I. World View of Western Society and Culture

“Wonders are many, but none so wondrous as Man”

Aeschylus, *Antigone*

A. World View or *Weltanschauung*

1. A comprehensive conception of the world and the place of humanity within it.

2. It shapes culture

a. non-material: values, beliefs, norm, ideas

b. material: technology, social arrangements, living, community

3. It determines the understanding of what it means to be human

4. It determines a society’s conception of and relation to the natural world.

a. beliefs about the natural world

b. value of the natural world

c. practices toward the natural world.

5. I want to critique Western society/cultures worldview as a way of answering the questions how we got here, ecocide, and how to a great degree it determines

and limits of our response?

6. Understanding world view through the Other: Navajo

7 Western Society World View: a constellation of three ways of understanding and living in the world

a. religion: Judeo-Christian tradition

b. scientific/technological: modern secular world view

c. capitalist/consumerism: neoliberal worldview

8. Western society world view and the Great Transformation

a. Revolution: scientific revolution, industrial revolution, political revolutions capitalism

b. revolutionary change in world view of Western society

c. some parts are revolutionary, but

i. not revolutionary when it comes to understanding nature

ii. religious tradition is still a significant part of the constellation

iii. status of women and non-Western humans are modified

but remain much the same

II. Judeo-Christian tradition and nature

A. Sacred Texts - Creation story

1. God said, "Let us make man in our own image . . . let

them be masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of

heaven, the cattle, all the wild beasts, and all the

reptiles that crawl upon the earth

2. Later, "Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and

conquer it . . . I give you all the seed=bearing plants

and all the trees with seed bearing fruit

3. Man also had the power of naming and "each was

to bear the name the man would give it."

4. Banishment: Wilderness

a. Adam and Eve banished from the Garden of Eden into a wilderness

b. "Accursed be the soil" "It shall yield you brambles,

and thistles, and you shall eat wild plants"

5. Promised Land: Moses and Israelites wander in wilderness before they find the Promised Land

6. New Testament

a. Jesus spends 40 days in wilderness where it is a place of temptation

b. St. Paul continually emphasizes the spiritual vs. the body (nature)

B. Catholic Church: dominant institution 5th to 15th century, as such, institutionalizes it

in practices and doctrine

1. Body as sin: monasteries, ascetism, castration, women as nature

2. St. Augustine: animals are beyond the scheme of salvation

3. St Thomas Aquinas: world was God's creation, thought that everything was for man "Differences between Rational and Other Creatures"

a. creation is hierarchy (borrowed from Aristotle)

b. mankind qualitatively unique, reason and intellect in image of God.

c. "Therefore every other creature is naturally under slavery, the intellectual nature alone is free."

d. animals are like slaves, they can be used for the sake of the creatures with an intellect

e. Hereby is refuted the error of those who said it is sinful for a man to kill dumb animals . . . Hence it is not wrong for man to make use of them, either by killing or in any other way whatever."

4. Inquisitions/witch hunts

a. heresies and heretics: animism, paganism, goddess-worship

b. witch hunts

i. witches as targets of Catholic inquisitions

ii. women as nature

iii. Protestant witch hunts: “frenzied”

C. Religious world view and the environmental destruction of Western Europe

1. massive deforestation

a. England deforested by 15th (Acts of Enclosure since 12th)

b. Europe deforested by 16th

2. pollution of rivers and streams

3. agricultural practices

a. over grazing: Spain overgrazed by 15th

b. loss of arable soil

4. overfishing: Mediterranean and Baltic

5. animal torture sports

a. bearbaiting

b. cockfighting

c. bull fighting

d. hunting: organized slaughter hundreds/thousands of birds, deer

6. live vivisection

7. killed cats: demonic

8. Consequences for people

a. destroyed their environment

b. hunger/starvation

c. disease

d. death cult/end of world

9. Western Europe was a shit hole, and it began to share it with the

Rest of the world: colonialism

D. Summary: Judeo-Christian tradition in relation to the environment

1. Dualism between man and nature: hierarchical and qualitative

2. man: power over nature; role is conqueror “subdue nature”

4. nature: means and threat

5. women and nature

6. non-western humans

E. Early Colonialism

“Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for they possession.”

1. Goals in Americas: Spanish, English, French

a. establish settlements with own populations

b. establish political control with legal control over

land

c. establish economic system that allows for “development” and appropriation of natural resources

d. indigenous people: cheap labor, slavery, displacement or elimination

2. English colonialism and the Century of Exploitation 1550-1650

b. the “place”

i. occupied by those “less than human” “Savage Beasts”

“consider what these creatures are, I cannot call them men”

ii. land was not developed, lay in waste, *terra nullius*

iii. non-humans in the way

c. “development

i. mining for gold and silver

ii. logging for timber or to clear land for agriculture

iii. agriculture: sugar, but most importantly for British, tobacco

ii. commodities: fish, whale oil, fur (by 1650 100,000 beaver furs a year)

iv. land: mined, plowed, deforested, depleted, overfished

3. Puritans saw a "hideous and desolate wilderness"

a. wild, immoral, the devil's own "servants of Satan", 'demons from hell",

b. religious practices 'confusion among the damned"

c. hellish fiends and brutish men

3. Saw themselves as the new "chosen people" and that

they were being tested by God

4. As the new chosen people they believe their task was to transform this

wilderness into the Garden of Eden –a create a new Jerusalem

5. reclaim the "wild" for God, John Winthrop in 1629

Why remain in England and "suffer a whole Continent

. . . to lie in waste without improvement”

D. “Subduing nature”

1. Greatest deforestation in human history half a million acres

2. Continuous destruction of land through tobacco agriculture, which

meant continuous need to expand

"

3. Beavers (once 60 million) extinct through eastern U.S. north to Canada

by 1640,

4. Same with most fur-bearing (marten, wolf, otter, mink, muskrat)

5. depleted large herbivores (deer, moose, antelope, elk, wood bison, caribou)

game birds (turkey, ducks, geese, passenger pigeons) and exterminated in

heavenly settled areas

6. filled in marshes and wetlands

"All in all, the presence of just a few hundred thousand of the European branch of the human species, within just a century after its landing did more to alter the environment of NA than many millions of the American branch had done in fifteen centuries or more."

ii. extermination or displacement of those whose environmental practices had created this "paradise”

F. Manifest destiny and war against the environment

1. from NY Times to Washington to Teddy Roosevelt

“only natural . . . all other races . . . must bow and fade before the great work of subjugation and conquest of the Anglo-Saxon race.

" felling trees and Indians and rounding out their natural boundaries"

Hugo Grotius: "most just war is against **savage beasts**, the next against **men who are like beasts."**

Washington: "the gradual extension of our settlements will as certainly cause the savage, as the wolf, to retire; **both being beasts of prey, tho' they differ in shape."**

Teddy Roosevelt: "the most ultimately righteous of all wars is a war with savages" "establishing the rule of the dominant races." He referred to the Sand Creek Massacre " as a righteous and beneficial deed as ever took place." Colorado 1864 (scary)

2. defined as war against nature in diaries, letters, "enemy,” “conquered", “vanquished", "subdued," by the "pioneer army"

3. 1830 same attitude, natural world, needs to be cultivated, it's God's will - Senator Lewis Cass

4. 1830 Gov of Mich, wilderness is waste, proper relationship to it is exploitation, quoted Genesis

5. Kill everything: Place

a. multiple species of whales in bays and lagoons and staggering assortment of sport fish and

marine mammals - sea otters

b. beavers in creeks and streams

c. antelope, deer, badgers, bighorn sheep

d. spotted and red lynx, mountain lions, and jaguar

e. gray wolves and "the best grizzly bear range on earth"

f. golden and bald eagles, condor, flocks of migrating birds (83 separate species) that blacken the sky

g. "one of the greatest natural habitats for wildlife and game birds in the world

h. 22 million acres of finest virgin grassland left in

the world

6. The comprehensive looting and destruction of this extraordinary biological endowment was the basis for “development”

a.1803-1813 killed 50,000 sea otters for fur

b. same period trapped most beaver, mink, and

river otter to extinction

c. cattle destroyed the grasslands

i. quintuple erosion rates

ii. scarred the land with arroyos

d. 1812 killed 30,000 wild horses

e. antelope and wolf pushed out of environment

f. grizzly bear hunts

i. grizzly meat a delicacy

ii. one posse alone killed 22 bears

g. between 1865

i. one million ducks

ii. quail, doves, rabbits, deer

h. native bird: "lassoed and dragged and

strangled when full of food and clumsy, or

shot just for sport

i. big game hunters spent up to $3500 in 1920s to shoot mountain lions, imported tigers, leopards, and jaguars from zoos that were chained to poles

k. war on cougars Oct 1907 $20 bounty

l. one decade

i. 674 cougars, 3,000 coyotes, 120 bobcats

ii. consequences, deer population 3,000 to

100,000 between 1906 and 1924

iii. Nov 1926 one hundred million mice overran

the town of Taft, reason killed all the predators coyotes, skunks, red tail hawks

13. Other world views illegal; Religious Crimes Codes

In 1882 Interior Secretary Henry M. Teller ordered an end to all "heathenish dances" and ceremonies due to their "great hindrance to civilization" - males ordered to cut braids and outlawed the Sun Dance, rite of passage and celebration to the Sun

Pueblo religion was outlawed because it involved overtly sexual practices and public nudity

II. The Great Transformation

A. Revolution and the transformation of Western Society: Modernity

1. Scientific Revolution

2. Industrial Revolution

3. Political Revolutions

4. Capitalism

B. Renaissance/Humanism

1. emerged as domination of church was weakening

2. man is god-like

3. power to create the world

4. natural world was material out of which “he” would shape his world

C. Protestant Reformation and the natural world

1. Protestant Reformation: Luther and Calvin

2. Weber: Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism

a. salvation by faith

b. problem: God’s omnipotence and predestination

c how does one know material world exists only as a place of accumulation,

3. accumulation/success in world perhaps meant salvation

4. religious justification for expropriation of nature and transformation of natural world into economic products.

C. Nature in these "revolutionary" world views

1. 1950s and advocates of giant damn on Colorado

River "conquering wilderness" and "subduing the earth"

2. as late as 1965 article in Saturday Evening Post

talked of civilization being defined in terms of war

with dark forces of nature

3. 1914-15 federalized extermination of wolves,

coyotes, mountain lions, bobcats, raptors

a. predators were cruel, they murdered

innocent deer and songbirds, wanton killers

b. "large predatory mammals destructive to

livestock and game no longer have a place

in our advancing civilization"

4. most large carnivores wolves, bears, mountain lions

had bounties put on them and were nearly extinct in

lower 48 states

5. 2022 Europe “garden” global south “jungle”