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Distinguishing Harms to Derive Commitments: Karen Warren and Aldo Leopold on Ecofeminism and Domination

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Distinguishing Harms to Derive Commitments: Karen Warren and Aldo Leopold on
Ecofeminism and Domination

A Senior Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Departments of Philosophy and Environmental Studies

Bates College

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of Bachelor of Arts

By

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Lewiston, Maine

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INTRODUCTION

It is not an unusual nor particularly new claim to acknowledge the intersectional oppressions and dominations that stain all aspects of many human societies as having a connected necessity to dismantle. Ecofeminist Philosophy is a field in which some of the work of theorizing about such processes of dismantling is done, and it is done so specifically through the connections between women and the natural world, (although indeed does often note the more broadly linked oppressions of minority groups and beings). As the arguments and theories even within Ecofeminist Philosophy are many, and at times are incompatible, I approach and engage with this large topic with a narrowed focus on Karen Warren's Ecofeminist arguments.

I argue that Karen Warren's interpretation of Ecofeminism is correct in regard to the connections between the domination of women and the domination of nature;¹ however, it is wrong insofar as it posits that the reason one must be committed to dismantling both dominations is based in the wrong that befalls the victim in these relationships. Rather, I argue that Warren's Ecofeminist objective of committing an individual to dismantling the domination of women and the domination of the natural world can be improved by appealing to the moral problems inherent in the process of dominating. That is, this commitment to dismantle these dominations is derived instead from the harms to the perfectionist and prudential value of the dominator. I make this argument by first introducing Warren's argument and the problems within it in Chapters

¹ It is important to note the language that I will use throughout this paper. For the purposes of clarity, I will utilize Warren's definition of "nature," that being "plants and rocks," and further, will interchangeably use "nature," "the natural world," "the land," and "the environment." I note this to acknowledge the complexities and oppressions tied up within these various words; nonetheless, I have chosen to use them interchangeably to most clearly align my language with the thinkers that are referenced throughout.

1 and 2. In Chapter 3, I make clear the important distinctions between harming and wronging, and prudential and perfectionist value. These distinctions, while seemingly overlooked by Warren, become crucial for my own argument as it relies upon a clear understanding of harm and how it interacts with these two types of value in regard to the dominator. With this foundation, I am then able to develop my redirection of Warren's argument. This redirection is structured by the following three chapters, in which I discuss living well and liberty (Chapter 4), Aldo Leopold's Land Ethic (Chapter 5), and the human-land relationship (Chapter 6). These chapters provide structure to my argument by introducing the concept and question of what it is to "live well", alongside the work of a prominent Environmental thinker, Aldo Leopold. Leopold provides an alternative framework to consider the human relationship with the natural world, and an assessment and deconstruction of the human-land relationship, all elements that work together in my own reframing of Warren's Ecofeminism. Chapter 6 also begins the work of embedding these elements within each other, as I point to the harms that impact the dominators flourishing in the context of liberty. I complete my argument in Chapter 7, by discussing the harms that impact the dominators well-being and flourishing in the context of relating to the other, specifically through breeding isolation.

By focusing on the harms associated with the act of dominating itself, rather than the problems within the concept of harm that Warren focuses on, I hope to provide a reformulation of an Ecofeminist argument that commits one to dismantling the twin dominations of women and nature without relying upon conceptions of wronging as they play out for the various victims of domination. I hope too to acknowledge the dominators

position, and inherited ideations of privilege, to compel to act those that must, for a reason that is more consistent (albeit narcissistic in ways) and uniquely universal.

CHAPTER 1

ECOFEMINISM AND WARREN'S ARGUMENT

In this chapter I will introduce the concept of "Ecofeminism," and explore Karen Warren's positioning and argument for the Ecofeminist objective.

CHAPTER 1.1: AN INTRODUCTION TO KAREN WARREN'S ECOFEMINISM

"Ecological Feminism" or "Ecofeminism" is a term that is difficult to define. To resolve this difficulty, I will utilize Philosopher Karen J. Warren's definition of Ecofeminism as a foundation for considering the topic. I will do so due to her definition's clarity and clear logical development, as well as for its accessibility to a layperson attempting to understand connections between the oppression of women and nature. With this definition in mind, I will consider Ecofeminist theories regarding relationships, and present Warren's argument regarding the necessity for dismantling the twin dominations of women and nature. However, where Warren identifies the commitment to dismantle these twin dominations as derived from the wrong that is done to the victim, I will instead identify this commitment as derived from the moral problems inherent within the process of dominating, namely, the harm to the dominators perfectionist value in the context of liberty as well as in the context of relationships.

Before delving into the specifics of Ecofeminism and structural oppression, it is necessary to discuss subalternate positioning. Warren approaches oppression by first introducing a vocabulary for unjustifiably dominated groups: "Others," meaning "both

‘human Others’ (such as women, people of color, children, and the poor) and ‘earth Others’ (such as animals, forests, the land).”² This initial linguistic category of “Others” introduces the connections between those who are unjustifiably dominated, and, while there exists much diversity within this category of Others, allows a movement of solidarity “based on shared beliefs and interests.”³ Such a movement illuminates the effects of structural oppression on all that are oppressed, and further, illuminates the shared necessity for escaping this oppression. This point should not go unregistered, as the structural connections between those harmed by oppressive frameworks are crucial to recognize if one is to fight to dismantle such negative realities. Nonetheless, Warren’s Ecofeminist theory does not focus on each and every group within the category of Others, which admittedly may raise some concerns. The choice to focus specifically on women as a group within Others is not a claim of a hierarchical importance in deconstructing dominated groups beginning with gender, but rather, as Warren posits, the focus on women exposes important elements of the intersectionality of domination. That is, in approaching domination as an overlapping system of oppression for various social identities, it is useful to focus on just a single identity, such as women as women, (rather than women as human, women as mothers, women as wives, etc.), within the category of Others, to clearly and then comprehensively explore that intersectionality.⁴

Within the subgroups present in Others, Warren explores gender by noting, “it is often women who suffer disproportionately higher risks and harms than men.”⁵ She

² Karen Warren, *Ecofeminist Philosophy: A Western Perspective on what it is and Why it Matters* (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 1.

³ Karen J. Warren, “The Power and Promise of Ecological Feminism,” *Environmental Ethics* 12, (1990): 125.

⁴ Warren, *Ecofeminist Philosophy: A Western Perspective on what it is and Why it Matters*, 2.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

further argues that “female-gender roles...overlap with a particular environmental issue in a way that male-gender roles do not,” and finally, that some Western ideologies “that underlie the conception and domination of “nature” are male-gender biased in ways that are distinct from other sorts of bias.”⁶ A focus on the domination of women lends itself to a particularly effective window into the group of Others and into domination in general, and as such justifies Warren and other’s focus on women in understanding oppressive frameworks in the context of Ecofeminism.

CHAPTER 1.2: WARREN’S ARGUMENT

With an account for the choice of focus on women rather than other Others included in the category of the oppressed outlined, one can then turn to the specifics of Warren’s Ecofeminist argument. Warren provides a relatively inclusive definition of the term “Ecofeminism”: “the position that there are important connections—historical, experiential, symbolic, theoretical—between the domination of women and the domination of nature, an understanding of which is crucial to both feminism and environmental ethics.”⁷ This definition highlights the culturally purported link between women and nature, the association with women and the natural, the mother and mother earth, and the emotional and natural women: all dual to the dispassionate and civil man. In this definition, Warren establishes a footing for an interpretation of relationships, specifically for those that are dominance based. With the connections between the dominations of women and nature recognized, Warren then goes on to claim that insofar as these are twin dominations informed by the same oppressive frameworks, to challenge one is to commit to challenging both.

⁶ Ibid., 2.

⁷ Warren, ““The Power and Promise of Ecological Feminism,” 123.

Warren establishes the point of these dominations as tied by focusing on the “logic of domination” that is at work in both the oppression of nature and the oppression of women. Without the logic of domination, “a description of similarities and differences would be just that—a description of similarities and differences;”⁸ that is, the logic of domination ensures the impossibility for difference without hierarchy. A logic of domination employs value-hierarchical frameworks to dictate moral superiority, (or, those beings that have superior moral value), and works as the moral premise that asserts superiority as justifying subordination. Namely, the existence of a logic of domination means that there is a logically coherent structure that can be used to justify subordination by laying out and appealing to levels of social, physical, etc. superiority and subsequent inferiority that permits domination. In the oppression of both women and the environment, the logic of domination is applied in the same manner, and as such the dominations are twin, linking the two in such a way that Ecofeminists argue to dismantle one domination commits one to dismantling the other. Warren’s interpretation of this working follows as such: from the assumed premise that “whatever has the capacity to consciously and radically change the community in which it lives is morally superior to whatever lacks this capacity,” (a premise predicated on value-hierarchical thinking), it follows that humans are superior to plants and rocks. Following this with an introduction of the logic of domination, “For any X and Y, if X is morally superior to Y, then X is morally justified in subordinating Y,” the argument concludes with the claim that “humans are morally justified in subordinating plants and rocks.”⁹ With the oppressive framework of the human and nature relationship established, it then follows that

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

recognizing the cultural link between women and nature reiterates the domination of women in the same format: “whatever is identified with nature and the realm of the physical is inferior to (“below”) whatever is identified with the “human” and the realm of the mental,”¹⁰ again a value-hierarchical thought. Employing the logic of domination again, “For any X and Y, if X is superior to Y, then X is justified in subordinating Y,” it follows then that men, of the human and mental realm, are justified in subordinating women, of the natural and the physical realm. It is this conceptual framework that has functioned and continues to function to oppress women and nature in the same manner; thus it is impossible to address just one of these dominations when both are derived from and dependent upon the same patriarchal structure.

¹⁰ Ibid., 124.

CHAPTER 2

WARREN'S MISTAKE

Here I will begin to push back against Warren, and identify where I believe her argument is vulnerable to neglected important distinctions and claims.

CHAPTER 2.1: WARREN'S MISTAKE

Karen Warren's Ecofeminist argument operates on the premises of value-hierarchies and the logic of domination as consistent and parallel across both the oppression of women as well as the natural world, a conceptual consistency and connection that requires one to attend to both dominations. That is, if one agrees that the premises that posit humans as superior to nature and men as superior to women are incorrect, and further, resists superiority as justifying subordination, then the commitment to dismantling both dominations as a dual requirement remains. However, if one does not deny these premises, then Warren's argument fails. Warren is vulnerable to a counterargument that asks what particular kind of "thing" is on either side of the dominant relationship and whether that "thing" is one such that may be permissibly dominated. If domination is problematic for the impact that it has on the victim, in other words for the *wronging* of the dominated, then one must assume that nature can be wronged in order to accept Warren's argument. But, is this a reasonable concession to make, or is it possible that nature is not the type of "thing" that can be wronged? If nature, "plants and rocks" as Warren defines it, is not the particular kind of thing that can be wronged, then there is reason to grant the permissibility of its domination. In order to make a claim either way further consideration into the capacity for nature to be wronged is required. Such consideration can be approached through the deliberation of notions of

nature's utility, or instrumental value, and nature's rationality, sentience, and teleological functioning, or nature's ability to be wronged.

CHAPTER 2.2: INSTRUMENTAL VALUE

Challenging these premises of value and superiority in the context of utility, rationality, sentience, and teleological functioning raises important questions that make distinct women from nature. Before delving into the notion of wronging, I will consider these distinctions between women and nature, turning first to the instrumental value of the natural world. It seems possible that there are instances wherein some domination of nature is required, though the same cannot be said about any domination of women. For example, there is the issue of food. The human population is dependent upon nutrients garnered from plants and animals for survival, and our food system processes embody domination of the natural world. One might respond to this by arguing that as a part of nature ourselves, the human population can partake in the circle of life and death and consumption of the land not solely as domination but as necessity of community. This response might then point to the food industry's approach as *frivolous* domination, and take issue in that framing. This is not a difficult point to concede: in 2015, the United States slaughtered 5.2 million cows for the commercial food industry, not only an extreme example of humanity's violent and widespread domination over animals, but also a comment on the lengths gone to for food production. While perhaps consumption of cows is not an essential element of human life, the same scale of domination appears over all varieties of food items and agricultural exploitation that exist in the human food industry, manifesting as genetic modification and erosion, soil erosion and degradation, wasteful water consumption, and countless other oppressions inflicted on the natural

world as a consequence of its instrumentality. Thus, there is indeed a distinction to be drawn between frivolous domination (albeit necessary) and sustainable necessary domination. Food aside, one may also consider shelter; the shelters humans create are possible only through the subjugation of the trees cut, the rocks fragmented, and the holes dug, instrumental to human living insofar as shelter is necessary, but excessive in application. These above two examples are only the baseline of what could be regarded as necessary domination based on instrumental value, without yet even mentioning arguments for the economic utility of nature, and seem to posit the permissibility of sometimes dominating nature in some ways, whether one makes claims against frivolousness or not. Regardless of the extent of and/or approach to domination, all of these “necessary dominations” seem untranslatable to woman.

CHAPTER 2.3: RATIONALITY, SENTIENCE, TELEOLOGICAL FUNCTIONING

Turning away from the “necessity” argument, one may begin to address the question of wronging, and therein the potential justification behind the domination of nature: the difference between the rational, sentient, and teleological organization of woman and the argued absence of rationality, sentience, and teleological organization of nature. It is here where I argue that Warren’s depiction of Ecofeminism fails. If the indictment of domination in the context of the human is dependent upon wronging due to the humanity’s rational and sentient nature, or due to their perfectionist value, then if nature, (again plants and rocks), has none of these qualities, it seems less troublesome, if at all, as a subject of domination. If a geologist smashes a rock with a rock hammer, but the rock cannot feel or even perceive the hammer’s blow, it seems acceptable to say that the geologist is not wronging the rock. Further, if there is not an intrinsic aim or end that

exists within all rocks, a “teleological function,” then there is no perfectionist value to be affected as the geologist smashes the rock. The rock is neither sentient nor rational, and similarly, it is difficult to argue for either of these qualities as existing in plants. Thus, this formulation of nature posits it as a permissible particular kind of “thing” to dominate.

Of course, if one begins to expand the boundaries of Warren’s definition of nature to include animals, a logical development considering the general western cultural interpretation of nature includes wild animals (and one that I will at least address briefly to acknowledge this common understanding), the point of at least sentience begins to change. Animals are creatures that have the capacity for experience, and, more pertinent to a conversation about domination, are creatures that suffer and feel pain—thus, they are sentient. This is a relatively moderate point to concede with contemporary biological and neurological research, however, if the traces of uncertainty that inflict this field of research (stemming from the difficulty of language and communication barriers) remain of concern, it can at least be said that, for example, dogs suffer and cry when they are kicked. If one accepts the sentience, or at least a semblance of sentience, of non-human animals, the justification of domination must then land on the matter of rationality. Animal cognition is a point that has been disputed by early western philosophers such as Aristotle, who rejected the possibility of rationality existing in animals other than humans, and Kant, who focused on the incapacity for animals to think about themselves and thus lacked rational agency,¹¹ as well as later thinkers and scientists who have conversely argued for elements of the human mind that seem to appear in animals as well. Ultimately, due to the methodological issues regarding the study of animal minds

¹¹ Andrews, Kristin, "Animal Cognition", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), Summer 2016 Edition, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2016/entries/cognition-animal/>.

and the controversy and lack of clarity that exists, I will concede that the potential for animals' irrationality lends itself to a justification for subordination.

CHAPTER 2.4: BREAKING DOWN WARREN'S ARGUMENT

These arguments that separate the domination of nature from the domination of women for reasons of necessity as well as logical justification are important to consider, as on them rests Warren's point of the commitment to dismantle both dominations. Warren argues that one cannot recognize the structural oppression of women and structural oppression of nature, the value-hierarchy and logic of domination acting the same in both, and only choose to confront one of the dominations and still claim consistency. However, the lens of harm to the victim that Warren utilizes in this argument is not one that stands, as sentience, or at least rationality, is a major distinction between women and nature that affects their statuses as subjects of harm. Warren might respond to this question of rationality by pointing to the western cultural dualistic association of men with the rational and women with the irrational. As long as this duality between women and men, with men associated with rationale and organization and women associated with "the emotional" and disorder, is validated in our culture, so too is the association of women with nature and men with civilization validated.¹² This is not to say that this western dualism is correct nor that the Ecofeminist need adhere to it in order to believe in non-domination; however, as ecofeminism is dependent upon the social and cultural structures and rhetoric that have been and continue to be propagated, this social ordering of men as rational and women as not cannot go unnoted and without influence on advocating against the oppressions of nature and women. A feminist and an

¹² Warren, *Ecofeminist Philosophy: A Western Perspective on what it is and Why it Matters*: 47.

environmentalist must work under the constraints of cultural narratives, despite the likely opposition to those narratives; each is committed to dismantling the oppressive framework that utilizes language to deem value based on rationality, regardless of the truth in that language and narrative.

This point of the restrictive cultural narrative within which the dismantling of oppression must occur is valid insofar as this duality between men and women exists and does affect the treatment of women. However, the acknowledgement that this western dualism is incorrect suggests that in a space within which one is aiming to dismantle an oppression, this dualism can be rejected in the process of advocating for women. That is, an individual could simply argue for the rationality or teleological organization of women and then from there, aim to dismantle the domination of women, without having to even acknowledge the oppression of the environment. It is much easier as well as less problematic to make arguments for these qualities that exist within women and oppose this duality, than it is to work within it and argue for non-domination of women despite implicated constructions of the irrationality of women. As such, these distinctions between women and nature seems significant enough to harm Warren's thesis as again it affects the status of women and nature as twin subjects of harm. The rational, sentient, and teleologically organized woman can be wronged, however the non-sentient, non-rational, and non-teleologically organized rock may not have this same capacity; the Ecofeminist argument cannot then commit one to advocating for women and nature on the premise of wronging.

CHAPTER 3

DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN HARMING VS. WRONGING AND PRUDENTIAL VS. PERFECTIONIST VALUE

In this chapter I will aim to make important distinctions that seem to have been neglected by Warren, and will set up latter parts of my argument.

CHAPTER 3.1: MAKING DISTINCTIONS

Before continuing into my own arguments regarding Ecofeminism, there is a distinction to be made here between understandings of harm and wrongdoing, especially in the context of concepts of well-being versus concepts of flourishing. That is, as in my following discussion the question of harm and wrongdoing to women as well as to the environment will arise, it is important to first discuss the exact formulations of harm and wrongdoing that will apply. In this argument, I will be considering these concepts as they play out for the dominator in regard to flourishing as well as well-being/welfare. Moral Philosopher Leonard Wayne Sumner articulates the distinction between the two concepts of well-being and flourishing as “prudential value” versus “perfectionist value” respectively, the former referring to a value founded in the welfare of a person dependent upon how they¹³ are “faring” and whether they are “doing well”¹⁴, while the latter addresses the value of the person’s life relative to the nature of their being and in that, the function of their species identity. Sumner further examines this distinction by noting that

¹³ Here I acknowledge the grammatical mistake of utilizing “they” in a singular context, however also note that I will continue to do so in referring to individuals to recognize the complex reality of gender fluidity and gender politics.

¹⁴ Leonard Wayne Sumner, *Welfare, Happiness, and Ethics* (Clarendon Press, 1996): 1.

welfare “is a matter of how well a life is going,”¹⁵ while perfectionist value refers to whether a “thing” is a “good instance or specimen of its kind” or “exemplifies the excellences characteristic of its particular nature.”¹⁶ Thus, prudential value refers to the well-being of the individual, an achievement of good not founded in the expectation of species identity as perfectionist value references, but rather in that which “yield[s] truth conditions for claims about, or assessments of, our interest or well-being.”¹⁷ Sumner continues to explicate this concept by offering the following useful example:

You can easily imagine yourself, at the end of your life, taking pride in your high level of self-development but nonetheless wishing that you had got more out of your life, that it had been more rewarding or fulfilling, and thinking that it might have gone better for you had you devoted less energy to perfecting your talents and more to just hanging out or diversifying your interests. Whatever we are to count as excellences for creatures of our nature, they will raise the perfectionist value of our lives regardless of the extent of their payoff for us. There is therefore no logical guarantee that the best human specimens will also be the best off, or that their underdeveloped rivals will not be faring better...the perfectionist value of a life is conceptually independent of how well it is going for the owner.¹⁸

In this example, Sumner calls attention to the important difference between success as dictated by one's species identity and the subjective success in one's personal well-being. While one may have significant perfectionist value, this does not necessarily have anything to do with how that being's life is going for him/her/them. Thus, Sumner

¹⁵ Ibid, 8.

¹⁶ Ibid, 24

¹⁷ Ibid, 7.

¹⁸ Ibid, 24.

presents the concept of living well as conceptually separate from excellence of being, and therein as a product of factors beyond just teleological function.

It is important to note here the potential assumption that theories of well-being are based entirely in the subjective experience of the individual. While Sumner claims that any attempts at objective theories of welfare fail due to “descriptive inadequacy,”¹⁹ this is not to say that these objective theories do not exist. Rather, there do indeed exist theories of objective prudential value. This is just to say that the defining and most poignant element of prudential value that distinguishes it from perfectionist value is not a reliance on subjectivity, but rather the notion that prudential value is the condition of faring well, with or without reference to subjectivity.

As has been determined, the perfectionist value is distinguishable from the prudential value and thus welfare of a being; from this, it then follows that it is possible for a being to be harmed in the sense of the perfectionist value without being harmed in the sense of prudential value. That is, the excellence of the being can be undermined by a harm that is not contrary to the interests of the being. One such example, employing Sumner’s theory of subjective prudential value, could be formulated as the following: consider a human being who lives isolated from his local community. He not only lives in isolation, but also takes no measures to reach out to the community, and as such has no friends, or even acquaintances. However, this individual is tempered such that he is not bothered by this isolation, rather, he quite prefers to be alone. As far as he is concerned, his life is indeed going well. In this situation, this individual is not being harmed prudentially, for as noted, it is within his subjective interests to be without

¹⁹ Ibid, 46.

companionship so actually his prudential value and well-being is increased in this scenario. However, simultaneously, given that he is a human being and thus of a gregarious species that engages in social interaction and social communities, his isolation means that he thus does not “display the excellences appropriate to [human] kind.”²⁰ Here, the individual’s perfection of species is at risk, and his ability to flourish is harmed. In this way, a harm that becomes an individual’s perfectionist values can simultaneously be identified as not such, or even a good, for the individuals prudential values.

Sumner’s distinction implicitly calls attention to another question of clarification and distinction to be made, that of harm versus wronging; while both are relevant to some degree, harm will be more pertinent to my particular argument. In my use of the term “harm” I specifically refer to that which affects a decrease in either perfectionist or prudential value. With this use of “harm” it is not always clear that it is distinguishable from a simultaneous wronging. Nonetheless, there are contexts in which harming and wronging occur simultaneously, as well as contexts where one may occur and the other may not. That is, it is conceptually possible to be harmed without being wronged, as well as possible to be wronged without being harmed. As I’ve outlined, while harm denotes a decrease in either prudential or perfectionist value generally, wronging has a more nuanced application in its more evaluative focus on rights. An example of the former situation could look like this: Person A buys the last donut at the donut shop, a donut that Person B had been planning on buying themselves. Person A bought the donut first simply because Person A was in front of Person B in line; thus, Person A followed social regulations and norms and justly got to the last donut first. This means that Person A did

²⁰ Ibid, 78.

not wrong Person B as he had the right to buy the donut himself. However, while Person A may not have *wronged* Person B, they did *harm* Person B. As Person B was planning on having that donut, Person A harmed Person B by interfering with Person B's desire and plan to have that donut. In this same vein, there exist examples wherein a person may be wronged but not harmed. Consider that Person B did not go to the donut shop, and instead Person A went and bought the last donut and then broke into Person B's apartment to leave the donut as a gift for Person B. In this example, Person B was not harmed, as they actually benefited from Person A's action in regards to gaining a donut. However, by breaking into Person B's apartment, Person A did wrong Person B, for to gain entrance to Person B's private property without consent violates a right of Person B that constitutes wronging.

This distinction between harming versus wronging is necessary for elucidation in a discussion of Ecofeminism and distinguishing between victims of domination because while harm to prudential value can indeed constitute wronging, it is not clear that a harm to perfectionist value can constitute a wronging. It is possible to imagine a harm to prudential value that also implies a wronging in the following example: If Tommy keys Kate's car, Tommy has both harmed Kate by damaging her property, as well as wronged Kate by interfering with her property when she has the right for Tommy not to do so. Thus, there do exist instances in which an individual's prudential value is harmed simultaneously as they are wronged. It is not necessary to continue on to ask whether a non-conscious being can be wronged prudentially as I have already established that non-conscious beings are not bearers of prudential value.

It is clear that in a case where a woman is dominated that she is wronged in the sense of her perfectionist value because her flourishing is dictated by her identity as a human, rather than a gender identity, and thus her flourishing requires equal opportunity and freedom as any other human being. Domination impedes human flourishing because it introduces an obstacle to excellence in the social, political, economic, etc. spheres. However, it is also possible for a situation to occur where an individual's perfectionist value is harmed but they are not wronged, as the moral consequences differ dependent upon context. That is, as I have noted, perfectionist value is one such value that extends beyond humans to organisms in the natural world, unlike many theories of prudential value. For example, trees have perfectionist value, and this value can be harmed insofar as the flourishing of a tree can be interrupted by carving words into its trunk. Yet, for someone to carve words into the trunk does not necessarily mean that they are *wronging* the tree, even though they may be harming it. Working with Sumner's particular formulation of prudential value, this also does not mean the tree is being harmed prudentially, as the tree is not a bearer of prudential value. Interestingly, in this context, the perfectionist value of the tree seems to be worth a different type of consideration than does the prudential value or welfare of a being. In examples of beings that have prudential value, for example Kate in the above example, it seems that prudential value falls in the moral realm such that it is worth promoting, for faring well seems different from flourishing. Kate is a being that has the distinct capacity to fare well, and have interests, and as such, has the capacity for this value to be wronged. The tree having perfectionist value does not necessarily seem to warrant the same attendance to or promotion of value, as it is referential to an excellence of being rather than a more

individualized welfare. In this way, it seems that harming and wronging may come together or apart in different contexts, especially when compared across prudential versus perfectionist value.

CHAPTER 3.2: RELATING THE DISTINCTIONS TO MY ARGUMENT

These distinctions, first between prudential value and perfectionist value, and then from that a more fine-tuned and relevant conception of harm and wronging, are important for the arguments that will follow for my reference to and the significance of prudential value versus perfectionist value in the context of the victim of domination. In my consideration of the Ecofeminist plight, and the effects of domination on the dominators as well as the dominated, I will reference not prudential value nor harm to such, but rather I will focus on perfectionist value and the conception of flourishing, for while harm to prudential value applies to women it is more difficult to argue its application to the natural world. In my arguments connecting the domination of nature with the domination of women and the importance of as well as commitment to dismantling both, perfectionist value will be most relevant for its attempt to utilize the objective and intrinsically valuable being. That is, in considering the individuals, I will not have to attempt to make claims regarding their subjective preferences, but rather I can approach the individuals considered through associated species identity and expectation. Finally, the parallel that will be drawn between women and the natural world will be founded in the harm that befalls the dominator's perfectionist value. To further clarify these points, I have provided the following chart considering Ecofeminism and Domination:

<i>Can Domination Harm...</i>	Prudential Value		Perfectionist Value	
	Harm	Wrong	Harm	Wrong
Women	<p>Yes</p> <p>Reason: Domination is against the woman's interest and thus hinders her well-being</p> <p><i>Ex./ A woman who is dominated by a man who treats her as property is harmed in that she is treated without respect and human decency, and cannot engage in free action.</i></p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Reason: Domination is against the woman's interest and interferes with her right to external freedom.</p> <p><i>Ex./A woman who is dominated by a man who treats her as property is wronged insofar as her freedom is suppressed and rational action and humanity denied by the man in control.</i></p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Reason: Domination decreases the woman's ability to flourish as a human being</p> <p><i>Ex./ A woman who is dominated by a man that considers her property cannot herself have true agency and freedom to pursue functional human pursuits involving free rational action, such as free pursuit of livelihood, education, etc.</i></p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Reason: Domination interferes with the woman's ability to flourish and right to flourish as free human being in social, political, economic, etc. spheres.</p> <p><i>Ex./A woman who is dominated by a man who treats her as property may participate in human practices in a way that aligns with her perfectionist value, such as engaging in free social practices, if the man is in control.</i></p>

<p>Natural World</p>	<p>No</p> <p>Reason: It is not evident that the natural world has the rational consciousness to have interests and thus can be harmed prudentially</p> <p><i>Ex./A jungle system is not harmed when a tree is cut down.</i></p>	<p>No</p> <p>Reason: It is not evident that the natural world has the rational capacity to have interests and further to be a conscious bearer of rights so that wronging may occur, thus it cannot be wronged prudentially</p> <p><i>Ex./A jungle system is not wronged if a tree is cut down within it because it does not have the rational capacity to pursue its own interests, nor does it have the rational capacity to be wronged in regards to its interests.</i></p>	<p>No</p> <p>Reason: An Ecosystem is not teleologically organized in the same way that individual organisms are, thus it is not possible to speak about an Ecosystem's perfectionist value.</p> <p><i>Ex./A desert ecosystem has no clearer a state of flourishing than does a random assortment of animals and plants. The individual cacti or horned lizards may have states of excellence, just as the individual animals and plants in the random assortment have, however the unity of the desert organisms does not have the potential for a more excellent unity than that of the random assortment of organisms; thus, neither have clear states of flourishing.</i></p>	<p>No</p> <p>Reason: An Ecosystem cannot be wronged in the sense of perfectionist value because it is not teleologically organized in the same way that individual organisms are, thus it is not possible to speak about an Ecosystem's perfectionist value.</p> <p><i>Ex./A desert ecosystem has no clearer a state of flourishing than does a random assortment of animals and plants. The individual cacti or horned lizards may have states of excellence, just as the individual animals and plants in the random assortment have, however the unity of the desert organisms does not have the potential for a more excellent unity than that of the random assortment of organisms; thus, neither have clear states of flourishing.</i></p>
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Dominator	Sometimes	No	Sometimes	No
	<p>Reason: Domination may increase the well-being of the dominator, however it is equally possible that dominating harms the ability of the dominator to fare well.</p> <p><i>Ex./A man who dominates women may be harmed prudentially because domination may inhibit the well-being of the oppressor insofar as he inherently disengages himself socially from others.</i></p> <p><i>Ex./A tiger that dominates its prey does not have the rational capacity for subjective interest, nonetheless it is possible to assume that the tiger only benefits from this domination in terms of well-being.</i></p>	<p>Reason: The Dominator is not wronged by domination in a prudential sense because the domination itself does not interfere with the dominators rights and desires.</p> <p><i>Ex./A man who dominates women is not wronged prudentially because his own individual external freedom is intact.</i></p>	<p>Reason: Both rational as well as non-rational dominators have the ability for perfection of species, however, as domination creates a path of isolation for the dominator that may only be perceptible to rational/sentient beings, only such beings may be harmed from dominating others</p> <p><i>Ex./ A man who dominates women may be harmed in the sense of his perfectionist value because of the inherently isolating effects of dominant positioning, (unable to relate to the other and form true connections as normal for gregarious species).</i></p> <p><i>Ex./A tiger that dominates its prey is not harmed because there is no rational/sentient connection that would otherwise be possible between tiger and prey.</i></p>	<p>Reason: The Dominator is not wronged in a perfectionist sense by dominating other beings because the domination does not affect their own ability to flourish as a human being.</p> <p><i>Ex./A man who dominates women is not wronged in a perfectionist sense because his external freedom to flourish is still intact</i></p>

<p>Dominated</p>	<p>Sometimes</p> <p>Reason: Domination inhibits the well-being of rational beings insofar as it does not align with the interests of the victims. Non-rational beings cannot express subjective interests, and thus it does not make sense to speak of prudential value</p> <p><i>Ex./A women that is dominated by a man by being treated as property suffers harm to her prudential value insofar as she is not free to follow subjective pursuits.</i></p>	<p>Sometimes</p> <p>Reason: Domination interferes with the ability for a dominated rational being to set and pursue their own subjective ends</p> <p><i>Ex./ A woman who is dominated by a man who treats her as property may not establish and pursue her own ends, such as buying her own property, and thus is wronged by the man in control.</i></p> <p><i>Ex./A tiger is not wronged in a prudential sense if it's habitat is destroyed because it neither has the rational capacity to have interests nor the rational capacity to pursue its own interest.</i></p>	<p>Sometimes</p> <p>Reason: Domination inherently suppresses the perfectionist value of any <i>individual</i> being as it suppresses the flourishing of the <i>individual</i></p> <p><i>Ex./A women cannot flourish if she is dominated by a man who treats her as property. Nor can a tiger flourish if its habitat is destroyed and dominated by a human.</i></p>	<p>Sometimes</p> <p>Reason: Domination interferes with the ability for a dominated rational being to set and pursue their own ends in a way that is beneficial for their flourishing</p> <p><i>Ex/. A woman who is dominated by a man who treats her as property may not live freely in a way that aligns with her perfectionist value, barred from such perfectionist activities such as engaging in social practices, if the man is in control.</i></p> <p><i>Ex./A tiger is not wronged if its habitat is destroyed because it does not have the rational capacity for external freedom and right to flourish.</i></p>
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Figure 1. The harm and wronging done by Domination on the prudential and perfectionist values of various beings and positioning's of beings.

As explored in Figure 1, there exists potential obstacles for focusing an Ecofeminist argument on using prudential value over perfectionist value, namely when the discussion turns to consideration of the natural world. That is, prudential value is either inherently subjective and as such relies upon conscious *interest* of the subject in question, or it relies upon judgements about faring well objectively, so when it comes to

assessing the good of the natural world it is less applicable, for determining the interests or states of faring well of a non-rational non-sentient being is irrational and ambiguous. As Sumner argues, by placing a focus on prudential value, the welfare of the being, it is difficult to avoid necessitating an identification of subjective interests of beings and not conflate prudential value and perfectionist value by doing so. Sumner discusses this difficulty by highlighting a point that Environmental Ethicist Paul W. Taylor brings up, in which he considers whether “it makes sense to speak of what is good or bad *for* the thing in question. If we can say, truly or falsely, that something is good for an entity or bad for it, without reference to any *other* entity, then the entity has a good of its own.”²¹ Taylor then goes on to conclude that for these beings, “things that happen to them can be judged, from their standpoint, to be favorable or unfavorable to them. Yet they are not beings that consciously aim at ends or take means to achieve such ends. They do not have interests because they are not interested in, do not care about, what happens to them.”²² In this explication, Taylor hits upon the exact difficulty in considering harm to the natural world: with non-rational beings, one cannot get at the specific subjective interests of the individual being, and as such, these beings cannot be bearers of prudential value. Any attempt to do so would fall back onto teleological functioning, which Sumner points out as problematic for it is “a fallacy to slip from saying that something can be good or bad of its kind to saying that it therefore has a welfare.”²³ However, while this conclusion posits that non-rational beings do not have prudential value and thus cannot be harmed prudentially, this is not to say that their perfectionist value is not at risk of being harmed.

²¹ Ibid, 73.

²² Ibid, 74.

²³ Ibid, 79.

Turning to the objective functioning and perfection of the individual, one can indeed make claims of harm to such a process of flourishing. While the limits of harm to prudential value of different species become blurry, perfectionist value is at risk of being harmed by domination across the categories of women and individual organisms within the natural world. It is important to flag here the distinction between the perfectionist value of individual organisms and the perfectionist value of the natural world. While the former is logically acceptable, as it posits that every organism has a state of excellence of functioning, the latter, regarding the perfectionist value of the natural world, seems to more difficult to accept as it suggests that there is a state of excellence and flourishing that can be identified for the whole combination of the elements of the natural world, that is, the unified ecosystem. This latter claim, as noted in Figure 1, is a difficult one to make for the apparent arbitrariness of delineating an “excellence of functioning” for a unity of organisms. That is, it is not clear what flourishing would look like for a jungle ecosystem as there seem to have been a variety of states of jungles throughout different epochs and with different organisms that could be deemed “flourishing.” In this same vein, it seems inconsistent to claim that one group of organisms living together have a perfectionist function, while another assortment of organisms put to live together, do not. There seems to be no reason to think that a jungle ecosystem should be a bearer of perfectionist value but a meadow in which we place a goat, a rat, a bird, and a yak, should not be a bearer of perfectionist value, for both situations are ultimately random assortments of organisms living in the same place. Yet we would not deem the meadow situation one such unity that should have perfectionist value, so it should follow that neither should we deem a jungle system a unity that should have perfectionist value. One may respond to this by

arguing rather that the jungle ecosystem is a very different sort of thing than the menagerie of animals, handpicked by humans. However, even so, this eclectic system evolved through various stages and with various components, none of which were more valuable than the last. Simply put, the jungle system has not evolved throughout its various stages to have a specific function nor state of flourishing. Thus, the focus on perfectionist value of the victims of domination in an Ecofeminist argument becomes almost or equally as difficult to pursue as claims against harm to prudential value of victims of domination.

Nonetheless, there still exists a category that remains viable as a path to draw a parallel between the domination of women and the natural world, committing one to dismantling both. While the category of dominator remains one in which the being may only sometimes be harmed in terms of prudential and perfectionist value due to the potential necessity for rationale in theories of prudential value, for the purposes of my argument this remains acceptable insofar as I focus on humans in the position of dominator in both the domination of women as well as the domination of the natural world. In this way, it is possible to make an Ecofeminist claim without necessitating arguments that get into murky and controversial waters such as the subjectivity of prudential value, the rationality of the natural world, and the unity of the natural world.

A final note in regard to so deliberately distinguishing prudential value and perfectionist value is to reiterate and make clear the significance of these different values as they apply to the woman and the natural world, and make clear where these subjects of domination differ. By recognizing both types of value, the way in which domination harms women can be emphasized and validated as distinguishable from the way in which

domination harms the natural world, with prudential and perfectionist value informing the former, and perfectionist value alone informing the latter. Nonetheless, as my version of Warren's Ecofeminist argument will focus on the harm that befalls the dominator, with the assumption that the dominator is human, the implications of both types of value, perfectionist and prudential, will be relevant.

Due to the complication that a focus on wrong to the victim creates in Warren's argument, I have chosen to consider the harm to the dominator in situations of domination as an alternative approach to the twin dominations of women and nature that can still commit one to dismantling both. Rather than positing the wronging to the subject as indictment of the domination of women and nature, a position difficult to defend, I argue that it is the harmful formulation of a relationship of domination itself that is problematic, as living within relationships of domination is not an ideal way to live, for neither an agent nor a subject of the domination can live well, as well as it negatively affects the way the agent relates to the subject and vice versa. Most notably of course for my argument is the impact to the dominator, for it is from this impact that may derive the action to dismantle these dominations, as these structures of oppression must be dismantled in order to reduce the obstacles for living a good life. This claim raises two questions: How, if at all, does domination ultimately obstruct the process of living well thus necessitating its dismantling? The second is a consideration of exactly how structures of oppression affect the process and conception of relating to the other.

CHAPTER 4

LIVING WELL AND LIBERTY

This chapter introduces the concept of “Living Well” and the elements within which that will be most relevant for my argument.

CHAPTER 4.1: INTRODUCING LIBERTY

To answer the first question one must assess what it is to live “well” and flourish in the sense of one’s species identity perfectionist value. In order to address the concept of living well, I will utilize theories of Republicanism and Republican liberty, focusing specifically on the notion of liberty as requiring the absence of structures of domination. While there are a multitude of theories addressing living well and “the good life,” by focusing singularly on liberty I hope to address one basic and hopefully less controversial component of human good. The Republican idea of freedom aligns well with the Ecofeminist agenda of dismantling structures of domination, as it posits that “A person is free to the extent that other do not stand over him or her, able to interfere at will and with relative impunity in his or her affairs.”²⁴ In order to obtain this liberty the subject needs independence from the arbitrary power of the master, which cannot be done by “making [the] master a better person” but rather must be done by “render[ing] him less of a master... This can only be done by curbing either his arbitrary power, or his subjects’ dependency on him.”²⁵ The concept of arbitrary power is one that I will address and define further after providing an initial introduction to the good of Republican liberty; nonetheless, the basic concept of freedom from domination is thus far clear.

²⁴ Philip Pettit, “The Domination Complaint,” *Nomos* 46, (2005): 87.

²⁵ Lovett, Frank, “Republicanism”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), Spring 2017 Edition, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/republicanism/>.

CHAPTER 4.2: NON-DOMINATION AND LIBERTY AS A GOOD

Before delving further into specific structures of the Republicanism argument, it is important to consider non-domination itself as being a human good (as well as a general good), and thus distinguishing itself as a core aspect of liberation. Political Philosopher Frank Lovett addresses this concern by distinguishing between the evident truth of the goodness of non-domination versus the causal reality of the goodness of non-domination. That is, “the fact that most people prefer non-domination might be taken as evidence that non-domination is a good, but it is not...what makes it good;”²⁶ one cannot base the rationale for dismantling domination on preference for the very fact that preferences are not universally uniform, and further “as [the] preference weakens or disappears, [the] obligation [of reducing domination] diminishes correspondingly.”²⁷ Thus, the wrong of domination must come from somewhere else, originating instead, as Lovett argues, in its nature as an obstacle to human flourishing for “enjoying some significant degree of non-domination is a crucial condition of human flourishing, which he later stipulates as “success in achieving autonomously formulated, reasonable life plans, through fellowship or community with others, over a complete life.”²⁸ Without non-domination and subsequent liberation, beings cannot succeed in living well and engaging in true community.

Objections to this idea of liberty as “always a good thing” do exist and are worth noting. Most often citing “benevolent care-giving relationships,”²⁹ this objection

²⁶ Frank Lovett, *A General Theory of Domination and Justice* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010): 130.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 131.

²⁹ Lovett, Frank, "Republicanism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), Spring 2017 Edition, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/republicanism/>.

essentially follows the logic that if all relationships of domination (that involve humans) must be dismantled then, for example, the parent-child relationship is compromised, for it embodies and relies upon arbitrary power and domination. This of course becomes problematic for it seems to suggest that a child would be better off without a figure caring for him/her/them because by doing so that figure would be expressing dominance. This suggestion is certainly undesirable due to the inability of young children to flourish without the support of guardians, and thus increasing republican freedom in this scenario would actually not be ideal. However, responses to this objection focus on the fault of considering “an overall evaluation of a whole with an evaluation of its parts considered separately,”³⁰ while parent-child relationships are “extremely valuable considered as a whole; it does not follow...that this relationship is necessarily valuable in each and every part.”³¹ While this objection seems to fail conceptually, it is worth noting for the fact that it reveals “that republican freedom is simply one good among others, with which it may come into conflict,”³² a point that is relevant in that it acknowledges republican liberty as one among a list of elements that allow for living well yet also initiates a consideration of the priority and far-reaching good that this notion can contribute to this list.

CHAPTER 4.3: PHILIP PETTIT AND ARBITRARY POWER

With a clearer establishment of where the wrong of domination rests in regards to liberty I can now venture further into discussing a specific construal of Republican liberty and utilizing renowned Political Philosopher Philip Pettit’s work “The Domination

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

Complaint.” While in this work, Pettit focuses his argument on the non-domination of the state over the individual, the formulation of his arguments remains applicable and indeed useful for considering non-domination from an Ecofeminist perspective for its adherence to ideas of respect and implications of validation to the dominated. As previously mentioned, Pettit focuses his theories of domination on the concept of “arbitrary” power or interference, which can be understood as an interference “that is not controlled by the avowable interests of the victim but, as arbitrary interference usually will be, is controlled by the *arbitrium* of the interferer, where *arbitrium* may refer to will or judgment.”³³ He further elucidates this idea in his work *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* by noting “Power is arbitrary...when it fails to track the “welfare and world-view” of those affected;”³⁴ thus, in order for non-arbitrary power or interference actions of the state must account for the interests of those on whom they are employed, rather than the interests of those exercising the power.

Pettit continues his assessment of domination with claims of its risk to the ability of the dominated to interact discursively with others, for “the fact of being exposed to the possibility of arbitrary interference from another impacts in a serious way the likelihood that a person will speak his mind.”³⁵ This idea is problematic both for the individual’s agency as well as the implication of the perpetuation of domination. That is, not only is the dominated less inclined to speak their mind due to concern for further arbitrary interference, but in fact any words said by a person who is in a position of subordination will be taken less seriously as Pettit queries “how can people trust the remarks of the

³³ Pettit, “The Domination Complaint,” 93.

³⁴ Philip Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press, 1997): 56.

³⁵ Pettit, “The Domination Complaint,” 102.

vulnerable person, especially when they are tailored to fit with the opinions of someone in relation to whom they suffer vulnerability.”³⁶ In this way, domination “almost invariably undermines a person’s capacity to enjoy respect,”³⁷ for their discursive abilities are undermined by their own recognition of the domination as well as for the wider common awareness of this domination. Pettit completes his assessment of the role of respect in non-domination by concluding that “any society where people’s non-domination is at a maximum will be a society in which people enjoy a corresponding equality of status, with each doing as well as can be expected in commanding the respect of their fellows.”³⁸ Respect is invariably an element of liberty and non-domination, as it is itself predicated upon non-arbitrary interference, for true respect for the other cannot exist if one maintains notions of superiority over the other, and similarly consequently undermines equality. Obviously, Pettit’s presentation of the risks of arbitrary power speaks loudly to the victim in such scenarios, furthering the importance of acknowledging key distinctions between particular types of beings that are victims. However, the notions of respect that are brought up do indeed still remain relevant to the connected identity throughout systems of domination: the dominator. Pettit’s work will later prove useful for emphasizing my argument about the harm that befalls the dominator when denying the dominated respect, for not only is equality undermined for both parties, but liberty itself is undermined, as well as the harm to healthy and genuine relationships and community with the other. The construction of domination that Pettit presents is invaluable to the Ecofeminist objective, however it becomes even more relevant and helpful when it is paired with Aldo Leopold’s Environmental Ethics

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., 103.

³⁸ Ibid., 110.

theories. Thus, it is productive to introduce Leopold before beginning to apply Pettit specifically to Ecofeminism.

CHAPTER 5

LEOPOLD'S LAND ETHIC

This Chapter provides an introduction to and foundation of Aldo Leopold that will play into each of the main components of my argument.

CHAPTER 5.1: INTRODUCTION TO LEOPOLD'S OBJECTIVE

Aldo Leopold is often considered the father of wildlife ecology as well as an influential figure in the development of modern environmental ethics.³⁹ Much of his fame comes from his work *A Sand County Almanac*, a collection of essays about his perceptions of the natural world written over a twelve-year period and finally published in 1949. The first line of the introduction embodies the work's potential as well as function: ““There are some who can live without wild things, and some who cannot. These essays are the delights and dilemmas of one who cannot.”⁴⁰ The work is full of sentimental yet informative stories of the wild, fostering compassion within the reader for the workings of the natural world. It is a successful expression and sharing of love, for Leopold even explicitly notes his objective as such in his introduction: ““When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect. There is no other way for land to survive the impact of mechanized man, nor for us to reap from it the esthetic harvest it is capable, under science, of contributing to culture.”⁴¹ There is a inevitably a distinction made here, between “love” and “respect,” which only furthers the magnitude of change and reformulation that Leopold seeks. That is, there

³⁹ “Aldo Leopold,” *The Aldo Leopold Foundation*. Accessed November 30, 2017. <https://www.aldoleopold.org/about/aldo-leopold/>

⁴⁰ Aldo Leopold. *A Sand County Almanac: With Essays on Conservation from Round River*. (First Ballantine Books ed. New York: Ballantine Books, 1970): xvii.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, xix.

must both be a fostering of care for the natural world in combination with a respectful positioning next to it; in Leopold's description it seems almost that these concepts necessitate one another to be most effective. This objective is carried throughout the work, as each essay carries its own value and evidence. However, while the essays are sentimental and compelling in themselves, from a philosophical perspective the most value in the work comes in a much later chapter, entitled "The Land Ethic," which he describes as "set[ting] forth, in more logical terms, some of the ideas whereby we dissenters rationalize our dissent."⁴² He then goes on to say "Only the very sympathetic reader will wish to wrestle with the philosophical questions of Part III. I suppose it may be said that these essays tell the company how it may get back in step."⁴³ It is this final section of the work that I will focus on for its positioning in the field of ethics, and for the instructive role it takes.

CHAPTER 5.2: LEOPOLD'S RELEVANT ARGUMENT'S

Aldo Leopold presents a compelling argument for acknowledging and developing an environmental ethic, in his chapter "The Land Ethic." This piece has points that are particularly relevant to challenging the dominant frameworks that are illuminated as problematic in Warren's conception of Ecofeminism and the logic of domination. The elements of his argument that I want to focus on are extending the conception of community as solely human-oriented to a conception that includes land and the natural world as well as humanity, re-defining the present understanding of the value of land, which as of now stands primarily as economic, and ridding the human-land relationship of violence. These three points made by Leopold are compatible with my claim of the

⁴² Ibid., xvii.

⁴³ Ibid.

concern for the harm inherent within the formulation of a relationship of domination itself as it negatively affects leading a good life as well as the nature of relating to the other, and contribute to the interpretation of this concern.

CHAPTER 5.3: EXTENDING COMMUNITY TO LAND

Leopold begins his account of a land ethic by speaking to the mechanics of an ethic; in philosophy this term implies “a differentiation of social from anti-social conduct,” and in ecology this term implies “a limitation on freedom action in the struggle for existence.”⁴⁴ His account of these ethics concludes with a summary and conflation of the basis of each: “the thing [ethic] has its origin in the tendency of interdependent individuals or groups to evolve modes of cooperation.”⁴⁵ That is, an ethic is analogous to “a kind of community instinct,”⁴⁶ prompting the individual to cooperate in order to survive in a space reliant upon interdependence. It is from this point that Leopold can then make the first claim: insofar as ethics rest upon the premise of community and interdependence, developing an ethic for land is to simply enlarge “the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land.”⁴⁷ If this extension is upheld, then the community instinct should compel a more respectful and cooperative treatment of the land for it “changes the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it;”⁴⁸ as such, the relationship of human to nature becomes one that is not founded on domination. In regards to Ecofeminism, the extension of community becomes crucial as true cooperation

⁴⁴ Aldo Leopold, “The Land Ethic,” in *A Sand County Almanac: With Essays on Conservation from Round River*, (First Ballantine Books ed. New York: Ballantine Books, 1970): 238.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 239.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 240.

within a community requires equality, and as long as women live unequally in a patriarchy, their “cooperation” in the community is null as it is based on a foundation of oppression. Similarly, if the publicly accepted perspective on nature is as separate from the social community, then there cannot be a cooperative and equal relationship and thus instead permits the framework of domination that exists today.

CHAPTER 5.4: RE-PRESCRIBING VALUE TO LAND

The next important element that Leopold calls attention to is the conception of value in the land. This element presupposes the initial argument for extending community to land, for it explains the “why” behind that notion. In fact, re-prescribing the value in land is important for any attempts at environmental ethics, as noted in many theories including Deep Ecology. Leopold addresses this issue by delineating land as being more than “merely soil.”⁴⁹ Rather, it is “a fountain of energy flowing through a circuit of soils, plants, and animals,”⁵⁰ one such flow of energy upon which all of life, including human life, depends. In this way, the value is not solely economically driven, but rather is framed as a necessary life force for all beings as well as is a living energy in its own right. This framing of the natural world is particularly salient in the socio-political climate today in regards to climate change. The human reliance upon and assurance in the land is jeopardized insofar as humanity continues to poison and dominate that flow of energy. However, it is important to note that Leopold’s formulation of value is not simply instrumental, despite his recognition of the human dependency upon the land. Rather, he structures his argument based on the assumption that “we can be ethical only in relation

⁴⁹ Ibid., 253.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

to something we can see, feel, understand, love, or otherwise have faith in.”⁵¹ With this understanding of ethical relationships, defining the natural world as a fountain of energy upon which humanity depends as well as within which humanity exists, formulates the land as something humanity can indeed “see, feel, understand, love...[and] have faith in,”⁵² for in many ways it is described as a being itself. This seems to suggest the value as intrinsic in that the good of the land can be felt and understood, and thus it is “prima facie worthy of being preserved or promoted as an end in itself and for the sake of the entity whose good it is.”⁵³ The natural world is not an entity that should be treated as a “mere object” nor valuable only for its instrumentality, but rather must be recognized as having a well-being that “is judged to have value in and of itself.”⁵⁴ Leopold’s interpretation of value seems convincing for its painting of the natural world as a system within which humanity exists, holding intrinsic value as a central point but also recognizing and utilizing the instrumental value of the land to further arguments for an environmental ethic. An argument for Ecofeminism is incomplete unless it holds a reason for a worthy value in land, worthy enough to be considered equal and “twin” to the value of women in society. What Leopold begins to offer in his argument for reframing the value of the environment is a justification for having an environmental ethic, and further, a justification for the impermissibility of the domination of nature that is equal and twin to the impermissibility of the domination of women, despite their values being different. Insofar as he offers an account of the intrinsic value of nature, regardless of how that value may be weighted differently from the value of women, domination of the natural

⁵¹ Ibid., 251.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Paul W. Taylor, “The Ethics of Respect for Nature,” *Environmental Ethics*, no. 3 (1981): 201.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

world cannot also exist as it undermines the recognition of this intrinsic value by evading genuine respect and love.

CHAPTER 5.5: VIOLENCE IN THE HUMAN-LAND RELATIONSHIP

In regards to confronting the violence of man on nature, the argument becomes more vague and may also require filling out, yet nonetheless remains important. Leopold acknowledges the deficit of information in this element of his argument, but in regards to the core of it explains that “man-made changes are of a different order than evolutionary changes, and have effects more comprehensive than is intended or foreseen.”⁵⁵ Thus, we must take great caution in all environmental alterations, anticipating the extension of our actions on the environment, for “the less violent the man made changes, the greater the probability of successful readjustment in the pyramid.”⁵⁶ While this aspect of Leopold’s argument is small, I highlight it along with the others because of the domination inherent in the use of the word “violence” as well as the urgency implied from it. If we can extend our community to include the land, so too can we extend our language and conceptual framework to include domination of nature under the umbrella of violence, under which the domination of women already explicitly exists. However, it is also important to take care not to conflate this element with a focus on harm, for instead it should be a helpful way of considering the process of domination without moving into the muddled complications of harm. This point of violence will become even more relevant when I approach the latter part of my argument, that of re-constructing a relationship between the dominator and the dominated.

⁵⁵ Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 255.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 257.

CHAPTER 6

DECONSTRUCTING THE HUMAN-LAND RELATIONSHIP AND APPLYING LEOPOLD AND WARREN

In this Chapter I can begin to tie my argument together by applying the layers of foundation I have set up in previous sections. I will focus specifically on the first part of my argument, applying what has been set up to the concern of “Living Well.”

CHAPTER 6.1: INTRODUCING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN LEOPOLD AND DOMINATION

“The Land Ethic” is a work rich with many salient points, however I have focused on the above three for what each can say about Ecofeminism and in turn what Ecofeminism can about each. Extending our concept of community to maintain an ethic for land, re-evaluating what makes land valuable, and recognizing and then clearing the violence from the human-land relationship are incredibly important points in both connecting the twin dominations of women and nature as well as addressing them. Further, these points are relevant to considering the negative implications within a relationship of domination, and lend themselves to considering more explicitly the relationship between humanity and the environment and deconstructing it with a focus on this problematic relationship of domination.

CHAPTER 6.2: CHARACTERIZING THE “WESTERN” RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LAND AS DOMINATION

It is difficult to consider broadly the contemporary human relationship with the environment, as it is by no means singular, affected instead by societal, cultural, and personal contexts. However, for the purpose of working within a somewhat succinct

interpretation of the human-nature relationship, I will focus mainly on a generalized Western context and the general benefits that people in the West garner from the natural world (regardless of the personal connections with and/or activism for the environment to which certain Western communities may better relate due to their ultimate minority position). As I have already touched on, there are the utility and necessity frameworks to consider in the oppression of the natural world. The implications that extend from these frameworks are simple: humanity ravages the natural world for the needs of the human species. The relationship between a general Western context and the natural world is defined by what the natural world can give to the human. While indeed, there are populations, or at least individuals, who more actively consider their role in environmental degradation, even these individuals benefit from the systematic ravaging of the natural world in some way or another. The construction of highways and roads often requires explosive manipulation of the natural world that gets in the way, and yet these highways and roads are instrumental to a functioning Western society. As Rachel Carson first brought to light, the agriculture industry has historically consistently ravaged the environment with toxins and pollutants, and this reality is still relevant today, albeit in different ways. The average American produces about 4.4 pounds of waste per day, waste that does not simply disappear but rather works its own harms upon the functioning and purity of the natural world.⁵⁷ It is not difficult to continue to list ways in which the human relationship to the natural world is consistently harmful and oppressive.

It seems acceptable to claim that there is virtually no community feeling extending from the general Western human life to the natural world, and similarly, that

⁵⁷ "Municipal Solid Waste." *United States Environmental Protection Agency*. Last modified March 29, 2016. <https://archive.epa.gov/epawaste/nonhaz/municipal/web/html/>

there is not a widespread recognition of the value of the natural world beyond this ultimately detrimental instrumental value. It also seems acceptable to posit that the way the environment is treated is violent; the extreme use of explosives, clear cutting of forests, and slaughtering of farmed animals as well as wildlife should be imagery enough to convey this violence. If one accepts that the general Western relationship to the environment is quite negative and indeed harmful to the natural world for its undiscerning focus on utility, the task then becomes deconstructing this relationship through the lens of domination and considering the way that oppression is being constructed and perpetuated.

The domination involved in the above examples is striking. The human relationship to the environment is incontestably related to domination, if not simply just domination based. Again, the Western human psyche seems to consider the environment through a lens of utility, a lens from which the following logic emerges: If subject 1 is defined by and related to for its utility by subject 2, and there is no notion of equal reciprocity from subject 2 to subject 1 but rather there is a general theme of violent exploitation that subject 2 employs on subject 1, then subject 2 dominates subject 1. Insofar as the natural world is perceived primarily by the Western world for its utility, a utility employed by violent exploitation, and there is no evidence of the western world giving to the same extent that it is taking from the natural world, then the western world is dominating the natural world. The way in which that domination is negative depends on how it affects both the subject as well as the agent involved in the process.

The problem inherent in this relationship is twofold. For the dominator, domination presents both a risk of obstruction to living well as well as to the process of

relating to the Other. To the first point, there must be a framework within which to work to consider how a particular kind of thing could obstruct the dominators process of living well (in this case, that kind of thing would be domination itself), and in doing so, ultimately harm a beings perfectionist value. As outlined in Chapter 4, “Living Well,” the framework within which I work is that of a Republican idea of freedom and non-domination and specifically Philip Pettit’s conception of this theory.

CHAPTER 6.3: APPLYING PETTIT TO THE DOMINATION OF LAND AND ADDRESSING THE EFFECTS ON THE DOMINATOR

These arguments are quite applicable to the domination of women and, perhaps with a little more thought, can be applied as commentary on the domination of the natural world. To the former, a man is in the position of interfering arbitrarily in a woman’s affairs simply as a function of the systematic oppression and the privilege inherent in being a superior within this system, (even as this privilege may be unrecognized by him). Such examples of arbitrary interference that a male may (and many males do) exercise daily range from participating in the perpetuation of the glass ceiling and inhibiting the mobility of women to the concept of “taking up space” and consequently leaving no room for the quietly oppressed woman. In regards to the natural world, it is both quite reasonable and simultaneously difficult to apply concerns of arbitrary power. Humans are in the position of interfering arbitrarily in the natural world’s affairs to the extent that we are not “forced to track the avowable interests” of the natural world, and instead base our consumption of it solely on our own interests. However, this idea is also convoluted when applied to the natural world because it does in theory require the natural world the capacity to “avow interests” explicitly, a capacity that is nonexistent. Nonetheless, it is

not difficult to assume at least basic interests of the natural world and recognize the humans utter dismissal of those, or at least recognize that as it stands now, humans act only on their own will or judgment, a judgment that is skewed towards violent domination.

As Pettit's notions of domination as inhibiting participation in discursive spaces and thus respect are applied to the oppression of women, it is not difficult to see both the suppressed voice of women as well as the neglect of basic respect for women in a variety of contexts, again citing examples such as the glass ceiling or even practices of cat calling and sexual harassment. Of course, again when the natural world is considered this becomes more difficult to apply, for the natural world cannot interact in discursive spaces regardless; nonetheless, as one begins to consider reassessing the value of the natural world the notion of a basic respect is inevitable. Again, the relevance of the distinct features of women versus nature has been made clear; however, it is still possible to utilize these points of Pettit's to address harm to the dominator, which connects both. Regarding value, insofar as the dominator is not giving respect then their capacity to enjoy the act of giving respect and recognizing the value of other is inhibited, and thus their process of relation to the other is compromised, an idea that I will return to and address later. Pettit's last point of equality as tied up with respect is invaluable to the Ecofeminist objective, for while it is controversial to assert the natural world as deserving a status of equality, there is at least a call to recognize the oppression that does indeed rest on a violent inequality. With domination, there can be no equality, and that very lack of equality, while benefiting the dominator in a prudential sense due to privilege, inevitably is harmful in the sense of perfectionist value.

While throughout Pettit's arguments there are echoes of Leopold's logic, such as the assumption and necessity of reevaluating value, there is no connection more clear between the two thinkers than that of the community logic. That is, valuing non-domination is inherently tied to valuing community for without one the other is not possible. As Leopold is himself focused on environmental ethics, and as the human to human connection and necessity for community is relatively easier to conceptualize, I will focus in this section on how the community value of non-domination relates to the natural world. Non-domination cannot exist in a solitary setting, for "to enjoy non-domination it is necessary, first, to have other people around with whom one interacts; and second, that one not be dominated by those people...One must enjoy the absence of domination in a context where it is a real possibility, not enjoy it as a mere byproduct of total isolation."⁵⁸ As Leopold posits, entering into a community with the land is necessary for developing an ethic for it, and in that same vein, entering into a community with the land should itself mean all enjoying non-domination alongside equal others.

The second connection between non-domination and community appears with the recognition that "a person's immunity to arbitrary interference—a person's non-domination—will not materialize as a causal result of the institutional measures taken to realize it; rather, it will be constituted by those measures, being present just as soon as they are present."⁵⁹ That is, non-domination must preface social structures as a foundational identity rather than a causal identity, for one cannot be immune to non-domination unless the measures protecting against arbitrary interference exist as one does rather than consequentially. Otherwise, there is left the risk of a potential period of time

⁵⁸ Pettit, "The Domination Complaint," 110.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 111.

for enactment during which the measures could take effect and thus leave space for the domination itself to exist. Thus, the community must institute measures that make the dominated secure against the arbitrary interference by other members of the community. In regards to the natural world, the specific measures that may be taken to protect its non-domination are themselves not difficult to imagine, such as legal initiatives and protections, however the tactic of implementation itself requires a reordering of priority for the human species and a commitment to respecting the community so that the measures are valued as a primary necessity rather than as consequentially important.

Pettit's final formulation of the connection between community and non-domination relies on the fact that enjoying non-domination requires that non-domination exist for all others in the same vulnerability class, "you cannot enjoy freedom as non-domination without others in every salient class to which you belong—including... others in the society as a whole—enjoying that sort of freedom as well."⁶⁰ Considering this element of non-domination and community through an Ecofeminist lens requires noting again that women and the natural world are not the same type of "thing," and thus are not exactly in the same vulnerability class. Nonetheless, due to their twin structural oppressions this community standard of non-domination seems to apply in a similar way that it would if they were in a single vulnerability class. This argument becomes complicated in that it seems to posit that any domination of any "thing" inhibits the enjoyment of non-domination for every "thing," and thus the claim becomes incredibly large and vulnerable to counters of a "slippery slope." That is, a society and world without domination of any sort seems unfeasible, as there are systems within the world

⁶⁰ Ibid., 112.

that require some extent of domination, such as the concept of owning and utilizing any material item. While it is true that material items are neither rational nor sentient, and, as has been established, nor is the natural world, there must be a distinction between the two in order for the domination of material items to not be classified as domination in the same way. Whether one approaches this distinction by considering the notion of human-created items versus that beyond the creation and in this way control of human, or through another approach, I will leave this argument unresolved due to its tangential relation to the ultimate case I hope to make, for regardless of the outcome of this question, the point of non-domination as enjoyable only if it exists for all is worth consideration. Without equal non-domination, there can be no genuine liberty.

The way that domination affects the process of participating in genuine relationships, in this case with the environment, is more of an abstract and emotively structured harm than a logically structured and supported harm (as is the impact on liberty), however it is a harm nonetheless. While the terms “domination” and “power” are often used in the context of social relationships, in Leopold’s formulation of extending the social community to include the natural world these terms can reasonably apply in relationships with the natural world. Insofar as humanity is in a relationship with the natural world and in that relationship has a power over the natural world that is exercised in an unjust manner, then arbitrary domination is employed. The question then becomes, what exactly does this do to the process of relating to that that is arbitrarily, or violently, dominated? In the second part of my argument, I will move from the notion of liberty to the notion of relating to the Other, and consider the implications of dominating on

relating. I will explore this notion further, as well as the ensuing implications of such, in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 7

THE PROCESS OF RELATING TO THE OTHER AND ISOLATION

This chapter supplies the second part of my argument regarding the impacts of domination on the process of relating to the Other, and in doing so completes my argument.

CHAPTER 7.1: LEOPOLD'S REPRESENTATION OF THE HUMAN-LAND RELATIONSHIP

Relating to the natural world is a task within itself, a task on which Leopold spends over twenty chapters attempting to instigate in *A Sand County Almanac*. However, the nature and very process of relating to another is affected deeply when that other is conceived as a kind of thing to be dominated. In fact, it is impossible to relate genuinely to a subject when that subject is one such that is dominated in every mode of one's own life, for the subject becomes unknowable. That is, one may relate to an oppressed subject insofar as that relationship is comprised of dominator-dominated or superior-inferior, but this positioning acts to inherently suppress the ability of a genuine and fully-formed relationship to develop as it silences knowledge of the dominated that could exist outside the scope of the category of "inferior." To know a subject, beyond the subject's externalized being, and beyond the utility that humanity conceives of as definitive in the natural world, requires a view free from oppressive tendencies and subjugating mindsets. This view must utilize concepts of knowing such as respect, compassion, or at the very least validation. These elements are distinctly missing in the human-nature relationship, as it is comprised of violence, flagrant exploitation, and ultimately domination.

As has been established, it is the harm to the value of the dominator that must be the action-guiding element for redefining the human-land relationship. Nonetheless, this action relies upon a sufficiently divergent alternative to a relationship with the land that is based in domination, and thus again here I will reference Leopold for his work in representing a more positive relationship with the land. As Leopold's account relies upon respect, which in itself relies upon intrinsic value, I will account for the controversy in approaching questions of intrinsic value by simply granting that the intrinsic value of land is the reason why we *can* respect the land, while still holding that the reason we *ought to* respect the land is for the harm that becomes our perfectionist value in a relationship based in domination.

While I have already introduced Leopold, it will be helpful here to briefly include further explication of points that are uniquely applicable to this part of my argument, that is, to my position about relating to the environment. Leopold's characterization of the best human-land relationship is defined by reverence, love and understanding, recognition of value, and harmony. Underlying each of these concepts is the premise of a renewed, genuine respect; throughout *A Sand County Almanac* this premise can be observed in various places, both within and outside of "The Land Ethic." To the latter, there is a particularly emotive section referenced widely by Environmentalists to this day as simply the "Fierce Green Fire," in which Leopold hunts a wolf only to "watch a fierce green fire dying in her eyes," and to realize that in those eyes "there was something known only to her and to the mountain...[he] thought that because fewer wolves meant more deer, that no wolves would mean hunters' paradise. But after seeing the green fire

die, [he] sensed that neither the wolf nor the mountain agreed with such a view.”⁶¹ In this passage there is more than a hunting narrative; there is an actual recorded moment in which a reversal of views about the land occurs, from that which is meant to be dominated to that which is valuable, which itself ultimately results in a fundamental change in the relationship. This narrative is reiterated more overtly and argumentatively in his chapter “The Land Ethic” in passages that I have already referenced in earlier sections. Leopold speaks to extending the boundaries of the community to include the land,⁶² to changing “the role of *Homo Sapiens* from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it... imply[ing] respect for his fellow-members, and also respect for the community as such,”⁶³ and to extending the social conscience “from people to land.”⁶⁴ Thus again and again in Leopold appears this call for a respect that recognizes value in the land beyond simple utility.

CHAPTER 7.2: WHY LEOPOLD’S REPRESENTATION CANNOT EXIST SIMULTANEOUSLY WITH DOMINATION; ISOLATION

While I have claimed that Leopold has presented an alternative to a relationship based in domination in his depiction of a relationship of respect, elaboration on what domination itself breeds and how Leopold’s alternative cannot exist with domination, (thus avoiding this negativity), may further clarify these points. As has been stated, it seems domination is harmful to the human perfectionist value for its tendency to breed isolation. This isolation parallels Marxist ideas of alienation as it is rooted in an estrangement from an essential reality within us. However, in this case, that estrangement

⁶¹ Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 139.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 239.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 240.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 246.

is from our dependence on and shared space with the natural world. Without delving too far into arguments about whether human kind is a part of or apart from the natural world, I aim to convey that our relationship with the natural world is inextricable from the way in which we move through the world. That is, human beings are undeniably engaging reciprocally with the natural world every moment, whether they be practicing permaculture in a secluded place, or simply breathing in oxygen and releasing carbon dioxide. Yet, in many societies today, the natural world functions simply as resource to which we have neither ties nor obligations, and thus may exploit. Therein is bred this isolation: a detachment from and dismissal of a core part of our being.

This correlation between “using” and “isolation” is most clear in the following example. Suppose Greg is a devout Buddhist, who has been practicing for many years, and engages with the tradition in a holistic and respectful way. Now, consider that Dan considers himself Buddhist, but focuses more on creating a certain reputation for himself by identifying with Buddhism rather than participating in the tradition respectfully and reciprocally as Greg does. In this example, it seems uncontroversial to say that Greg’s relationship with Buddhism is the preferred and more meaningful one, and further, is even healthier for his being. It also seems uncontroversial to claim that insofar as Dan engages with Buddhism only to utilize it for his own ends, he remains relatively detached and isolated from Buddhism, and even spirituality itself, misusing and misunderstanding the distinctly human relationship that is religion and spirituality. While religion admittedly has a very different relationship to human life than does the natural world, in both cases there is a deeper understanding and more meaningful life at stake, a chance to flourish in a holistic sense either more or less. Further, from both religion and the natural

world, constitute a human relationship that is core to human life and begs for a rule of navigation. If one is to flourish less well, these relationships are based on utility alone and thus produce isolation from the other; if one is to flourish holistically, these relationships have respect embedded within it.⁶⁵

This isolation obstructs any hope of engaging with others and with ourselves in a holistic way, for as much as we deny our ability to relate to the natural world, we deny each other's as well, until we are left without a recognition of genuine relationship around which our lives revolve. Thus, we deny others and ourselves the ability to flourish holistically, without denying a central part of ourselves. Val Plumwood explores this notion further in her work *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, basing her claims in the dualism that defines domination-based relationships. Plumwood identifies a dualism as “an intense, established and developed cultural expression” of an oppressive hierarchical relationship, “constructing central cultural concepts and identities so as to make equality and mutuality literally unthinkable”⁶⁶. Within dualism there exist key elements that Plumwood focuses on to explore the nature of dualism, one particularly relevant one being “Radical exclusion”/hyper separation. Plumwood describes this phenomenon of minimizing continuity as “important in eliminating identification and sympathy between members of the dominating class and the dominated, and in eliminating possible confusion between powerful and powerless.”⁶⁷ She goes on to argue that “a major aim of dualistic construction is polarization, to maximize difference or separation between the

⁶⁵ Here I do not intend to convey that every human must have a deep connection to religion, but rather that there ought to be a respect of it and for it, regardless of personal participation in or affiliation with it.

⁶⁶ Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (Taylor & Francis, 2002): 48.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 50.

dualised spheres and to prevent their being seen as continuous or contiguous.’⁶⁸ Thus, built into the very structure of domination is the practice of creating distance between oneself and the other, reinforcing this domination and isolation between oneself and on that which one depends. Plumwood’s characterization of domination aligns with my concern about the harmful processes that exist in and are bred by domination, and serve to both clarify as well as universalize the harmful effects on the dominator in a domination based relationship, and ultimately calling attention to the risk to perfectionist value. Insofar as one takes part in the radical exclusion of the natural world from oneself and from others, one cannot flourish holistically by relating genuinely to the other, and further, cannot participate in genuine community.

As my references to Plumwood begin to explore, there are a number of elements working both together as well as individually within the concept of domination that are at work in this particular process of harm. Beyond the dualism, the next and most obvious is that of hierarchical structures that premise domination, and the implicit biases that are bound within that structure as it functions to oppress. These hierarchical structures inhibit developing an understanding of (and thus silence) that which is deemed of lesser value, that is, that which is being dominated. This silencing works to not only inhibit the external value of the oppressed, but further acts as the aforementioned positive feedback loop in that it obstructs genuine, uninhibited understanding of the dominated that would itself allow for more than inferiority. With this lack of genuine understanding wedded to a system that is structured by power, domination absolutely undermines sincere reverence and *equal* respect and recognition of value; still, it is not clear that it entirely undermines

⁶⁸ Ibid.

respect. It does seem reasonable to argue that domination allows for a certain kind of condescending reverence (albeit misconstrued and perverted in that it is bred from an assumption of inferiority) that could allow a kind of respect to develop. Nonetheless, this type of respect is not the image of respect that Leopold preaches, nor is it a type of respect that would allow for a connection and recognition of value to develop that would be free from oppressive ideations. Insofar as this assessment of domination notes the complexities of respect tied to non-domination, it seems that Leopold's characterization of the ideal human-land relationship requires a dismissal of systems of domination.

CHAPTER 7.3: CAN WE ENTER INTO COMMUNITY WITH THE LAND?

There is another element to Leopold's claims that need be considered more critically: that of the possibility of entering into a community of land. Even as I have granted the intrinsic value of land as only the reason why we can respect the land, (again, not the reason we should), it does not seem that the same allowance necessarily assumes the conclusion that it is also possible to enter into a community with the land. In fact, respecting the natural world seems, in some respects, quite different from entering into a community with it. In exploring this question further, it is helpful to turn to Edith Stein's formulation of the concept of community. The aspect of Stein's philosophy of community that I will focus on is her delineation of the two necessary components for a community: "that its functions and organizations are conformable and that there are individuals who can fulfill its functions."⁶⁹ It seems here that there is room to argue for the environments involvement in such a context. To the former, the conformability, if the community's primary function is to instill respect of all members, or that is, not do the

⁶⁹ Mary Catherine Baseheart, "Edith Stein's Philosophy of Community," *The Personalist Forum* 8, no.1 (1992): 171.

opposite of this by propagating domination, then the function is conformable for even the non-rational beings as the natural world cannot dominate humans other than through hunting processes. As actively hunting humans is not a natural instinct for any organism besides polar bears, and further, as I have not meant to disbar hunting by categorizing it as domination in totality but only as domination insofar as it is done in the careless and exploitative way that humans have recently done, this point becomes moot. Additionally, the second component of Stein's philosophy of community may even do away with the need for the natural world to fulfill the first component, as it simply states that there be individuals who can fulfill its functions, and does not ask that *all* individuals within the community be able to fulfill its functions. That is, it is clear that the human side of the community is able to instill respect in all members and carry out necessary secondary functions of the community, which in itself accounts for Stein's concept of community without even calling upon the natural world. Thus, a community that consists of humans and the natural world satisfies Stein's necessary components of a community, making possible Leopold's community recommendations.

There is one element of Stein's conception of community that raises concerns when applied to the human-land relationship. Stein claims that "genuine community aims at union, a community of life and a community of being that is rooted in the personal and touches the core of the personality of the subjects. It is characterized by genuine feelings arising from the personal "I" of each."⁷⁰ This depiction of community, especially the last line addressing the personal "I," seems incompatible with claims that posit community between humans and the natural world. As I have held throughout my arguments, the

⁷⁰ Ibid., 169.

complexity and controversiality, and admittedly unlikelihood of the rational and introspective capacity of the natural world is not worth arguing for; therefore, it seems immediately that the ability of the natural world to participate in community is denied. However, as I have highlighted previously, in Stein's account of community she does reflect on the non-necessity for all members of a community to be equally accountable and participatory members of the community. Rather, "the quality of the community's life depends upon the life-giving motives of individuals and the vitality with which they carry these motives into action for the life of the community;"⁷¹ that is, while community aims at total participation and union that calls on the personal, it seems that this totality only functions to determine the quality of the community, rather than the existence of the community. Of course, this not a perfect response to Stein as following that point I am now forced to concede that while community may exist between humans and the natural world the quality is unavoidably compromised by the non-participation of the natural world due to the inability for introspection. However, my response does at least still allow for some type of community to exist between humans and the natural world, and thus Leopold's ethics can persist.

With the above structure and concessions to my position, my argument thus is confirmed and created by Stein, Leopold, and Warren, for with their theories it becomes clear that not only is it possible to be in community with the natural world, but in fact it is necessary to do so in order to preserve the dominators perfectionist value of a communal, gregarious, and non-isolated way of relating, that is, of living in and with the world.

⁷¹ Ibid., 164.

CONCLUSION

Karen Warren's arguments about Ecofeminism that focus on the twin dominations of women and the natural world, and the commitment that one has to dismantling both if one is to dismantle either, contribute important work to Ecofeminist theory. Warren presents arguments that connect the oppression of women with the natural world clearly and concisely, and begins to address questions about dismantling structural frameworks that dominate the marginalized in parallel and connected ways.

Nonetheless, there is room for significant alterations and additions to Warren's argument, which I have tried to provide here with aid from Aldo Leopold's philosophical thought. While Warren works from the position that the wronging done to women and the natural world in the process of their oppression can be the action-guiding element for dismantling the dominations, I have presented an alternative which attempts to recognize the different particularities of the natural world and of women that do make each of their dominations distinct in some ways. This alternative recognizes this distinction and avoids problematic arguments that overlook it by appealing to the moral problems inherent in the process of dominating itself. I argue that the commitment to dismantling the twin dominations of the natural world and of women comes not from the wrong done to each victim, but rather from the negative effects that dominating has on living well as well as on the process of relating to the other, that is, the harm that befalls the perfectionist value of the dominator in these ways. This argument is set up quite well by Philip Pettit's description of what human flourishing, or perfectionist value, requires "success in achieving autonomously formulated, reasonable life plans, through fellowship or community with others, over a complete life." There is the element of liberty, as well as

that of community and relationships; both of which, as I have argued, are necessary components of a human beings perfectionist value.

Domination directly inhibits the process of living well by obstructing a crucial element of living well, that of liberty. Using the Republican theory of Liberty (with reference to Philosophers Frank Lovett and Philip Pettit), which requires the absence of domination, in combination with theories that recognize the inability for equality so long as domination exists, as well as the inherently social value that is non-domination, I have posited that to be a human being that dominates is incompatible with being a human being that lives well and flourishes. The second piece of my argument that reinforces the way that domination affects the dominator focuses on the way dominating negatively affects the process of relating to the other and breeds isolation, both elements that themselves inflict harm on the perfectionist value of the dominator. I argue this point by acknowledging the relationship between community and respect, and identifying thinkers such as Val Plumwood and again, Leopold, who outline how to be in community with another, juxtaposed against my interpretation of the isolation that is bred by dominating the other. That is, to dominate is to directly inhibit genuine relationships with the other, and inherently isolate oneself, a function that is incompatible with human flourishing.

By identifying two important harms that domination inflicts on the perfectionist value of the dominator, I hope I have presented an alternative cause (or at least the initial components of a cause) to dismantle the domination of women and the natural world, one that does not get into potentially difficult and controversial claims of harm to the victims in each domination, but rather hopefully inspires the dominator to act by acknowledging what is at stake when dominating. The implications of this argument could be massive,

not only for woman and the natural world, but for all minorities and subordinates placed into the “other” category that Warren references. To challenge the logic of domination by clarifying the harms that it presents to the dominator is to reframe a structure that justifies subordination that happens everyday and everywhere in our world today, and to do so in such a way that provokes the self-preservation instinct within the human character. Of course, there are questions still left by this argument, both of the social and logistical nature. To the former, I have not dealt specifically with the reality and implication of being in both categories, that is, both dominator and dominated (for example, a white woman), and the impacts to the navigation of such. As oppression is a layered process within individuals, my arguments thus far need additional work that addresses the way these perfectionist harms play out in the layered identities that define most individuals. Another important social point to note is that of undermining the harm that is done to the dominated. Even as it varies based on the distinct natures of those being harmed, the harm that oppression brings is exorbitant and extravagant, and is important to recognize even as I have argued it a difficult position to base intersectional commitments from. What I have presented here leaves open questions of recognizing this harm to the subject, and in that same vein, as I have noted throughout it does not address the complexities of arguments for or against the intrinsic value of the natural world. To the logistical gaps in my argument, there is significant room and need to consider what exactly a society without domination would look like. That is, to make claims to dismantle value-hierarchies is a strong position to take, and requires much more content and discussion regarding what would be left. A final point worth noting that I have left relatively unaddressed as well as have noted previously in the paper, is the concern of whether there

does indeed exist inherent value in the natural world. While I have attempted to make clear that my argument does not rest on the validity of the claim that the natural world has inherent value, and thus have not explored that argument extensively, my argument is nonetheless impacted by the validity of this claim and thus could be supplemented by further argumentation and content.

It goes without saying that making claims about dismantling entire frameworks through which social life is filtered is a difficult task. What I have presented here is just an initial step, or rather, a re-route into approaching an Ecofeminist objective by changing the point of focus and inspiration for action. There are enormous implications and important questions that follow from this initial re-route of focus that I have tried to initiate with these arguments, regarding the dominator, the dominated, and the intersection of both. Nonetheless, my hope is that this project begins to make important distinctions between the nature of the subjects of domination, while still giving reasons to dismantle all dominations, namely through the perfectionist value of the dominator.

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