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Better Talking Heads: Concerning Fuller "Experience" in Environmental Philosophy

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BETTER TALKING HEADS: CONCERNING FULLER 'EXPERIENCE' IN ENVIRONMENTAL PHILOSOPHY

By

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Questioning what constitutes moral behavior toward nature is the task of professional

environmental ethics. Some of the field's most widely acknowledged theories stress the

importance of reason in moral decision-making while downplaying the roles of emotional and

physical experience. For instance, environmental ethicists often model their frameworks for

environmental moral thinking after classic moral systems like utilitarianism and Kant's ethics

(which both emphasize the intellect and reduce other human capacities). While these theories

are valuable, they have limitations.

Physical and emotional life also affect moral deliberation. These aspects of experience

interruptour efforts to be objective. For one thing, the sum of our social, economic, and

cultural situations comprises our experience and impacts which issues we believe are deserving

of ethical attention. Reflecting on such matters reminds us that a theory of ethics which

proposes ethics as a matter of rote calculation or cool deliberation is unrealistic and mostly

useless in everyday life. To me, professional environmental ethics represents a sincere attempt

to apply philosophical thinking to real life environmental concerns. So imagining just

environmental relations demands efforts which respect and integrate not only our rational

capacities but also our physical and emotional dispositions, our experience.

Some feminist theory has exposed the limitations of theory that overemphasizes

objectivity, or the attempt to think without reference to the aspects of experience I have

mentioned (namely, the physical and emotional aspects). For example, some feminist

perspectives have brought the primacy of intellectual interiority, or "mind," into question by

demonstrating its necessary dependence on the body and the physical world.[1] One thinker who does this well is Bonnie Mann. She suggests that a particular reformulation of feminist epistemology can radically change how we engage with the environment and environmental questions. Mann confronts us with the fact that we are literally dependent upon Earth which provides the material conditions for our survival. I feel that a reflection on the relationship of human life and its material conditions could reveal weaknesses of intellectual thinking divorced from corporeal life and may improve the work and culture of professional environmental ethics.

Through the present project I will demonstrate how traditional theorizing of environmental ethics is constrained by, what I will call, a rationalist bias and I will offer a different approach to environmental questions in the face of these observations. The first chapter looks at the arguments of environmental ethicists Paul W. Taylor and Bryan G. Norton to provide a representation of the rationalist ethical thinking with which I am concerned. Next I will shift my discussion toward some epistemological commitments of this thinking by contrasting Mann's theory which centralizes the fact that intellectual life depends on material conditions and necessary ties to Earth. I will suggest that an emphasis on our physical connections with the planet can benefit professional environmental ethics. In chapter 2, I will discuss how an awareness of the aspects of experience beyond rational deliberation can benefit ethical work. Second Wave feminists in the U.S. relied on methods to deepen their understanding of the socio-political issues oppressing women. Sharing the details of their lives, the facts of everyday experiences, helped individual women to realize their shared experience

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[1] Iris Marion Young, *Throwing Like a Girl and Other Essays in Feminist Philosophy and Social Theory.* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 9.

of discrimination. I will draw from some feminist understandings to discuss the advantages of a professional environmental ethics that respects and integrates experiences outside of rational deliberation. Finally, in chapter 3, I will introduce the Environmental Health Movement (EHM) and some work of the organization, Women's Voices for the Earth (WVE). In this section, I will attempt to bring my discussion of experience, environmental ethics, and some feminist strategies into the real world by looking for these themes in the practices of the EHM and of WVE. I will explain how EHM's and WVE's examples might offer lessons for professional environmental ethics in terms of adapting practices which incorporate extra-rational experience into ethical thinking.

A significant overarching goal of this project is to gesture at the importance of diversity in doing good philosophical work. I mean "diversity" in two ways: (1) diversifying professional environmental ethics in terms of ethnicity and race, gender, and class among students and professors, and (2) diversifying professional environmental ethics in terms of the kinds of issues that are accepted as worthy avenues of reflection within professional environmental ethics. For me, these two types of diversity are related. Experience outside of what is considered to be "normal" encourages critical reflection on the value of the status quo. As philosophers, we are proud of our ability to challenge accepted beliefs but such analyzing requires a broad and comprehensive understanding. So professional environmental ethics needs both sorts of diversity in order to ask deeper, more nuanced questions as well as to offer more complex and creative solutions.

I.   DOMINATING EPISTEMOLOGIES

Presently, I will provide a bit of background and define some major terms of my project.

The separation of mind and body has a long history in Western philosophy. To provide an example, Australian philosopher Genevieve Lloyd characterizes Descartes' thinking in the following way:

> Descartes separated thought of the kind that yields certainty… sharply from the practical concerns of life. It was for him…a complete transcending of the sensuous… And with the sharpness of this separation of truth-seeking from the practical affairs of everyday life [Descartes] reinforced already existing distinctions between male and female roles, opening the way to the idea of distinctive male and female conscious-nesses.[2]

According to Lloyd, the separation of "truth-seeking" and "certainty" from daily, practical experience and the sensuous began around the Enlightenment and effectively assigned men to the contemplative life of mind and committed women to the domestic sphere and to material affairs that could detract from intellectual activity. Some feminists have theorized about the historical links between men with "mind" and women with "body" and about the duality between man and woman and "mind" and "body." In an explanation of her ecofeminist position, philosopher Karen J. Warren discusses "value dualisms" and "value hierarchical thinking" prevalent in Western thought.[3] Warren's theory of value hierarchical thinking helps to explain the significance of equating men with "mind" and women with "body."

Warren describes value dualisms as "disjunctive pairs in which the disjuncts are seen as oppositional (rather than as complementary) and exclusive (rather than inclusive)" – for example, mind/reason/male contrasts with body/emotion/female.[4] For Warren, value hierarchical thinking organizes these dualities with an "Up-Down" metaphor which attributes

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[2] Genevieve Lloyd, "Reason as Attainment," in *A Reader in Feminist Knowledge,* ed. Senja Gunew (London: Routledge, 1991), 173-74.

[3] Karen J. Warren, "Ecological Feminist Philosophies: An Overview of the Issues," in *Ecological Feminist Philosophies*, ed. Karen J. Warren (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1996), xi.

[4] Ibid.

"higher value (status, prestige) to that which is higher ("Up").[5] According to this view, the

dualisms listed above become organized hierarchically. To wit, the "mind/body" and

"male/female" dichotomies indicate that "mind" and "male" have higher value than "body,"

"female."[6] The problem, as Warren points out, is not simply that value hierarchical thinking and

value dualisms are used, but the way in which they have been used in "oppressive conceptual

frameworks to establish inferiority."[7] It is a "logic of domination," coupled with value

hierarchies and value dualisms that justifies the subordination of the body/female realm to the

mind/male realm. Warren says a logic of domination is the "most important characteristic of

[any] oppressive conceptual framework."[8] A logic of domination justifies the subordination of

individuals, ideas, or activities through a logic which assumes "superior" individuals, ideas, or

activities possess a characteristic which the "inferiors" lack.[9] It is by virtue of this perceived

lack that "Ups" justify their position. For Warren, such hierarchical thinking is at the core of a

dominating logic. She says that the Western philosophical tradition offers an example of such

logic. In Western philosophy , "mind," reason, or rationality is the favorable trait which justifies

the superiority of certain perspectives, arguments, and dispositions.

In a similar vein, the Australian philosopher Val Plumwood, employs the terms "master

identity" and "rational design" to characterize a conceptual system underlying the abuse of

nature, women, and other marginalized humans in the West.[10] According to Plumwood, the

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[5] Ibid. xi-xii.

[6] Karen J. Warren, "The Power and Promise of Ecological Feminism," in *Ecological Feminist Philosophies*, ed. Karen J. Warren (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1996), 20-1.

[7] Ibid., 21.

[8] Karen J. Warren, *Ecofeminist Philosophy: A Western Perspective on What It Is and Why It Matters.* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), 47.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Val Plumwood, *Feminism and The Mastery of Nature* (New York: Routledge Publishing, 2002), 67.

master identity is associated with rationality and autonomy and can be defined in opposition to

the material realm which is lacking in agency.[11]

In her book *Nature Ethics: An Ecofeminist Perspective,* Marti Kheel points out that

feminists have used many terms, such as "patriarchal," "androcentric," "dualistic," and

"masculinist," to characterize any epistemology that supports male domination.[12] For me, the

term "rationalism" captures epistemologies which Plumwood and Warren describe: those that

support the domination of our capacity for rationality over other aspects, such as our

emotionality or materiality. In addition, Plumwood's and Warren's explanation of how

intellectual epistemologies that ignore corporeal life have been used to support male

domination and subordinate the material realm makes Kheel's contribution relevant. Kheel calls

our attention to the term "masculinism" which, as she reminds us, feminists have used to

describe epistemologies supporting male domination, and we justify such domination by

associating males with reason. To my understanding, an argument can be rationalist without

necessarily being masculinist and vice versa but, for reasons which I hope I have clarified, I see

these concepts as associated. Thus within this project, I will be addressing positions that

assume the superiority of males *and* those that assume the superiority of "mind."

II.   PROFESSIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS & DOMINATING EPISTEMOLOGIES

The philosopher Paul Taylor was best known for his work in environmental ethics and

penned one of its foundational works. His *Respect for Nature* came out at a time when

environmental philosophy was a relatively new sub-discipline and Taylor's rigorous theory

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[11] Val Plumwood, *Feminism and The Mastery of Nature* (New York: Routledge Publishing, 2002), 69, quoted in Kheel, *Nature Ethics*, 210.
[12] Marti Kheel, *Nature Ethics: An Ecofeminist Perspective.* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008), 209.

earned the field legitimation within mainstream professional philosophy. A key strength of

Taylor's thought was his use of the norms of traditional ethical frameworks as a foundation for

the budding field of environmental ethics. Taylor's position can generally be described as a

Kantian-based ethic. Broadly speaking, he leveled humans' ontological standing within Earth's

community to that of other animals and argued that individual organisms (and not species or

ecosystems) have moral standing. As a result, he could make the argument that each individual

organism, be they human or nonhuman, is a teleological center of life, and thus an end-in-itself.

Mirroring Kant's position – that each person possesses inherent worth – Taylor posited that

individual organisms are inherently worthy of respect and equal moral consideration. Taylor

used the term "biocentric," or life-centered, rather than anthropocentric or human-centered,

to depict his ethic since it universalizes an "attitude of respect" to *all* living beings.   As a fellow

environmental philosopher with biocentric sympathies, I appreciate Taylor's strong argument

for the moral considerability of nonhuman life. However, I cannot completely agree with

Taylor's ethic because it is strongly rationalistic.

Taylor's efforts to persuade his audience are rationality-centric, and he denounces

sensation and experience. For instance, in *Respect for Nature,* Taylor presents the conditions of

ethics which for him must be satisfied in order for an ethical system to be valid.[13] Next, he

divides the conditions into "formal" and "material" ones. Formal conditions do not describe

the "empirical properties of actions or character traits" to which the formal condition, meaning

the rule or standard, applies. Formal conditions are standards that must be met in order to be

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[13] Paul W. Taylor, *Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 25.

considered as conditions for morality.[14] One of Taylor's formal conditions is: "For any set of

rules to constitute a valid normative ethical system, the rules must be intended to be applied

disinterestedly." For Taylor, fulfilling such conditions is necessary before a discussion of

morality can take place. Formal conditions are intellectual, requiring no consideration of the

"empirical properties" to which the rule applies. The material context within which a moral

system might come into play is secondary to these formal conditions. In Taylor's view, moral

work is primarily a labor of "mind;" specific material conditions do not inform the moral agent.

Instead she is to navigate moral situations using intellectual guidelines. One could argue,

however, that while moral situations are to be navigated by "mind," moral rightness or

wrongness is not determined by the formal conditions but is provided by the material condition

of a "respect for nature."[15] But regarding this point, Taylor argues that fulfilling the material

condition of respect for nature is not sufficient to establishing a moral standard. Actions

motivated by a respect for nature are not moral actions unless the actor accepts Taylor's formal

conditions. So while it is true that both material *and* formal conditions are necessary within

Taylor's system of ethics, apparently formal conditions precede material ones.[16] This is a reason

I consider Taylor's approach to have a rationalistic bias.

Taylor's appeals to "mind" underscores his rationalism. Taylor says that "we cannot use

either our own or anyone else's moral intuitions as grounds for accepting or rejecting a theory

of environmental ethics."[17] In another passage, he claims that "intuitive judgments [are]

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[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid., 26-7.
[17] Ibid., 23.

strongly affected by our early moral conditioning and…different societies will imbue children with different attitudes and feelings about the treatment of animals."[18] Then Taylor concludes that "intuitions cannot be used as rational, objective grounds for any theory of environmental ethics."[19] As I understand him, Taylor believes that since "intuitions" are influenced by our "early moral conditioning" and our "attitudes and feelings" and they are irrelevant in ethical thinking. In fact, elsewhere Taylor claims that "feelings and dispositions" have *no* place within the principle of respect for nature. He says,

> one's love of nature is nothing more than the particular way one feels about the natural environment…And just as our love for an individual person differs from our respect from all persons (whether we happen to love them or not) so [personal interest in] nature differs from respect for nature. To put it in a Kantian way, to adopt the attitude of respect for nature is to take a stance that one wills it to be a universal law for all rational beings. It is to hold that stance categorically…irrespective of personal feelings…[20]

It seems that for Taylor ethics belongs exclusively to the realm of "mind." In his view, moral commitments are matters of principle and are irrespective of our experiences, our feelings, our relationship with Earth and with other beings, our material conditions.[21] I agree with Taylor – rational deliberation has its place in ethical thinking – but I think moral commitments depend on experience. Rationality is a part of our experience but "experience" also must include our particular embodiment, our histories, and our feelings. Each of these is an integral piece of our experience and no part can be entirely removed from the whole. Ethics cannot and should not be reduced to rationality alone (or only to feelings, for that matter).

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[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid., (205-6).
[21] Paul W. Taylor, "The Ethics of Respect for Nature," in *Foundations of Environmental Philosophy*, ed. Frederik A. Kaufman (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003), 205-6.

Another important thinker in the canon of professional environmental ethics and one

whose arguments I believe are rationalist is the pragmatist environmental philosopher, Bryon

Norton. His seminal contribution to the field is a distinction between "weak anthropocentrism"

and "strong anthropocentrism." A view can be called weakly anthropocentric if interests that

are morally relevant to it consist of the "considered preferences" of only human beings. Strong

anthropocentrists reduce morally relevant interests to human beings' "felt preferences." The

difference between Norton's "considered preferences" and "felt preferences" is that the

former are rationally assessed while the latter are those that upon scrutiny one may realize one

ought not to have.

Norton differs from Taylor in that he does consider moral intuitions to be relevant to

ethics. He seeks to construct an ethic based on principles from which "rules can be derived

proscribing behaviors" which "environmentally sensitive individuals" would intuit are

destructive.[22] While Taylor appeals to categorical, unchanging principles, Norton is more

pragmatic. He states that an adequate environmental ethic "involves moving back and forth

between the basic principles and the more or less controversial behaviors, adjusting

principles…until the best possible fit between principles and proscribed behaviors is

obtained…"[23] In this way, Norton can be said to be contextualist since in his view principles and

proscribed behaviors aren't necessarily obtained from a priori formal conditions. Instead

Norton seeks to put principles into agreement with experience and moral intuitions. I believe

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[22] Bryan G. Norton, "Environmental Ethics and Weak Anthropocentrism," in *Foundations of Environmental Philosophy*, ed. Frederik A. Kaufman (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003), 327.
[23] Ibid.

Norton's pragmatism as well as his contextualist approach are valuable to ethical work but his implicit rationalism weakens his arguments.

Norton's rationalistic perspective appears in his beliefs about human interest. These beliefs are couched in his discussion of felt and considered preferences. Felt preferences describes "any desire or need" of human individuals. Considered preferences are those desires or needs that an individual would

> express after careful deliberation, including a judgment that the desire or need is consistent with a rationally adopted worldview—a worldview which includes fully supported scientific theories and a metaphysical framework interpreting those theories as well as a set of rationally supported aesthetic and moral ideals.[24]

Norton claims that a value theory is strongly anthropocentric if all value recognized by it is explained "by reference to satisfactions of felt preferences."[25] On the other hand, a value theory is weakly anthropocentric if all value recognized by it is explained "by reference to *some* felt preferences or by reference to [considered preferences]" (emphasis mine).[26] Distinguishing between felt and considered preferences allows Norton to draw a line between perceptions with a rational foundation and those without. Norton says his position "places value on" *both* felt and considered preferences, however, he privileges considered preferences because they are anchored by rationality. According to Norton, strong anthropocentrists take "unquestioned felt preferences…as determining value" and in this arrangement there is "no check upon the felt preferences of individuals."[27] However, weak anthropocentrists "recognize felt preferences can be rational or not…Hence, weak anthropocentrism provides a basis for criticism of a value

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[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid., 328.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.

system."[28] Norton seems to be saying that the value of felt preferences ought to be checked by

reason. While Norton claims that moral intuitions are relevant to ethics, his system seems to

not actually include them. It seems that for Norton, like Taylor, professional environmental

ethics is more a labor of "mind" than anything else; meaningful moral commitments are those

which are rationally supported. If material conditions and capacities beyond the rational are to

have a role in Norton's ethical thinking, then theirs is one which is subordinate to reason since

reason is the organizing factor.[29] "Mind" does and must play a role in moral thinking but it

should not be treated as if it could be isolated from the rest of experience. In ethics, our

rational capacity should be levelled to other aspects of our experience, including our

embodiment, our histories, and our feelings, and not considered apart from experience and

somehow superior to these other aspects.

In this section, I have discussed the rationalist bias in traditional theorizing of

professional environmental ethics by claiming that the major arguments of Taylor and Norton

are representative of this tradition. The foremost reason why I think that rationalistic thinking

dominates environmental ethics is because many environmental thinkers simply try to extend

to nature classic models of human ethics, which historically are by and large rationalist.

"Extensionism" is a term which describes such efforts. Extensionistic theories are typical of

much environmental philosophical literature – especially of the 80s and 90s. This can be seen in

the work of Tom Regan, Peter Singer, and Holmes Rolston, to name some examples. Despite

the prevalence of extensionism within professional environmental ethics, there are exceptions,

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[28] Ibid.

[29] Paul W. Taylor, "The Ethics of Respect for Nature," in *Foundations of Environmental Philosophy*, ed. Frederik A. Kaufman (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003), 205-6.

such as deep ecologists as well as conservationist, Aldo Leopold. In a well-known passage from

The Sand County Almanac Leopold appeals to our emotions as part of his case for an

"ecocentric" land ethic:

> The individual's instincts prompt him to compete for his place in the community, but his ethics prompt him to cooperate. The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include…the land. This sounds simple: do we not already sing our love for… the land…? … In short, a land ethic changes the roles of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it. It implies respect for his fellow-members, and also respect for the community as such.[30]

It appears that for Leopold love can be a sound foundation for an environmental ethic. In

addition, Arne Naess and other deep ecologists have criticized extensionists for holding onto

the perspective that an environmental ethic need be an extension of human ethics. Naess says

that we now live in an age where our "ecological imagination" allows us to picture the world

from the perception of the muskrat and plan our environmental projects accordingly.[31]

III.   "EMPHATIC ANTI-ESSENTIALISM" & MANN'S ENVIRONMENTAL PERSPECTIVE

As I have pointed out, the task of engaging the rationalism of Western thinking with

other aspects of our experience has faced enormous difficulty. In the paper "The Body as

Bioregion" philosopher Deborah Slicer says that corporeal life is an "embarrassment" to

rationalism.[32] Feminist scholar Elizabeth Grosz offers the explanation that bodies, and physical

experiences are a reminder of radical materiality to a tradition relying on "mind" and her

perspective helps to explain how rationalism and masculinism are related.[33] The coding of

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[30] Aldo Leopold, "The Sand County Almanac," in *Foundations of Environmental Philosophy*, ed. Frederik A. Kaufman (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003), 258.

[31] Robert Sessions, "Deep Ecology versus Ecofeminism: Healthy Differences or Incompatible Philosophy," in *Ecological Feminist Philosophies*, ed. Karen J. Warren (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1996), 138.

[32] Deborah Slicer, "The Body as Bioregion," in *Reading the Earth: New Directions in the Study of Literature and Environment,* eds. Michael P. Branch, Rochelle Johnson, Daniel Patterson, and Scott Slovic (Moscow: University of Idaho Press, 1998), 108.

[33] Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism (*Bloomington: Indiana

materiality with "female" has allowed "males," Grosz continues, to inhabit what they believe to

be a purely abstract, intellectual order. In Western philosophical thinking a tendency to see

gender status as homogenous, dualistic, and simple – females occupy bodies and males, minds,

for instance – perhaps derives from an historical biological determinism through which natural

sciences viewed gender.

The theory of biological determinism has been an oppressive force for many classes of

people and for philosophical perspectives, such as gender theory, which engage the corporeal.

Anthropologist Anna Meigs summarizes this perspective in her paper "Multiple Gender

Ideologies and Statuses:"

> The status of women was given by nature—subordinate. It was a simple and universal biological
> fact. Female status was not constructed by culture (in which case it would be variable, complex,
> and highly differentiated both within and across cultures) but given by nature.[34]

Against this ideological backdrop a person's gender sprung from the biological facts; the

attributes of gender accorded with whether an individual had or did not have "male" or

"female" physical traits. Within the context of a pervasive deterministic interpretation of

gender, female and male status seems uncomplicated and self-explanatory. Men and women

were essentially different. In this view, necessary to proper functioning as "female," for

example, may be particular attributes such as reproduction and nurturing qualities, which

contrast with what are viewed as "male."

In Western Europe and the U.S., social constructivism is a theory which has upset such

perspectives of biological determinism. Through the lens of social constructivism – which says

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University Press, 1994), 86-7.

[34] Anna Meigs, "Multiple Gender Ideologies and Statuses New Directions," in *Beyond the Second Sex: New Directions in the Anthropology of Gender,* eds Peggy Reeves Sanday and Ruth Gallagher Goodenough (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), 108.

that phenomena are constructed through the meaning making of society or culture – gender

status and gender ideology can no longer be reduced solely to nature. Theories attempting to

show how biological conceptions of gender can be understood as socially constructed are

diverse. And the flexibility of thinking of gender in terms of social mediation is helpful to some

feminist politics which seek to liberate oppressed groups since meaning can no longer be

attributed to the "facts" of biology. However, a problem arises with attaching *no* meaning to

matter, or "reality."

In their article "Accounting for Sexual Meanings" anthropologists Sherry B. Ortner and

Harriet Whitehead point out that an issue of "myth" versus "reality" persists for some social

constructivist theories of gender as culture.[35] Some theorists argue that we ought to focus on

the "myths," the cultural representations of material relations, and others, "reality." The

concern regarding those views which focus mainly on "myth," the cultural representation of

gender roles, is that myths do not necessarily capture the messy entanglement of material

practices. For instance, while "females" may be said to have the role of "caretaking" in a

society, such a representation may overlook the complexity of actual practices of child rearing

in which both "males" and "females" participate. The anthropologists' point is that value is lost

and theory is incomplete when we refuse to attach some meaning to the material realm and

focus *only* on cultural interpretations of materiality. However, focusing injudiciously on the

opposite, on "reality" or corporeal life exposes us again to the problem of interpreting the

"myths" or cultural representations as overly determined by the "real" underneath, the biology,

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[35] Sherry B. Ortner & Harriet Whitehead, "Accounting for Sexual Meaning," in *Sexual Meanings: The Cultural Construction of Gender and Sexuality*, eds. Sherry B. Ortner & Harriet Whitehead (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 10.

for example. Thinking which attaches too much significance to the "real," to nature, or biology has been discredited as "essentialist" by many feminists. The philosopher Bonnie Mann discusses this problem in the context of a certain feminist epistemology.

There are various theories attempting to reclaim the "real," the notion that something meaningful makes up the appearances or the material realm. And Mann characterizes the broad criticism of these attempts by feminist epistemology as one essentially claiming that any structure behind the appearances can play a part only as "that which dissolves into the appearances themselves."[36] In other words, there is no "reality" behind the "myths," nothing truer than cultural representations. Mann suggests that because of the criticisms offered by the social constructivist viewpoint "the relationship between scientific inquiry and political power has been called into question, with the role of rationality in creating essentializing definitions of whole categories of people in the forefront."[37] The connections between science and power incited critical questioning of science and essentializing definitions.

Certain feminist thought has contributed a great deal to debunking essentialist and universalizing claims about women. Mann proposes that "the essentialism that was disputed [by feminist thought] was primarily a biological [one] that deployed accounts of women's hormones, anatomy, and physiology (especially in terms of menstruation and reproduction) to justify the political and social domination of women by men."[38] She claims that the price we pay for an alliance with social constructivism and what she calls "emphatic anti-essentialism" is

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[36] Bonnie Mann, "World Alienation in Feminist Thought: The Sublime Epistemology of Emphatic Anti-Essentialism," *Ethics & the Environment,* 10 (2005): 48.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.

"material displacement:" a position in which we are forbidden to "inquire into and articulate"

our relations with Earth. In Mann's view, our physical home, has been "effectively shut out" by

constructivist-leaning feminist theory. Mann calls this condition "world alienation," a notion she

borrows from the philosopher Hannah Arendt. Mann alleges that world-alienation takes the

form of the world being trapped inside discourse. Social constructivism, at its extreme

interpretation, dispossesses language of referentiality to the world, to the "reality," behind the

"myth." Now that language, Mann claims, is only self-referential through the constructivist view

it is nonsensical to speak of "Earth" or of "nature" in a way that exceeds discourse. Questioning

our relationship to the physical planet then is to be trapped inside of language. "Placelessness"

for Mann describes the physical experience of world-alienation, an experience of persons with

no place to go: refugees, the homeless, and stray animals. In the face of global climate change

we fear the Earth becoming uninhabitable and placelessness as a condition for us all. In

addition, says Mann, placelessness describes our theoretical position inside the "self-enclosure"

of language. In its alliance with social constructivism, some feminism concedes the theoretical

placelessness that marks the phenomenological experience of having no place to go which can

be dangerous for certain feminist politics that seek the liberation of oppressed groups. Such

politics can be displaced by strong claims of "essentialism" since relativism, for some, is a logical

consequence of equating truth with culture. In Mann's words, "not only has "reason" been

wrong about *what* it identifies as "the truth," it has itself *constituted* "truth" in ways that are

contingent on power rather than access to "the real.""[39] Claiming that all value is a matter of

cultural meaning (the relativist view) makes us especially susceptible to prejudiced views and

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[39] Ibid.

abuse of power since there are no principles outside of power to which we can appeal for justification. While Mann agrees with this objection, she discredits certain essentialisms for what she calls "deeper" reasons, to wit, that we in fact depend on this planet.

The problem of essentialism in feminist theory has been addressed in terms of the philosophical problem of the one and the many, the universal and the particular. Anti-essentialism disparages generalizing about women which never adequately articulates the particular experiences of groups of women or of individual women. Inquiries into any condition that women might share, such as our relationship to Earth, for example, are precluded. To quote Mann, "A feminist philosophy that turns its back on the Earth embraces, rather than contests, the world-alienation of which Arendt spoke. Yet our alienation from the Earth … can never free us from our dependence on it."[40] Mann suggests that since we rely on Earth for existence we must resist thinking of ourselves as non-natural. Faced with Earth's destruction we are required to re-examine our relationship to the planet and to act. It is this condition that makes a re-examination of emphatic anti-essentialism necessary for particular feminist views and, I would add, for professional environmental ethics. Mann says both that "feminists must protest the continued strong association of women with [the material] realm, whether it is argued biologically or socially" and that we must protest the dissociation of human beings in general from the physical realm.[41] The feminist move must be to de-gender this dependence rather than reverse it.

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[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.

The problem of necessity and freedom for Mann is a philosophically significant question related to anti-essentialism. The paradox of necessity and freedom can provide insight into the motivation for "emphatic anti-essentialism."[42] Elizabeth Grosz speaks to this fear:

> In claiming that women's current social roles and positions are the effects of their essence, nature, biology, or universal social position, these theories are guilty of rendering such roles and positions unalterable and necessary and thus of providing them with a powerful political justification.[43]

Liberation from the realm of necessity has been the "precondition for a life that is fully human."[44] And since the realm of necessity has been intimately bound up with the feminine, the feminist flight from this realm is understandable. But, in Mann's view, the realm of necessity is not simply what "affixes the subject," it also "produces the subject."[45] She says

> The things that sustain us moment by moment, air, water, food, light and warmth, do not cease to sustain us because of a fantasy of emancipation from them. A feminist epistemology that started from this bare dependence would certainly be "universalizing" and "essentialist" [and would] go against a rationalist tradition which insists on emancipation from and domination over the Earth through reason as a precondition for freedom.[46]

Mann is not the first thinker to redirect our focus to the necessary alliance of bodies and Earth. Feminist thinker, Marion Young, for instance, also inverted the primacy of the intellect by demonstrating its necessary dependence on the physical.[47] And consider ecofeminist thinking and deep ecological thought. What is different about Mann's contribution is that she directly engages the problem of essentialism and defends an environmental perspective beginning from what some may consider essentialist and universalizing assumptions.

IV.   EARTHLY DEPENDENCE & ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

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[42] Ibid., 52.

[43] Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 85.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid., 59.

[46] Ibid., 60, 61.

[47] Ibid.

Professional environmental ethics seeks to develop moral standards for our environmental relationships and, as I have claimed, philosophers frequently have required rationality as the foundation for moral thinking. While "mind" should play a factor in ethics, it should not supersede the material and social situatedness, the experiential aspect of moral deliberation. Our rational capacity has limitations. For instance, Mann and other philosophers have shown that rationality creates "untruths," essentializing interpretations of groups of people which have served the interests of political power. Mann, for one, discusses how reason has wrongfully identified what constitutes "truth." To wit, it has seen *itself* as constituting truth. These connections bring the "universiality" of reason into question.

As an alternative to rationalist foundations for ethics, I support Mann's proposal of building moral thinking out of aspects of our experience besides "mind," out of reflection upon material conditions – those which are universal, such as living on Earth, and those which are unique to the individual, such as growing up along the Mississippi River. Reclaiming our ability to inquire into and articulate our necessary material relationship with Earth as well as our immediate environments may encourage environmental thinking which is more comprehensive and applicable to real world environmental issues. In addition, a reengagement with our necessary physical ties to our environment would resist rationalist and masculinist biases by reminding us that these traditions rely on the precondition of necessity: physical sustenance, the breath, an inhabitable planet.

Environmental ethical thinking which starts from Mann's essentialist perspective could also inspire greater diversity in environmental ethics. My hope is that the issues become more diverse along with the group participating in the discussion. Developing environmental moral

theories that engages us with our physical existence requires reflection on experience. Perhaps subjectivity, and emotions as they affect and are affected by the context in which they are situated, could inform environmental philosophizing. Such a focus on experience may deliver new environmental concerns to the table since my experience growing up as a girl, in a poor single parent home in the Midwest exposed me to environmental conditions different from yours. Maybe shared narratives of experiences would create a shared consciousness about common problems and attract a more diverse audience to professional philosophy which would turn out more diverse philosophical conversations and concerns. In my view, sharing experience holds promise of certain political changes. It names forms and meanings of present circumstances as it holds open the possibility of change. For instance, describing women's embodied experience, as Iris Marion Young has done, exposes embodied oppression.[48] And re-materializing ourselves allows for an expression of the particularities of individual experiences which have yet to be considered legitimate sources for theorizing and power. Perhaps referring to experience, of which reason, along with embodiment, personal history, and emotion, is a part, is requisite for doing better professional environmental philosophy, that is, one more cognizant of developing just relations between Earth and bodies, especially those which have historically been marginalized or ignored.

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[48] Young, 12.

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION

In chapter 1, I demonstrated through the work of Taylor and Norton that often professional

environmental ethics are over-influenced by a rationalist paradigm. I discussed some problems

with rationalism and their impacts on environmental philosophy. Through Mann, I suggested

that the field of environmental ethics re-focus on the universal alliance between bodies and

Earth to consider aspects of our experience beyond our ability to reason as an acceptable

reference for environmental philosophizing. When we examine the fact that we need air and

water to maintain vital bodies, we can see that environmental consideration goes beyond

reference to only our rational experience. Rationality is meaningless (if only because it will be

short-lived) if we do not have air to breathe or water to drink. I believe ethical theory can be

worked through from experiences, such as breathing, along with reason – which is, after all,

also a piece of experience.

In chapter 2, I will show how an awareness of material conditions can aid in the

development of environmental ethics. By sharing the details of their lives, Second Wave

feminists realized their shared experience of discrimination. I will draw from a feminist

understanding of Consciousness Raising (henceforth CR) and a concept of a "feminine style of

communication" to discuss integrating more facets of experience into professional environmental ethics.

I.   CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING, EXPERIENCE, & SHARED ANALYSIS

Before her conversion to feminism, Simone de Beauvoir thought of herself as being apart from other women, and perhaps as superior to them. Like many exceptional women before her, de Beauvoir saw herself as having escaped the sanctions on other women of her time. "The moment of truth," says feminist scholar Hester Eisenstein, "came when the "exceptional woman" understood that to be told "You think like a man" was to be told, "You're not a 'real' woman," and "Real women are inferior to men."[49] Beauvoir initially interpreted that comment from her male colleagues as a compliment; she was in effect being complicit in that negative stereotype about women. That comment, intended as a compliment from male colleagues, had initially worked on her, and it meant that de Beauvoir had agreed to the negative judgment about all women, including herself. Eisenstein comments on the transformative power of experiences of realizing a redefinition of self in her book *Contemporary Feminist Thought*. She says that this effect of the method of experience-sharing developed by radical feminists in the 1960s known as Consciousness Raising was particularly visible in women with high aspirations in male-dominated professions. As a woman, the cost of acceptance into a male-dominated arena was frequent and blatant rejection of one's sexual identity.   Through CR, the "exceptional woman" realized the commonplaceness of such experiences among women.

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[49] Hester Eisenstein, *Contemporary Feminist Thought* (Boston, MA: G.K. Hall & Co., 1983), 39.

Feminists like Jo Freeman have described the significance of CR for developing a shared

awareness of the meaning of individual predicaments as social and thus political problems.

Eisenstein focuses CR as an element of the construction of a feminist theory. She says that a

first assumption of CR was that

> what women had to say about the details of their daily lives, about their personal experiences and histories, mattered, it had significance…and validity. This meant that the source of authority, of legitimacy, about the lives of women, and the significance of what they experienced was the individual woman herself. Rather than being the objects of study by…social scientists, women were the experts, the authorities, the source of knowledge about themselves. This expertise stemmed…from the "authority of experience."[50]

In other words, an individual could know something to be true because she had experienced it

first-hand and she could trust herself as the expert of her own experience. Validity could be

corroborated by other women in a group who lived in similar positions with comparable

experiences. For women participating in CR, personal experiences took on new meaning: they

were not isolated phenomena, incidental accounts of the failures of individual women. Rather,

they represented symptoms of society-wide structures of power and subordination. Thus

sharing experiences allowed women to understand that they all belonged to a category, "all

women," and to politicize it. Describing the CR method, Eisenstein says, "[it] bridged the gap

between private and public realms."[51] Once individual personal secrets were shared they could

become a basis for a politics.

There were additional virtues of an understanding of the commonality underlying

women's experiences. To illustrate the multiplicity between women within the Women's

Movement, Eisenstein writes that

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[50] Ibid., 37
[51] Ibid., 38.

individual lives of women in a CR group could vary considerably: their situation in their family of origin –number of and sex of siblings; their birth order; their age, and the generation they belonged to; their class—their own and that of their family of origin; their racial and/or ethnic and religious background, and the customs governing the lives of women in that tradition; their history of work experience and education; their sexual history, and their sexual orientation; their relation to marriage and divorce; whether or not they had children –all of these were variables that made for great diversity in the details and nuances of each woman's personal experience.[52]

Despite the many differences between women, certain common features of their lives could be discerned as the consequences of being treated as a woman by others; to wit, being a woman could be seen as "a defining characteristic," that cut across differences of class, race, and sexual orientation.

Particular techniques were involved with CR. There were provisions intended to overcome power inequities among women in a group. The convention was that each individual would have a turn to speak, and that she would be allowed to complete her statement without interruption. Similarly, in commenting on someone else's contribution, the attempt was made to avoid comparisons and judgments concerning what had been said. The significance of these rules was that the members of the group were equals and that no one person's experience was more significant than any other member's.

These structures were not perfect. For example, one account points out some of the difficulties of a group when middleclass and working class women tried to work together. The terms of communication had been set by the women from a middle-class background so the differences created by the kind of education and cultural background of individuals ensured that those who were middleclass were comfortable speaking freely and readily, while those who were working class felt less confident and were hesitant to speak. Nonetheless, a

[52] Ibid.

distinction can be made between intent and outcome and clearly the aspiration to create a

setting of equality was part of the structure of CR, whether or not the goal was actually

achieved in an individual group.[53]

In sum, CR examined the means by which women were oppressed by extending and

developing an analysis of the workings of patriarchy using information generated from reports

of individual participants. CR validated individual women's experiences. It "sought to create a

small piece of the world" in which the experiences of women of diverse backgrounds mattered,

had authority, and was directly useful to other women so that they were all able to see the

possibility of value and richness in women's experiences, which in part enabled them to

develop a politics of the women's movement.

II.   "ALL PARTICIPATE & LEAD, ALL ARE EXPERTS:" FEATURES OF A "FEMININE STYLE"

A major manifestation of the women's movement was rhetorical. Communication

scholar, Karen Kohrs Campbell offers a rhetorical analysis of CR, which, she claims, highlights

the distinctive stylistic features of the women's movement. Campbell treats the rhetoric of

women's liberation as stylistically persuasive since the rhetoric contains the "linguistic feature"

of "persuasive campaigns" in general. These include an emphasis on particular forms of

argument and evidence. But the rhetoric of women's liberation is distinctive as it rejects certain

traditional aspects of the rhetorical process, such as persuasion of the many by an expert or

leader and inducing acceptance of a specific program or a commitment to group action.

According to Campbell, the "anti-rhetorical" style is meaningful in itself because traditional

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[53] Ibid.

rhetorical transactions with the aforementioned features encourage "submissiveness and

passivity in the audience—qualities at odds with fundamental goal(s) of feminist advocacy"[54]

Furthermore, Campbell says the mode of communication "uniquely adapted" to feminism is

CR, wherein the goal is to

> make the personal political: to create awareness (through shared experiences) that what were
> thought to be personal deficiencies and individual problems are common and shared, a result of
> their position as women. The participants seek to understand and interpret their lives as
> women, but there is no "message," no "party line." Individuals are encouraged to dissent, to find
> their own truths.[55]

In other words, the stylistic features heightened in CR transactions are characteristic of a

feminine rhetoric which "affirms the affective," validates various kinds of experience and

emphasizes the value of dialogue and collaboration.

Before moving forward, I will make two important distinctions. Firstly, "feminine" and

"feminist" refer to different approaches to ethics, although they are interrelated. "Feminine"

most often refers to the advocacy of an ethic of care including nurturance, care, compassion,

and networks of communications. "Feminist" refers to theories, liberal, radical, or otherwise,

arguing against patriarchal domination, for equal rights, a just and fair distribution of resources,

etc.[56] There is much debate surrounding the ultimate source of feminine traits but that is not

the issue here.

Secondly, a feminine method of communication is not a style unique to women and can

be used by men and women. Campbell's sense of a feminine style of communication can be

associated with the "feminine consciousness" used by some feminist scholars like Caroline

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[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Betty A. Sichel, "Different Strain and Strands: Feminist Contributions to Ethical Theory," *Newsletter on Feminism* 90, no 2 (Winter 1991): 90.

Whitbeck and Nancy Chodorow. Rosemarie Tong says that a feminine consciousness concerns the gender traits traditionally associated with women—particularly, nurturance, compassion, and caring—as positive *human* traits.[57] Like feminine consciousness, a feminine style is not unitary but multiple.

Although, according to Campbell, the stylistic features of women's liberation were most apparent in small group processes of CR, they are not confined to these interactions. The features are present in essays, speeches, and other discourses. Steinem's work, for instance, has all the distinctive stylistic features of the CR paradigm. In her essay, "If Men Could Menstruate," Gloria Steinem, one of the most famous feminist activists, provides an example of a feminine rhetoric as used in CR groups. Recall that one of the purposes of the women's movement was to tap into their own lives and experiences so that the personal could be seen as reflective of socio-political structures. In the aforementioned essay Steinem, claims that "living in India made [her] understand that a white minority of the world has spent centuries conning us into thinking a white skin makes people superior, even though the only thing it really does is make them more subject to ultraviolet rays."[58] Significantly, Steinem cites her own a-ha moment of recognizing "conning" at a more general social level. By drawing from her own experience, Steinem suggests that the personal sphere is a legitimate source of evidence of the broader society. Supporting my claim, Steinem says that her "*living* in India made [her] understand..." Nowhere in her statement does she offer any "official" reasons (statistics, the conclusions of the social sciences, e.g.) as guides for her understanding. Instead, she

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[57] Rosemarie Tong, *Feminine and Feminist Ethics.* Belmont (California: Wadsworth, Inc), 1993, 5.
[58] Gloria Steinem, "If Men Could Menstruate," *Ms. Magazine,* October 1978, 41.

emphasizes *her life*, her experience, to come to an understanding of a "con." The con that

Steinem describes is one taking place also beyond her life. She discusses "a minority of the

world" which has "conned us into thinking a white skin makes people superior." Steinem

highlights a social class of people at a broad level of society indicating that her realization has

broad socio-political implications, far beyond the scope of her life, yet it is her life that allowed

her to come to this conclusion. Not only does Steinem articulate the legitimacy of individual

experiences for reflection, she highlights its potential for understanding society more generally.

Steinem is similarly personal when she discusses her reading of Freud. She claims that

"Freud made [her] just as skeptical about penis envy." By drawing from her own experience,

Steinem suggests that the personal sphere can indicate broader social themes. She says that

her "skepticism" developed out of Freud. Nowhere in her statement does she rely on an

external source for her conclusions. Instead, she emphasizes her own thought as the source of

her understanding of Freud. Significantly, Steinem's reference to Freud describes themes taking

place beyond her life. At the time of her essay document, Steinem was aware that Freud

represented some sexist assumptions about women. She highlights far-reaching sexist attitudes

indicating again that her own understanding describes socio-political tropes beyond her life,

while she relies on her life for evidence of these. Steinem highlights the privileged role of

personal understanding for realizing themes of the greater cultural situation.

Steinem's essay, and much of women's liberation rhetoric, contrast with traditional

models of rhetoric (which rely on persuasion of the many by an expert or leader and

directedness toward inducing acceptance of a specific program).[59] Steinem, however, engages

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[59] Campbell, 78.

her own experience, disclosing her feelings and the specific form that the problems of oppression and liberation take in her life.[60] Steinem's essay asks for the participation of the reader, not only in Steinem's experience, but also in the reader's own. The goal of Steinem's piece and other works of a feminine style is this process, not a particular belief or policy. The broad aim was that analysis move from personal experience and feeling to illuminate common conditions so that structural, not merely personal, solutions could be imagined.

A goal of a feminine style of communication – as exemplified in CR – is to create a leaderless conversation in which all participants are encouraged to participate, speaking from the unique truths of their individual experiences. Traditional persuasive rhetoric, per Campbell, requires an expert who informs his audience. The active speaker and passive listeners are distinguished from each other; the speaker is empowered while the audience is subordinate. The feminine style disrupts this model by changing the politics of the rhetorical dynamic. Arguably, traditional persuasive rhetoric is the rhetorical style popular in formal philosophical discourse found in classrooms, journals, lectures, and conferences. And it has familiar consequences for participants: the speaker holds the seat of power as the active subject while listeners comprise a passive audience. A rationalist bias within much of professional environmental philosophy distinguishes its rhetoric from a feminine style. As I've shown, a rationalist bias denies legitimacy to other kinds of experiences and materiality – key features of a feminine style. Integrating traits of the feminine style into philosophical conversation could benefit the discipline. The next section will show how a more feminine style of communication can aid

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[60] Ibid., 129.

professional environmental philosophy in retiring rationalistic tendencies and incorporating experience and materiality into ethical thinking.

III.   A FEMININE STYLE AND ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

As I have explained, "feminine" describes gender traits traditionally associated with women, such as nurturance, compassion, and caring, as positive *human* traits. Like a feminine style of communication, a feminine ethics embraces these characteristics. Because of this overlap in values, I believe it is appropriate to equivocate on the terms and discuss a feminine style in terms of doing environmental philosophy rather than in terms of rhetoric. As Campbell showed, however, a rhetorical style and its content are integral. A feminine rhetorical style in professional philosophy follows from a feminine style of thinking.

Shifting from a traditional philosophical style to a more feminine style raises at least two epistemological questions

1. Does a "leaderless conversation" mean there can be no experts?

2. If all individual experiences are "true," what does this mean for "truth"?

To answer these questions, I will closely follow some work regarding feminine ethics. Karen J. Warren, for instance, has synthesized a list of what she calls "boundary conditions" that help to address these epistemological concerns and gesture at the contours of a more feminine style of theory-making.

The term "boundary conditions" means that a feminine style of ethics may require necessary conditions but will not dictate "joint necessary and sufficient conditions" because this is not fruitful for a feminine style.[61] Warren uses the metaphor of a quilt to lay out this

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[61] Karen J. Warren. "The Power and the Promise of Ecological Feminism." 138-139.

idea. She says that her boundary conditions are like the perimeters of a quilt as they delimit its

territory without dictating its interior. The content of the quilt emerges from the multiplicity of

voices participating in its creation. This metaphor illustrates that a feminine style outright

rejects attempts to assume an essence (in the sense of a transhistorical and universal

abstraction) of an ethic. And that a feminine ethics is not static, rather it is expected to change

with the changing voices constituting its fabric. Warren's notion of boundary conditions helps

to clarify some of the minimal conditions of a feminine ethic without assuming its essence.

A feminine-styled ethic would:

1. reject any ideology which presupposes or advances a "logic of domination."

2. be contextualist and so see ethical discourse and practice as emerging from the

   voices of people located in different historical circumstances. While a claim may take

   precedence under certain circumstances it may not in another.

3. give central significance to diversity of voices, a suitable environmental ethic must

   be structurally pluralistic rather than unitary or reductionist. That being said, there

   will be differences between individuals. Someone may be a particularly apt leader

   or have an impressive skillset. Special traits and know-how should be shared without

   invidious comparison or judgment. This point partially responds to the first

   epistemological concern above (can a leaderless conversation have experts?). Within

   masculine rhetoric, the problem is not leadership or expertise per se but the use of

   these qualities or roles to dominate a conversation or others. Abandoning such an

   abuse of power does not also mean that there can no longer be leaders or experts. A

feminine style of communication maintains that there are ways to lead and to employ special know-how without subordinating others.

4. view theory as always in-process and subject to change over time. Generalizations are inevitable but are themselves a pattern of voices. Within these, different voices that emerge out of concrete and alternative descriptions of ethical situations have meaning.

5. be evaluated in terms of its inclusiveness. Claims which are more inclusive of the felt experiences of oppressed entities would be epistemologically favored. The condition of inclusiveness requires and ensures that the diverse voices of women and other oppressed persons will be given legitimacy in ethical theory building. It thereby helps to minimize empirical bias toward certain groups. As an offshoot of this, such an ethic provides a central place for values typically unnoticed or misrepresented in traditional environmental ethics (for example, values of care). In these ways, more inclusive claims are "truer" than less inclusive ones. The second epistemological concern above expresses the fear that questions regarding "truth" will become irrelevant or valueless if all experiences are considered to be true. A condition of inclusiveness addresses this fear by pointing out that pluralism, or a conviction that all experiences are legitimate, actually makes for vigorous truth instead of no truth because it helps to minimize empirical bias and pull marginal values to center.

6. not attempt to provide an "objective" perspective in the sense that it does not claim to be "unbiased" or "value neutral" because it is self-consciously context-dependent. This condition reiterates the idea that truth always involves experience. Thus in

response to concerns about the status of truth, a feminine style maintains that there

is no "truth" independent of experience. This does not mean that there is then no

truth. Rather it means that a consideration of context is always relevant to truth

claims.

7. reject what Alison Jaggar calls "abstract individualism," the position which attempts

   to identify a universal human nature independent of any particular historical

   context.[62] As a positive alternative, humans and moral conduct are understood in

   terms of networks or webs of historical and concrete relationships.[63]

The dual politics of the feminine style – a) understanding situations through personal

narratives and b) imagining alternatives in the broader society as a result of this understanding

– can help to clarify and develop more comprehensive environmental philosophy. Traditional

philosophical discourse emphasizes a rationalist viewpoint while a feminine style challenges

this bias. Incorporating a feminine style into philosophical discourse will broaden the scope of

environmental issues to include currently excluded ones. Environmental problems are

experienced differently from one individual to the next and aggregating various experiences of

such issues may expose new environmental concerns and provide novel solutions to old ones.

In this way stories that are usually left unconsidered, those of marginalized populations like

women or people of color, may be included.

In her paper, "Integrating Disability Studies, Transforming Feminist Theory," Rosemarie

Garland-Thomson, theorist of feminist disability studies, sets an agenda for future work in

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[62] Alison M. Jagger, "Love and Knowledge," in *Gender/Body/Knowledge,* ed. Alison M. Jagger and Susan R. Bordo (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1989), 148-49.
[63] Warren, 139-41.

feminist disability studies.[64] In doing so, she articulates what the now lesser known field of

disability studies can contribute to feminist theory. I think some key points of Garland-

Thomson's such as "intellectual tolerance" contribute to my discussion in that one of the

challenges of increasing diversity within professional philosophy is overcoming intellectual

*in*tolerance. A position of Intellectual tolerance overlaps with Warren's and my vision of a more

feminine styled ethics. I will follow Garland-Thomson's paper closely to explore the possibility

of adopting Garland-Thomson's concept, intellectual tolerance, in professional environmental

philosophy.

Garland-Thomson describes intellectual tolerance as aiding in the integration of

disability analysis into feminist theory. Intellectual tolerance is a position of tolerating what has

been thought of as "incoherence."[65] The following bullets outline what is entailed by

intellectual tolerance

Intellectual tolerance as a method…

1. asks difficult questions and accepts partial and provisional answers. Intellectual tolerance does not seek transhistorical theory, but instead considers the historical boundedness of theory-making and is sensitive to the fact that claims can take precedence within certain circumstances and not in another; theory is always subject to changes.
2. recognizes the power of identity, at the same time that it reveals identity as always incomplete and socially constructed. Intellectual tolerance understands the identity of individuals and groups as fundamental to value-making. That being said, values are viewed in terms of historical and concrete circumstances, thus they are ever-changing and always partial.
3. seeks equality, while it claims difference. In terms of point 2, intellectual tolerance recognizes the impact of differences between identities of individuals and groups but these differences are seen as equally significant – a particularity, such as intellectualism, is not universally valued over another (there may be concrete circumstances in which certain skills are more useful than others).
4. allows us to teach with authority at the same time that we reject notions of pedagogical mastery. Feminine styled rhetorical transactions seek to create a situation in which speakers

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[64] Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, "Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory" *NWSA Journal* 14(4) (Autumn 2002): 28, accessed February 15, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1978286.
[65] Ibid.

and listeners are active and engaged with one another with both parties contributing to meaning-making. But as I've said, this does not mean that there can be no experts. It means instead that an individual with a special skillset or authority over a subject does not use his know-how to dominate others. Likewise, a teacher practicing intellectual tolerance relies on his expertise over his subject while he rejects the notion that his special status allows him to treat others as subordinate. And, as an advocate of intellectual tolerance recognizing the historicity of knowledge, he rejects that his views are transhistorical or universal, accepts that they are partial and processual, and rejects the possibility of pedagogical mastery.

5. establishes institutional presences even while it acknowledges the limitations of institutions. Institutions (like any ideology) are limited in terms of their history and circumstance. While establishing an institutional presence may be necessary to pursue particular capacities of teaching and learning, such a status does not justify dominance over others. An intellectually tolerant point of view takes into account the provisional and partial knowledge even of institutions.

6. validates the personal but implements disinterested inquiry. Acknowledging the legitimacy of personal does not negate the possibility or value of disinterested inquiry. Personal narratives and disinterested ones (scientific narratives are one example of the latter) are important sources of knowledge.

7. writes new stories and recovers traditional ones. The method of intellectual tolerance views theory as a living process – since it is always historically determined – in which we are continuously integrating narratives, old and new. [66]

Embracing the feminine style and all that it involves is a challenge that, for some, may appear to threaten the coherence of philosophical discourse. But intellectual tolerance can accommodate such a challenge and paradoxes it may bring. As Garland-Thomson has shown, embracing the alleged incoherency of the personal (in all its partiality, contingency, and particularity) along with intellectual tolerance would mean to challenge and transcend masculinist and rationalist bias within traditional philosophical discourse.

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[66] Ibid.

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION

I have suggested that experience should inform professional philosophy. I have

attempted to show how experience can increase the breadth and depth of the field by exposing

it to a broader pool of concerns. The example of the women's movement's use of CR

demonstrates how sincere consideration of diverse experiences can contribute to analyses of

broader social issues. Without greater diversity and validation of the personal within

professional philosophy, its issues will remain those of a homogenous population. And as a

result, issues beyond the experience of this population, such as those problems dealt to women

and the poor, will continue to be deprived of ethical attention.

In this chapter, I will introduce the Environmental Health Movement through the activity

of the organization Women's Voices for the Earth (WVE). I will rely on my interview with

Alexandria Scranton (Alex), the Director of Science and Research at WVE for this portion. I will

highlight how the work of WVE is similar to the CR method and represents a feminine style of

communication. Finally, I will suggest that WVE's model offers an example of an

environmentalism of the sort Mann has in mind and one from which I hope professional

environmental philosophy can learn.

I.   WOMEN'S VOICES FOR THE EARTH: A DIFFERENT ENVIRONMENTALISM?

In the summer of 2015, I did an internship at WVE working mostly with Alex. In the Spring

of 2016, I discussed different styles of environmentalism and communication strategies with

her. Through this interaction I realized a difference between my work at WVE and prior

environmental work. I found that WVE was refreshingly lady-dominated. From the Volunteer

Coordinator to Executive Management, WVE was entirely run by women. The other difference

I noticed was that WVE's approach to environmental work was also quite different from the

kind I was used to. Through Alex, I learned that gender significantly factors into the structure of

WVE, the issues it takes up, and the kind of communication it uses.

WVE was founded in the early 1990's when, after working for a conservation

organization, Bryony Schwan became "all too familiar with the male-dominated culture of

environmental organizing."[67] Schwan said of her experience organizing for the environment:

> I would see women come to meetings and get engaged but they wouldn't stay engaged. They
> would become very concerned and they would say 'What can we do?' and some guy would turn
> around and say, 'Why don't you bring tea and cookies to the next meeting?' Seriously, I'm not
> making it up.

Rather than providing refreshments for the meetings, Schwan responded by organizing a

women-only environmental conference and founding WVE.

Gender as a component to environmental work is about more than inclusion at

meetings. It is central to certain environmental problems. For example, Schwan once described

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[67] Stacy Malkan. *Not Just a Pretty Face: The Ugly Side of the Beauty Industry* by Stacy Malkan (Canada: New Society
Publishers, 2007), 21.

women as "the canaries in the coal mine" when it comes to the manufacturing of chemicals into everyday products. This is because women's health is disproportionality impacted by toxic chemicals in their environments. Women are effected differently because they have unique biological systems that respond in unique ways that are not understood and because of the kinds of products they use and the kinds of jobs they do.[68] The "canaries in the coal mine" quote refers to how, historically, the acceptable levels of chemicals for women has not been considered in chemical trials. WVE works to bring such concerns to the attention of industry, the manufacturers of consumer products containing chemicals of concern, policy-makers, and the public.

According to Alex, WVE's work is part of the broader Environmental Health Movement (or EHM), which considers environmental issues in terms of how they affect human health. The EHM confronts issues at the intersection of the environment and humans through the lens of biological health. It deals with issues yet to be recognized by the larger environmental community, like endocrine disruption and biomagnification. Through this point of view, experiences of "environmental bads" in the body is a deeply personal yet universally understood. With human health at the center of environmental concern, the EHM focuses on prevention and removal of toxic chemicals and other hazardous materials in the environment. "There's been a lot of historical work in [degraded] environments from a perspective that doesn't take the human impacts into consideration," commented Alex. "The food we eat and the air we breathe is being significantly impacted and that's a reason to protect the environment. To do so is to protect human health," she added.

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[68] Alexandria Scranton (Science and Research Director at WVE) in discussion with the author, April 2016.

WVE's approach to their goal of removing toxics from the environment is multi-faceted. Affecting general education is one aspect. They seek to amplify women's voices in particular by providing information about environmental hazards and access to cheap and safe alternatives. According to Alex, the responsibility of safety in this regard is not entirely up to the individual. WVE recognizes that hazardous chemicals require a collective effort to protect people in general. Manufacturers of household products and cosmetics have a huge responsibility to ensure their products are safe for consumers. "Reading a label shouldn't require a PhD. All products should be safe," Alex said. She added, "We work with women who self-identify as leaders but we want regular women to know that they don't have to have special expertise to have safe products." Everyone has the right to safe products that carry no risk of cancer and other health risks and WVE tries to provide opportunities for individuals and groups to use their voices. In terms of this collective approach, WVE also works on corporate policies as well as government policies (federal and state) in order to legislate that corporations' products meet certain requirements.

Another aspect of WVE's approach is storytelling. Alex spoke to me regarding the relationship between experience-based knowledge and scientific research. As the Director of Science and Research, Alex ensures that WVE's work is scientifically credible, that there is data backing up its claims. According to her, it is difficult to walk the line between experiences and scientific research: "There's a lot of things that science can't say with complete certainty, but we've found that it's also very powerful that there's any concern at all, even if we don't have the data." For example, manufacturers will often claim their calculations show that the proportions of chemicals used in their products *should not* come with risks. This uncertainty

alarms WVE members. While figures may show there is little risk of exposure to particular

amounts of a substance, WVE's position is that companies should use alternatives that require

absolutely no estimation of risk. Alex reminded me that estimations require best guesses. "You

can put statistics into computers and there's still a lot of uncertainty with the outcome. The

process of science requires an amount of estimation that isn't always clearly represented in the

data," she said. In addition, there are many variables that factor into health. For example, a

dose of a risky chemical on day thirty of a pregnancy may have no effect. But on day fifteen, the

outcome may be different. The point is that when it comes to health and chemical formulas, we

can never predict results with 100% certainty. When it comes to health the goal should be to

reduce risks as much as possible. Illustrating the variant risk involved with toxics sometimes is

more powerfully conveyed through stories rather than scientific or political language. For

example, the "Green Mama" page of WVE's website contains the following quote

> As a parent, you have a lot on your mind, and the last thing you want to worry about is exposing your baby to harmful chemicals in your own home. We really have to watch out for babies because they are especially vulnerable to chemicals…Yet it's not always easy for busy parents to know where toxic chemicals might be lurking and what the safe and practical alternatives are.[69]

Here, WVE's message is informal and relatable because such language allows for consumers to

fill in the blanks with their own story. WVE does have associated pages which list the facts of

chemical risks should a visitor to the site seek more information, but the language of the blurb

above encourages readers to tap into their own experiences and to reflect on how the far-

reaching implications of toxic chemicals in the environment affects their lives. Reflecting on the

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[69] "Green Mama Guide," WVE, accessed May 23, 2016, http://www.womensvoices.org/avoid-toxic-chemicals/pregnancy/non-toxic-baby-tips/.html.

particulars of one's experience may motivate change in one's practices more than the objective language of scientific reports.

WVE communicates with their audience by mixing the conclusions of scientific reports and personal stories. Alex shared some of her own story: "I used to think, 'OK, I need all the best data I can find and spell it out for people.' But I realized my reports are read by so few people in the end. Yet they're still important. From them we can build the fact sheets and stories which have scientific credibility," she said. Alex emphasized that scientific detail alone can be very empty and that, in WVE's work, experience, of all sorts, and research are parts of the same whole. Regarding the communication of environmental issues, Alex commented: "Storytelling is incredibly important…because a lot of these issues are complex and complicated. But, if you can have a real human story associated with them, it helps people to recognize the human face on them—people are more likely to connect. Scientific reports alone can't provide this kind of richness."

Moreover, changing the status quo comes with fresh perspectives. Alex observed:

I think one of the problems with doing traditional environmental work is that often groups claim, 'we are *the* voice of environmentalism instead of [saying] we are *a* voice among environmentalists, here is what we do, and we want to collaborate.' In this way, I think the environmental movement is changing. It's been very male-dominated with a winners-and-losers mentality. These groups have accomplished amazing things so I'm not saying those tactics are bad but there are a lot of ways to talk differently. We don't have to have opposition. There are ways that we can get what we want and you can get what you want. And it can be hard and requires consistently working at it.

Alex suggests that developing new questions and solutions to environmental problems requires inviting diversity. Even conversations between people on the same team have to evolve, she says. WVE and other organizations can work together to be more effective without claiming to have the most valid approach to environmentalism or to be addressing the most urgent issue.

As Alex says, communication doesn't have to be oppositional. However, amicability requires an approach that addresses exclusivity regarding what counts as knowledge, which kinds of issues can be considered environmental problems deserving of theory, and who can participate in such questioning.

II.   WVE, ESSENTIALISM, & A FEMININE STYLE

Describing the work of WVE bears out some of the characteristics of the feminine style. CR was significant for validating individuals' experiences. Individual women experienced newfound authority over their situations through the support of others who corroborated their feelings with similar experiences. Personal experiences could then take on new meaning: they were not isolated incidents but symptoms of broad social problems. Similarly, WVE creates opportunities for individuals and groups to educate themselves so that they might have greater control over their lives. The information WVE disseminates also reveals seemingly lone incidents of environmental illness as part of the systemic use of toxic chemicals.

Regarding CR, Eisenstein claims that "[it] bridged the gap between private and public realms."[70] Shared personal data became the basis for a politics. Like CR, WVE seeks to change the system. Women are a source of power. Since they are the primary buyers of household goods and cosmetics and the largest voting bloc in the U.S., women can change their exposure to environmental toxins by demanding better environmental policy and safer products. WVE believes it is not solely the responsibility of the individual to protect themselves against risk. The organization tackles corporate and governmental policies regarding chemicals in everyday products to improve conditions for individuals. In this sense, WVE also closes the gap between

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[70] Eisenstein, 38.

the private and public spheres. WVE amplifies individuals' voices to make demands and

influence socio-political decisions. Similarly, CR contributed to developing an understanding of

the universality underlying diverse experiences (while accounting for differences between

individuals). Common experiences between women cut across differences of class, race, and

sexual orientation. Likewise, WVE sees biological risk to chemicals as affecting all life, cutting

across differences between people.

Technique was significant to CR. CR used methods intended to overcome power inequities

between individuals, such as asking individuals not to interrupt each other. This concern about

avoiding comparisons and judgement among individuals is not at the core of WVE's

communication strategies, but as a group WVE *is* cognizant of these issues and relies on

particular tools for dealing with them. For example, Alex noted that while WVE seeks to

empower women and work with women who identify as leaders, its priority is to let women

know that special expertise is *not* required to ensure their safety. Furthermore, folks at WVE

consider theirs to be a voice among other voices. Members of the group understand their work

to be part of a broader whole and not more or less significant than other contributions to the

environmental conversation.

The stylistic features of CR and WVE are characteristic of a feminine style. A feminine

style is personal, collaborative, experiential, and empowering. Both CR and WVE promote

education of individuals and groups to encourage greater control over their lives and society.

And in both groups, personal information is powerful. Their style is distinct from a traditional

rhetorical transaction which encourages submissiveness and passivity in listeners; persuasion

by an expert; and inducing acceptance of a specific program. One of the central aims of a

feminine style is to create awareness of a shared reality. WVE and CR attempt to equalize the social and political power of all women. For both groups individual stories are integral to developing personal and social politics. And WVE addresses safety interests with research *and* stories. Alex stressed that a complete account can only be developed with both narrative and research.

WVE's perspective also offers an example of Mann's idea of an emphasis on our ties to Earth as a basis for environmentalism. For instance, Alex bemoans that historical wilderness movement has ignored the impact of degraded environments on human health. She says, "The food we eat and the air we breathe is being significantly impacted and that's a reason to protect the environment." Such a view protests a disconnection of humans from the physical and begins from the assumption that Earth constructs and sustains us. Similarly, WVE draws attention to the reality that toxics pose biological risk to all life, cuts across gendered (among other) differences between people – and across divides between human and nonhuman animals. Starting from our bare dependence on Earth and underlining the universality of toxic threats to develop its critique certainly makes WVE's epistemology essentialist in Mann's sense.

III.   IMPLICATIONS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PHILOSOPHY

In professional environmental philosophy, the rationalist conversation about the environment limits the scope of the discourse and who can participate. The theories of Taylor, Norton, Regan, Singer, and Rolston, to name a few, bear this out. In this chapter I have suggested that WVE offers a practical example of a union of Mann's "essentialist" environmentalism with a feminine style. In this section I will discuss five ways in which

following this example can benefit environmental philosophy. First I will speak more generally about these implications.

Broadly speaking, an analysis beginning from assumptions of Warren and Garland-Thomson would deepen scholarship and facilitate a more comprehensive view of environmental problems. Such a move would require changes. Warren's boundary conditions would provide shape to epistemological questions that arise with shifting away from a rationalist platform. Warren's requirements can help to clarify some of the minimal conditions of a feminine ethic without dictating its contents or suggesting it needs an ahistorical core. The specific content would emerge from the many voices participating in its creation. In addition, Garland-Thomson's articulation of a feminist disability studies contributes to this discussion of a feminine environmental ethic as it challenges and adds new critical insight to some strengths of a feminine theory. For one thing, Garland-Thomson indicates that frequently an equality model of feminist theory advances individualism and autonomy as key to women's liberation. But feminist disability theory contests this assessment and suggests instead that we are better off learning to individually and collectively accommodate bodily limits rather than trying to eliminate or deny them—as we all evolve into limited bodies, at least, in old age. A feminist disabilities study recognizes bodily dependence in a way reminiscent of Mann's admonition that we rely on our physical selves and our habitats for basic survival. Incorporating a feminist disability studies as a category of analysis – which critically zeros in on differences between bodies – into a more feminine environmental ethic can challenge and strengthen analyses of bodily relations with environments and other bodies.

The first specific way in which professional environmental philosophy can benefit from a more feminine style is that it will begin to be rid of oppressive and dominating biases, such as rationalism. A feminine view of ethics, philosopher Rosemarie Tong reminds us, points out that a community that is structured in terms of patterns of subordination is simply morally worse than one that is not.[71] A feminine view is based on a principle of equality wherein theory-making is the shared and inclusive activity of individuals who are all experts of their own lives. WVE and the CR model showed us that a feminine discourse creates measures to dissuade comparison and judgement within groups in order to foster unprejudiced relations among members. Environmental philosophers should be more cognizant of these issues and develop particular tools for dealing with them to avoid discourse that privileges certain viewpoints while subordinating others. For instance, students should not be singled out for having a special capacity for rationalist argument because doing so suggests a belittling of other capacities.

Second, a feminine discourse in environmental theory-making will contribute to greater diversity and inclusivity which will in turn sharpen knowledge. According to Warren's conditions, feminine style gives centrality to diversity. Under this condition, a suitable environmental ethic must be structurally pluralistic, so special attention must be given to creating a space where a diversity of voices is welcome and equally deserving of consideration. Yet differences between individuals will still be recognized. For instance, special skills should be praised but without comparison or privilege. WVE sees itself as a voice among many voices. Its members are aware of the situatedness of their perspective. As mostly white women they could not understand the experience of environmental bads on populations with very different

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[71] Rosemarie, Tong. *Feminine and Feminist Ethics,* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1993), 173.

demographics. WVE's work is part of a collaboration with predominately black, Latino, and Asian organizations, among others, and WVE supports other environmental groups while it has its own distinct goals. Similarly, environmental philosophers should see themselves as making a contribution to a vast conversation instead of arguing for the superiority of their point of view. As Alex said, changing the conversation will be difficult and require consistency but a commitment to plurality will resist forces of uniformity and reduction. Diversity means more women and oppressed populations are involved in creating environmental theory. As WVE demonstrates, theory by women produces environmental work that is different from theory by men. The experience of gender, along with other social influences such as race and ethnicity and class, impacts issues that are considered important and it shapes how these issues are communicated. And, due to their current demographics, philosophy departments cannot speak to the kinds of environmental problems considered important or urgent to oppressed communities. Perhaps, greater diversity within environmental philosophy departments can motivate the development of new strategies to consider the specific environmental problems affecting underrepresented populations.

Warren points out that since a feminine ethic is contextualist and pluralist it should be evaluated in terms of its inclusivity. Under this condition statements and claims which are more inclusive of the felt experiences of the exploited or subordinated have favor. This ensures that the voices of women and other oppressed individuals will have legitimacy in theory-building. WVE focuses on amplifying women's voices in the environmental conversation because, as Alex said, women's voices are often ignored. Creating a platform for women and other minorities in environmental philosophy would ensure that their concerns are included in environmental

thinking. This condition would help to minimize the privileging of certain groups and help to avoid uniformity and reduction of theory. Valuing human health as an environmental issue may become central to environmental theorizing since it is a problem women and other minorities have to bear disproportionately, relative to men. Similarly, as a feminine style of rhetoric is personal, collaborative, experiential, and empowering as opposed to a traditional rhetorical transaction which encourages submissiveness and passivity in an audience, a more feminine environmental theory would encourage students to have greater control over their lives as they are empowered by their expertise over their own experiences. Such empowerment would foster an awareness of shared realities between professors and students who, while different, can come together over the shared features of their environmental experiences. In a related topic, Lori Gruen, a philosopher of feminist moral epistemology, directs our attention to the practice of feminist dialogue, which is more than a way of reaching knowledge.[72] Gruen points out that dialogue is an important moral experience itself in that it cultivates values, such as mutual equity and respect, care, trust, sensitivity, and so on. Gruen sees dialogue, which assumes that an individual's experience is indispensable to moral and political knowledge and that every person's experience is equally important, as a starting point for moral and political knowledge. She also stresses the assumption that an ideal situation for dialogue is a diverse, inclusive, nurturing and supportive environment. The heart of the matter is that Gruen challenges environmental philosophy to encourage an awareness of individual differences, shared experiences, and dialogue.

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[72] Lori Gruen, "Revaluing Nature," in *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature*, ed. Karen J. Warren (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1997), 359.

A third advantage to environmental philosophy that a more feminine style would provide is that the breadth and depth of environmental theory would be challenged. A feminine style which incorporates diverse experience and material conditions into its discourse would take seriously what Mann has shown – namely, that theory can never completely transcend our material existence, since each of us depends on our bodies and Earth for survival. Reengaging with our physical-boundedness can change how we think about the environment. Integrating a view of environmental thinking with human well-being at the fore can create new possibilities for philosophical work. For instance, Alex of WVE bemoans that the wilderness movement has ignored the impact of degraded environments on human health. Such a view protests a dissociation of humans from the physical and begins from the assumption that Earth constructs and sustains us. WVE's example highlights that theory is needed for thinking through a perspective that is essentialist in Mann's sense. WVE draws attention to the reality that toxics pose biological risk to all life cutting across differences between people – and across divides between human and nonhuman animals. Starting from our bare dependence on Earth and underlining the universality of environmental threats to humans can refresh the discourse of environmental theory. Rethinking our material dependence may help us to see old arguments in new light.

A fourth feature of the feminine style that can benefit environmental theory is a critical consideration of common and different experiences between individuals. Garland-Thomson shows that a feminine perspective with disability studies at its core would confront how we understand the socio-cultural structures that interpret differences between bodies. An approach that includes all bodily experiences while considering differences can stay alert to

universalizing language that would generalize environmental relations. For instance, such a

critique would challenge premises that exclude and/or subordinate the experiences of unusual,

for instance disabled, bodies in the environment. Considering these bodily differences in

environmental theory would also reinvigorate the field of environmental philosophy which

tends to generalize the experience of white, male, able-bodies. Garland-Thomson's

contribution deepens this critique in its stress on the individual's dependence on other bodies.

A theory that highlights this reality can critically zero in on our bodily relations with Earth and

other bodies – including both human and animal bodies – and can centralize relationships

rather than individuals.

Briefly, a fifth advantage is that a feminine styled environmental philosophy would make

political, power related, issues central to philosophical work within and outside of classrooms.

Modeled after the politics of the women's movement and feminist thought, the feminine style

aims to shed light on dominating words and actions. WVE and CR attempt to level the social

and political power of all women. For both groups individual experiences are integral to

developing personal and social politics. Environmental philosophical work could take a cue from

the feminine style by encouraging students to interact with broad politico-environmental issues

and to incorporate these experiences into class discussion and assignments.

IV.   CONCLUSION

In my practical environmental work, I have found that environmental issues are far

more numerous and nuanced than my academic work has acknowledged. Environmental

philosophers historically have been concerned with the protection of "Nature." While such

protection is undoubtedly important, this concern casts a shadow over other understandings of

environmental work. I believe the work of WVE and the EHM represents necessary

environmentalism. The kinds of issues these groups address are not the type that traditional

environmental philosophy has emphasized. I think this has something to do with the fact that

professional philosophy has been dominated by a homogenous group that is not especially

exposed to the harms the poor, women, and children experience. An adequate response to this

reality would be a focus on personal and material knowledge, which will deepen scholarship

and facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of environmental problems.

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