forms seen as having a similar relationship to country. The place of attachment, the place of mind and identity, and the actual place of material support are one and the same. For us, they are split along mind/body lines.

It will not do to evade the problem of the split by pretending that we already have a unified concept or can easily get it by paying more attention to or celebrating our places of attachment. Nor will it do to substitute a distant and dubious ideal of self-sufficiency for consideration of the multiple places that support our lives. What is the effect then of starting from the other, materialist end and taking this indigenous concept of country [eg Neidjie's] as a criterion of 'your place', so that *'your place' is those parts of the earth that 'grow you', that support your life?* This seems to correspond quite closely to the recently introduced idea of 'the ecological footprint', as all those places that bear the ecological traces of one's passage, or that carry the ecological impacts of supporting your life. Taking this concept instead of some consciousness-based, singular notion of 'home-place' or dwelling–place as basic has some startling consequences, revealing the extent of the false consciousness and fragmentation of place in the dominant culture, and the need for understanding both as an important part of a critical account of place. The indigenous criterion reveals, as *denied or shadow places*, all those places that produce or are affected by the commodities you consume, places consumers don't know about, don't want to

know about, and in a commodity regime don't ever need to know about or take responsibility for.

These places remote from self, that we don't have to know about but whose degradation we as commodity consumers are indirectly responsible for, are the shadow places of the consumer self. The places that take our pollution and dangerous waste, exhaust their fertility or destroy their indigenous or nonhuman populations in producing our food, for example, all these places we must own too. We must own to the coral reefs wrecked to supply the clownfish in the fish tank, the places ruined by and for fossil fuel production. We must smell a bit of wrecked Ogoniland in the exhaust fumes from the air-conditioner, the ultimate remoteness, put-it-somewhere-else-machine. On the Neidjie criterion, we would have to accept all these shadow places too as 'our' place, not just the privileged, special, recognised place, the castle-of-the-self-place called home.

I am not of course arguing that there's necessarily anything wrong with loving a special place, or that justice demands that we each love and care for all places equally, any more than it requires that one love one's child only as much as all other children and no more. But justice does require that we take *some* account of other children, and of our own and our child's relationship to them, perhaps even that we not aim to have our child thrive at the expense of these other children. In the same way, in the place case, I think we may have to start the process of recognising denied places by owning multiplicity, envisioning a less monogamous ideal and more multiple relationship to place. An important part of the environmental project can then be reformulated as a place principle of environmental justice, *an injunction to cherish and care for your places, but without in the process destroying or degrading any other places, where 'other places' includes other human places, but also other species' places*. This accountability requirement is a different project, and much more politically and environmentally demanding project, than that of cherishing one's own special place of dwelling. It is a project whose realisation, I would argue, is basically incompatible with market regimes based on the production of anonymous commodities from remote and unaccountable places. A practice that requires a multiple place consciousness can help to counter dematerialisation and remoteness.

Reworking Bioregionalism

The emphasis on singularity of place usually leads those who have got this far in the ecojustice critique of place to advocate some form of bioregionalism or localisation devolving economic production to a single, small, unified 'home' community as a way of healing the fragmentation of place. There is likely no unique solution to the problem of recognising denied places, but we can suggest some general principles in terms of parallels with other mind/body resolutions. Think what it would mean to acknowledge and honour all the places that support you, at all levels of reconceptualisation, from spiritual to economic, and to honour

not just this more fully-conceived 'own place' but the places of others too. Such a program is politically radical, in that it is incompatible with an economy of privileged places thriving at the expense of exploited places. Production, whether from other or self-place, cannot take the form of a place-degrading process, but requires a philosophy and economy of mutual recognition.

What is valid in bioregionalism is the demand for place honesty and responsibility, which involves countering remoteness and denial. Filling these out requires an ethics of place and a politics of place. Their development is stunted because the ideal is so often automatically identified with living in One True place, with living in a self-sufficient household or community, or in a single watershed. But we could draw another lesson from the indigenous model—*that we need to develop forms of life and production where the land of the economy (production, consumption, and service provision) and the land of attachment, including care and responsibility, are one and the same*.

This means that there are two basic routes to restoring place honesty: we can retain highly singularistic ideals of place and try to reorganise economic life to fit them—the self-sufficiency route—or, alternatively, we can recognize the reality of multiple relationships to place but insist that they be reshaped as meaningful and responsible. The last is the suppressed alternative, the ecojustice route to dealing with the mind/body splits of place. I am tempted to swim against the current of the self-sufficiency tide and point out the virtues of this different route to honesty, fearing that the return to the small, wholesome, pure community is a cup western culture may have poisoned forever. In a colonising and dualistic culture, advocacy of singularistic allegiances to place is likely to express or encourage false consciousness. In western culture, so strongly drawn to and corrupted by the patterns of mind/body dualism which deny or devalue a supportive material order conceptualised as other, the self-sufficiency route courts trouble in the form of denial of dependency on an inconsiderable, inferiorised other that is outside the system of privilege and self-enclosure. Ideals of self-sufficiency can idealise a 'community' version of individualism which does not envision the community in relationship with others and which thus neglects or suppresses the key justice (north/south) issue of relationship with other communities—downstream communities especially. Taking responsibility for remote places requires strong institutional and community networking arrangements.

Of course we can also mix these strategies, and a judicious combination of local and non-local production and care seems the most likely as well as the most sustainable outcome. This means sourcing more of our needs from local land, using forms of discount for the local perhaps, and extending public and political forms of care and value to those non-local areas our production and consumption impact upon—for example by giving value and standing to distant land and its

ecological services and taking some social responsibility for its maintenance. But we have many options other than self-sufficiency for the mix here. To envisage these options, think about the difference between the ideals of growing all your own vegetables in your own garden, versus participating in a community garden, in Consumer Supported Agriculture, or in a cooperative working for trade justice, as contrasting and potentially complementary routes to place accountability.

An ecojustice ideal of this kind for an ethical politics of place is not incompatible with and can even support some limited forms of self-reliance, but it is clearly not the same as, and does not imply, any ideal of self-sufficiency based on a relationship to place so singular that it would exclude exchange. The responsibility principle is compatible with some forms of exchange, and with the desirability of some exchange of goods and bads between places, provided this meets the ecojustice criterion of making one or both places involved in the exchange better and no places worse. Is it not perhaps poorly accountable commodity systems of exchange at whose door we should lay much of the blame for the contemporary fragmentation of place, rather than the existence of exchange itself? Exchange could also have at its core celebration and exchange of place and place knowledge, and take place under conditions of connection, knowledge, care and responsibility. If unity versus dissociation are not the only options for relationships with place, a critical sense of place based on knowledge and care for multiple places could be the form of place consciousness most appropriate to contemporary planetary ecological consciousness.

Val Plumwood (1939-2008) was a founding intellectual and activist in the global movement that came to be known as ecofeminism. She published three major books as well as over a hundred articles and encyclopaedia entries, and her work has been translated into numerous languages. In February 2008 she died of a stroke at her home in the bush, aged 68. Please see Deborah Rose's obituary tribute in this issue.

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Notes

[1] I do not want to say however that all important place relations reduce to the north/south set, or that these concepts always offer the best analysis. I do not think different kinds or dimensions of privilege or oppression can be reduced to one, although those with sufficiently common logic may come together with useful parallels in 'the master subject', outlined in Plumwood 1993.

[2] See the discussion in Rose, 'Reports', Chapter 2.

[3] Thus Bill Neidjie: 'This piece of ground he grow you' (Neidjie, 'Kakadu', 166).

[4] 'Country', as Rose, 'Dialogue', points out, can nurture you, call to you, and take up other very active roles.

[5] This suggests a parallel with Teresa Brennan's maternal energetics; see Brennan.

Has Democracy Failed Ecology? An Ecofeminist Perspective

VAL PLUMWOOD

The superiority of democracy over other political systems in detecting and responding to ecological problems lies in its capacity for correctiveness. That this correctiveness is not operating well in liberal democracy is a further reason for questioning its identification with democracy. The radical inequality that increasingly thrives in liberal democracy is an indicator not only of the capacity of its privileged groups to distribute social goods upwards and to create rigidities which hinder the democratic correctiveness of social institutions, but is also an indicator of their ability to redistribute many ecological ills downwards and to create similar rigidities in dealing with ecological ills. It is therefore not democracy that has failed ecology, but liberal democracy that has failed both democracy and ecology. Ecological denial is structured into liberalism in multiple ways, particularly through its reason/nature dualism, its limitation of democracy, its disposition of public and private spaces, and its marginalisation of collective forms of life. A radical democratic alternative would reshape the public/private distinction to open the way for a public as well as a private ethics of environmental responsibility, for the diffusion of practices of responsibility and care through crucial areas from which liberalism strips them, and for the development of a democratic culture which displaces reason/nature dualism.

Ecological Consciousness and the Persistence of Ecological Degradation

As we approach the fourth decade of ecological consciousness and scientific concern about the degradation of the earth's life support systems, the evidence is mounting that the unprecedented level of public concern and activist effort which these decades have seen is not being reflected in adequate, effective or stable forms of change at the political level. Although

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ecological consciousness has some successes to its credit in the form of better standards and regulations, and even in some areas better practices, these are themselves under constant threat. What is more significant, however, is that even these hard-earned measures have done little to arrest the ever-accelerating progress of environmental degradation. David Orr outlines this progress:

> If today is a typical day on planet earth, we will lose 116 square miles of rainforest, or about an acre a second. We will lose another 72 square miles to encroaching deserts, the results of human mismanagement and overpopulation. We will lose 40 to 250 species, and no one knows whether the number is 40 or 250. Today the human population will increase by 250,000. And today we will add 2,700 tons of chlorofluorocarbons and 15 million tons of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere. Tonight the earth will be a little hotter, its waters more acidic, and the fabric of life more threadbare.

Even in the area where ecological consciousness appears to have had some success, in recycling and consumer education, the results have been disappointing. As Timothy Luke states:

> After twenty years of ecological consciousness ... the average per capita daily discard rate of garbage has risen from 2.5 pounds in 1960 to 3.3 pounds in 1970 to 3.6 pounds in 1986. By 2000, despite the impact of two decades of recycling, this figure is expected to rise to 6 pounds a day. Similarly, even though ecological concern is rising, the average gas mileage of new cars declined 4 per cent from 1988 to 1990, and the number of miles driven annually continues to rise by 2 per cent by year.

In the sphere of international politics, the message that has emerged most clearly from the Rio Conference and from recent reversals in environmental regulation is the disturbing one of the extreme difficulty of mobilising our present systems of national and international governance to stem escalating ecological damage.

Any civilisation that sets in motion massive processes of biospheric degradation which it cannot respond to and correct will plainly not survive. The escalation of the processes responsible for ecological degradation, despite the great citizen effort which has gone into challenging them in democratic polities, therefore represents an alarming failure. It is not primarily a failure of knowledge or of technology, for we largely possess the scientific and technological means to live upon the earth without destroying its capacity to support life, even if our present numbers compound the problem. The failure is primarily a failure of our political systems and

systems of morality and rationality and, what is especially alarming, it includes those systems that many of us have seen as among our finest achievements – systems of political democracy, especially liberal democracy. Although confronting this failure is not popular with the eco-establishment, it is imperative that we do confront it fully and trace the reasons for failure.[1] The evidence of the last two decades suggests that serving up the same recipe for reform will not be effective, and that we will not turn the processes of environmental degradation around without accepting many more major kinds of change in our political systems. In this paper I draw on recent democratic and feminist theory and other critical resources to reflect on the implications of this failure for democracy and to outline some of the systemic change necessary to stop the escalation of environmental damage.

Responsive Democracy and Ecological Failure

The main focus for our investigation must be the failure of liberal democratic systems. It is no real surprise that authoritarian political systems, especially the military systems organised around protecting privilege which control so much of the planet, fail to protect nature. Military systems are neither responsive nor accountable, and have a record of gross environmental destructiveness which parallels their record of gross human destructiveness [*Seager, 1993*]. Regimes based on authoritarian, military thinking and coercion usually fail systematically to consider the lives and rights of most of their human citizens, so that it is hardly to be expected that they will protect what is even lower in the usual scale of consideration – nature and animals.[2] Both political argument and political observation suggest that we should rule authoritarian and military-coercive systems out as possible routes to solving environmental problems, despite the arguments of the authoritarian school of environmental thinkers who pin their hopes on environmental and scientific oligarchy. Even if we grant regimes of environmental oligarchy possession of powerful means to enforce compliance with environmental regulation (Thompson, this collection), what is unexplained is how they can develop or maintain the political conditions that will guarantee the oligarchy's motivation to use these powerful means for the purpose of protecting nature, rather than for other ends which buttress their own power.[3] Such regimes must be fatally lacking in capacities for correcting such tendencies and soon must come to suffer, like the normal authoritarian regime, from severe informational distortion.

The environmental disasters and rigidities of the Soviet Union and satellite Marxist systems lend support to the view that political democracy, if not a sufficient condition for adequate environmental action, is at least a

necessary condition. Thus it is primarily democracies that have been able to sustain vocal environment movements able to raise and pursue ecological issues in ways that would bring repression elsewhere. An elite-dominated polity which silences messages that those in power do not wish to hear and pushes on regardless with elite-benefiting projects will come to possess a dysfunctional rigidity and informational distortion regarding the degradation of nature which render it resistant to an important range of changes, unable to detect or correct its blindspots, as indifferent to gross damage to the surrounding natural world as it is to gross damage to the social world. In contrast, a polity that is open to reshaping institutions in response to the views and needs of a wide range of social groupings, especially those at greatest risk of ecological damage, is likely to be able to respond reflectively and usefully to a crisis in its ecological, as in its social, world. It is at any rate more likely to be able to do so than a polity caught in structures that are responsive mainly to the needs of a small elite, an elite that derives much of its privilege from the institutions that bring about ecological destruction and is able to buy relief from many of its ill effects.

The superiority of democracy to other systems in detecting and responding to ecological problems would seem to lie largely, then, in its capacity for adaptation and correction. So in order to discover why democracy is failing, we must now ask which political features of democracy contribute to and what forms hinder its capacity for correction? I shall argue that an important feature that hinders this capacity is radical inequality within democratic polities. There is a rather persuasive set of political arguments confirming the thesis that democracy is essential, but these same arguments encourage us to a critical and differentiated approach to what passes for democracy. They suggest that those responsive democratic forms that open communication and spread decision-making processes most equally should offer the best protection for nature. Thus systems that are able to articulate and respond to the needs of the least privileged should be better than less democratic systems that reserve participation in decision-making for privileged groups. This is because radical inequality is both itself a hindrance to correctiveness and a key indicator of other hindrances to societal correctiveness.

Much of the politics of ecological conflict, as Ulrich Beck [*1995*] notes, takes the form of 'distributing exposure to undesirable things' [*1995: 9*], in contrast to the politics of class conflict, which mainly concerns the distribution of societal rewards. Beck assumes that ecological ills, in contrast to societal goods, are distributed equitably in liberal democracy, cutting across boundaries of class and power: 'poverty is hierarchical', writes Beck, 'while smog is democratic' [*1995: 60*]. The assumption of equality of impact, however, holds good only for a certain range of

environmental harms – those forms of degradation which have highly diffused or unpredictable effects not amenable to redistribution – and then only partially. For those kinds of environmental degradation that are more local and particularised in their impacts, such as exposure to toxins through residential and occupational area, the same kind of politics of distribution can be played out as in the case of societal goods: the powerful will strive to redistribute these ills, just as they distribute the goods, in their own favour, with varying success depending on the extent to which the social system is susceptible to their influence. Such forms can and do impact differentially in terms mediated by privilege.

For a considerable range of environmental ills resulting from the institutions of accumulation, then, some redistribution and insulation is possible. It is the privileged members of a society who can most easily insulate themselves from these forms of environmental degradation; toxic wastes and occupations can be directed to poorer residential areas (including Third World destinations), and if privileged suburbs, regions or territories become noisy, degraded or polluted, the privileged can buy places in more salubrious environments. When local resources (including amenity resources) become depleted, they will be best placed to take advantage of wider supply sources and markets; often these will continue to deplete poorer distant communities in ways that elude knowledge and responsibility. The privileged can buy expert help and remedies for environmental health and for other problems, and their working life is likely to involve a minimum of environmental pollution and disease compared to other groups [*Jennings and Jennings, 1993*].

At the same time, they are the group who consume (both directly for their own use and indirectly through income generation) the greatest proportion of resources, who are likely overall to be creating the most pollution and to have the strongest economic stake in maintaining forms of accumulation which exploit nature. Since the privileged can most easily purchase alternative private resources, they have the least interest in maintaining in good condition collective goods and services of the sort typically provided by nature, and are most distanced from awareness of their limits. So they are normally the group with the strongest interest in maintaining the nature-destroying processes of accumulation from which they benefit and the group with the least motivation to support any fundamental challenge to these institutions that might be needed.[4] For the highly diffused forms of environmental ills, the ability of the privileged to buy relief from vulnerability to environmental ills is ultimately an illusion,[5] but it may still be a long-lasting and influential illusion which affects political decision-making.[6] Thus in a polity in which the privileged have the sole or central role in decision-making, decisions are likely to reflect their

especially strong interest in maintaining processes destructive of nature.

If the privileged have the key role in determining culture and information flows, news about the degradation of nature and its impact on less privileged human lives is likely to be obstructed or given little weight in their media, which may be weighted to consider mainly the kinds of problems that impact on the powerful. The wider culture may be distorted in ways that make the 'losers' inferior – for example, in the West, those associated with bodily labour, materiality and nature – and give little attention to their ills. Cultural ideals will often tend to idealise the rich and successful, and reflect their styles and standards of resource overconsumption, while portraying low consumption, satisficing lifestyles in negative or contemptuous terms [*hooks, 1995*]. To the extent that the privileged are able to exert control over cultural and political processes then, these are more likely to be distorted in ways that resist response, deny ecological problems and push exploitation past sustainable limits. Note that these considerations apply equally to those privileged through market systems and those privileged through bureaucratic and authoritarian/military systems. They apply not only to those privileged by economic class but also to those privileged by race and gender. We can see these insulating and information-distorting features of privilege clearly at work in many parts of the world where environmental destruction has been at its worst, in the decisions of class elites from Sarawak and Brazil to eastern Europe where political systems have lacked most of the corrective measures created in more democratic systems. We can see similar insulating features of gender privilege at work in the association between the destruction of subsistence agricultures and the dispossession of women agriculturalists in the processes of development in India and Africa [*Shiva, 1988; 1994*]. Here, as a number of Third World theorists have argued, the intentional connection is often even closer: impoverishment and environmental degradation are produced as twin offspring of the same processes of development [*Shiva, 1988*].

The most oppressed and dispossessed people in a society are those who are made closest to the condition of nature, who are made to share the same expendable condition as nature. The logic of the market is one factor that ensures that the least privileged are likely to feel the first and worst impacts of environmental degradation, as in the case of much deforestation, pollution, waste dumping in poor and coloured communities, and environmentally hazardous working and living conditions for the poor. This logic treats the least privileged as the most expendable, defining them as having 'least to lose' in terms of the low value of their health, land and assets and, by implication, of their lives.[7] The fact that they feel the first and worst impacts does not mean that, in highly hierarchical or repressive

contexts, they will necessarily be in a good position to observe or contest such degradation, any more than to contest their own fate. It is a sad irony of present forms counted as democratic that those most oppressed are usually least able to contest their oppression [*Green, 1985*]. However, groups at the margins who are able to observe and contest the degradation of their local environments, such as those women who must attend to them as agricultural workers, household managers or carers for the bodily needs of vulnerable others, often make up the bulk of those active in grassroots movements and citizen activism [*Seager, 1993*].

If the flows of power and information in a society are such that the needs of the least privileged cannot be articulated or considered, then key sources of ecological information and correction are also blocked. The occupational health hazards of minority workers, the systematic poisoning of millions of migrant agricultural workers (the immediate life-expectancy of US farmers is estimated to be twenty years below the national average), and the dumping of toxic wastes on poor communities can pass unremarked while environmental attention is focussed on green consumer issues which impact on more privileged groups [*Jennings and Jennings, 1993*]. Radical inequality is a major factor that hinders the ability to respond to many collective forms of ecological degradation and especially to those forms which impact differentially in terms mediated by privilege (ecojustice issues), because inequality acts both as a barrier to information and feedback on degradation and its human impacts, and to responsiveness to this information. These points provide a theoretical basis for understanding the ecojustice issues known (too narrowly) as 'environmental racism', for the well-attested convergence between activism on environmental and activism on social justice issues [*Seager, 1993*], and for linking the persistence of ecological degradation with the persistence of radical inequality.

If social forms that can express and heed the needs of the least privileged are also more likely to be responsive to the needs of the biosphere and those who articulate them, and subject to fewer systematic and disabling distortions of knowledge and perception, then an ecologically responsive democracy should be one which minimises such information blocks, spreads as widely and as equally as possible the means to act politically and articulate needs, and has the capacity to change institutions in response. However, a good deal of empirical work shows that the responsiveness in the dominant form of democracy, liberal democracy, is mainly directed to privileged and upper income groups, that it is these groups who are selected as politically active and are able to have their needs considered in the liberal political structure [*Pateman, 1989*].[8] That is, liberal democracy selects as politically active primarily that group who are most likely to react to

ecological crisis by supporting cosmetic change and by redistributing ecological ills downwards rather than by supporting fundamental and effective ecological change.

The radical inequality of liberal democracy is an indicator not only of the capacity of its privileged groups to distribute social goods upwards and to create rigidities which hinder the corrective, democratic reshaping of social institutions, but also an indicator of their capacity to redistribute ecological ills downwards and to create similar rigidities in dealing with ecological ills. If the capacity to correct and reshape ecologically destructive institutions is thus hindered in liberal democracy by the rigidities resulting from its protection of privilege, the elements of an ecologically responsive democracy will never be sufficiently available in liberal democracy. They are most likely to be found elsewhere, within the alternative democratic tradition that interprets democracy as widespread popular participation, choice and involvement in decision-making, that stresses the shaping of institutions in communicative structures which enable all citizens to be equally consulted and responsible.

This argument suggests that we might view ecological responsiveness on ecojustice issues as a criterion of adequacy for democracy. Like the severe forms of inequality which now proliferate in liberal democracies, the failure of ecological responsiveness where there is widespread citizen concern and support for change,[9] can be taken as an indication that something is rotten, that communication and participation are somehow blocked or skewed. We can employ the framework suggested by John Rawls to conclude that such a democracy is not what it pretends to be, the result of universal and equal choice opportunities, because if people really had the equal opportunities for communication, participation and choice they are said to have in such a structure, such outcomes could not emerge.[10] The responsiveness of the apparatus of democracy to persistent violations of ecojustice which create severe costs for groups of non-privileged citizens, can be viewed then as a key test for whether or not a system is genuinely democratic in its operation. But this test is one that actually existing liberal democracy, as well as several other proposed forms, largely fails, in practice as well as in theory.

If liberal democracy (by which I mean the attempt to combine liberal principles of free speech and representative democracy with a system of liberal market economics) is, as is now often claimed, the best of our political systems and the final victor in the contest of systems and ideologies, its inadequacies in ecological matters give us good reason to be very concerned about our prospects for survival. It is a matter of widespread observation that actually-existing liberal-democratic political systems are not responding in more than superficial ways to a state of ecological crisis

which everyday grows more severe but which everyday is perceived more and more as normality. To be sure, liberal democracy has enabled a certain range of environmental concerns to be voiced, even at government level, but it has not enabled a correspondingly adequate response.[11]

The grassroots environment movement has put a major effort into articulating and raising public awareness of ecological problems, and such an awareness is clearly a necessary condition for any democratic ecological progress. But such a strategy assumes the democratic ideal, and can only be effective in the presence of a genuinely responsive democracy; it is insufficient for effective change in the presence of the major structural barriers to ecological responsiveness present in actually existing liberal democracy. In actually existing liberal democracy, not only is systematic action on the crucial issues in most places stalled by these barriers, but there is an increasingly successful effort to erode the gains environmental groups have struggled for over decades [*Dowie, 1995*]. It is increasingly apparent that the 'interest group' politics of actually existing liberal democracy is inadequate for ecological protection: it cannot create stable measures for the protection of nature and is unable to recognise that nature is not just another interest group or another speaker, but the condition for all our interests and for all our speech.[12]

Green Consumerism and the Ecological Failure of Existing Liberal Democracy

That liberal democracy is failing to deal effectively with environmental problems is an observation to which both liberal and radical environmentalists might in principle agree. They would tend, however, to give very different interpretations and accounts of what this means and of the reasons for it, their explanations falling basically into two broad classes, which I shall designate liberal and critical. The first, liberal, type of explanation takes ecological failure to be due to the lack of concern for future survival or for the needs of the biosphere among the bulk of the population, who are thought to be preoccupied, rightly or wrongly, with personal or consumerist goals. This liberal avenue of explanation, according to which 'the enemy is us', treats change in liberal terms as a matter of consumer willpower and argues back from the absence of change to the absence of consumer concern. If responsibility for change in democracy is framed in liberal terms, as resting primarily with consumers, the democratic route to change can only lie in overcoming their resistance through intensifying education or ecological consciousness-raising efforts. Explanatory frameworks of this consumerist type tend, as Timothy Luke points out, to be favoured because they fall in with the liberal imperative of

saving the political structure of liberalism from criticism and preserving the fiction that liberalism is democracy.

There has been a tendency for this consumerist type of explanation to be adopted in default by much of the conventional environment movement, precisely because it appears to absolve liberal democracy from responsibility and remove the need for any larger and bolder challenges to liberal rationality. In fact it does so only if it makes the self-defeating assumption that ecologically harmful, self-maximising 'consumerist' behaviour is a natural, invariant aspect of 'human nature', rather than one itself institutionally constructed and specified as rational within the framework of liberal capitalism. It assumes a commodified model of nature, and overlooks the crucial importance for nature of collective forms of life which cannot be properly commodified and opened to individual consumer influence. The central point however against the consumerist explanation and green consumer strategy invoking consumer responsibility as the solution is that it involves a mistaken view about the nature of liberalism and about the effectiveness of its chosen area of leverage. There is something right about the green consumer strategy, as we will see, but also something badly wrong about it.

The inevitable outcome of attempting to give priority to saving the conventional identification of liberalism with democracy is to cast the ecological failure of liberalism as a conflict between environment and democracy, and thus ultimately to force a reluctant construction of ecological failure as lending support to authoritarian strategies and regimes oriented to coercion of this recalcitrant 'human nature'. This is another source of movement inability to confront liberal failure and the need for systemic change. But this conflictual explanatory strategy is flawed for several reasons. It ignores the crucial and continuing role that grassroots democracy plays in contesting environmental issues, and at the level of political theory overlooks the severe limitations in the power for change citizens are allowed in the roles liberalism defines for them as consumers and as voters. It leaves unchallenged those further major kinds of power which structure the frameworks of consumer choice and bear on the continuance of environmental degradation, but which are not subject to any effective democratic control, such as decision-making about production and about technology. It thus locates the major sources of responsibility in the wrong places [*Luke, 1993*] and promotes a strategy whose failure invites an explanatory and activist impasse, a choice between two unacceptable alternatives – that of sacrificing either democracy or the environment. In the name of taking successful and effective action for change within the system, the movement has focused increasingly on ineffective action which defines success as compatibility with the system. Although activists are enticed into

accepting the 'insider' liberal strategy by the promise of quick results, the promise is a fraud: accepting the larger, critical challenge is, in the long run, the only source of hope for real improvement.

The alternative, critical type of explanation opens up the possibility that it is not primarily the democratic aspect of liberal democracy that creates these problematic structures of resistance to ecological action, but rather its democratic failures, its steadfast commitment to an alliance with privilege and economic power and the contradictions between its rhetorical assertion of democratic principles and the crippling limitations it imposes on their application [*Green, 1985*]. If we follow the second avenue of explanation for failure, we do not need to posit a fundamental conflict between environmentalism and democracy. Rather, such a critical explanatory framework opens space for exploring the ecological virtues of more thoroughgoing forms of democracy. This second, critical strategy for explaining the failure of liberal democracy has much independent support. If the degree to which democratic principles determine the structures in which most people live their daily lives is a measure of the success of the democratic project, this project has clearly been railroaded in current forms of liberal democracy by the absence of economic, household and workplace democracy as well as by other relations of domination. Thus it is open to us to take the ecological failure of liberal democracy as an indicator of the extent to which effective and responsive democracy has been subverted and rendered docile in the current liberal forms of government which are conventionally called democratic.

Accordingly, the poor ecological performance of those states termed 'liberal democracies' hardly provides a test of the ecological responsiveness of democracy in more meaningful and responsive senses. We can draw few negative conclusions from actual liberal performance about the ecological satisfactoriness of more radical forms of democracy; rather it remains open to us to interpret current ecological failure as a gauge of the extent to which dominant concepts of democracy have weakened almost beyond recognition the original meaning of democracy as popular control and decision-making in areas of common life. Thus green consumerism may be on the right track in wanting to diffuse a sense of responsibility for nature into the structures of the economy and of everyday life, but is astray in its uncritical understanding of existing liberal structures and their capacity to support practices which take responsibility for impacts on nature.

A Critical Explanatory Strategy

An alternative critical strategy which abandons the imperative to maintain faith in liberalism can begin to explore the hypothesis that liberalism has

failed ecology primarily because it builds in, systematically, features that severely limit democracy and hence ecological adaptation. The concept of responsive democracy suggests a way to explain the persistence of ecological abuse by showing how it is connected to the betrayal of democracy and the persistence of radical inequality and oppression in liberal polities. The incompleteness and subversion of democracy in liberalism helps explain both ecological failure and also why formal democratic political structures do not eliminate, but rather cohabit with, major forms of oppression and domination, which concepts must still have a major place in any analysis of liberal democratic societies [*Young, 1990*].

I have argued in general terms that to the extent that liberal democracy removes major areas of ecological impact from democratic reshaping and allows privilege and inequality to govern its political, informational and cultural systems, its capacity for crisis adaptability and ecological responsiveness is reduced or defeated. To see how many of the same rigidities operate in both cases, we can begin by noticing some of the barriers that liberal inequality generates for information flows, the area where liberal democracy appears strongest. Even here, the openness and responsiveness of liberal political democracy and its information systems are only relatively good when compared to more authoritarian systems.

We have already noted one of the generalised informational impacts of inequality, that for educational and participative reasons the greatest obstacles to effective communication tend to fall on those citizens liable to suffer most from ecological damage, but there are many others. The existence of normalised forms of censorship fostered by hierarchy within liberal academic, scientific and bureaucratic institutions, and their role in obstructing the flow of information about environmental degradation, have been well documented [*Plumwood, 1994a; Martin et al., 1986*]. This also applies more widely: in a polarised society where work structures create grave insecurity, hierarchy and dependency [*Schor, 1991; Green, 1985*], liberal citizens often find difficulty in exercising ecological and social responsibility in making public information deriving from their workplaces about harms, toxicity and ecological damage. The control of information in liberal democracy by those, especially governments and corporations, with an interest in hindering social and environmental change is also well documented.[13] In the process of 'manufacturing consent' through collusion with policy-makers [*Parry, 1992; Alterman, 1992; Chomsky, 1991; Lindsay, 1943*], the liberal media are at least as much engaged in shaping 'public opinion' as liberal democracy is in receiving popular input, thus removing a major basis for responsiveness to citizen input and reversing its direction. These are only a few of the barriers that privilege creates to change in the crucial process of informing citizens. In the equally crucial

process of transforming any citizen choice thus formed into action by elected representatives there are very many more such obstacles.[14]

Liberal democracy also creates major barriers to corrective ecological action by placing crucial areas of environmental impact beyond the range of democratic correction and reshaping, especially the institutions of accumulation and property. This characteristic is becoming more marked, in what gives signs of being a positive feedback process. The democratic component of liberal capitalism has always been in conflict with the undemocratic control of economic life and of technology, but this antagonism grows more acute as the nation state, the chief arena of democratic decision-making, becomes itself increasingly inadequate to direct economic life. As the economy is globalised without the likelihood of corresponding political structures, the area of life accountable to democratic decision-making and capable of being structured to meet social and ecological needs grows daily smaller. Even within liberal democratic states, the poorly socially accountable price/auction form of the market is increasingly permitted to invade the area available to democratic decision-making and to dominate and shrink the sphere of the political.

The market in this aggressive colonising form not only invades the public space in which oppositional citizen networks have flourished, but also wherever possible reduces collective welfare and forms of life to private, marketable goods, in the process frequently jeopardising many of the social and ecological functions they carry out. These tendencies are increasingly supplemented by political measures which further dismantle the corrective mechanisms expressed in regulation which have helped preserve a few collective and ecological areas of life from the ravages of liberal egoism.[15] Under neo-liberal forms of management, for example, private interests are emphasised to the point of irresponsibility, and many of the forms of collective life essential to the flourishing of nature lead an increasingly precarious and marginalised existence, subject to arbitrary elimination or pauperisation.[16]

The growth of radical inequality and the attack on collective forms of life undermine not only ecological responsiveness but also the main basis for the claim that liberal democracy represents freedom. This has rested largely on the concept of democracy as the making of laws 'for oneself' in a common polity, of freedom as autonomy and assent, self-government or self-determination involving the free recreation by all of social institutions.[17] However, liberal democracy increasingly assumes the form of groups of privileged citizens making laws punitive of marginalised groups – the homeless, women, illegal immigrants, future people, the criminalised, welfare recipients, animals – constructed as Others whose fate they can be sure they will never be required to share and who are excluded from full

citizenship or political subjecthood. One does not need to assume an undifferentiated 'general will' in the fashion of Rousseau to observe that such oppressions and oppositions also undermine those forms of equality, intersubstitutability, and collectivity which make it plausible to describe what is done in the name of liberal democracy as 'self-government' or 'self-determination'.

As inequality increases and as key areas of economic management, depoliticised through excision from the sphere of popular political agency, are reconceived as part of the sphere of instrumental management by the purveyors of economic 'expertise' and 'prediction', the relationship of liberal society to necessity and freedom grows more and more distorted: the economy and technology are represented as engines of necessity, while nature, conceived as without limits, is represented as a sphere of freedom as unconstrained manipulation, of human conquest and prospect for human emancipation.[18] By protecting the major destructive social institutions from democratic re-evaluation and re-creation and displacing human hopes for betterment onto the control of the sphere of nature, the very structure of liberal democracy fosters a technocratic orientation and a disregard for natural communities and natural limits.

On the critical explanatory model, then, ecological failure would lead us to conclude that it is not democracy that has failed ecology, but rather liberal democracy that has failed both democracy and ecology. Although present forms of democracy have indeed failed ecology, this is not because they are democratic, but because they are liberal. That these same liberal forms have also failed democracy itself is attested by the realistic 'democratic' world we see around us, which is democratic mainly in rhetoric. For the many oppressed people who experience it, this 'democratic' world is not an imperfect through recognisable copy of a democratic ideal which our polity is striving to reach but, more often than not, a betrayal of democratic principles.

The Philosophical Roots of the Democratic Failure of Liberalism

A number of threads from feminist and critical theory can be drawn together to help theorise the interconnected democratic and ecological failures of liberalism and explain the weakness of its concept of ecological rationality. These suggest that we should view liberal democracy as a form of arrested development which provides a narrow understanding of democracy, limits and restricts this democracy excessively even in what it has designated as the sphere available to it, the political sphere, and fails to extend democratic principles to ecologically crucial areas of life including the economy and the sphere of paid work, as well as to 'private' areas such as the sphere of the

household and personal life. These limitations and conflicts in liberalism reflect the tensions in the development of liberal democracy as the historical vehicle of a privileged, property-owning 'middle' class – simultaneously both an insurgent class needing to employ a discourse of universality and equality against monarchy and various kinds of despotism from above, and also a class of dominance aiming to maintain its own privilege against others such as women, 'savages', and animals, and to resist the extension of this universalising democratic discourse to excluded groups below it [*Pateman, 1988; 1989*]. Any project to liberate democracy must involve disentangling the inclusionary and exclusionary movements of liberalism [*Macpherson, 1973; 1977*]. Thus liberalism involves not only incompleteness, but also a set of inconsistent or exclusionary movements, the institutionalised denial of its own principles to areas and groups of Others with reduced political subjecthood and exempted from principles presented as universal. These areas and kinds of subjects exempted from the reach of democracy include both nature itself and the areas where the major relationships to and impacts on nature are found.

At the source of many of these exemptions and exclusions is a masculinist model of the citizen as independent (the 'man of property'), where the concept of independence incorporates various disavowed dependencies. Some of these denials are normalised in liberalism through the legitimation of forms of appropriation which deny the social Other by denying the dependence of property formation on collective forms of social life and infrastructure. These forms of appropriation also help constitute as less than full citizens specific groups of excluded Others whose contributory labour is denied and represented as background, as inessential and beneath recognition.

For all these primary Others, there is a common pattern or 'logic' of oppression or exploitation which arises from their assimilation to the status of 'nature'.[19] The primary Others who are exploited (that is, assumed but denied) in this master conception of property include, first of all, women, whose labour as 'nature' in the household is assumed but denied by the man of property as household head in his appropriation to himself of the wider social and economic rewards it makes possible [*Waring, 1988; Okin, 1989*]. Second, they include labouring, non-propertied citizens, and all those social Others whose contributions to production, and to the society and the infrastructure which makes this production and property possible, are assumed but denied in liberal forms of appropriation. Thirdly, these Others include the colonised, whose prior lands and prior and continuing labour are assumed but denied and appropriated in the formation and accumulation of the colonisers' property, often by assigning them the status of 'nature' [*Shiva, 1994*]. Fourthly, they include animals, nature and the earth itself,

whose own prior agency and intentional organisation is denied and overridden in the foundation of property.[20] The man of property assumes the contribution of nature in the form of a continuing support base for production, accumulation and renewal, but also denies it, not infrequently in even stronger terms than he denies these human Others, failing to recognise and allow, in his economic and cultural systems, for nature's reproduction and continuation.[21] This denial establishes the basic ecological rationality characteristic of liberalism.[22]

These features of liberal property are reflected in the rational egoist form of the market, which assigns 'market values' to the contributions of excluded others such as women in accordance with this logic of denial [*Waring, 1988*]. The rational egoist variety of the market is founded on an anthropocentric denial of nature's intrinsic value and significance which is revealed in Locke's original argument for the legitimacy of property based on the 'mixing' of human labour as the source of value with a passive and valueless nature which contributes no 'value' or moral constraint on its own account. The anthropocentric representation of nature as nullity provides the basic model by which the exclusion of human others is framed and excused, in terms of their representation as nature in the framework of reason/nature dualism which I discuss in the final section [*Plumwood, 1993*].

Green liberalism and consumerism have hardly begun to address the problem of formulating a non-anthropocentric version of the market. Although some theoretical progress has been made in representing the instrumental value of certain forms of nature to the extent of allowing for their renewal in instrumental terms and of recognising nature's non-interchangeability and certain kinds of limits [*Pierce et al., 1989*], even these limited changes are usually deemed too radical for practical adoption in the context of actually existing liberal democracy, and it is unclear that anything less commodifying can be implemented within the boundaries of the liberal framework.[23] Envisaging a truly non-anthropocentric and ecological economy implies going much further still: envisaging nature as active agent and partner in the production of value [*Benton, 1989*], and challenging nullifying liberal conceptions of property, the market, and production.

The conception of self based on this denial and established as paradigmatic in the institutions and rationality of the liberal public sphere is that of the self-maximising and self-contained individual who is radically separate from others and from nature, rather than a satisficing[24] and relationally-expressed one. In this framework, egoism emerges as the normal and rational mode, altruism (like the Other) a problem to be explained or reduced to some version of egoism/self. These assumptions place the basic liberal forms of identity and rationality in conflict with the recognition of those relationships of kinship, care, dependency and

mutuality which an ecological awareness requires us to recognise with future generations and with nature. [*Plumwood, 1993; Mathews, 1991a, 1991b*]. This element of the liberal tradition leads to the conception of the political encounter of democracy as occurring in a fundamentally instrumental community – that is, a community based on coincidence of interests, thought of as a means to ends conceived as only coincidentally shared. Similarly, liberal democracy sees as the essential political feature of individuals not the capacity for empathy and care for others but the capacity for rationality, usually interpreted as rational egoism in the pursuit of interests [*Jaggar, 1983*]. Dualistic models of freedom and reason converge to interpret freedom as distance from necessity and the body, and the dominance of the material conditions of life by reason as the essence of the higher self. This interpretation not only discounts other aspects of life and self, but gives major emphasis to a dominant Western conception of rationality which has been historically opposed to nature both within and without the human individual [*Plumwood, 1993*].

Reason/nature dualism has both provided the backdrop for the informal cultural climate of liberalism, and shaped its vision of formal political structure. Thus liberalism divides life into separate spheres which are organised hierarchically in accordance with reason/nature dualism. Those spheres identified with reason are the 'managers' which coordinate and rationally order the separate, split-off areas of 'interest' in which material desire and consumption, bodily need and care, material production and labour are organised as lower spheres representative of the body and nature. To the extent that direction is centralised into separate 'political' organs external to the sphere of material life, rather than spread widely throughout the social body, there is a parallel with the way in which the Cartesian reason-mind isolates and concentrates in an external organ the intentionality of the mind-stripped, mechanically-conceived body [*Plumwood, 1993*]. Reason supposedly forms the basis of qualifications for entry to the impersonal political sphere, directing and weighing impartially these lower spheres, according to the dictates of instrumental rationality. The supposedly rational public or 'political' sphere is divorced from the lower body of material and social life by the exclusionary characteristics attributed to reason – the exclusion of emotion, care, materiality and particularity – and conceived as a sphere of universality, freedom and choice divorced from considerations of material necessity. By means of these oppositions, the liberal dualisms of political and economic citizenship are established, and class and other forms of exclusion are articulated along axes of distance from nature as necessity, of recognition (or failure of recognition) of agency in labour, and in terms of 'rational' development, control and management of both the self and of subordinated Others.

Under the common liberal interpretation of individuals as self-contained, the liberal conception of freedom as absence of interference lends itself to an interpretation as separation from Others, especially non-human ecological Others, who are doubly excluded as outside even the human polity. Freedom comes to be interpreted in elitist and masculinist terms as lack of relationship and denial of responsibility, and self-determination as the rational mastery of external life conditions, through maximising transcendence of necessity and through control over the Other, over the 'lower' aspects of self as internal Other, and over nature. It is no coincidence that such freedom, defined as the denial of relationship associated with masculinism, selectively rewards those privileged, white, usually male subjects who succeed in the public sphere by avoiding or passing down to subordinated Others household and personal relationships and responsibilities [*Okin, 1989*]. In the *fin-de-siècle* neo-liberal orgy of the Nasty Nineties, security is interpreted not as a collective good resting in social trust, social 'capital' and the mutual provision of satisficing, basic life standards for all, but in the individualist terms of punitive law enforcement as social warfare waged against the criminalised Other, and in terms of each individual struggling to maximise self-shares in order to make provision for herself as best she can in an isolated battle against a hostile world. Thus the rationalist and individualist bases of liberalism [*Addelson, 1994*] lead it to define many of its key concepts – self, freedom, reason, security, and agency – in masculinist terms, in terms of opposition to those elements identified as Other, and in struggle with what is identified as nature.

Many other ecologically problematic features flow from these ways of conceiving the individual and his forms of rationality, including the marginalisation of collective forms of life, and the limitation of democracy and the political to interest group politics. As Carole Pateman notes, the liberal individual is conceived not just as ontologically self-contained but also as naturally contained within private life; '[liberal] citizenship is a "political lion's skin" which covers, temporarily, an individual whose natural habitat is private life' [*1988: 104*]. Liberal democratic citizenship becomes a bloodless, semi-fictional affair in which 'the liberal-democratic citizen does not vote as a political actor, but in defence of private interest', and public life is conceived in impoverished terms as a place for accomodating these private interests [*Pateman, 1988; Walzer, 1992*]. The resulting conception of democracy in terms of a central state mediating a multiplicity of competing (private) interest groups takes egoism, inequality and domination for granted, provides poorly for collective goods, militates against interests being balanced in a way which takes account of the weak, and legitimates the development and interest of a powerful security state as the central manager [*Arblaster, 1987*].

The liberal state's representative system reflects and enhances these problems, providing candidates lacking real critical strategies for the intractable social problems of liberal inequality with an alternative ground for competition in raising fear and distrust of the excluded Other. The resulting understanding of representation does not facilitate the processes of social communication or represent the outcome of collective decision-making, but rather permits representatives to adopt roles hostile to collective social forms and favourable to private interests selected in terms of power. Under the individualist interpretation of democracy, the concept that initially appeared to promise freedom as unlimited collective interrogation and free recreation by all of social arrangements degenerates into a formal show of managed electoral competition which all but the most repressive regimes can manage to stage in some form. Even where these are fair, their claims to ensure popular control are vitiated by their incompleteness, for only if the franchise were the major form of political power would voting begin to ensure widespread participation in communication and decision-making and therefore responsiveness to the degradation of collective ecological goods. As democracy is increasingly identified with its shallowest aspects, liberal commentators celebrate its spread in the modern world [*Marks and Diamond, 1992*].

Ecology and the Liberal Public/Private Division

Feminist political philosophy has shown that the liberal public/private division is one of the major means by which these masculinist limitations of vision are reproduced and sustained. It is also central to the means by which democratic activity and principle are kept confined to a narrow area of public 'political' life easily controlled by elites which benefit from environmental destruction. As a claim to exclude others from participation in the relevant sphere of decision-making, the liberal account of privacy has been used both to restrict the scope of the political, to effect the exclusion of women and other groups (servants, domestic animals) counted as part of the household, and also used to relegate most economic affairs to the realm of the private, to exclude them from democratic control and prevent their realisation as political, as subject to social discussion and determination [*Okin, 1991; Pateman, 1989*]. For feminists, households are primary political sites, and are only relatively unaccountable: the idea of the family as a sacred unitary space apart from the political and from others' knowledge and responsibility is now widely rejected in the treatment for example, of domestic abuse. Although few feminists argue for the elimination of household intimacy or in favour of incorporating it into the other dualistic pole of the public sphere,[25] feminists critical of both

capitalism and patriarchy have stressed the way in which the concept of household privacy has been misused to put beyond challenge both the subordination of women and the private determination of an economic sphere which affects a much wider society [*Pateman, 1989; Bacchi, 1994; Fraser, 1987*].

The liberal private sphere thus includes both the sphere of particular relationships and ties, the realm of desire, care and value and, quite differently, the sphere counted as 'your own business', economic activity excluded, on the pretence that it affects no one else, from public knowledge and control, and therefore unaccountable and open to purely selfish determination. The liberal concept of privacy thus disjoins two quite different notions, with the intention and effect of transferring the hitherto uncontested status and small-scale decision-making basis of domestic privacy to the privatised economy. The dualistic structure designating the private-family and the private-economic as outside democratic control also exempts from democratic responsibility the two areas, consumption and production, where modern society impinges massively on nature.

Decisions about production and technology structure the frameworks within which private consumer choices are made. Any adequate ecological analysis of liberal democracy must move beyond the acceptance of these frameworks, expressed in green consumerism, to contest the exemption of the major areas of production and technology from democratic responsibility, and therefore to contest the way liberalism has shaped and used the public/private distinction. Feminist thought has provided many useful leads here on showing how liberalism denies and misrepresents the collective creation which shapes our lives [*Addelson, 1994*] and on the deconstruction of the liberal dualism of public and private spheres. The concept of privacy acquires great importance in liberal democracy as the seat of individual identity and freedom, and this tends to obscure the way in which it works, under the influence of the master subject, to perpetuate oppressive as well as emancipatory aims.

If, as Carole Pateman and others have noted, liberal theory locates the real individual in the private sphere, as the area of consumption and pursuit of desire, the 'public' world of citizenship, politics and collective forms of life will appear to lack importance except as instrumental to the private. As Young notes, the standards of professional and 'public' workplace behaviour also locate the 'real' individual in the private, along with her body, bodily needs and emotional satisfaction and expression [*1990*]. This private conception of the individual is ever more strongly asserted in contemporary life: thus in contemporary anti-taxation argument, it is only that part of your time you spend working for private appropriation that counts as truly 'working for yourself', implying that the 'public' aspects of

self are external and 'other' to who you really are.

State and bureaucratic structures of regulation, often very extensively developed under liberal democracy as a substitute for as well as a concession to democratic management, tend to confirm this conception of collective life as alien, reinforcing the need to stress privacy as protection for the individual from sources of bureaucratic and state control and intrusion. All these factors combine to create the illusion that liberal privacy is invariably the saviour of freedom, and hence that ecological and other collective forms of responsibility must inevitably be on a collision course with freedom. What is overlooked when the collective aspects of self are thus marginalised is that liberal privacy, as well as having some liberating aspects, is also a major plank in the construction of many varieties of unfreedom – as subordination, discipline and vulnerability in both private and public worlds.

Feminist theorists such as Pateman and Okin have shown how liberalism's arrangement of public and private spheres effects the subordination of women, and these insights are also applicable to nature. The spheres of the family and the economy delineated by liberal concepts of privacy are articulated through gender, through the identities of the male producer and the female carer or consumer [*Fraser, 1987*], and inherit the problematic of masculine/feminine and of reason/nature dualism. Liberalism treats the public and the private as a dualism of sharply separated and opposed spheres, reflecting the dualism inscribed in male and female 'natures'. The extension of the democratic imaginary to the household is blocked by the assumption that the family, like woman's nature, is a unitary sphere of necessity sharply separate and radically other, a sphere of values and of relationships which are either naturally harmonious or naturally subordinate, but in neither case constructed in political terms.

Liberalism strives to construct and represent the public/domestic relationship in terms of a radical exclusion [*Plumwood, 1993*] which hyper-separates public politics and private care and intimacy, public freedom and private necessity, and hides the conflictual and political character of the household. 'Rational' public life adopts the instrumental, impartial, objectivist stance of reason and economic expertise in contrast to the domestic, conceived as the sphere of intimacy, care, need, emotion, value, empathy and natural community. This division also hinders the development of any public morality able to express care and responsibility for nature, other than that expressible in terms of 'interest group politics'. Within such superficial conceptions of the political and the democratic, what can be done to give social expression to concern for nature is very limited, being largely confined to green consumerism, participation in the instrumentally-oriented interest group politics of environmental lobby

groups, and the politics of protest and embarrassment. This exclusion of the possibility of a public ethic has formed an important part of the critical case for replacing liberal conceptions of the polity by either a communitarian [*Sandel, 1982*], civic republican [*Skinner, 1992*], or a radical democratic conception [*Pateman, 1988; Mouffe, 1992b*].

One effect of the way in which the liberal public/private division has been shaped is that the liberal polity is 'systematically denuded of a set of public moral values' [*Pateman, 1988: 113*], which deficit includes any commitment to the health and viability of ecological systems, as well as to fairness to future generations. This creates an ethical vacuum in just that area where a commitment to an ecological ethic and an ecological economy would need to be founded. In the absence of the possibility in liberalism of a public ethic of care and responsibility for nature or the future, green consumerism tries to get by with a private ethic of care and responsibility for nature. But such a private ethic is patently inadequate for the main task of taking responsibility for the ecological impacts of larger social formations such as the structures of production, that is, for a democratic, ethical and ecological economy. The inability to conceive any public forms of moral life means that liberalism can at best yield a narrowly instrumental form of public policy in relation to nature, and is hard pressed to stabilise even enlightened instrumental forms in the tug of war between interest groups.

Liberal privacy does permit relationships based on recognition to occur in the private sphere, between particular individuals and nature. But although deeper possibilities can be realised by individuals on a private basis, the inability of liberalism to endorse any collective morality means that these possibilities are always in conflict with the instrumental rationality of the liberal public sphere, and can receive no genuine or unproblematic public, political or institutional expression. Thus liberalism cannot provide a stable conception of social good or democratic virtue in relation to nature or a framework for social practice based on respect for nature. At best it can exercise repressive tolerance towards such a practice, as the private practice of a few individual 'extremists'.

Radical Democracy and the Conditions for Ecological Citizenship

The demarcation of the household and the economy as private removes from political contest and democratic responsibility the major areas of material need satisfaction, production and consumption, and ecological impact. This is certainly not irrelevant to the persistence of ecological damage and inequality in liberal societies [*Green, 1985*]. It means that liberalism can recognise the other as an equal centre of agency in limited

ways in a very limited sphere of political representation (political citizenship), but fails to extend this to provide wider recognition of the Other in the material sphere as an equal centre of need and responsibility in production, household and ecological life (economic and ecological citizenship). As Marx implies, the liberal tendency to recognise political but not economic and ecological citizenship rests on a form of mind/body dualism, a dualism then of the same kind that underlies Western inferiorisation and neglect of nature.[26] Marx however did not provide the basis for an adequate solution to this dualism, assuming that the political could be reduced to economic 'administration' and absorbed into the material and economic sphere. This reduction is not unconnected with the corresponding failure of Marxist societies to develop an adequate conception of democracy or political citizenship [*Walzer, 1992*]. A renewed effort to construct liberatory concepts of the political and of citizenship in the economic and ecological spheres is needed to resolve this dualism, which also plays an important role in maintaining the underdevelopment of democratic economic structures at the international level.[27]

The norms of democratic universality are often thought of as involving a recognition of the Other as a being of like agency and freedom, a different individual who is alike in meeting the conditions for political inclusion (reason or, what is different, agency and need). They also imply a setting of the boundaries of the political, the area in which power relations between political subjects are recognised as occurring and the area beyond which no such recognition is required or possible, the area of instrumental relationships. Liberalism strives to confine and minimise the area in which the political character of relationships is recognised and to limit recognition of appropriate subjects. This impoverished conception of the political is implicated in the conceptual blindness of formal liberal democracy to social relationships of domination [*Young, 1990; Phillips, 1991; Mouffe, 1992b*] and the restriction of equality to equal rights in a narrowly conceived legal and political sphere [*Green, 1985*]. A radical democratic and ecological objective would tend in the opposite direction, to maximise the recognition of political relationships and subjects and to recognise the plurality and pervasiveness of power relationships [*Okin, 1991; Phillips, 1991; Walzer, 1992*], as appearing for example in the sphere of gender relationships, in the household, in economic areas, in formations of knowledge, culture and identity, and in relationships with nature and animals [*Plumwood, 1993*]. Systematic and institutionalised failures and distortions of this recognition in the case of nature and animals can, I suggest, be thought of, in much the same way as in the human case, as political as well as ethical failings. Concepts of democratic communication also enable the extension to nature of some notions of political community (Dryzek, this collection), especially

if we adopt the intentional stance in relation to nature [*Plumwood, 1993*].

But we also need to start from the other end to envisage the conditions for a concept of citizenship that could extend such recognition to integrate nature and concern for nature more fully into conceptions of political community, and especially into areas from which they are presently excluded in liberal polities. A fuller and less masculinist conception of citizenship can open space for renewing and extending the political and democratic impulse in key areas of exclusion, in the household and in economic and production organisation, including technology selection.[28] A number of theorists have argued that a better integration of democracy with everyday life can provide some of the necessary conditions for a public political morality.

Okin [*1989*] argues persuasively that democratising the household is essential to bring about a wider sense of social justice. Participatory theorists argue that the diffusion of democratic experience in both the household and the workplace develops democratic values and participatory competences [*Gould, 1988; Mill, 1969; Pateman, 1970; 1989*], diffusing practices of responsibility and care through areas from which liberalism strips them. Since an exclusive focus on workplace democracy can reflect a masculinist [*Phillips, 1991*] as well as a narrowly productivist orientation, it is important to stress a larger focus which supports a practice of democratic virtue across a wide area of life, including such female-identified areas as education and welfare. Economic citizenship must be conceived in wider terms which insert workplace democracy into larger networks providing community, regional and transnational accountability for economic policy and investment decisions [*Young, 1990*]. Without such insertions, there is nothing to prevent the exclusion of those not engaged in production from the decisions which shape the contours of their world, or a particular workplace from building its success in one community on ruining some other place [*Orr, 1994*].

Economic citizenship thus linked to widely diffused democratic values and practices has a crucial role in establishing not only political responsibility for other humans but also ecological responsibility for nature. A number of theorists have provided a basis for a conception which can extend such responsibility to nature: for example, Gould [*1988*] argues for economic citizenship from the idea that democracy involves a form of recognition of the other's equal agency. If recognising others in as many diverse ways and spheres of activity as possible can be thought of as a criterion of the political maturity of a society, it would follow that democratic recognition principles should extend to economic and household (private) life as well as to the recognition of others in nature.[29] The recognition account carries radical democratic implications subversive of a

division of labour and working life which, under present forms of liberal capitalism, denies most workers agency and keeps for a minority of privileged professionals the recognition as self-determining agents implied in the ability to determine the meaning of their task and structure their own time and effort [*Ehrenreich, 1990; Young, 1990; Gould, 1988; Green, 1985; Pateman, 1970; Kropotkin, 1970*]. To find ways to renew and express the political and democratic impulse in this area, we need to mobilise a variety of democratic strategies and forms of organisation, not only direct democracy but novel democratic and representational forms, including demarchy (Burnheim, this collection). Democratic theorists suggest that where democratic structures and experiences are widespread and integrated into all the structures of everyday life, not split off as separate managerial organs for political elites, 'the democratic personality' [*Gould, 1988*] which emerges is one capable of infusing care and political responsibility into the tasks of daily life.[30] Such a practice can provide a basis for ecological citizenship as the recognition of others in nature, acknowledgement of the ethical and political character of relationships with animals and nature, and for ecologically responsible production and development behaviour as well as consumption and household behaviour.

If the core of such a shared political morality can be envisaged as respect for democratic values and participatory virtues in all spheres of life [*Mouffe, 1992b*], this provides a way to articulate a radical democratic conception of citizenship in which the individual is conceived as at home in public as well as private moral space. There is an important convergence here between such a radical democratic conception of citizenship as involving the diffusion of democratic practices and values throughout economic and political life, and an ecological citizenship capable of developing and giving expression to collective ecological concerns. The radical democratic reconception of citizenship involves a paradigm shift which effects a series of systematic displacements in the liberal framework which in turn bring it much closer to an ecological formulation of citizenship. Oppositional conceptions of reason can be displaced as the main conceptual basis for political entitlement and citizenship, to make room for a richer and less dualistically defined set of features.[31]

The self-contained conception of self characteristic of liberalism and its rationality of self-maximisation and instrumentalism can be replaced by a relational conception of self and its rationality of mutuality, which several theorists have argued corresponds to an ecological conception of self [*Plumwood, 1991; 1993*]. The identity of the individual in such a democratic order can be reconceived as expressed in the public as well as in private space, not, as in liberalism, as only exceptionally expressed in public, political action [*Pateman, 1989*]. The public aspect of identity as

citizenship is expressed in political responsibility in the democratic forums of everyday life, and in the 'public-spiritedness' which aims to further the collective and cooperative forms of life marginalised in liberalism, whose health is necessary to the community and essential to the flourishing of nature, particularly biospheric nature.

This shift in identity opens a space for the development of moral values appropriate to the public sphere, replacing the empty and instrumental character of liberal morality by a substantive conception of public morality as 'principles of political right on which members of a self-managing democracy can consciously draw to order their political practice' [*Pateman, 1989*]. A commitment to such concepts of democratic virtue can provide a non-instrumental conception of political community which is inclusive of future generations and the non-human world. If the democratic community is envisaged as an unbounded community (Dryzek, Thompson, Mathews, this collection), these virtues would have to include such ecological values as taking responsibility for the ecological impacts of one's life, work and community, and not robbing future others for present generation benefits. Should we try to ensure this further by structuring into the forums of democratic communication political speakers for the interests of nature, representatives for nature and the future (Eckersley, this collection)? That idea is not limited to liberal representative politics, although it originates in the liberal framework. But the liberal framework is the very place where such a manoeuvre is least likely to be effective, where it would amount, given the rest of the liberal structure I have outlined, to sowing the wind, if only because such representatives would be unable in the liberal structure to address properly the major areas in which most impacts on nature originate. Economic citizenship is an essential condition for the usefulness of such a representational device, for only if we are equipped with democratic forums which address these major areas of impact in the making of decisions about production and economic life could such structures of representation for nature begin to be effective.

Radical democratic virtues can be based on the values inherent in participating in a political community as well as on the reintegration into the public of some of the care liberalism confines to the private, yielding a conception of responsibility for the Other that is not just human-centred in application. Communicative and democratic virtues include attentiveness and openness to the Other, tolerance, empathy, respect for the Other's difference, preparedness to share the means of life, to negotiate and accomodate needs with the other, generosity to and respect for the Other and recognition of their freedom and agency, and responsibility for one's life impacts on the other. All of these concepts can be applied directly to nature and animals to recognise them as part of the political and moral

community,[32] yielding a concept of ecological morality and citizenship which resists the liberal reduction of ecology to the interests of the private pressure group. Of course, many of us will still seek private solace and joy in intimacy with nature, developing special relationships of love and care with particular others in nature, which can now be more in harmony with public ethics. But public ecological ethics need not and should not be reduced to such a private and intimate morality of love and friendship with nature. In this alternative democratic paradigm we are not obliged, as we are in the liberal paradigm, to rely on the hope that such personal values will somehow become universal, in order to build practices of democratic and ecological citizenship which respect the needs of nature.[33]

Reason/Nature Dualism and Democratic Culture

These concepts of democratic citizenship have much to offer in constructing ecological alternatives to liberalism, but in employing the discourse of public morality and stronger citizenship, we need also to be aware of various difficulties and dangers. These include a danger of positions such as civic republicanism using the concept of public morality to support a state-centred agenda which performs the converse reduction of the individual to the citizen and refuses the conditions of economic citizenship and diffused participation which are critical to ensuring that this discourse does not become another rhetorical cloak for elite control [*Plumwood, 1994b*]. Another area of difficulty is in the concept of moral pluralism, a prominent and widely admired landmark of modernity whose loss would mark our movement into unrecognisable political territory. Mouffe argues, convincingly in my view, that where a substantive conception of public morality is based on shared commitments inherent in democratic political practices, commitment to the procedural and communicative processes and values which make democratic practice and political community possible, public endorsement of these structural values is compatible with a strong commitment to moral pluralism in the non-structural field; in fact a commitment to pluralism and to the practices of multiculturalism can be considered one of the major democratic virtues [*Mouffe, 1992b*].

It seems clear that a commitment to ecological health should also figure among such structural commitments, first because the health of nature is not just another set of interests but the condition for any sustainable democratic practice, and second because nature and animals should be included in the political community in which such commitments operate. Mouffe is sceptical of such an extension, but I think that she has failed to see the possibilities for a political relationship to nature and animals based in the intentional stance and on communicative virtues, and for extending

structural concepts of community membership and democratic virtue to nature. If this doubt indicates an area of debate, it also indicates a failure to recognise ecological responsiveness and citizenship as a key test of democracy.

Another major potential area of failure is in the area of responsiveness, ecojustice, and democratic culture. Richer conceptions of democracy help open the way for better information flows from those at the bottom who bear most of the costs of environmental damage, and hence better correctiveness and better accountability across a crucial range of areas. But simply widening areas of participation and providing a richer set of formal participatory structures by no means ensures that people, particularly the least advantaged people, will be able to participate. Feminists in particular have made the point that such structures can disadvantage women [*Phillips, 1991*]. Although this is in part a consequence of the liberal public/private division of labour which leaves women with the double day, it is also a consequence of lingering masculinism in conceptions of democracy. But there is also considerable work which shows that not only in liberal, but in non-liberal frameworks, those with most need to be considered are those least likely to participate in democratic structures [*Pateman, 1989*], and which suggests that a wider provision of structures of democracy may simply reproduce what Pateman calls 'miniature liberalism' in more areas. So multiplying formal participative structures will not on its own solve the urgent ecological problems of responsiveness and ecojustice, will not ensure that information and action on the degradation of nature flow freely through channels unclogged by elitism and inequality.

In our quest for ecological citizenship, we should not make the mistake of those political theorists who assume that formal political structures are all that we have to be concerned about, and who overlook the importance of democratic culture [*Pateman, 1989; Green, 1985*]. Deconstructing elite formations of culture in everyday life is essential if 'political activity is to become a part of everyday life, not something extra to it' [*Pateman, 171*]. And here it can be said that if reconceiving democracy is essential to fixing up our relationship with nature, reconceiving our relationship with nature is equally essential to fixing up democracy. This is because in Western culture, (which is now global technological culture), elite domination has particularly been elaborated through culture via the dialectic of reason/nature dualism, whose variations permeate everyday life and culture and are expressed especially in the structures of knowledge, labour and identity. Over 25 centuries of elite control of cultural resources have created a complex web of dualisms, in which 'lower' groups are represented as some version of nature or of body in contrast to the higher groups' appropriation for themselves of concepts of mind and rationality. Although

the roots of these dualistic structures are old, they are constantly renewed to justify and create new forms of social hierarchy which defeat the possibilities for democracy, participation and political equality. Extending democracy into the area of political culture involves reconstructing this hierarchical reason/nature story, which, through its roots in the older Western project of rational mastery, has partially overshadowed and subverted the project of democracy.

To understand this subversion we need to understand how conceptions of reason and nature have been constructed as tools of hierarchy, and how an instrumental version of reason has evolved which supports a culture of rational meritocracy in which those considered 'more rational' acquire the right to dominate those constructed as less rational. We are conventionally offered a singular, unquestionable model of disengaged reason which has somehow escaped political influence in its formation. Yet for twenty-five centuries or more the essence of humanity has been identified with mind and reason, which has in turn been identified with elite groups, and the contrasting concepts of body, emotion and nature identified with those they dominate, with men over women, European over 'barbarian', civilisation over primitivism, and human over animal. It is not just a mistaken belief system we have to deal with here, one that we can set straight by claiming women, for example, to be equally rational; for, as feminist philosophers have argued, the dualistic exclusions which still form the framework for life in Western culture have deeply affected the dominant construction of both the body and reason, and thus of both who and what is seen as reasonable.

In both modern and classical forms of democracy, hierarchical concepts of mind and reason have been some of the major tools employed to contain universalist and egalitarian potentials and prevent the extension of democratic privileges to excluded groups. The retention in liberal democracy of a dualistic conception of reason which is traditionally opposed to the excluded lower realm designated as nature and body, means the corresponding retention of influential anti-democratic and anti-nature elements at the heart of liberal culture. Thus a strong theme of rational meritocracy has existed as a crucial subtext in liberal thought, excluding a variety of others represented as in opposition to reason – women, children, manual workers, those of non-European descent, non-whites, the mentally ill, those less educated – from the category of full political entitlement and participation. Mill wrote of his rational democracy: 'The best government must be the government of the wisest, and these must always be a few.'[14] Groups cast as outside or of lesser reason have often sought to contest exclusion from political entitlement on the basis of their possession of reason and hyper-differentiation from other lower orders thought to lack it, especially those from reason's major contrast class of 'brute nature'

[*Wollstonecraft, 1982*]. Thus, a strong motivation for seeing other 'lower groups' as inferior along the lines of reason/nature dualism is written into the foundation of the liberal turn, and is reinforced with each extension of democratic privilege to a new category of human society.

The liberal-rationalist subtext of rational meritocracy remains active within liberal democracy in justifying hierarchy and social inequality outside the formal political sphere, and constantly defeats efforts to obtain a more just and democratic society. Reason/nature dualism (and its special case, mind/body dualism) plays a significant role in the pervasive structuring of labour in terms of the division between socially esteemed 'mind-people', managers and professionals who design and direct their own labour and that of others, and their contrast class, the devalued and instrumentalised 'body people' who carry out these designs. These deep dualistic structures are part of the cultural complex of rational meritocracy that permeates basic cultural areas like knowledge and the culture of labour [*Green, 1985; Marglin and Marglin, 1990*]. They are reflected not just in ideology but, of course, in actual social ordering as divisions of prestige and reward, of knowledge and labour between higher and lower categories, between managers and 'hired hands', between men as doing the labour of freedom and achievement, and women that of necessity and care. Extending formal participative structures may mean little unless we can rework the dualisms that permeate the politics of work and leisure, knowledge and science, freedom and necessity, public and private, to subvert these oppositions of the higher order to the inferior orders, the head people to the body people, the 'civilised' to the 'primitive', the controlling, expert knower to the objectified known, the highly valued masculine life of freedom to the devalued feminine life of necessity, the rational, speaking human agent to the silenced, 'mindless' non-human object. Democracy, social equality and ecological citizenship must remain formal and superficial concepts and practices in a culture structured by the dualistic divisions and dualised identities which pervade the organisation of work and everyday life in existing liberal democracies. We must work to reconcile the anciently divided spheres of nature and culture, both in theoretical and political structures and in the culture and practice of everyday life, if we are to accomplish the increasingly urgent and convergent tasks of creating a society in which both human freedom and nature can flourish.

NOTES

1. Capture of much of the professionalised environment movement in the halls of power through the interest group framework is widely remarked [*Seager, 1993; Dowie, 1995*].

Another mark of the co-option of the eco-establishment through professionalism is the unwillingness of professionals to confront the intractability of the dominant political framework and the poverty of the strategy of promoting green consumerism and liberal reform. The professionalised movement is increasingly incapable of providing critical political direction and honest evaluation, or of generating effective strategies which face the reality that many failures have their roots in these political structures and are not just temporary and contingent setbacks. To the extent that movement professionals give top priority to guaranteeing their own advancement and projecting a 'successful' corporate image, they cannot entertain or admit failure or adopt a stance critical of structural barriers to change.

2. See Johansen [*1993*].
3. To the extent that environmental oligarchy is assumed to depend on 'objective science' to substitute for democracy as a reliable information source, its proponents depend on ignoring the substantial body of work on the social construction of science and on its production for the needs of the powerful. Much feminist work too has shown how power distorts conceptual frameworks and knowledges. Recent work on the way such distortions in science are generated by forms of power and oppression includes Harding [*1991*].
4. Privileged groups who have a stake in the problematic structures of accumulation will often be motivated to support mitigating forms of change which leave them intact, and it is this agenda especially which has influenced the forms of environmental politics they have been able to control [*Dowie, 1995*]. Although (relatively) non-privileged groups such as workers may have their choices constrained in ways which lead to their obstructing change, they are likely to play a much less significant role in constructing the overall choice context, and to have less stake in protecting it. Many of these forms of redistribution downward are also directed to future people, who, in terms of consideration for their interests and welfare, have to be considered highly disadvantaged.
5. Although they can already use their superior access to resources to mitigate the personal ill effects of diffused forms of environmental degradation, and will be able to do so to an increasing degree as technologies which enable selective insulation develop.
6. The effects of power are amplified by the perceptual politics of ecological bads, whose highly particularised forms are often those which are most noticeable, and appear most clearly as contingent and avoidable. These are the forms most likely to arouse effective political action for positive change, but also the forms most liable to redistribution to the poor in a society of inequality. The highly diffused forms of environmental degradation, such as nuclear radiation, acid rain and general biospheric degradation, tend to be harder to perceive, and are subject to notorious problems of political responsibility and effective action.
7. This was the argument recently employed by the President of the World Bank to justify Third World waste dumping.
8. See Pateman 'The Civic Culture: A Philosophic Critique', in Pateman [*1989*].
9. Surveys persistently show high levels of public support for environmental action. See Luke [*1993*].
10. This is one way to get something useful from the 'veil of ignorance' framework elaborated by Rawls, which otherwise can function as a justification for liberalism by preserving liberal egoism while introducing philosophical instruments to abort its normal effects. It is not the failure of 'the veil of ignorance' which we should hold responsible however, in the context of inequality, but political and cultural structures which favour the privileged.
11. As Castoriadis [*1991*] notes, environment portfolios solve the problem of what to do with junior ministers.
12. On nature as the condition for speech, see Kirk [*1995*].
13. See recent works by Alterman [*1992*], Bagdikian [*1992*], Baker [*1994*], Kofsky [*1994*], Mazzocco [*1994*], Parry [*1992*], as well as many others.
14. For an account of some of these in the form of corporate influence and lobbying in the environmental case, see Dowie [*1995*]. Other liberal mechanisms which reduce the accuracy of representative systems themselves, (for example 'power trading' identified by Burnheim, this collection) can also be implicated in loss of ecological responsiveness.
15. It is important to stress that the problem does not just lie in capitalist control of the economy,

but also in systems of knowledge, in political and administrative systems, and the complex interaction between these factors. The existence of interactive structural features of liberal capitalism which render it unable to respond to the complexity of problems of an environmental nature has been persuasively argued recently by John Dryzek [*1990; 1992*]. Dryzek argues that capitalism generates through its own growth and profit logic environmental problems which it cannot solve itself but must displace into the spheres of administration and representative democracy. But the political sphere of liberal democracy is also imprisoned by the requirements of economic growth, while administrative systems are prevented from dealing adequately with the complex, boundary-crossing problems of the environment by their hierarchical structure, instrumental rationality, and commitment to the economic system. The logics of all systems combine to block an effective, non-piecemeal response to the kinds of problems the large-scale degradation of nature represents. Many seasoned environmental activists have trodden the well-travelled avenues of bureaucratic frustration and democratic failure this structure generates.

16. This extends to the environment movement itself: the successes of environmentalism in the past twenty years have depended heavily on collective forces within liberal democracy which are now in decline [*Keane, 1984; Held, 1993*], such as effective regulatory institutions and funding support for citizen associational networks for nature.
17. The other major argument for this identification of liberal democracy with freedom, that from free contract, is also undermined by gross inequality, since unequal or forced contracts which take place in contexts which have structured out other choices (often by past violence) do not represent freedom and have no moral force. Who could be said freely to strike so disadvantageous a social bargain as that which attends gross inequality?
18. This distorted relationship to necessity also appears in other areas. Thus corporate generosity is directed, through 'advantage' systems and other perks for star consumers, to those who need it least, but withheld from the homeless and destitute.
19. On this common logic, see Plumwood [*1993*]. These features correspond to an anthropocentric structuring of the market, as well as an androcentric and eurocentric one.
20. For detailed discussion of Locke's argument and its assumption of the nullity of nature, see Plumwood [*1993*].
21. The sphere of domination does not of course stop with the exclusion of these four groups of primary Others, which are simply those which have had a crucial initial constituting role in defining the master subject. For a more complete contemporary account of kinds of oppression, see Young [*1990*].
22. Feminist thought particularly has contributed to understanding the peculiarities of this form of denial, with its assumption of the contribution of the other and simultaneous refusal to recognise this. On the form of this denial, see Marilyn Frye [*1983*].
23. For some critique of the neoclassical model, see Jacobs [*1994*].
24. Where satisficing replaces maximising by the concept of 'enough', as in Buddhist economics.
25. There are three major exceptions. First, some forms of Marxist feminism, which aim to absorb the private in a new fraternal public sphere. Second, the radical feminism of Shulamith Firestone. The third exception is the nineteenth-century 'material feminist' movement which aimed to socialise the household via the market, through the replacement of women's unpaid labour by specialist or professional services [*Hayden, 1984*]. When feminists speak of democratising the household [*Okin, 1989; Pateman, 1989; Phillips 1991; Young, 1990*], they do not of course mean that it should become open to the 'tyranny of the majority', state regulation or regulation by general voting in a single, universal public sphere: they mean that household relationships themselves should take on the characteristics of democratic relationships, and that the household should take a form which is consistent with the freedom of all its members. Mill's principle for selecting decision-makers in terms of who is affected may be used here.
26. See K. Marx [*1967:225–6*]. Note that this dualism connects closely with the liberal conception of the essential feature of citizenship as the capacity for rationality, which is what the political sphere is taken to represent. Marx does not of course explore the connections between this fundamental dualism and the inferiorisation of nature, since he is himself

committed to this inferiorisation. See Plumwood [*1981*].

27. On the importance of democratising international relations, see Held [*1991; 1993*].
28. On the role of democracy in technology selection, see Winner [*1986*].
29. This is also the conclusion which follows from the application of Mill's principle that those most affected by decisionmaking are those who should be most involved in it. This is one of a number of points at which Mill's principles conflict with capitalism and point towards economic citizenship. See Macpherson [*1973*].
30. The recognition of nature can follow some of the same logic as other political forms which acknowledge the other as a fellow subject and agent, another who is, like the self, a centre of choice, freedom and needs, but a different one [*Benjamin, 1990; Laclau and Mouffe, 1985*], a logic which requires the recognition of both community with and difference from the other. In addition to recognition of the other as a fellow agent, democratic norms also require respect for the other as of value for their own sake [*Gould, 1988: 77*]. This criterion of the political corresponds to the familiar idea that the political sphere is that in which power is contested or exercised over another. Distortions of the recognition process are indicators of the familiar dynamics of power – exploitation, domination and oppression – involving treating the other as means, denying or attempting to subsume their agentic capacities, and failing to acknowledge either their agentic commonality and interdependence or their agentic boundaries, difference and independence from self [*Benjamin, 1990*].
31. For example by the concepts clustered around agency, which include purposiveness, need, intentionality, and self-directedness. If this is the key cluster of concepts for political community, a reconception of nature as active, intentional agent [*Merchant, 1980; Haraway, 1990; Mathews, 1990; Plumwood, 1993*] helps us to extend elements of political community to nature.
32. The thesis that the main elements of the recognition account apply directly to nature is argued in detail in Plumwood [*1993*].
33. Even if they were, somehow, to become universal, it is not clear that they could become effective in the liberal framework, because of the nature of liberal and institutional rationality.
34. J.S. Mill, quoted in Arblaster [*1987: 49*]. For a tracing of the themes of dualism and rational meritocracy, see Marglin [*1990*] and Plumwood [*1993*]. Many feminist and postmodernist writers have explored the theme of the dualistic construction of identity.

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Liberal Democracy and the Rights of Nature: The Struggle for Inclusion

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Is there a necessary, in-principle connection between ecocentric values and democracy or is the relationship merely contingent? Is it possible to incorporate the interests of the non-human community into the ground rules of democracy? Through an immanent ecological critique of the regulative ideals and institutions of liberal democracy, it is suggested that ecocentric values and democracy can be connected to some extent – at least in the same way that liberalism and democracy are connected – through an extension of the principle of autonomy and the rights discourse to include ecological interests. However, the move from autonomy, to rights, to an ecologically grounded democracy encounters a number of hazards, not all of which can be successfully negotiated owing to the individualistic premises of the rights discourse. While the rights discourse may be extended to include human environmental rights and animal rights in relation to captive and domesticated species, it becomes considerably strained and unworkable (ontologically, politically and legally) in relation to the remaining constituents of the biotic community.

After more than two decades of public environmental concern there is now a growing disquiet among many environmentalists that the regulative ideals and institutions of liberal democracy may be inadequate to the task of addressing the ecological crisis.[1] While most environmentalists would concede that liberal democratic states have proved their *relative* superiority to single party communist states on the issue of environmental protection (as in many other areas), very few would regard this comparison as a vindication of liberal democracy (or of capitalism). To be sure, liberal democratic institutions have provided scope for the political mobilisation of environmental concern, ranging from mass protests to the formation of green parties. Moreover, it has been argued that environmental activism on

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