Capitalism and the Environment

I. Capitalism and the Environment

A. It is necessary to look at the relationship of capitalism to

the environment first before we examine more fundamental

cultural relationship to the environment.

B. The logic of capitalism

1. capital or profit is a result of a combination of elements that constitute the means of production

a. industrialization - technologies of production

b. natural resources

c. the labor power of the worker

2. natural resources are transformed into commodities for consumption or to

3. supply the power for technology, water, steam,

coal, oil, natural gas, nuclear

B. Capitalism defines the natural world as that which can

be owned, private property

1. taken for granted now, this had to be enforced

militarily, legally, and ideologically

2. In pre-Industrial England much of land was commons, shared crops, shared grazing, wood

3. early rules for private property, John Locke

a. land is passive, is just there

b. person works the land

c. land becomes his

d. but limit, not so much land you exclude others

C. Natural world or nature to capitalism

1. raw material, no inherent value, simply instrument

a. a forest is a lumber yard to be or paper

b. a mountain side is a Rancho of condominiums

c. a river is power - 75,000 damns in US

d. wild animals are potential sea worlds. clothing,

or trophies

2. transformed to fill man's needs and desires

D. Marxism agrees with capitalism in its fundamental relationship to nature, Marx

1.nature is for man's digestion and enjoyment

2. nature is man's inorganic (non-living) body and an

instrument for his life activity

3. essence of man is utilizing nature as instrument and

means

4. would there be limits on socialism -- needs rather

than shaped desires

D. Continous production

E. But also capitalism depends on people internalizing

a way of life -- consumerism -- getting their identity,

not just from consuming, but from continuing to consume

the "new" -- each year the market place increases plus

10% in new items, that doesn't include "updated" items,

new cars, Ford Model T, and GM

II. Capitalism's two global faces: colonialism and neo-colonialism

A. the logic of the economic sytem, global or monopoly capitalism is accumulation and concentration of capital

B. expansion, and the exploitation and transformation of the

natural world into commodities

C. the logic of the political system is to establish a global

environment conducive to the above, penetration of capital

into all areas of the globe without restraint

guaranteed natural resources for the benefit of the

first world

cheap or slave labor from indigenous people, or the

elimination of those who were in the way

new markets for expansion

III. Colonialism: environment and indigenous people

A. The globalization of capitalism has its roots in colonialism

which involved the military conquest of the Americas, Africa,

and Asia in order to exploit there natural resources, labor,

and markets

B. Colonialism frequently precedented under the ideological

banner of "civilizing" the savages of the conquered colonies,

or eliminating them if they couldn't be civilized

"We govern them by sheer weight of character and without use of force" Lord Cromer, ruler of Egypt from 1883-1906

"In the Empire we have found not merely th key to glory and wealth, but the call to duty, and means of service to mankind." Lord Curzon, viceroy of India

The Seal of the Governor and Company of Mass Bay in 1629 depicts an India pleading "Come over and help us."

However, a question arises, is this a sufficient explanation to understand the causes of the environmental crisis. I believe we need to examine the cultural causes, and take a brief look at the history of western culture in relationship to its environment

There is a quite different point of view from those that are getting civilized

Nehru: "The ideology of British rule was that of the herrenvoldk and the maste race and idea inherent in imperialism."

D. And it could be argued that English rule of India not only

set them back -- they were highly advanced in ship building,

metal working, glass, and crafts -- England's goal was to

make them an agrarian society in service to Englands cotton

mills

E. India, Calcutta and Bengal, to Euro eyes, " a wonderful land

whose richness and abundance neither war, pestilance, nor

oppresion could destroy"

F. However, British policies did exactly that and the British

Settlement Act created that necessary elite of wealthy

and powerful who benefited from the occupation

G. Indias poverty now is the basis of its exploitation of

its natural world -- the Chipkas -- vulnerable to First World

H. The civilizing effects of western Europe and colonialism,

in that unique form called manifest destiny, is well known

I. It constitued the "concentrated task of felling trees and

Indians and of rounding out their natural boundaries

- Columbus himself exterminated the Taino Indians

from the face of the earth in his pursuit for non-

existent gold, the Indians, he described, as "so kind,

gentle, and willingly to share that they will be easily

used

-- with the destruction of the Taino went the destruction

of the natural ecosytems of much of the Caribbean, in

an effort to turn them into plantations

J. This compares favorably to the civilizing effects of

manifest destiny

" All other races must bow and fade before the great work of subjugation and conquest to be acheived by the Anglo-Saxon race"

"not one foot of what we have acquired has blood spattered on it"

K. Of course, the few remaining native Americans, 10% of

the original population, and those few remaining buffaloe, and

forests, if they could speak might say something differently

L. European colonization of NA may have been the swiftest

and most dramatic environmental change ever wrought by

human agency on the face of the earth up to that time

1) by 1640 trapped most fur bearing animals to

extinction in the lands they occupied, also in occupied

lands killed large herbivores to extinction, deed, moose,

2) vastly depleted game birds, turkey, duck, geese

3) by 1640 Eater deciduous forests wer depleted,

by the end of the seventeenth century one half

million acres were deforested, greatest deforestation

in human history

4) General destruction of ecosytem, loss of topsoil,

increased floods, low water tables

"all in all, the prsence of just a few hundred thousand of the European brach of the human spcies, within just a cnetury after its landin di more to alter the environment of NA than many millions of the Ameican branch had done in fifteen centuries or more.'

III. Neocolonialism, economic imperialism

A. After WWII the colonial empires broke down and

the US emerged as the most powerful country in the world,

the most powerful country ever

B. During the War the US and the allies had signed the Atlantic

Charter guaranteeing self-determination to countries after

the war

C. They were however deciding how to organize the globe in

a new fashion, this is now called economic and or cultural

imperialism, and it was couched in an ideology with less

racist overtones than "bringing civilization to savages" but it

is just as savage in its attack on the poor, the indigneous and

the environment, "devolopment" and "modernization"

D. In this system the third world is assigned the same role,

a service role: to provide resources, cheap labor, markets,

opportunities for investment, and export of pollution

E. Primary threat are those countries or movements that

wand to use the above for domestic needs.

F. E conflicts with a political and economic climate conducive

to priate investment and protection of our raw materials

NSC 5432/1, 1954 and George Kennan

G. Latin America should fulfill its service function, support

Guatemala, Nicaraqua, Chile, all anti- people and environment

H. Asia should be disuaded from independent developement.

"the US must find ways of exerting economic pressures on countries that do not accept their role as suppliers of "strategic commodities and other basic materials"

I. African resources, except white Africa should be directed at

rebuilding Europe

J. Middle East, energy system should be in US hands, operating

in manner designed by the British, Arab facade, family dictatorships

-- after overthrowing the parliamentary Mossadegh

regime

NYTimes "Underdeveloped conuntries with rich resources now have an object lesson i the heavy cost that must be paid by one of their number which goes beserk with fanatical nationalism" also Indonesia, E Timor, Guatemala, Vietname

K. It works through debt and military aid, US is last among

nations in foreign humanitarian aid, but first in military aid,

biggest part of debt of third world to first

I. political and social philosophies of the environment.

each is concerned with the **norm of social justice**

they are criticism of social arrangement and political and economic institutions

they reverse the domination argument, domination of man

and woman and race equals domination of nature

**The fundamental question**s that are asked of institutions is how do they function (manifest and latent) and who benefits and who is harmed.

**The inference t**hat underlies these theories is that if a society is comprised of institutions of domination it is more likely to be a society that dominates nature.

The **problem of social justic** is ambiguous at the philosophical leve, but with the contxt we have ben speaking we can sa it involves the ideas of equal respect, equal consideration of the suffering of others, love and sympathy for humans and no-human beings. **to what degree do institutions live up to this.**

II. John Rawl's "theory of justice"

A. What is the hypothetical situation that would create

the conditions for determing social justice for all

B. This would be the "veil of ignorance" where none

would know their position in the social world

C. given the veil of ignorance Rawl's argues that they

would agree on principles of equality, democratic

D. each individual is to have equal rights to the most

extensive system of liberties

E. social benefits and burdens should be distributed equally

unless an unequal distribution would benefit the least

advantaged members of society

F. and only if those benefits are attached to those positions to

which everyone has equal opportunity

Obviously, our system fails according to these principle.

III. Social Ecology and Murray Bookchin From bookchin's point of view, social institutions and arrangements are hierarchical with the few on the top benfiting while those on the bottom are oppressed

A. The **"logic of domination"** according to Bookchin is the logic of hierarchy -- superiority, inferiority, dominance and

oppression

B. **hieracrchies a**re by essence structures which are

asymmetrical power relationships, one group holds power

over another

C. all hierarchies are authoritarian, and are organized to

perpetuate themselves and those at the top, not a

**conspiracy**

D.beyond marxism, **eliminating class** (economic inequality

would not necessarily eliminate hierarchy, elite bureaucracy

over masses, men over women, ethnic group over ethnic

group, body over mind , spirit by shallow instrumental

rationality

E. hierarchy can be maintained by **coercion**, simple power, or

more insidiously it is maintained by **ideological institutions**,

specifically **education and the mass media**

F. in fact Bookchin thinks that the most dangerous forms of

hierarchy are perpetuated by people who have **internalized**

the dualism of inequality. See them **as justified**. The wealthy

worked for what he got.

G. Societies that are highly hiearchical have a relationship

of domination to nature

H. For bookchin these social, political and economic hierarchies create both the **psychology and the material conditions for the domination** of nature -- he has a social psychology, unfriendly technology

I. he has however a dialectical conception of the relationship of the individual and society, it is holistic in a sense but with the possibitlity of the individual acting

1) identity is mainly determined by society, social roles, history,circumstances, languages, practices etc.

in this sense the individual is a microcosm of the social worldof which he is a member, society has a life beyond the sum of the individuasl which make it up

2) if members of a society just internalize social reality, then they **reify** society, they just become functions of it,

3) however B thinks that the person can undertake **"self-determing activity"** through achieving his potential to become a **conscious thinking being**

4) how is this conscious self-determining actiity possible?

**non-coercive free society, no hierarchies**

J. what would be the model of the just community? similar to deep ecology, "libertarian anarchy"

decentralized, participatory democracy

cooperation rather than competion, it would

**approximate small ecosystem**s, diversified, balanced,

and harmonious

K. Relates to the practicies of sustainable agriculture

criticism:

human life is of a different order, defined by reason, idea of reason is naturalistic, can now guide evolution, "Captain Ahab"