I. Western Society/Culture: A Critique

**A. Unique**

1. Subject of history

a. Providence: God’s chosen people

b. Enlightenment Narrative: progress

c. Historical stages

i.

ii. Marx’s historical materialism

d. “Other” people: uncivilized, barbarians

2. religious ideology: Judeo-Christian tradition

a. earthy manifestation of divine providence

“from creation to judgment”

b. catholic church was the body of Christ on earth

c. institutions were divinely sanctioned

d. actions were ordained, providential

e. people were God’s chosen, different from, superior to.

3. ideology of humanism

a. Christian Euro-human beings were god-like

b. their destiny was to shape the world

4. science as power and progress

a. Demystification: beyond superstition, myth to reality

b. science as power: world is matter in motion, science discovers the laws,

gives humans power over nature

c. power to overcome scarcity

5. American exceptionalism

a. exception City on a Hill (furthest point of humanity)

b. values are universal

6. No constraints on actions, in fact morality legitimated action

a. “Other” unlike “us” is irrational

b. “Other” unlike “us” doesn’t feel pain

c. “Other” unlike “us” don’t care about human life

B. **Alienation from Nature**: separate from and superior

1. religious ideology

a. scriptures

b. authoritative interpretations: dualism

i. nature vs garden

ii. wild vs tamed

iii. humans vs animals

c. early practices

d. Church “Fathers”

i. Augustine

ii. Thomas

e. nature as fallen, evil, filled with restless dread, temptation

2. Science

a. natural world matter in motion

b. lifeless

c. Descartes. Newton: modern world view

3. Capitalism/Consumerism

a. nature as resource to be transformed into a commodity

b. nature as aesthetic experience for humans

c. life is orientated around producing and buying

4. Conservation and Sustainability

**C.** **Technophilia**- unreflective and uncritical embrace of technology and the belief that

Technology is synonymous with “human” progress.

1. instrumental theory of technology, common sense theory, or unreflective theory

a. techne logos: the logic of how to

b. technology as tools for human use

2. Heidegger: “A Question Concerning Technology”

3. Lords of the Earth

**D. Violent and Self-destructive**

“If you can be made to believe absurdities, you can be made to commit atrocities.”

1. Uniqueness has justified extreme violence, the destruction of thousands

of cultures, the impoverishment of billions, the elimination of the possibilities

of the exploited to change their situation, forced starvation, slavery, and genocide.

2. World View on nature has led to. . .mass extinction of species, destruction of

the crucial ecosystems necessary for planetary survival, catastrophic global climate disruption

3. science and technology has allowed those in power to create and disseminate

Technologies that allow humans in first world to create bubbles for themselves that allow them to ignore the above, and that we can destroy the entire planet.

Choi and I don’t have a solution, or even solutions. We are suggesting another way of looking at the world. Instead of critiquing the logic or intent of what we say, maybe think about understanding the world as not just an I, but in terms of the Other.

II. Re-Imagining Nature: Meeting the Other

A. **Natural world is sacred, or holy place.**

1. The earth is a living, breathing entity.

a. not a metaphor

b. can be harmed

2. It is inspirited, animal, bird, insect, plant, forest, river, the land, mountains.

3. Traditional Navajo

a. Dine

b. Dinetah, sacred land, which is marked by

four sacred mountains, made of sacred matter

4. Tewa Pueblo

a. The land is an extension of Indian thought and being

b. "this is the place that made us"

c. Sacred orientation to place and space is key element of

Indians relationship to the natural world

d. place is not just physical but spiritual

e. this relationship was the basis and is reflected in every aspect of their culture, language, art, music, dance, social organization

f. living carried out with humility,

understanding, and respect for the sacredness of

the place and all living things in the place

g. "look to the mountain" which refers to the long view,

what we are doing in terms of future generations

d. education starts with the environment because

that is the primary relationship

**2. Nature as Community**

1. All beings are members of community

2. Human beings are part of the world; they are not

qualitatively different or superior

3. Non-human persons have their own social arrangements

4. as part of the community they have moral standing,

rights

5. a complex system of obligations and responsibilities for humans in relation to these other "persons"

6. even in hunter societies

a. belief in reincarnation

b. complex rituals involved in sending creature

on its way

c. to return again

7. Navajo and bears

Often considered to be as much human as animals, they are shown respect that is due holy beings . . . even tracks are treated with respect. They have the power to heal and help. Only killed under extreme circumstances such as starvation and then with a prayer, "though you are eaten, you will return whole to your own poeple and will become chief over your own people."

**3. Norms, Ceremonies, Creation stories**

1,There is an order to this world and the goal of

human beings ought to be to find one's place in the

order.

2. Traditional Navajo: Hozho, or the beauty way of life.

a. K'e

b. humility

c. harmony

d. respect for all living things

3. This relationship is the primary and most important

relationship for the culture/society.

4. Above is reflected in cultural and religious practices.

a. corn and the prayer at sunrise

b. shape of homes or hogans

c. stories

d. sacred symbols

Cheyenne and Sacred Arrow

The Medicine Arrow (Mahuts) symbolize the collective existence of the tribe. As the Arrows prosper, the tribe prospers; as they are allowed to suffere neglect, the tribe declines in prosperity. There attributes are in their supernatural qualities.

The Arrows were given to the Cheyennes by their mythological cultue hero, Sweet Medicine. Sweet medicince went to Bear Butte with all the wism men of all the peoples of the earth as a pupil of Maiyun (the great Spirit). The great Spirit gave Sweet Medicine

the four arrows, two have power over the buffalo, and two have power over human beings. They are the Cheyennes greatest resource against two biggest threats: hunger and enemies

e. ceremonies and dances

Cheyenne Sun Dance

The central theme of the Cheyenne Sun Dance is world renewal. "the object of the ceremony is to make the whole world over again . . ."

The origin myth of the Sun Dance is that Erect Horns journeyed to a sacred mountain because of the need of his people - famine. "Vegetation withered, the animals starved, the land became barren and dry, and the ancient Cheyenne were on the verge of starvation, for they had no food but dried vegetation and their dogs of burden."

Erect Horns took his wife to the sacred mountain where the Great Spirit taught them the Sun Dance: Follow my instructions . . . when you go forth from this mountain, all of the heavenly bodies will move. The roaring Thunder will awaken them, the sun, moon, stars, and the rain will bring forth fruits of all kinds, all animals will come forth behind you from this mountain, and they will follow you home.

Ghost Dance

f. rituals

i. rights of passage

ii. Walkabouts of the Australian aboriginals

Appendix I

A. Iroquois: creation story

1. Before there were humans there were Sky People who

dwelled in the celestial world

2. There was no sun all light came from the celestial

tree that stood in front of the Lodge of Sky Chief

3. Sky Chief had married a young wife who became

pregnant Sky Woman

4. Firedragon spread rumors that the child was not

Sky Chief's

5. Sky Chief in anger ripped up the celestial tree and

through his wife in the hole

6. Sky Woman fell down towards the water below

7. The birds feeling sorry for her supported her breaking

the fall and carrying her slowly downward

8. The water animals hurried to make a place for her

9. Turtle said that he would support a world on his back.

10. Muskrat came up with a large mouthful of earth

which he placed on turtles back

11. The blossoms of the fallen celestial tree shone through the hole

and became the sun

12. When Sky Woman landed grass and trees had already begun to grow

13. Sky Woman gave birth to a daughter who gave

birth to two sons, the father could have been Turtle

or West Wind

14. The two were twins but one was goo and one was

evil, the good twin born the the usual way, the evil twin

born through the mother's side and killed her

15. Sky Woman buried her daughter and plants miraculously began to grow

from various parts of her daughter

16. These were the most important plants, tobacco, corn,

beans, and squash "Our Supporters" or "Three Sisters"

17. As the good twin grew to manhood he began creating

good things: plants, animals, medicinal herbs, rivers,

and streams

18. The Evil Twin began to spoil his brother's work,

rapids, and boulders in the river, poisonous plants, thorns,

and briars, diseases, and monsters

19. The Good and Evil Twin battled on, Evil could never

win

20. Finally, The Good Twin created human beings to

enjoy all the good things that he had made for them

Appendix II

I. Yup'ik Eskimos

A. Rich coastal environment of Nelson Island

B. they view animals as nonhuman persons

C. Tradionally viewed the relationship between humans and

animals as collective reciprocity

1. animals gave themselves to the hunter in response

a. to the hunter's respectful treatment of them

as persons in their own right

i. respect is understood as both love and fear

ii. takar (to be shy of, respectful for,

intimidated by

b. as humans animals also had souls

i. sould is life force

ii. stays close to body for time after death

iii. before it goes to extraterrestial realm

for rebirth

2. both animals and humans participate in a cycle of

birth and rebirth

a. cycle was contingent on right action and thought

b. by both self and others

3. also in the past inanimate objects were thought to

have souls

B. Both animals and humans possess a awareness or consciousness which allow them control over their own destiny

1. experience through life is a key in controlling one's

destiny

2. from experience comes understanding for both

animals and humans of an elaborate set of rules

a. for living

b. which define action between humans and

humans and non-humans

3. especially important

a. rules for hunting were rules of respect that if

not followed would mean the animals would not

give themselves to the hunter

C. Animals and humans

1. some believe animals are humans in disguise

a. speak, marry, live in sod houses

b. take part in material culture

2. some believe animals are transformed humans i.e. the wolverine and descended from humans

3. animals take human form the wolf, but give itself

away by bone crunching

4. animals act like humans

a. playing dancing

b. mice cleaning house in spring

c. sensibilities

Appendix III

I. Navajo: Creation Story

A. called the dine, or "people of the surface of the earth"

B. Holy People lived in the lowest of the twelve worlds

C. origin story is story of the ascent of ancestors

D. Holy People are holy because they are powerful, not because

they are perfect

E. Usually some act of mischief or malice that cause the Holy

People to move from a lower world up

F. In each world there were adventures and events that are

relevant today

1. in third or fourth world hermaphrodites or transvestites appeared

2. venerated with supernatural power

3. in the world before the surface men and women

quarreled and lived separately

a. men lived harmoniously, learning women's

skills and inventing tools and utensils

b. women couldn't deal with the lack of sex

c. had sex with monsters

d. basis of certain taboos

4. A great flood began to fill the eleventh world and the

Holy People were forced to scamble up through a

hollow reed to the surface of the earth

5. First Man and First Woman are prominent among the

Holy People

6. the earth was devoid of form when the Holy People

arrived

7. First Man brought soil from the mountains in the world below, he made for replicas, mixed sacred matter

in each, planted them in the four cardinal directs, and

breathee into them to make them live and grow large

8. these are the four holy mountains the mark the sacred

land

"In the east he put Sisnaajinii, or Blanca Pak, CO, placed in it a white shell, covered it with daylight and dawn, fatened it to the ground with lightning, and assigned it the symbolic color of white.'

"To the south wen Tsoodzil, Mount Taylor, in which he placed turquoise: he then covered it with blue sky, fatened it with great sotne knife, and gave it the color blue as its symbol."

"Dook'o'oosliid, or the San Franciso Peaks, is the mountain of the west. Securing it to the ground with asunbeam, First Man put abalone inside and covered it with yellow clouds and evening twoiligt, yellow being it color."

Black is the color of Dibe' ntsaa, or Hesperus Peak in Co, the mountain of the north, it is fastened by a rainbow, impregnatd with jet, and covered with darkness.

8. During this creative period Talking God and Calling

God assumed guardianship of the mountains

a. dressing them in jewels

b. giving each two songs

c. placing supernaturals within to gather the clouds

and answer prayers "those that stand within"

9. The mountains are referred to as hogans in which

many beings reside, animals and plants

10. much of Navajo ritual, and social life is organized

around their belief in the sacredness of the mountains

a. homes

b. prayer

c. taboos

d. navajo wedding basket

11. hozho or the beauty way of life

12. they are parents of most imporanat figure in Navajo

mythology Changing Woman

13. Changing Woman mated with the Sun Bearer and had

two sons, both Monster Slayer and Born for Water

14. Monster Slayer got weapons from his father the sun

had and killed the monsters

Appendix IV

I. Sociology of the Environment

A. All societies/cultures understand and define the natural world in different ways.

B. Different understandings of the natural world lead to

various cultures having different:

1. relationships to the natural world.

2. experiences with the natural world.

3. practices toward the natural world.

C. In sum: every society has a dominant world view

regarding the natural world aka the environment

D. As a way of explaining this contrast the traditional Navajo

world view with the dominant world view of Western and

American society.

F. Western culture

1. Human beings are "lords of the earth"

a. qualitative difference between humans

and other beings, i.e. soul or reason

b. hierarchical: humans at top

c. power to shape the world and create their own destiny

i. science discovers the laws of nature

ii. technology transforms discovery

into power over nature

d. they have the power to predict and control

the consequences of their transformations

2. Natural world exists as "standing reserve," or a

resource

a. waiting to be transformed into a commodity.

b. waiting to be adapted as a source of power

c. private property

d. profit

3. Natural world has no inherent value, and

non-human beings have no inherent or intrinsic value.

4. Cultures which don't recognize the truth of the

above, like the Navajo, are "primitive," 'backward."

G. Influences on Westen society's world view.

1. Christianity

a. text

b. Church decisions

c. Puritans

d. manifest destiny

2. Science

a. world as calculable

b. predictable

c. controllable

3. Capitalism

a. world as potential commodity

b. private property

c. profit

d. sink and garbage dump