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Indigenous Climatic Perspectives
A Multidisciplinary Approach To Environmental Discourse Analysis

By
Linda G. Claros

Claremont Graduate University
2022

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Approval of Dissertation Committee

This dissertation has been dully read, reviewed, and critiqued by the Committee listed below, which hereby approves the manuscript of Linda G. Claros as fulfilling the scope and qualify requirements for meriting the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Religion with a concentration in Women's and Gender Studies.

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Abstract

Indigenous Climatic Perspectives A Multidisciplinary Approach To Environmental Discourse Analysis

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This dissertation presents a multidisciplinary analysis of climate discourse from Indigenous Climatic Perspectives (ICP). This research highlights how the manner in which we relate intellectually, culturally and spiritually to the environment has been dictated by economic ideology developed within Euro-American capitalistic paradigms. Hence, the origin of our climate disaster is traced to religious and philosophical assumptions about Nature and the environment, that operate unchallenged within spheres of discourse- scientific, religious and cultural. This dissertation presents an alternative means of analysis, Indigenous Climatic Perspectives, by which we can come to understand our place in the biosphere by embedding new theoretical and praxiological methodologies based on co-operation with environmental factors. Indigenous philosophy and religious practices are combined with other perspectives, such as ecofeminism, sociological analysis, urban studies and agro-ecology to present a coherent, climate-conscious discourse that is accessible and functional in terms of helping reduce the impact of climate destruction.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
1 Christian Discourses on God and Nature: Impacts on the Climate Crisis	22
2 Economic and Religious Discourses: Catholic Thought and the Climate Disaster	58
3 Indigenous Climatic Perspective: Approaches to the Climate Breakdown	106
4 Ecological Culture and Citizenship in the Age of Climate Change	149
Conclusion	188
Bibliography	194

Introduction

We are living in the midst of an unprecedented scenario: the environment in which we live is breaking down, a failure caused by our very own invented economic system. How did such a scenario come into being? What can we do, first to stop and then potentially reverse, the damage already done? These types of questions lie at the center of this study.

One could employ a multitude of perspectives to explain and analyze the climate crisis. Historical, anthropological, economic and scientific perspectives all have something to offer in this context. My research presented here draws on a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary model to center solutions to the climate disaster; this issue is currently the foremost problem facing humanity, and thus all our scientific and intellectual resources need marshaling to assist in overcoming what is already a climate care deficit as a result of five hundred years of capitalism.

This research incorporates a multitude of different academic and intellectual perspectives from a variety of different disciplines. Nonetheless, there are several focal points that help fundamentally orientate the discourse. Some of my guiding principles include ecofeminism as a useful tool for deconstructing the patriarchal discourses used to justify climate destruction; the emphasis on religious discourse as an important part of human cultural, intellectual and praxiological formation, and the role of women and gender diversity in recasting the sense of the purpose and function of the planet away from exploitation towards more effective, efficient and harmonious interactions. These aspects intertwine at different junctions to inform my arguments and to help frame the overall methodological orientation of the project. These elements of the research methodology presented here are designed to frame a new field of inquiry that I call “Indigenous climatic perspectives”. The purpose of arguing for Indigenous climatic perspectives is to create an overriding fulcrum where climate positive arguments and solutions are debated

theoretically with the purpose of integrating these solutions into practical contexts within other fields of study – such as science, economics, sociology.

Indigenous climatic perspectives (ICP)

The term *Indigenous climatic perspectives* suggests that as a society we need to re-orientate ourselves and our discourse to re-engage with nature on a fundamental level of equality and humility. In this sense, I suggest that Indigenous societies, especially in North America, have historically engaged with nature in positive and sustainable ways not simply by chance, but due to nature-positive integration of ideas, norms and practices that help humans understand our position as co-dependent members of a larger relationship with the sacred aspects of the natural world. I will show using concrete examples drawn from Indigenous religious and spiritual traditions how nature-orientated discourse and practice provides essential insights, options and alternatives for those of us in the modern world. Indigenous climatic perspectives and discourse challenge the roots that cause our modern alienation from nature, our normalization of anti-nature discourse and the general sense of apathy concerning human attitudes towards nature.

In terms of identifying the reasons for our current intellectual and spiritual alienation from nature, there are several obvious sources of discourse that are human-centric, interconnected and mutually enforcing – academic and scientific discourse, religious discourse and economic discourse. All three discourses share the assumption of an anti-Indigenous foundational methodology. The means by which all three aspects of discourse are anti-Indigenous is explained in subsequent chapters.

The key discourse under discussion here is the religious discourse of Christianity, with a particular emphasis on the Catholic Church and the institutional pronouncements of the Vatican.

There are several valid reasons for focusing on the Catholic Church. First, it is the biggest Church in the world, and thus has access to a large number of members, shaping human beliefs concerning nature for populations all across the world. The Catholic Church, through the status of the Vatican as an independent political state, also exercises power on the political level. The Catholic Church has also played a vital role in the destruction and continuing invisibility of Indigenous peoples and cultures. This antipathy towards Indigenous culture and religion, many examples of which will be provided in subsequent chapters, stems from the intellectual context of the development of the Church's own anti-physical, anti-nature dogmas. The practical impact of these doctrines is seen through the historical reality that the Catholic Church involved itself minutely with the oppression and cultural destruction of Indigenous peoples' religious and scientific contexts in order to make way for forced conversion to Christianity. This project runs parallel to the early colonizing efforts by Europeans all across the Americas. In this sense too, the economic systems established on the basis of enslaving and exploiting Indigenous peoples, systems established by European Christians, often mirror the way in which nature is exploited by capitalism.

In this sense, discourse is important. When we compare the language used within Christianity, capitalism and scientific discourse, and compare them to Indigenous climatic perspectives, we see that the images, metaphors and descriptions of nature in the context of Euro-American discourse is very different from what we see in Indigenous climatic perspectives. We can characterize Euro-American dominant discourses as centering patriarchal ideology, envisioning nature as a helpless and victimized woman, seeing men as masters and innovators marching inevitably forward in a whirlwind of "progress", the anti-physical rhetoric of bodily

disgust, the normalization of the exploitation of both the human and the natural world facilitated by demeaning discourse concerning Native peoples and cultures.¹

For these reasons, it is fair to critique Christian discourse from the Indigenous climatic perspective. Indigenous thought systems place religious and spiritual well-being at the center of their philosophical perspectives. Nature is not an inanimate, passive “other” but is in active engagement with society and culture at all levels of practice and discourse. The texts under consideration consist of doctrines and Vatican documents emphasizing how religious patriarchy and human-centered values take precedent over nature. This demonstrates how the Church, despite its opening to social concerns post-Vatican II, still maintains its religious ideologies towards gender and nature. The motivating question is not only about “What coping strategies and actions improve climate justice?” but “What are the kinds of discourse that have perpetuated the crisis?” In answering this question, I analyze the problem by framing the general field of religion and spirituality as the key to better environmental awareness.

Why Religion?

Given that many modern capitalist societies appear to have uncoupled from religious realities in pursuit of purely economic goals, one might wonder why an emphasis on religion as a key aspect of climate discourse?

Religion, more so than philosophy and scientific knowledge, has the potential to motivate the individual in meaningful ways. Philosophical theories of ethics, for example, often suffer from a theory – praxis gap; one may believe the reasoning behind the philosophical theory and its conclusions, but recognizing flawless or convincing logic does not necessarily

¹Recent events in the Los Angeles city council chambers show how deeply embedded anti-Indigenous discourse actually is.

translate to action corresponding to the theory. In the case of religion, we see that the motivational force of religious discourse is much more potent. As German anthropologist Helmuth Plessner (1892-1985) argued, religious imagery and discourse is structurally and psychologically closer to politics than philosophy.² Religious discourse concerning Native societies, often stemming from Christian sources, has historically used deliberately emotive and degrading language to describe Indigenous religious culture – terms like “savage”, “primitive”, “demonic” and even “pantheistic” are used as adjacent critiques of the fact that Indigenous religious technology is based on interaction and interdependence with nature. Christian discourse instead appeals to religious and spiritual values orientated “towards a remote, higher immaterial world which is the real source of sacrality”³. This discourse has led to ecological alienation, as such negative discourses concerning the natural world become enshrined as cultural touchstones testifying to the victory of dominant discourses justifying the abstraction and subsequent brutalization of nature. Western religions, sciences, philosophies and economic systems have played a role in this; it is thus logical to suggest that these disciplines have also thus contributed to the cultural discourse from which an evolution towards the actual physical destruction of the climate emerged.

Indigenous religions and religious discourse are considered in this work as a form of reimagining our connection to nature and the natural world. Inherent respect for natural processes and our place within this context is the foundational philosophy of many Indigenous religious systems. We will see how this position is in marked contrast with the monotheist position of God, for whom nature is just another aspect of their creation. Drawing on philosopher Vandana Shiva, we will see how monotheism is also often aligned with other

² See, Helmuth Plessner, *Political Anthropology* (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 2018).

³ Val Plumwood, *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason* (London: Routledge, 2002), 219.

aspects of monistic thinking; in particular Vandana Shiva identifies monological thinking and monocultural thinking. Such myopic foundational philosophies are critiqued from Indigenous climatic perspectives, not to create a sense of hostility or argument, but rather because we need all peoples of all faiths to understand that a coherent and effective response to climate disaster requires a certain amount of religious and philosophical common ground. Indigenous climatic perspectives are actually designed to also foster positive interaction between people of different faiths.

Flexibility and openness to changing situations and contexts is central to the Indigenous climatic perspectives; it conditions change the means of relating to nature spiritually may also under certain changes. It is not possible to establish rigid certainties beyond our knowledge of our own natural embeddedness. It is harder for religions that depend on one canonical text to envisage this kind of nuanced flexibility, but I believe it is possible. Similarly, we see that other “world religions” do involve a perspective similar to Indigenous climatic perspectives. The belief systems known commonly as “Hinduism” and “Buddhism” provide good examples.

A good example from the Hindu context is the anti-establishment figures of the *sadhus*, wandering ascetics who dedicate themselves to worship of God in the practical sense, not necessarily through ritual worship or prayer, but through the conjoining of their everyday existence with God’s creation. There is a great variety of perspectives and practices within sadhu culture, with some adopting extreme practices. For example, the Aghori sadhu is one who believes everyone and everything is a manifestation of God, and so therefore, there is no basis upon which to discriminate between aspects of God’s creation that you find palatable and aspects you find repulsive. All aspects of natural life are embraced. Aghori sadhus often live in cremation grounds, eating pancakes made from mixing lime with the ashes of corpses.

Everything is God, so why the discrimination and disgust? While some of the sadhu practices may seem extreme, they are nonetheless consistent and help to incorporate human consciousness, divine consciousness and the natural world into one coherent and validating system. This also suggests that it is not necessary to postulate a God that is independent of, and rules over, the domain of nature. It does not demean God in any way to link God with nature and to worship God through concern for, and worship of, nature.

Buddhism is a religion that does not adhere to monotheism. While there are gods within Buddhist cosmology, they are not considered important in comparison to the status of a Buddha. Nonetheless, there are many forms and classes of Buddhas. One form is known as a *pratyekabuddha*. This term refers to a meditator who has been living in the forest in communion with nature. Through understanding cause-and-effect as it manifests in nature, the meditator understands his position as another cog in the wheel of what Buddhists call dependent co-origination. This doctrine suggests that everything that happens, either in the human or natural world, is linked together by a chain of causes, effects and conditions. The *pratyekabuddha*, because of their closeness with nature, realizes the truth of this and attains a form of enlightenment.

Mother nature is also invoked in one of the most famous stories of the enlightenment of the Buddha. When the evil demon Mara, who rules over the world of pleasure and the senses, sees Shakyamuni Buddha meditating under the Bodhi tree, and decides to test him. Once Shakyamuni Buddha had passed all the tests, Mara challenged him by suggesting his meditation might be strong, but points out Shakyamuni that has no followers. Mara, on the other hand, suggests his followers are innumerable, basically all people who are not Buddhas. Mara tells the Buddha that there are no witnesses to the truth of his teaching, that Mara's world of ego and

exploitation is dominant and full of followers. Buddha responds with the “Earth Witness Mudra”. Shakyamuni touches his hand to the ground, invokes the Earth as the witness to the truth of his teaching; the earth shakes, providing the Buddha with validation, and he subsequently dispels Mara once and for all.

This story is one of many within Buddhism that extoll the important relationship between the natural world and animals. These stories are not outliers within the tradition. Our relationship to nature is foundational in Buddhism. Children in Buddhist countries are often taught to respect animals and nature via stories of the Buddha’s previous lives, known as *Jataka Tales*, that use stories of the Buddha, often appearing in the guise of an animal, to build mutual respect and reciprocity between humans, animals and nature.

A final example of how Asian religions have evolved in tune with nature relates to the issue of gender – whether it is static or fluid. In both Hinduism and Buddhism, we have numerous examples of gender fluidity rather than gender rigidity, although there are still issues within both religions regarding, in particular, institutional misogyny. Nevertheless, when we examine Buddhist history and doctrine, we see that eco-friendly, gender-positive interpretations are central to developing many of the key characteristics of Buddhist practice and social norms.

The religious questions relate to how religion informs individual and societal perceptions about our natural world. Religion has the opportunity to motivate people and to bring unifying principles with beneficial societal outcomes. For example, gender fluidity and the natural world are part of the Hindu and Buddhist pantheon. These religions do not lose anything through acceptance of gender fluidity, signifying an important consideration for the Catholic Church who continue to hold anti-gender views.

How is Buddhism open to gender? For example, there are many female Buddhas, such as Green Tara, who is said to be an emanation of Avalokiteshvara, who is depicted as male in India, female in China, and androgenous in Japan. The gender fluidity on display in Buddhist iconography is a representation of the doctrines that ultimately says gender is a construction of the human mind. In addition, many teachings imparted to groups of people by the Buddha and Padmasambava (circa eight-ninth century) is an interesting figure in Buddhist history. He is known for bringing Buddhism to Tibet from what is the Swat region of Pakistan.

The female Buddhist leader Yeshe Tsogyal (765/777-821 C.E.) was the first disciple of Padmasambava. She establishes a precedent for later female adepts, Machig Labdrön (1055-1149) another female practitioner who established the first lineage of Buddhism to emerge outside of India. Its authenticity was recognized by a group of Indian monks who travelled to Tibet with the expressed intention of testing Machig Labdrön. In this sense, women are equal to men in the ability to reach enlightenment. The female icons in the Christian tradition, such as the mother of Jesus, Hildegard of Bingen, Joan of Arc, and Theresa of Avila among others, represent important female figures to Christian women; nonetheless, female figures in Christian traditions are respected for their divinity and closeness to God yet are considered distinct from the highest form of divinity characterized in the figure of God the Father. In the context of Buddhist history, one is not considered inferior or divorced from the truth in any way if one chooses to follow female Buddhas instead of the male depictions.

The above discussion points out that, in fact, Indigenous religious perspectives that center on nature are not outliers, quite the opposite. Religious doctrines that accord special importance to the natural world are more numerous than those that denigrate nature. Yet in terms of influence, Christian doctrinal norms have seeped into the modern world's subconscious, often

via the close relationship between capitalist philosophies of exploitation and Christian doctrines that abstract the results of this brutality by applying a human-centered lens that prioritizes the short-term fulfillment of human desires over the long-term health of the planet. This discourse suggests that eventually God will right the situation via the rapture or other such apocalyptic visions. This dissertation aims to show that these are not the only options for religious discourse, or even Christian religious discourse. Native religious and spiritual epistemologies provide an example of how practical alternatives exist, maintaining the idea of God while integrating the natural world.

In the context of responding to the climate crisis, this work pairs the idea of religious ecology with the importance of understanding and incorporating gender and gender equality. This is another area where the Catholic Church compares unfavorably to Indigenous climatic perspectives and religious discourses. What are the roles of Indigenous women and how do they help us respond to climate disaster?

Indigenous women and the philosophy of climate praxis

The voices of Indigenous women have been largely excluded from Euro-American dialogue on the climate crisis and its solution. This work attempts to re-center the importance of women in part of the process of healing the environment. Interestingly, in Buddhist traditions, the female represents wisdom, and the male compassion. We see similar ideals of female and non-binary wisdom displayed prominently in Indigenous societies. This wisdom and leadership of women is crucial in our attempts to create sustainable climate solutions.

The concept of epistemic injustice certainly applies to Indigenous women. Despite the important role of Indigenous women in helping establish women's rights in American society,

their contribution is always minimized or vanished altogether, a point Miranda Fricker calls “epistemic injustice”.⁴ This means women’s perceptions or ideas about the world are rejected, rendering them unable to emphasize the stories of the culture in power in a given society. While at the beginning many European and Native Americans, in the Americas, learned from each other, the European settlers abandoned these friendly relations.

The research of Sally Roesch Wagner was key in helping rewrite much of the discourse concerning Native women of the Americas. For many years, Wagner studied the literature and writing of prominent figures in the women’s suffragette movement in the United States. She asks the question many have neglected: how did nineteenth century radical feminists Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902), Lucretia Moss (1793-1880), and Matilda Joslyn Gage (1826-1898) become inspired by the philosophy of gender egalitarianism? These utopian ideals were significant deviations from the founding philosophical model of patriarchal Euro-American society of the time. For over a decade, Wagner wrestled with this mystery, but was finally able to solve it.⁵ She found that Gage, Mott, and Stanton were living in upstate New York and drew inspiration from the women in the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) confederacy, citizens of the six-nations: Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, Mohawk and Tuscarora.

For example, Gage and Stanton wrote about the Haudenosaunee oral traditions, social and political organizations. They recounted a cautionary tale that tells of what happens to husbands who beat their wives. The Code of Handsome Lake says that the man, “who was in the habit of beating his wife, was led to the red-hot statue of a female, and requested to treat it as he had done his wife. He commenced beating it, and the sparks flew out and were continually

⁴From Miranda Fricker’s book title, *Epistemic Injustice: Power & Ethics of Knowing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁵Bruce E. Johansen, Donald Grinde Jr., and Barbara A. Mann, *Debating Democracy: Native American Legacy of Freedom* (Santa Fe: Clear Light Publishers, 1998), 117.

burning him. Thus would it be done to all who beat their wives.”⁶ These stories inspired the early feminists to demand rights for Euro-American women who had no rights to their children, property, or voting power. This greatly contrasted with the experience of women from the six nations under the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) confederacy. For example, in Wagner’s feminist and sociological research of the same Native women who inspired Gage, Mott, and Stanton reveal an unbroken custom for the Haudenosaunee. The clan mothers nominate the male chiefs who go on to represent their clans in the Grand Council. The list of qualifications for male chiefs requires that they have a clean record, no theft, murder or have sexually assaulted a woman.

Indigenous women have already started the movement towards climate justice. Indian scholar Vandana Shiva describes how the evolution of social and political movements is often neglected in the history of these movements, with the focus falling entirely on the end result. Shiva claims that movements transcend individual agents and represent major social and political processes. Their significance lies in the multiplicity of people involved in the movement resulting in social change. One such event that highlights the intersections of women, ecological, and socio-religious movements was the emergence of the *Chipko* movement, where a group of Indian women chained themselves to trees that had been slated for logging. Shiva considers this movement as the beginnings of the “...resurgence of women and ecological concern.”⁷ In some sense, this dissertation attempts to further contribute to the spirit of this movement.

Historical accounts of the social, philosophical, religious and economic shaping of this country were written exclusively by men. We have learned from feminist and ecofeminist scholarship that there is a sense that while women have been excluded from the creation of

⁶Sally Roesch Wagner, *The Untold Story of the Iroquois Influence on Early Feminists : Essays* (Aberdeen: Sky Carrier Press, 1996), 14.

⁷Vandana Shiva, *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development* (New York: South End Press, 2010), 68.

discourse, women continue to assume responsibility for much of the essential social and economic praxis which underlines the current economic systems. Historically, this is also the case, as women's labor and influence have been sidelined. This process has happened similarly to Indigenous women and women of the global south.

In the global South there are pervasive stereotypes about women as being passive to men due to the patriarchal culture and religious conservatism. But in the North, particularly the United States of America, women were denied a voice in the formation of the government. The misconception that lives in the popular mind was that women's equality was something no society tolerated at the time of the newly formed government. For example, Wagner writes how Abigail Smith Adams advises her husband John Adams, one of the framers of the constitution, to be more generous to women and cautioned him that he should not give husbands unlimited power or there will be a rebellion where women will not bound themselves to law which they have no representation.⁸

State of the field: Indigenous Climatic Perspectives (ICP)

I develop the Indigenous Climatic Perspectives (ICP) through a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approach to climate breakdown. In order to solve this crisis, we will require a multitude of disciplines and fields that will guide our understanding of our changing world. Below is a brief overview of some of the scholarly sources and positions that have influenced my research in this dissertation. In terms of categorical classification, the fields can be broadly divided into feminist philosophy, ecofeminist studies, Indigenous studies including culture and history, and environmental/ postcolonial studies.

⁸Sally Roesch Wagner, *The Untold Story of the Iroquois Influence on Early Feminists : Essays* (Aberdeen: Sky Carrier Press, 1996) 14.

What is interesting about the scholarship of Vandana Shiva, an Indian ecofeminist and scientist, is how she links the environmental crisis to monocultural systems. These dominant systems of thought permeate all sectors of society, including agricultural systems. Shiva links monocultural views to the development of the agribusiness models based on patenting seeds, agrochemical inputs and deadly pesticides known to be the leading cause of cancer for seasonal farm work. Agribusiness is also responsible for disappearing local biodiversity and displacing Indigenous local agricultural and scientific knowledge. Her scholarship has relevance to how we can survive the environmental crisis through safeguarding local and Indigenous knowledge that enables biodiversity and sustainable approaches to food systems. One area where I deviate from Shiva is her reliance on scientific data, while my starting point is gender and religious studies.

Vine Deloria Jr. (1933-2005) was a Standing Rock Sioux religious scholar whose research covers history, political science, law, religious studies and science.⁹ In many ways, Deloria Jr. was one of the first scholars to deconstruct Western perspectives from the lens of Native American philosophies, religions, and sciences. His scholarship is cited in most of the research surveyed on American Indian studies, by native and non-native scholars. Deloria Jr. asks when humans will finally find peace with the land and take up responsibilities to all living things? Deloria Jr. passed before the Standing Rock nation faced the ecological threat of having the Dakota access gas pipeline built through their lands. Without doubt Deloria Jr. would have railed against this pipeline access. He believed that while members of the ecological community

⁹ While the work of Vine Deloria Jr. has been accepted and used by many scholars, his detractors like anthropologist John Mohawk and others have critiqued Deloria for romanticizing Indigenous views. Mohawk levies a critique against Deloria Jr. for his supposed use of pseudoscience based on Native American oral traditions that offer a much older record of human presence on the Western hemisphere, than what mainstream science has established. While these detractions are important to consider, Mohawk and others like him are also operating out human scientific knowledge subject to the same kinds of critiques. Deloria Jr. in his book *Red Earth, White Lies: Native Americans and the myth of Scientific Fact* (1997) debunks the scientific theory of the Bering Strait crossing.

cannot speak, humans will have to speak on behalf of the entire ecological community.¹⁰ The emphasis on ecofeminist methodologies and Indigenous women's knowledge I use to interpret the climate breakdown is distinct from Deloria Jr. who employs a broader Native American perspective.

The Australian ecofeminist philosopher and environmental thinker Val Plumwood (1939-2008) presents a radically new perspective on what has gone wrong with the climate crisis.¹¹ She intersects interspecies ethics, political philosophy, feminist theory, and race theory to approach the crisis of ecological reasoning. Plumwood presents a unique framing of the crisis and its origins as dominant forms of rationalism developed by capitalism and Cartesian paradigms. She describes Christian religion and spirituality as being complicit with dominant forms of thinking about nature, but religion is not the focus of her research questions. In this sense, my research focus is distinct from her approach to the climate crisis.

I found the in-depth work on Native American societies by cultural anthropologist Jack Weatherford as the most accessible, detailed and uplifting. Many native and non-native scholars use the work of Weatherford for their understanding of Native American societies. Weatherford provides an account of the origins and roots of Native American modes of thought, including medicinal knowledge, personal liberties, and numerous resources still used in modern societies. The cultural anthropological lens Weatherford uses in his research on Native American communities is distinct to the multidisciplinary approach I use in this research.

¹⁰Vine Deloria Jr., *God is Red: A Native View of Religion* (Wheat Ridge: Fulcrum Publishing, 2003), 300.

¹¹ Val Plumwood's philosophical work has been critiqued for being overly abstract. Other scholars like Bruce Bratley and Rob Krueger critique Plumwood for overgeneralized and abstract understanding of western philosophy and science since she does not consider the cultural context of figures like Rene Descartes. This critique is ironic given that philosophical inquiry rarely considers the context or culture in which many universal philosophical assumptions were debated and constructed, leaving only a few male-centric figures to offer their perspectives based on subjective knowledge, not objective universal knowledge. Many ecofeminist philosophers like Plumwood leverage this critique on western science for excluding experiential and local knowledge from philosophical and scientific assumptions about gender and nature.

The seminal scholarship of Rosemary Radford Ruether (1936-2022) in feminist and ecofeminist theological studies surveys the dominant and destructive patriarchal interpretations of the Judeo-Christian traditions, and their impact on women and the environment. Ruether argues that many of the Aristotelian views and Platonic dualistic ideas suppressing the agency and power of nature and women were subsumed in the evolution of Christian cosmology. This philosophical legacy in Christian thought propelled many influential thinkers to adopt similar views in their theological interpretations. Nonetheless, Ruether advocates for the ethical values traced to the early Christian Church based on the egalitarian and socialist teachings of Jesus as a blueprint for healing earthly relationships. In this sense, I deviate from Ruether's solution to the ecological crisis. I argue that the ethical values found in the ministry of Jesus that Ruether claims can support ecological and social transformation have had no impact on the hierarchical Church and its religious ideologies about nature and gender.

Overview of Chapters

My thesis shows how to construct an Indigenous climatic perspective that will assist in the process of remodeling our structures of thought and praxis to cope with the climate disaster, and perhaps even reverse some of its most critical impacts. I suggest a reorientation towards Indigenous climatic perspectives, with its adjacent philosophical, religious, spiritual and technological associations. Since Indigenous views constitute a "disappeared" intellectual tradition, a vision of the world that has been replaced and discredited, it is first necessary to debunk the basis for such criticism. Much of the criticism of Indigenous perspectives is filtered through Christian discourse. This is true in both historical and contemporary contexts.

Therefore, there are two distinct parts to this work. Chapters one and two are designed to function as a deconstruction and critique of the one Christian anti-nature discourse that forms one of the roots of the modern dominant western patriarchal capitalist interpretation of reality. I highlight the abstract, limited, and narrow views about the environment found within the discourses of Christian monotheism and Western science. The second part of the work, chapters three and four, focus on positive, regenerative perspectives concerning the climate that are found in Indigenous societies, but which form climatic perspectives from which we can all learn and apply in order to alleviate the climate crisis.

In chapter one I examine how Christian tradition, particularly the Catholic Church, has employed discourse that considers the environment as representing a resource to be exploited. This attitude harks back to the ancient pagan Goddess traditions who made the dense and dark forests of Europe, from Ireland to Germany to Ukraine, where pagan practices were undertaken in line with natural cycles of life. Hence, a coagulation of two types of fears: fear of the embrace of the natural world and its uncontrollable nature on the one hand, and a fear of the power of nature to impact the human realm, to cause discomfort and anxiety to those who are not aligned with nature's own natural philosophical course. Scary stories emerged likening the practitioners of these rites to gremlins and ghouls who live in the woods. These woods later became the home of demonic forces beyond human control.

As chapter one shows, Christianity has an ambivalent attitude towards nature and natural processes, preferring an abstract realm of pure Being, with the natural world subverted to the whims of this being known as "God". Chapter two continues the process of deconstruction and critique by focusing on the links between Christian doctrine and the ideas and practices of what I term "economic rationalism". Scholars like Marx and Max Weber have long since noted the

distinct mutually beneficial relationship between capitalism and Christianity. While Weber focused much of his attention on Protestant churches, I argue that a similar critique of the Catholic position is necessary, especially when we consider the important role played by the Catholic Church in justifying and supporting the initial raids on the Americas that would in hindsight mark the beginning of the capitalist system.

From the beginning, the system was based on exploitation of both the human and the natural world, a position endorsed by the Catholic Church through the encoding of anti-Indigenous rhetoric within its doctrinal systems and social proclamations. Economic rationalism disappears and excludes dependency on the radical Other, resulting in a monological system, stripped of compassion or regard for the radical Other. The human centered world is essentially built on injustices which have been obscured through history, minimizing awareness of the crisis. The monological system is complicit in ranking human and ecological life in accordance with their ability to service economic life. Monocultural systems emerge from economic rationalism and God discourse. This impacts many aspects of our approach to environmentalism, and certainly leads to a reduction in biodiversity, as monocultural systems are championed within agricultural practices based solely on the economic rationality of the yield produced. Concepts such as sustainability, mutual benefit, co-habitation and mutual respect are absent from this discourse, replaced by the brutal logic of profit. The undeniable connections between climate, economics, and God discourse may be problematic to identify, but they inform each other both ideologically and praxiologically through various points of convergence.

Chapters three and four attempt to construct what I am referring to as “Indigenous climatic perspectives”, an umbrella term that advocates for the conjoining of Indigenous climate discourse and praxis as a foundation for inclusive and communal mutual co-operation in

response to the climate disaster. When we think of globalization in the current moment, we think in terms of exchange of resources for profit connected globally. Iris Marion Young considers a view she terms “global commons”, challenging the idea that capitalist globalization is the only means of connecting the world on the same footing. Young argues,

certain resources are necessary for the productive capacity of all societies; they must be considered global commons. Their use and the benefits of their use should thus be globally regulated under a cooperative framework regard through the consideration of a global commons that distributes resources evenly, not only to those within sovereign states that have minerals, fertile land, and resources. The rational is identified with what is worthwhile, reason-centeredness implies human-centeredness and it correlate, human self-enclosure.¹²

It is with this kind of vision in mind that I have formulated the position of ICP. I believe by reorienting ourselves towards aspects of Indigenous climate practices and doctrines, we can come to incorporate these doctrines as part of our response. Chapters three and four build on positive aspects of Indigenous climate awareness, covering a large sphere of human activity – agriculture, urban planning, intellectual discourse, religious life, spiritual practices and philosophical doctrines. Moreover, I point out how we cannot simply theorize, that we must act to solve the crisis; in this sense, Indigenous philosophies also facilitate the application of theories into praxis, a key element that constitutes the major failure of the western philosophical canon and its plethora of doctrines. None of these doctrines are of use to us, as none have a practical application. The climate crisis will not be solved through theory, and so chapters three and four address the alternative possibilities based in Indigenous climatic perspectives.

¹²Val Plumwood, *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason* (London: Routledge, 2002), 98.

Orientation to the Problem

The current data on the scale of the climate crisis is shifting constantly as projections of the damage done and yet to come continually change. We have clearly failed on the level of discourse in communicating the significance of the problem and the extensive reformation of society that is required to solve the issue. Much of the public apathy to the crisis can be explained through the amount of money spent by fossil fuel companies on advertising campaigns and on purchasing influence through funding politicians, especially in the United States. Nonetheless, climate reports tell us about the atmospheric and geological changes impacting all life on earth as a consequence of our fossil fuel dependent economy. These reports are accessible to all members of public.

Green-washing by polluting industries has exacerbated the crisis in terms of awareness, discourse and practical environmental impacts. The United Nations reports they are not confident carbon emissions will be reduced in half by 2030. The executive director of the UN Environmental Programme, Inger Anderson, says that incremental changes are over, and that “[only] a root-and-branch transformation of our economies and societies can save us from accelerating climate disaster.”¹³ There is no confidence within the UN that a credible pathway to limit temperature increase to 1.5C by stopping greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere is possible. Such reports analyze only the problems that are currently visible, and do not account for related issues, such as the outbreak of wars for resources and political instability. Such a radical re-imagining of society along principles of inclusivity and tolerance of nature and the “Other” is precisely what is advocated in chapters three and four.

¹³Damian Carrington, “Climate crisis: UN finds no credible pathway to 1.5C in place,” *The Guardian*, October 27, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/oct/27/climate-crisis-un-pathway-1-5-c>

Establishing a powerful, convincing and practical Indigenous climatic perspective is one solution to the problem, and begins at the level of both discourse and praxis to reestablish a sense of nature as our home, and its preservation as our primary concern. This is a logical position, and renders capitalism a completely illogical system that leads to a practical failure – the very destruction of one’s own home. And yet, a multitude of discourses, encompassing virtually all academic disciplines, religious leaders, politicians, business and media-based culture, still support openly and enthusiastically this failed and brutal system of destruction known as capitalism. We are like the stubborn person in the old saying, we would rather be fooled than admit that we have been fooled and change accordingly. The arguments presented in the following pages hope to build upon the perspectives and teachings of those who follow the traceless path of non-violence and mutual respect, values that are the foundation of our potential planetary transformation.

Chapter One
Christian Discourses on God and Nature: Impacts on the Climate Crisis

Introduction

The ecological crisis is arguably one of the most important issues of our time. According to scientific consensus, the uncontrolled economic exploitation of the environment has caused irreparable damage to the ecosystem. This has resulted in a variety of climatic disasters that will continue to increase in both intensity and frequency unless radical action is taken to ease this problem. How is it that despite the growing awareness of the effects of capitalism-based societies on the environment, we still prefer this system around the world? This is the case because capitalism, while apparently an economic system, also finds support and justification within other systems of thought.

In this chapter, I will demonstrate how the Church's historical and theological views about gender and economics establish foundational perspectives, in particular about women's role in society. I show how these views have implications for gender relations and environmental sustainability. While ecologically based climate discourse remains within designated categories such as geological, ecological, and scientific terms? We neglect various avenues of study that provide alternative perspectives on the climate crisis. We have reached a scientific consensus: our current economic model of capitalism is exacerbating the crisis. Scientists agree and yet in terms of religious and philosophical discourse, we remain as a species hopelessly divided regarding the discourses that exacerbate climate change. Indigenous and Christianity sought to displace this knowledge from communities of people considered ripe for conversion to Christian ideals. Many Indigenous religions situate their views about the divine within the reality of

ecological nature; this synthesis of the natural and the theological is a key factor in the success of Indigenous people in maintaining the sustainability of their lands.

Environmental exploitation remains observed and studied across the human sciences; statistical reports provide data and evidence on the global effects to the atmosphere, oceans, and soil. Despite these scientific and technological advances to human understanding of the earth and its complex systems, science and technology could not slow the climate crisis. Some scholars argue that the development of Western science and technology has roots in an anti-nature position that has facilitated methods to exploit and manipulate nature. For example, in the 1974 book titled *Man's Responsibility to Nature: Ecological Problems and Western Traditions*, John Passmore, an analytic philosopher argues that Western traditions such as modern science follow a similar path as Christianity; that nature is not sacred. Passmore says to this point:

Nothing is sacred, on this tradition, except God and what, like Sinai, is specifically dedicated to God. 'The Lord is in his holy temple; The Lord's throne is in heaven. No doubt God owns earth and all it contains, 'every beast of the forest and the cattle upon a thousand hills.' But man is at liberty, under a special charter from God, to exploit it as he wills—subject only to restrictions specifically imposed by God. He is not, when he kills 'the cattle upon a thousand hills,' killing something sacred.¹⁴

Passmore suggests the idea that nothing is sacred, only the God of the bible has implications for Greek science, which serves as the basis for much of modern science; the rejection of nature as sacred.¹⁵ It is a commonly held view within Christian theology that both the bible and some

¹⁴John Arthur Passmore *Man's Responsibility for Nature: Ecological Problems and Western Traditions* (London: Duckworth, 1974), 10.

¹⁵ John Passmore includes a story of a fifth-century philosopher-scientist, Anaxagoras who was condemned for impiety and exiled from Athens for denying the divinity of the sun by calling it a fiery stone. Many contemporary cosmologists of Anaxagoras held similar views. Modern science equally rejected the sacredness of nature. Robert Boyle (1627-1691), a devout Christian, claimed that man must not think of nature as a sacred force but simply as a collection of animals, plains, forests, plants, and seas. The early clashes between Christian and pagan thinkers illustrate how the sacredness of nature became debated, and eventually disappeared this view of nature as a sacred

classical Greek philosophy viewed from a Christian perspective suggests that the Divine is defined primarily by its disassociation from materiality. For example, Latin Christianity adopted the “Platonic view of the soul as capable of being “detached” from the body and existing in disembodied form after death, though its eschatological fulfillment comes only when this immortal soul is rejoined with a “spiritual” body at the resurrection.”¹⁶ Thus the Christian view of the soul shares relies on an immortal substance that is similar to what one may regard as the realm of God. In the Trinitarian model developed from Aristotle’s ontological categories of relations, Augustine (354-430) and Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) embrace the idea that God’s relation to nature is not *real* but *logical*. This means the unique characteristic of God, its relation to nature, is purely logical in that other species other than humans are not part of God’s nature.¹⁷ In this sense, the Christian tradition does not associate nature with an emanation of God. Given that Christianity is the most popular religion in the world today, one must ask the question, what impact does this have on environmental discourse, in both theory and practice?

Clearly, Christianity, in the modern world at least, is exercising its political power largely in terms of climate crisis denial and resistance to ecological policies. Euro-American societies that elect conservative Christian leaders tend to roll back environmental protections in favor of business interests tied to fossil fuel consumption. For example, the government of George W. Bush exercised devotion to the idea that fossil fuel consumption is the chosen way of American life. Thus, any policy or intellectual discourse that threatens this ethos was to be rejected on ideological grounds. The Bush government alliance with the fossil fuel sector and fundamentalist

place. See John Arthur Passmore *Man's Responsibility for Nature: Ecological Problems and Western Traditions* (London: Duckworth, 1974).

¹⁶Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Healing* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992), 29.

¹⁷Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us : The Trinity and the Christian Life* (Chicago: Harper One, 1993), 153.

Christians resulted in anti-environmental policies enacted without any accountability to the public.¹⁸ Such problems have not decreased with time, as today in 2022 several European countries are under the control of far-right Christian politicians who are working actively to dismantle any climate protections even as the crisis deepens still further. Whether these leaders are most likely using Christianity as a political tool, it nonetheless suggests that Christian doctrines can be used to support this anti-environmental stance.

Political leaders elected by the Bush administration supported the view that, “Only Christianity offers a way of life that responds to the realities of this world—only Christianity.”¹⁹ Similarly, discourse concerning Christianity in political life often focuses on the idea that Christian values are European values, therefore facilitating racist discourse against migrants, many of whom have themselves been displaced precisely due to the application of these “Christian values” from the time of the transatlantic slave trade onwards.

Scholars may argue economic and political analysis is more urgent than an analysis of religious discourse in terms of developing a helpful climate strategy; yet as the above example demonstrates, Christian ideological views about nature impact both politics and economics, facilitating a discourse that has justified making profit from natural resources from the very inception of the capitalist system. As I will argue further in this chapter, it is no coincidence that Euro-American populations today consume up to ten times more energy than the populations of the global south; ironically, the origin of this overused energy is often the exploitation of natural resources from the global South that were crucial in developing, and continue to maintain, the economies of the hyper-polluting global North.

¹⁸Timothy Leduc, “Fueling America's Climatic Apocalypse,” *World Views: Environment, Culture, Religion*, 11, no. 3 (2007): 260.

¹⁹Leduc, “Fueling America's Climatic Apocalypse,” 260.

There is nothing inherent in the concept of a God that causes such disregard of the climate. Many Indigenous populations have a concept of God within their religious cosmologies, but nonetheless maintain a position of utmost respect for nature. How is the indigenous perspective of God different from the Christian? One of the clearest insights of Indigenous religions is the view of “embeddedness” within a living and sacred ecosystem, not above or distinct from it. In other words, we do not “have dominion” over any aspect of the natural world; rather, we humans are, in fact, one part of the natural world. This chapter suggests that this Indigenous view shares much with the position of ecofeminism. Both positions imply a critique of the exploitation and mistreatment of nature and women in the name of profit.

Indigenous religious discourse is ancient, yet it illuminates an uncommon view of nature and divinity that is an alternative to the Christian model. Nature does not need to stand in opposition to, or beneath, the Divine. Both ecofeminist theory and Indigenous climatic perspectives as explained in this work provide an eco-religious approach to climate solutions that may spread to other disciplines, incorporating new theoretical and praxiological models. These models suggest a preparatory theoretical framework that overcomes the traditional God and Nature duality through an analysis of climate discourse, indigenous climate philosophy and its relationship to ecofeminist theory and praxis.

The Christian position on nature is characterized philosophically as “dualistic rationalism.” At the center of this theory is that reason is within ontological categories of relations that characterize sharp distinctions between nature, God, and reason. The ecofeminist and Indigenous climatic perspectives offered here confront the hyper-separation between the Divine and nature that also manifest as other similar dichotomies: nature and reason, culture and nature, humanity and nature. Ecofeminist philosopher Val Plumwood sums up this position as

follows: “The idea that human life takes place in a self-enclosed, completely humanized space that is somehow independent of an inessential sphere of nature which exists in a remote space ‘somewhere else’ is of course a major expression of culture/nature dualism.”²⁰ Plumwood also points out that the ecological crisis is forcing us to see that a hyper-separation from nature is an illusion, and that humans along with a whole cast of non-humans are equally positioned in a cosmic ecological world.²¹ In light of recent climate disasters, it seems that both philosophically and scientifically Plumwood is correct, yet hyper-separation remains the position of the Catholic church, amongst others within the Christian communities.

The proponents of Platonic dualism in the Christian tradition argue that the dualistic rationalism of the Divine/nature dichotomy is about God’s truth revealing itself in the higher realms of consciousness, soul, or Spirit. According to these Christian Platonists, undermining the primacy of consciousness in favor of physicalism is problematic, as reliance on physical materialism obscures the revelation of consciousness.²² Theologians like Michael Northcott claim that it is uncertain whether a shift towards a more equitable human-nature relationship will guarantee desirable effects such as more sustainable environmental politics. Northcott maintains that eliminating dualistic rationalizations of humanity and nature will cause more problems. The characteristics of nonhuman nature constitute distinct needs and interests compared to human interests, and these interests often conflict. Northcott finds himself in somewhat of a dilemma. At the very least, we see, through Northcott’s scholarship, that dualistic rationalism is a deeply held belief in Christian theology, one that demands different moral considerations for humans and non-humans.

²⁰Val Plumwood, *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason* (London: Routledge, 2002), 51.

²¹Plumwood, *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of*, 51.

²²Charles Taliaferro, “Value, Dualism, and Materialism.” *Christian Platonism: A History*, eds. Alexander J.B. Hampton and John Peter Kenney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 432.

Such a position is in itself philosophically dubious; Plumwood is one of many to point out that reason is not a morally relevant difference when it comes to arguing for moral distinctions between humans and animals.²³ So, even if we accept Northcott's argument, all he is really providing is a justification of a doctrine that, even if theoretically sound has dire practical consequences. Northcott's position, for example, can justify practices like factory farming which are a major cause of global pollution, negative health outcomes and the continuation of inefficient and cruel systems that are morally unjustifiable. This inability of western philosophical discourse to apply itself practically is contrasted with Indigenous systems whose philosophical observations and religious discourse work in tandem with practical solutions to communal problems. When considering the issue of climate breakdown, a failure to see the consequences of dualistic rationalism can have catastrophic long-term results. Thus, we must ask ourselves not only whether dualistic rationalism makes sense, but even if it does make sense, whether its practical implications in terms of the climate impact can be justified?²⁴

Therefore, for Northcott, to bond nature and human beings as a unified interspecies that share common interests reduces the diversity and otherness of nature. To Northcott, an interspecies ethics that considers human beings and nature on equal terms, inevitability constructs human transformation of nature that situates it under the control of human selves.²⁵ The proponents of dualistic rationalism fear two results from a porous human-nature relationship: firstly, they view the human-nature relationship as a challenge to the primacy of conscience, spirit and soul within the human being and its connection to Divine eternal reality;

²³Val Plumwood, *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason* (London: Routledge, 2002),195.

²⁴Paola Guzmán-Luna, et al, "Analysing the Interaction between the Dairy Sector and Climate Change from a Life Cycle Perspective: A Review." *Trends in Food Science & Technology*, (2021): 6.

²⁵Michael S. Northcott, "From Environmental U-Topianism to Parochial Ecology: Communities of Place and the Politics of Sustainability," *Eco theology: Journal of Religion, Nature & the Environment* 5, no. 8 (January 2000): 80.

secondly, they see a porous human-nature relationship as responsible for dissolving the diversity and “otherness” of nature through an application of anthropomorphic interests to ecological nature.

These Christian concerns do not acknowledge the ways “God discourse” has intentionally undermined the description of the non-human world, a form of discourse that we will encounter again when discussing the origins of capitalism in chapter two. The idea of a God above nature and responsible for her creation, placing humans at the core, denies the right of nature herself to have her own teleology. For example, the book of Genesis I explains the creation story and how humans, the earth, animals, and plants came to exist. The following three biblical passages in Genesis illustrate how humans were created in the image and likeness of God. Then God gives humans dominion over all “creatures that move on the ground.” This is followed by the order in which God created man first and woman second. Finally, God gives humans the rights to domination over other life forms and the rights to reproduce.

“Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” (Genesis 1:26, NIV)²⁶

“So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them: male and female he created them.” (Genesis 1:27, NIV)

“God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” (Genesis 1:27, NIV)

²⁶Genesis 1: 26-28, New International Version. Accessed on December 4, 2022. *Bible Gateway Online* <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+1:26-28&version=NIV>

These biblical passages have been challenged by many ecofeminist scholars and theologians such as Rosemary Radford Ruether who explains how feminists have pointed to the anthropocentrism of Christianity. Ruether explains how, “the notion that humans are the crown of creation, the only ones who are made in the image of God, a concept itself linked with dominion of humans over the rest of nature. The sexist hierarchy that links maleness to the mind and rationality, seen as having sovereign power of the body represented by women, heightens this anthropocentrism.”²⁷ Further, the idea that humans are the apex of earthly life constructs discourses about how humans are superior to other life forms. In this regard, the feminist hermeneutic interpretation of Genesis problematizes and impacts the environmental and social-gender relation changes required today. Other Christian interpretations of Genesis view the same passages as reinforcing God’s preference for human domination and their “distinctive” image fashioned out of the same image as God.

For example, while my focus is on Catholic institutional documents, some conservative evangelical leaders have formed the Cornwall Alliance for the Stewardship of Creation have essentially lobbied to prevent carbon emission regulations.²⁸ These views are based on four arguments against mitigating greenhouse gas emissions. I will only discuss two of the four views. One of the four arguments constitutes an “anti-paganism” view illustrated in the following arguments by the Cornwall Alliance:

²⁷ Ruether, Rosemary Radford. “Ecological Theology: Roots in Tradition, Liturgical and Ethical Practice for Today.” *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 42, no. 3 (September 2003): 226.

²⁸Karin Edvardsson Björnberg, Helena Röcklinsberg, and Per Sandin emphasize that the arguments of the Cornwall Alliance must not be taken as a representation of all or what most conservative Christians actually believe. This investigation is about understanding how the Cornwall Alliance views on greenhouse gas emission connect to their religious views about God and nature. Björnberg and et al, say, “We identify five partly overlapping arguments against greenhouse gas mitigation forwarded by the Cornwallites summarized under the following headings: the anti- paganism argument, the enrichment argument, the omnipotence argument, the lack of moral relevance argument, and the cost-benefit argument.” Karin Edvardsson Björnberg, Helena Röcklinsberg, and Per Sandin. “Cornwallism' and Arguments against Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reductions.” *Environmental Values* 29, no. 6 (2020): 7.

We deny atheism (there is no God), pantheism (everything is God), panentheism (God is to the universe as the human soul is to the human body), animism (there are many gods, and they indwell and animate physical objects as human souls indwell and animate human bodies), and any other view that denies the Creator/creature distinction, because those who hold them exchange the truth about God for a lie and worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever (Romans 1:25).²⁹

In this example it can be said that the Cornwall religious leaders view the human body and God as the ultimate exchange of divine truth, and thus anything outside this exchange such as nature is regarded as superfluous. The environment and non-human species are altogether denied and rejected from divine consideration. Such views foster a false sense of certainty about the human-divine world, facilitating the idea that humans are directly linked to the Divine in a way that animals and plants are not. In the fourth view, God's omnipotent design of the earth makes it impervious to "catastrophic degradation from proportionally small causes."³⁰ At the same time they affirm that God's design of earth with its biological and physical systems is resilient and robust enough to withstand essentially anything.

On the international level at the United Nations, a global alliance of conservative religious activists has formed representing the three monotheistic faiths: Christian, Jewish, and Muslim conservative leaders. The purpose of this global alliance of orthodox faiths is to counter "perceived liberal dominance of the international legal and political arena."³¹ For example, Buss and Herman emphasize how the alliance of the World Congress of Family II (WCFII) constitute "competing monotheisms, each belief system has a long history of mutual antagonism.

Nevertheless, the WCFII is an example of the "curious global alliance...that emerged around the

²⁹Karin Edvardsson Björnberg, Helena Röcklinsberg, and Per Sandin. "Cornwallism' and Arguments against Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reductions." *Environmental Values* 29, no. 6 (2020): 9.

³⁰ Björnberg, et al., "Cornwallism and Arguments against Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reductions," 12.

³¹Doris Buss and Didi Herman, *Globalizing Family Values: The Christian Right in International Politics* (University of Minnesota Press, 2003), xiv.

‘natural family’ agenda at the end of the twentieth century. For instance, the orthodox believers members of the WCFII are asked to put aside their own cultural and theological views in order to stand for one unifying principle: “the natural family as the fundamental unit of society.”³²

The Christian conservative alliances intent on establishing globalized family values supported under the guise of “natural family values” discount the impact their efforts have on gender empowerment and climate action in the global South. The global religious-based alliances explained above have a voice and representation at the United Nations climate initiatives are adopting gender equality into their programs. For example, the training methods and strategies implemented by the UN programs transform individual and collective knowledge that advances gender equality in daily life and work conditions for both men and women. For example, the Sustainable Development Agenda, adopted by UN Member States in 2015 set a 2030 deadline for the achievement of gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls.”³³

The United Nations program on sustainable agricultural techniques have helped countless women to modernize their farming techniques. For instance, the women of Mali were showing discouragement from the degradation of the land and natural resources they depend on to feed their families. The UN program helped the women master eco-friendly agricultural practices to ease the effects of climate change on their food sources. In this way, will the WCFII object to UN programs that empower women who decide not to have a family in order to work towards increasing food

³²Boris Buss and Didi Herman, *Globalizing Family Values: The Christian Right in International Politics* (University of Minnesota Press, 2003), xiv.

³³“The achievement of gender equality is the fifth of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) laid out in the Sustainable Development Agenda. Ten additional goals include gender-specific benchmarks, acknowledging the interconnection between women’s empowerment and a better future for all. The latest data on progress towards gender equality across the SDGs, compiled in UN Women’s 2022 edition of our annual Gender Snapshot Report , reveals the inadequacy of present-day efforts. If change continues at its current rate, our analysis shows that gender equality will remain unrealized for centuries to come.” In focus: Sustainable Development Goal 5: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/in-focus/2022/08/in-focus-sustainable-development-goal-5>

security? How does the advocacy of “natural family values” by the WCFII impact gender issues such as non-binary persons and their involvement in climate programs in the global South?

This chapter addresses the unnecessary negative views of gender and nature in Catholic institutional discourse. The argument in this chapter does not dispute this form of discourse, in the sense that one can still speak of God and the Divine without necessarily denigrating nature; however, this chapter will analyze the negative connotations of this discourse within Christian philosophical systems, particularly the ways it “others” nature, as human-centric, inessential because of our technological development, and unimportant especially in comparison to the need to maintain our current model of capitalism. Thus, current Christian God-discourse and its tendency to instill an alienation from nature in its believers is ultimately one possible explanation for the fact that, as a species, we are now all aware that our climate is collapsing, yet we have made virtually no effort to alleviate this problem.

Use of Terms

Before beginning our analysis of the content of God discourse and its relationship to the issue of climatic destruction, it is important to outline specifically the meaning of some of the key terms and their relationship to one another. The reader should note that the definitions provided are based on my own analysis and understanding of the literature; I am not providing an exhaustive list of definitions, nor am I suggesting these are the only possible definitions; rather, the hope is to provide clarity for the reader and a place of mutual understanding from which to begin our dialogue. God and Divine are used interchangeably as the representation of preeminent existence in Christian discourse. I explore the ways discourse on nature is analyzed through

already pre-established logics and epistemologies of dualistic rationalism, which inevitably express themselves as the hierarchical subjugation of nature, inferior to both God and Man.

The problem with current Christian God discourse is twofold. The Christian argument that God and nature are distinct will be critiqued in this chapter; nonetheless, even if my argument against this position is deemed unsuccessful, and one agrees that God is indeed necessarily distinct from nature, we still have the problem that the sheer volume of negative comments concerning nature within classical Christian doctrine is both unnecessary and practically unhelpful in an age where we are attempting to heighten an awareness of our human embeddedness in nature as an important method of responding to the climate crisis.

I argue that the idea of God as an autonomous and metaphysical eternal reality sediments a fixed and abstract view of the Divine that obscures the religious significance of our embeddedness with nature. More than the development of science and technology, which is already sufficient to deal with the crisis, the discourse that considers humans as separate from, and superior to, animals and other creatures in the natural world is a major problem for our species wide recognition that if other animals are subject to mass extinction events, we must prepare for the same fate. I argue that dualism is a forced oppositional stance fostered by hierarchical views of nature and God. In this hierarchical context the concept of God, which is abstract yet interpreted by humans, is deemed oppositional and as the superior reality to the natural world that exist in front of us. The challenge to rationalism is not the absence of reason or irrationalism, but rather to highlight the ways in which dominant reason constructs hegemonic views, “subjugating the supposedly inferior and passive sphere of nature in the body in non-human life. In the hegemonic rationalist constructions of reason, the body and nature are treated

as lower, a sphere to distance and dominant.”³⁴ The idea that humans are imbued with “more” rationality, while non-human species possess “less” rationality discounts the fact that the human mind has its ground in nature.

The Earth’s independent matrix of organic processes that interconnects the climatic system, humanity and animals, plant life and its wider relation to the solar system constitutes a complex system beyond anthropocentric concepts. I expand on the concept of Earth’s knowledge as a religious value and the idea of a non-hierarchical sacred ecological cosmic order observed in the Hopi and Mesoamerican religious systems. In addition, I will include Indigenous ideas of gender, a key issue where the Christian churches, among others, hold entrenched views. I postulate that Indigenous religious systems can contribute to an Indigenous climate perspective that reshapes the state of climate discourse towards more sustainable solutions. This Indigenous approach is viewed in parallel with ecofeminist theory and praxis. The ecofeminist and Indigenous climatic perspectives function as collaborative lenses that explore and deconstruct the negative and subordinate views towards nature found in Christian discourse.

I define the Native and Indigenous religious perspectives as practices and beliefs that represent an embeddedness between nature, humanity, and the Divine. This work contrasts the religious understanding of God and nature within the two systems, Indigenous and Christian, and suggests that the latter’s understanding has contributed directly to negative views about nature that are still reverberating in today’s world and play a role in the scale of the climate crisis we now face; nonetheless, it is possible that Christians can come to an understanding of God that is not antagonistic to nature, but which draws inspiration from the Indigenous concept of the Divine and its relationship to nature. Eco-conscious Christians and Christian movements

³⁴Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, (London: Routledge, 1993), 19.

certainly do exist, based on their own understanding of Christian doctrine, and it is my fervent hope that they will continue to prosper and eventually influence the mainstream. As my subsequent chapters will highlight, despite some progress, the institutional position of at least the biggest Christian group, the Catholic Church and the Vatican, does not seem amenable to interreligious dialogue on the understanding of God.

The religious views and practices expressed in Native and Indigenous religions represent more accurate and helpful ways of thinking about nature. They are “accurate” in the sense that agricultural practices entwined with these religious practices successfully facilitated Indigenous societies despite a scarcity of natural resources. They are “helpful” in that they broaden religious perspectives about nature, facilitating a move to non-anthropocentric and non-dualistic thinking. The terms embeddedness and anti-embeddedness represent the opposite of each other; embeddedness enlarges an earthly cosmic order that includes all life species, while the anti-embeddedness view consist of “human-centric logic of the One and the Other in relation to nature” that situates humans in the category of “the One” more than in the category of nature.³⁵

I define the terms anthropocentrism, androcentrism and human-centrism as the logic that human beings, and the human perspective, is uniquely privileged, through either divine providence or some special ability (reason) entrusted only to us, thus humans are considered superior to the rest of creation. This view is presented through an analysis of the foundational thinkers in the development of orthodox Christian doctrine. “Anthropocentric culture endorses a view of humans as outside of and apart from plastic, passive and 'dead' nature, which is conceived in mechanical terms as completely lacking in qualities such as mind and agency that are seen as exclusive to the human. It may seem obvious, but worth noting nonetheless, that all

³⁵Val Plumwood, *Environmental Culture: The Crisis of Ecological Reason* (London: Routledge, 2002),139.

the historically significant theologians arguing for the “othering” of nature are male. I use the term backgrounding nature as it relates to human rationalism, since backgrounding nature implies the view that anthropocentric achievements and concerns are more important, while nature is situated as an “inessential” and an “unimportant category.”³⁶ Plumwood’s explanation on how the realm of nature is backgrounded and thus becomes an unimportant aspect of human activity is an important point to consider. For example, can Plumwood’s critique that says nature is becoming increasingly an unimportant category be reversed? How can nature become an important sphere where ethical questions arise on whether diseased nature caused by climate change an essential concern?

The focus of this chapter is to provide an ecofeminist and Indigenous climatic lens on Christian views of God and nature that are presented as diametrically separate. I use examples from the Pauline Letters, highlighting the theological and philosophical views in Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. The Aristotelian view of God as the unmoved mover is influential in Christian discourse about God and nature. The autonomous, invulnerable, and impervious character of God is contrasted to the temporal fecundity and decaying process of ecological nature. A religious bias towards God’s eternal essence is constructed against and at the expense of ecological nature. I demonstrate that the hyper-separation formed between God and nature translates to human alienation, indifference, and negligence towards nature.

In the first section of the chapter, I explore the idea of God discourse that promotes a false sense of certainty. I argue that an all-embracing dependence on God fosters a sense of invulnerability towards nature that is dangerous to climate discourse, since it renders human action and responsibility towards the crisis a controversial topic. This section discusses the idea

³⁶Val Plumwood, *Environmental Culture: The Crisis of Ecological Reason* (London: Routledge, 2002),48.

of backgrounding nature in a manner that denies human dependence on nature, thus rendering the natural world inessential and unimportant. I provide examples of reductionist and negative views about nature from both Christian biblical texts and theological discourses. The second part examines dualistic rationalism that cultivates monological and monocultural views about nature and society. These monological and monocultural perspectives are themselves limiting our ability to innovate and evolve away from economic systems of environmental self-destruction.

The idea of the Divine One and Creator of all eternity unwittingly hardens monocultural and monological views about nature. To address these issues, I use Vandana Shiva's concept of monoculture of the mind and Val Plumwood's concept of monological relationships. The cosmic compression of the Divine One affects dualistic rationalism that assumes homogenous and reductionist views of the complex multiplicity of nature's biodiversity. This plurality of natural forms in all its wondrous multiplicity is reduced to a prism of oneness, abstract and inaccessible. This section also includes discourse on God and gender, specifically how the focus on a masculine over a feminine God impacts views on nature. These views unwittingly translate to mainstream Christian culture in terms of agricultural practices and the dependence on the exploitation of natural resources in the capitalist economy (i.e., fossil fuels, mineral mining, logging, etc.). In the fourth section, I postulate the potential of Indigenous religious and philosophical systems as providing moral and ethical values and reasons to help improve climate discourse and form practical solutions. In the last section, I introduce the second chapter and provide concluding thoughts.

Christian discourse about nature

This section will discuss some of the problematic aspects of God/nature discourse in Christian traditions. For example, I use the Weberian reading of the “Pauline principle: “He who will not work, shall not eat,” applies absolutely to everyone. Unwillingness to work is a symptom of the absence of the state of grace.”³⁷ Weber illustrates how Thomas Aquinas interprets the Pauline Principle in similar ways to Luther by stating that, “work is only necessary “naturali ratione” for the preservation of the life of the individual and community.”³⁸ In this way, the Christian understanding of labor and work is interpreted through the Pauline Principle. Can the Weberian interpretation of Pauline Principle be expanded to make sense of not only economics and religion, but also nature and how it stands in opposition to nature. For example, Romans 8:19-20 discusses how nature is subject to futility since God has willed this to be, in the hope that nature will free itself from the burden of decay. The anthropomorphic descriptions of nature, such as groaning in suffering and yearning for an invisible hope in God’s redemption, constitutes a problematic view of nature as a corruptible state that is inferior to God.

In 1 Corinthians 15: 45-49, the old Adam (human) is described as made of dust, a representation of the whole of humanity. The new human, who is the truth of Jesus Christ, a man of heaven, bestows a spiritual image and version that the old human must assume in order to find glorious freedom as God’s child. In Ephesians 4: 20-24, the old human is bound by the desires of the body, and freedom from this corruptible nature occurs through the assumption of the new Adam. The metaphor of a Divine armor assumed through faith in the Spirit’s redemptive power

³⁷ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethics and the “Spirit” of Capitalism*. Edited by Peter Baehr and Gordon Wells, C. New York: Penguin Books, 2002), 107.

³⁸ Weber, *The Protestant Ethics and the “Spirit” of Capitalism*, 107-108.

represents a definitive conquest over bodily pleasures and nature's cycles of fecundity and decaying order.

The sensuous desires of the carnal body are interpreted in a negative fashion compared to the freedom offered by the Spirit once one lets go of these desires. The Christian theology of many thinkers like Augustine and Thomas Aquinas expanded this discourse about nature and God as fundamentally distinct. This discourse does not declare nature evil, yet the peripheral views that embodiment and physical matter are fundamentally distinct, temporal and dependent on God's Spirit, allow for a perception of nature that is at times fearful, indifferent, and negative.

The discourse on God and nature has centered on the distinction between God and ecological nature. For example, "Christian philosophical theology objected to this possibility of the eternal coexistence of 'matter,' since it suggests a source of being parallel to God. This challenges God's absolute sovereignty."³⁹ Christian tradition expresses the knowledge and power of God; however, it may find it difficult to situate the knowledge of Earth's history of 4.6 billion-years old as co-existing with God's eternal existence. Nevertheless, it is difficult to disregard Earth's eternal-like existence compared to human knowledge of God with a history of "400,000 years, or less than one-tenth of 1 percent" of Earth's history.⁴⁰ The efforts to "dominate" nature through garden pots began 12,000 years ago. Thus, the anthropocentric claim over nature appears absurd in light of Earth's eternal-like existence.⁴¹

The Hopi and ancient Mesoamerican religious systems explain their ideas about God and nature as an amalgamation of Divine nature. For example, they express the ideas of Father Sun and Mother Earth as the primal Creators. The earth itself, humans, animals, the four elements,

³⁹Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Healing* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992), 26.

⁴⁰Ruether, *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Healing*, 45.

⁴¹Ruether, *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Healing*, 45.

and plant life represent the multiplicity of Divine nature. The creation stories of Indigenous religions can be understood as ecological cosmic dramas that designate reverence towards all earth life including the physical earthly sphere. To the Hopi and other Mesoamerican groups, the inner center of the Earth represents a Divine cosmic point that connects to life in outer space. This view is largely distinct to Christian views that situate the Divine within the higher spheres of the cosmos and the earthly sphere to a lower domain that constitutes an overall impediment to Divinity.

Indigenous cosmic views have implications for climate discourse since they present alternative views that are not based on a hierarchical order where humans have the right to dominate nature. The Indigenous religious imagination expands the human imagination of the Divine that is interconnected to ecological nature. The Christian cosmic drama represents a soteriological drama that mainly involves human beings, the soul, and God. An emphasis on the masculine characteristics and transcendental power beyond any corporal earthly life are central to Christian images and views of the Divine.

Augustine develops the concept of ‘Two Cities’ in the *City of God* to resolve the glorious and eternal city of God over the pagan world where values are transient and relative.⁴² Augustine, like other Christian clergy and apologists, presented the pagan world through negative views and inaccurate portrayals of sexual disorder.⁴³ Augustine suggests that “both cities alike enjoy the good things, or are afflicted with the adversities of this temporal state, but with a different faith, a different expectation, a different love.”⁴⁴ The city of God and the earthly realm consists of two different states of being and two separate states of mind. For example, the

⁴² Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 307.

⁴³ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 208.

⁴⁴ Basil Studer, *The Grace of Christ and the Grace of God in Augustine of Hippo: Christocentrism or Theocentrism* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1997), 120.

earthly city is viewed as susceptible to corruption and irrational views about idols, and thus requires the authority of God who serves as a pervasive challenge from above to the earthly city and its irrational and immoral habits.⁴⁵

For Augustine, God's eternal city as a source of the Divine is proven victorious over all these other kinds of sources.⁴⁶ The love and knowledge of God advances a state guided by a different sphere that has parallels to the Pauline letters of embodying the new Adam. The love of God is thus interpreted as a major tenant in Christian life. In the *Confessions*, Augustine repudiates sexuality as "shadowy and repugnant" in light of the joys of the spirit.⁴⁷ The development of ascetic and monastic life in the fourth and fifth centuries had "a repository of vivid anecdotes concerning sexual seduction and heroic sexual avoidance. In this new monastic folklore, the body leapt into sharp focus. Women were presented as a source of perpetual temptation to which the male body could be expected to respond instantly."⁴⁸ During the monastic period, "[married] persons were treated as basically uninteresting. They were the 'footsloggers' in the army of Christ."⁴⁹ Augustine's experiences on the "fringe of the Manichean movement" fostered an uneasy encounter with married sexuality that caused Augustine to formulate strict codes for Christian marriage such as sexuality for childbearing purposes only and emphasizing the absence of immoral thoughts as a key to becoming closer to God.⁵⁰

These restrictive and negative views towards married sexuality are an attempt to distinguish Christian marriage from the dominant social, moral and religious life structures of pre-Christian ideas of marriage. Feminist scholars like Rosemary Radford Ruether argue that

⁴⁵ Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 309.

⁴⁶ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 311.

⁴⁷ Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 394.

⁴⁸ Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, 242.

⁴⁹ Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, 451.

⁵⁰ Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, 391.

“oppressive patterns in Christianity toward women and other subjugated people do not come from specific doctrines, but from a patriarchal and hierarchical reading of the system of Christian symbols as a whole. These same symbols can be read from a prophetic and liberating perspective.”⁵¹ Ruether claims that the beginnings of Christianity had inclusive and egalitarian views of gender that have not disappeared but were marginalized by the dominant patriarchal views common in Christianity. For example, Ruether highlights the various Christian groups in the second century, such as the Montanists, who held to the radical and prophetic vision of egalitarian views found in the ministry of Jesus. Seventy years after the end of the apostolic age, in modern day Turkey, two women, Priscilla and Maximillia became the central leaders of Montanism. We will discuss Ruether and the issue of Montanism further in section 4 below.

The hagiographies of the lives of saints such as Martin of Tours emerged as influential texts during the Patristic period. These stories reference sharp divisions between Christian and pagan worship. Martin saw paganism as the work of the devil, thus his travels to the countryside to persuade pagans to abandon their beliefs by toppling down their sacred temples made of trees.⁵² The life of Martin demonstrates a religious and spiritual confrontation with nature worship through axing of pagan trees. This embodiment of dualistic rationalism posits negative views towards nature that may transform into actions of denigration, exclusion, and violence. One can see, for example how, in the Middle Ages, Witchcraft, similar in many ways to nature worship, was transformed into a sinister plot between women and the devil to undermine the goodness of God. The philosophy of Martin of Tours is not an isolated example of the desire to vandalize the natural environment; rather, he set a precedent to be followed, and to that extent his

⁵¹Rosemary Radford Ruether, “Sexism and Misogyny in the Christian Tradition: Liberating Alternatives”, *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 34 (December 2014): 83.

⁵²Clare Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his hagiographer: history and miracle in Sulpicius Severus* (London: Clarendon Press, 1983), 155.

discourse and actions have been mimicked in both subsequent discourse and historical developments.

Thomas Aquinas held a view on married sexuality similar to that of Augustine, with a focus on the key dangers of concupiscence. According to Aquinas, the lower appetites of the body are no longer subject to reason, and thus, subject to the whims of concupiscence. However, the perverse nature of sexuality is transferred to “a misogynist perspective that sees female sexuality and childbearing as the essence of both sin and death. Through sexual reproduction comes the transmission of sin and mortal, corruptible life.”⁵³ Women are thus reduced to their sexual nature; even for women who renounce sex in favor of celibacy, it is difficult for them to escape this inherent sexualized sin. This misogynistic view of women is represented in the ways female sexuality is referred to with terms such as “evil”, “immoral”, and “corruptible”.⁵⁴

The God of Thomas Aquinas bears resemblance to Augustine’s God in that all goodness that humanity can hope is found through faith in God. This relational concept of the ways humans relate to God is fundamental to Roman Catholicism and Protestant religion. Thomas Aquinas develops one of the most comprehensive theological systems about God, the *Summa theologiae*, as an attempt to resolve the philosophical question of God. For example, the *Summa theologiae* is divided into three parts illustrated through the meaning of emerging and returning to God.⁵⁵

Thus, married life becomes superfluous in light of the mystic union with God through ascetic and monastic practice; to seek the knowledge and love of God constitutes the ultimate

⁵³Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Healing* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992), 189.

⁵⁴Ruether, *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Healing*, 191.

⁵⁵Joseph P. Wawrykow, *The Westminster Handbook to Thomas Aquinas* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 53.

human objective. A key distinction between ascetic monks of the Christian tradition and Sadhus of the Hindu tradition rests on the acceptance or rejection of the world. The Sadhus view discrimination against anything in the world, including the human body, as a rejection of God since He is everything. This is distinct to the Christian ascetic and monastic rejection of the human body that has deep roots in the idea that carnality is corruptible to sin and evil.

During the medieval period, as early as 1140, the Church was engaged in an inquisitorial system to root out devil worship and its many manifestations. The belief in Witchcraft was condemned as heresy. The ancient beliefs of women as “benevolent figures...magical protectors of the community,” was decisively overturned by the Church to regard these same women as “malicious witches, who threatened men, women, animals, and crops.”⁵⁶ The Church was intimately involved in altering earlier roles of healers and priestesses that women held in society. “An example of this trend is found in the *Malleus Maleficarum*, in which the authors, under the direct influence of the Church, used the carnality of women as their central focus in devising a manual whose purpose was to be a working document for the Inquisitors in their prosecution and persecution of witches.”⁵⁷

Regarding the debate on sexual matrimony, Thomas Aquinas concludes that the “devil is stronger than matrimony because evil beings exist,” and they “obstruct sexual union by their works.”⁵⁸ Though Aquinas does not provide a direct equivalency between women and the source of evil; yet, the *Summa* and his other works on the occult, sorcery, demons, and married sexuality are prevalent in the 1487 *Malleus Maleficarum*, the manual used to accuse female witches.⁵⁹

⁵⁶Anita Lundy, “Carnality and Witchcraft: The Salaciousness of Women as a Foundation for the *Malleus Maleficarum*,” *Magistra* 2, no. 1. (Summer 1996): 63.

⁵⁷Lundy, “Carnality and Witchcraft,” 63.

⁵⁸Lundy, “Carnality and Witchcraft,” 64.

⁵⁹Lundy, “Carnality and Witchcraft,” 65.

Thus, the Church's hostile and negative inquisitorial campaign towards Witchcraft creates a perception of nature worship and witches as devil converts. The Christian tradition is not the only religion to view female power in negative terms; the Hindu tradition, for example, speaks in terms of the "Married Goddesses and, by implication, married women channel through their husbands... This view of female cosmogonic power translated socially into both awe and suspicion of female creative power. Women on their own are seen as unreliable and dangerous. They are both necessary for men to create and must be strictly controlled in order not to become violently chaotic."⁶⁰

The implications of such views foster a sense of apprehension towards the feminine principle in nature, in particular the "women-other-nature" relationship that is deeply rooted in ancient views of the feminine principle. For example, the "image of the witch in pre-Christian Europe had its inception in various world religions and mythologies, such as Graeco-Roman, Celtic, Germanic and other numerous pagan traditions. The ancient Irish tales are full of references to women in 'fully anthropomorphic guise,' who are at once creator and destroyer, gentle and fierce, nurturer and warrior."⁶¹ These views about women are more accurate in terms of the dual complexity of the feminine principle found in the world. The Goddess traditions and Indigenous religions view the feminine principle outside of the dichotomy of good and evil paradigms.

The religious and philosophical structures in Euro-American culture portray nature as a place of dangerous wilderness where savages live, or something that needs to be placed under

⁶⁰Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Integrating Ecofeminism, Globalization, and World Religions* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing, 2005), 51-52.

⁶¹Anita Lundy, "Carnality and Witchcraft: The Salaciousness of Women as a Foundation for the *Malleus Maleficarum*," *Magistra* 2, no. 1. (Summer 1996): 66.

control for fear of its ferocity.⁶² To a certain extent these negative views towards nature call into question human embeddedness with nature. The view of nature as dark and unfriendly has implications for the climate crisis and may have its roots in the Church's views on nature and Witchcraft. According to Goddess tradition scholars such as Starhawk, Witchcraft as a form of Goddess religion was observed in pre-Christian Europe. Starhawk claims that the Goddess religion is the "Old Religion, as we call it, is closer in spirit to Native American traditions or the shamanism of the Arctic. It is not based on dogma or a set of beliefs, nor on scriptures or a sacred book revealed by a great man. Witchcraft takes its teachings from nature, and reads inspiration in the movements of the sun, moon, and stars, the flight of birds, the slow growth of trees, and the cycles of the seasons."⁶³ The Church's forceful condemnation against Witchcraft situates women-nature relationship and knowledge on comparable terms with evil.

From the perspective of the Church during the Middle Ages, an intense focus is placed on the negative associations with female carnality and nature linking it only with sin and evil; rarely is the feminine associated with traits such as benevolence, compassion or spiritual goodness. The manner in which Christian discourse inferiorizes nature through negative associations with human characteristics produces ambivalent, harmful, and obscure prejudices. The ecofeminist and Indigenous climate perspective is critical of the Christian idea that nature is fundamentally without innocence. This furthers the idea that nature is not only culpable of something, but that human beings are able to doubt our need as humans to foster a necessary relationship with nature, upon which we depend. Paul Tillich and other Christian theologians have found it difficult to reconcile the idea of nature as inherently "fallen." The idea that human beings are

⁶² Vine Deloria Jr., *God is Red: A Native View of Religion* (Golden: Fulcrum Books, 2004), 90.

⁶³ Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess*, 20th Anniversary Edition (New York: HarperCollins, 1999), 27.

guilty, while nature is innocent is an absurd idea to Tillich, who argues that evil and good exist in nature.

Tillich adds that Christian distinctions between human beings and animal nature are accurate since, at some point in human evolution, animal nature was discarded by humans.⁶⁴ Whether this argument is even consistent with Christian doctrines of creation is an open question. Whether humans are qualitatively different from nature and animal nature remains an open question. In a majority of Christian views, this question may be viewed as closed, since the idea of the human soul/spirit/consciousness affects a hyper-separation between human beings and nature. Nevertheless, the ecological crisis requires that we embrace the idea that all living species, regardless of diversity and uniqueness, require a healthy biome. The human maximization of interests encroaches on the lives of other humans and species, which in turn destabilizes the ecosystem for all.

The Christian apocalyptic story recounts the insignias that prophesize the end of times and second coming of Jesus to Earth. This will occur at a time when human beings are judged to reach intolerable levels of immorality. In this apocalyptic story, the heathens perish alongside ecological nature of the old Earth. Jesus raptures believers and establishes a new Earth and new heaven without corruptibility. Thus, a human centered view of salvation promotes a false sense of invulnerability to nature, and the climate disaster, buttressed by the promise of Divine intervention and salvation regardless of the physical circumstances. The dualistic rationalist view seen in this apocalyptic story proves insensitive towards human dependence on nature. The idea that “someone” else will shoulder the crisis can confuse and misplace accountability, and suggests negative anthropological practices towards nature will somehow be without concrete

⁶⁴Vine Deloria Jr., *God is Red: A Native View of Religion* (Wheat Ridge: Fulcrum Publishing, 2003), 79-80.

consequences. In an age where the collapse of our climate is happening in front of our eyes, there is no telling what danger this perspective, held by the largest religion in the world with at least a billion followers, may have on our attempts to solve the problem of climate degeneration.

Gender, Nature, and the Divine

What is the connection between gender, the Divine, and nature? The Christian tradition has mostly leaned towards masculine characteristics of the Divine more than the feminine. The feminine aspect of the Divine seen in the images of Mary and the female saints remains a second behind the image of God the Father and Son. In this section I focus on the intersectional elements that address two connected aspects that are not accurately presented or understood in climate discourse: Christian views on nature and gender and how they impact the ways we relate to nature. This section will briefly illustrate discourse on God and its relation to gender, specifically the feminine principles found in the universe. The global leaders at the UN climate change conference known as Cop26 urged the importance of female empowerment to combat the climate crisis.⁶⁵ An ecofeminist and Indigenous climatic lens challenges the disposition to accept inferior roles and treatment of female beings and nature in society and in religions such as Christianity. This constitutes a climatic failing, and the corrective path involves advocacy towards female equality and empowerment.

As outlined earlier, Rosemary Radford Ruether argues that the beginnings of Christianity had inclusive and egalitarian views of gender that have not disappeared but are marginalized by the dominant patriarchal views common in Christianity. For Ruether, the reclamation of the

⁶⁵Damian Carrington, “World designed by men has destroyed many Things, Cop26 warned,” *The Guardian*, November 9, 2021. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/nov/09/female-empowerment-is-vital-to-end-climate-crisis-cop26-told>

radical and prophetic vision of the early Christian churches is significant as it directs us to the possibilities of the tradition and its many paths, in particular a group known as the Montanists. Seventy years after the end of the apostolic age, in modern day Turkey two women, Priscilla and Maximilla became the central leaders of Montanism. Many were drawn to Priscilla's vision of a female image of Jesus Christ. According to Ruether: "They believed the outpouring of the Holy Spirit dissolved gender differences and liberated women to be prophets, announcing an imminent transformation of the world."⁶⁶ These early Christian views are evidence to Ruether that "this liberating tradition was included in elements of women's monastic movements in the Patristic and medieval periods who believed that women's equality of soul superseded their gender subordination and allowed them to be vehicles of God's revelatory presence."⁶⁷ This Montanist movement was distinct from, "Tertullian [who] is remembered as both a Montanist and a notorious misogynist."⁶⁸

The thesis Ruether presents is undercut by the devastating oppression of the Montanist movement in early Christianity. The lives of prominent figures like Ambrose, Augustine, and Jerome from the Patristic period were hostile to women and nature. The Montanist movement was oppressed and outstripped by the views and lives of the most prominent Church doctors.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, Ruether maintains that Montanism expresses a more inclusive, prophetic and liberating view present in early Christianity, "that continues alongside the dominance of patriarchal Christianity, partly in separate groups and communities, partly interpenetrating

⁶⁶Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Sexism and Misogyny in the Christian Tradition: Liberating Alternatives," *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, 34. No. 2 (2004); 90.

⁶⁷Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Sexism and Misogyny in the Christian Tradition: Liberating Alternatives," 90-91.

⁶⁸Frederick C. Klawiter, "The Role of Martyrdom and Persecution in Developing the Priestly Authority of Women in Early Christianity: A Case Study of Montanism," *Church History* 49, no. 3 (1980): 252.

⁶⁹Klawiter, "The Role of Martyrdom and Persecution", 251.

dominant Christianity.”⁷⁰ Ruether offers a strong argument towards liberating alternatives found in early Christian movements; nevertheless they constitute a minor incursion on dominant patriarchal views about gender rooted in the Christian tradition. Women’s experiences were subsumed into the experiences of men and their relationship with God and Christ. The experiences of women were submerged beneath oppressive and patriarchal perspectives; these perspectives were present in society and were subsequently promoted within Christianity itself. The followers of Christ did not establish a lasting church in which all members are equal, as Jesus preached, but rather established a Church with, at the very least, a gender hierarchy. The example of Martin of Tours outlined above is further evidence of the devolution of the trend towards egalitarianism within medieval Christianity.

I have pointed out above how this clear “gender-related ideology” present in Christianity, and particularly Catholicism, constitutes a tactic that psychologically mimics modern-day conspiracy theories. Both the carnal and intellectual aspects of woman are denied, nature is transformed into a demonic power, and men of good conscience are called by the Church to defend God and his creation from the sinister power of the feminine.

In the present context, the Church continues to operate on an anti-gender agenda that restricts the empowerment of women and girls around the world. The anti-gender position is equally problematic to climate progress since the ecological crisis exacerbates pre-existing social conditions that situate poor girls and women in vulnerable positions following natural disasters.⁷¹

⁷⁰Rosemary Radford Ruether, “Sexism and Misogyny in the Christian Tradition: Liberating Alternatives” *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, 34. No. 2 (2004); 90-91

⁷¹Alyssa Banford and Cameron Kiely Froude, “Ecofeminism and Natural Disasters: Sri Lankan Women Post-Tsunami,” *Journal of International Women’s Studies* 15, no. 2 (January 2015): 171.

Ironically, from the perspective of gender analysis, it is the Catholic church and other religious groups who are engaging in a “sinister plot”, in particular against “gender-related ideology”. For some scholars, this constitutes an anti-gender conspiracy:

Many anti-gender texts fit the definition of a conspiracy theory as outlined by Jovan Byford (2011). Conspiracism as an explanatory style is centered on intentionality and collusion, while rejecting all official sources of knowledge. Such theories set out to explain complex social processes as sinister plots. The narrative is Manichean in nature; it involves an innocent misled majority that is manipulated by a powerful devious minority group. The conspiratorial imaginary demonizes the enemy, thus precluding any possibility of compromise. Its logic is irrefutable as disconfirming evidence is transformed into further proof of conspiracy, while doubt is dismissed as distraction or worse – a sign of collusion with conspirators.⁷²

In this regard, the Church’s inquisitorial position towards female witches constitutes an anti-gender conspiracy that transforms female knowledge and worship of nature into imaginary demonic forces, and enemies to the One Divine essence of God who is beyond nature. During the late Middle Ages, the carnality of the female body and knowledge of nature was linked to sinister activities. This anti-gender perspective and sentiment within the Church diminishes and obscures alternative views of the Divine that include gender fluidity. The Church persists in its anti-gender perspective that affects the empowerment of vulnerable groups such as non-gendered persons, girls, and women within the church and around the world. As mentioned above, the empirical data that illustrates the various ways women are affected by environmental destruction correlates with the idea that nature is a feminist issue.

⁷²Agnieszka Graff, and Elzbieta Korolczuk, *Anti-Gender Politics in the Populist Moment* (London: Routledge, 2021), 41.

Christian monotheism and societal organization

An over-emphasis on the importance of a Monotheist perspective and concern primarily with interpreting the will of God can result in a monological and monocultural understanding of the world. This perspective reduces the natural world to an object of creation or stewardship, rather than viewing and respecting the natural world on its own terms. How does monotheism extend to monocultures of the mind to the extent that it does where biodiversity and human diversity is seen as an issue that must be addressed in dualistic ways of thinking? Why does Christian discourse on God rely heavily on masculine and male characteristics? The monotheistic emphasis of One supreme being extends to other hierarchical ways of thinking about nature. Plumwood suggests that the “ecological critics of anthropocentrism have argued that the dominant tendency in western culture has been to construe difference in terms of hierarchy, and that a less colonizing approach to nature does not involve denying human reason or human difference but rather ceasing to treat reason as the basis of superiority and domination.”⁷³ The monological and monocultural forms of Christianity are themselves mirrored in capitalistic structures, both of which deny plurality and independence to beings not connected to the Divine realm.

Intellectual reason and asceticism are two of the key components of Christian practice. While these elements are in themselves not pernicious, in the broader context of a monological and monocultural perspective, we see how an anti-nature discourse arises. For example, asceticism denies the body through prayer and sexual avoidance, two aspects that constitute the highest witness to knowledge and love of God. For the ascetic is denying one of the fundamental natural drives, often leading to a demonization of the object to be avoided (often sexual contact),

⁷³Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (London: Routledge, 1997), 15.

and an objectification of the source of this desire, embodied women. Intellectual reason as postulated by the Church remains a dominant form of discourse and has morphed into a secular version of scientific rationalism in the last several hundred years. This rationalistic instrumentalism is prevalent as a signpost of western philosophical discourse and remains a central form of logic justifying the global economy, despite the continuing ecological destruction caused by this model. Gender oppression, inequality and short-sighted geopolitical perspectives focusing on capital and GDP rather than the well-being of humans and nature are the results of this position. The idea of embeddedness is a difficult view to adopt or comprehend, especially if one's entire system is based on two mysterious and disembodied "concept beings" – God in the context of Christianity, and the free market in the context of capitalism.

It is difficult to ask for acceptance of plurality, a plurality that perhaps contradicts long cherished views about the world formed through belief in a God that quite literally precludes the possibility of any error; where in this case error can be substituted for "ideas I do not agree with"; for neither the idea of God nor monological thought more broadly allows for multiplicity of perspectives, embeddedness in nature, or diversity in terms of how we interpret reality. The exclusion from our modern society of local knowledge, biodiversity, indigenous cropping systems, gender fluidity, and medical autonomy etc. are the results of a monotheistic thinking that has evolved to become a means of assimilation and control the dominant models of capital and Christianity. The result of all this is the: "weakened sense of the reality of our embeddedness in nature is seen in the cultural phenomenon of ecological denial which refuses to admit the reality and seriousness of the ecological crisis. This *Illusion of Disembeddedness* is an index of

how far we have come in what Jennifer Price calls, 'losing track of nature'--and in that process, losing track of ourselves as ecologically constrained beings."⁷⁴

What are the origins of this monological rationality which derives so seamlessly from the dualistic rationalism of God/human against nature? The hierarchical order of being in Platonic and Aristotelian thought formulates the idea that the highest sphere of the cosmos represents the "One rational mind of God the Creator" that infuses the masculine mind with superior rationality. Aristotle certainly based his views on Plato's work that expressed: "dualistic constructions of reason and nature, mind and body, spirit and flesh create polarizing metaphors and understandings of these elements which are woven through many kinds of social division in dominant society."⁷⁵

Additionally, Aristotle's empirical observations of women and men in fourth century B.C.E milieu were influential to his perceptions of female anatomy.⁷⁶ Aristotle's erroneous views of the male seed as the most essential and important part of the reproductive process, and female bodies as 'misbegotten males' were normative for many centuries after his death.⁷⁷ Such views about women led Aristotle to proclaim the superiority of male reason. In his *Politics*, the othering of the non-male elite class constitutes an inaccurate assumption about other sources of reason such as ecological rationality. One passage from *Politics* states,

Again, the male is ruled by nature superior, and the female inferior; and the one rules, and the other is ruled: this principle of necessity extends to all mankind...the lower sort are by nature [enslaves persons], and it is better for them for all inferiors that they should be under the rule of the master. For he who can be, and therefore is, another's and he who participates in rational principle enough to apprehend, but not to have such a principle, is [an enslaved person] by nature. Whereas the lower animals cannot even apprehend such a

⁷⁴Val Plumwood, *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason* (London, UK: Routledge, 2002), 97.

⁷⁵Plumwood, *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason*, 19.

⁷⁶Maryanne Cline Horowitz, "Aristotle and Woman," *Journal of History and Biology*, vol. 9, no. 2 (1976): 185.

⁷⁷Horowitz, "Aristotle and Woman," 184.

principle; they obey their instincts.⁷⁸

Aristotle's depiction of masculine nature is inflated through a certainty surrounding its superior rationality, while the lower groups such as female nature constitute inferior rationality, enslaved persons must submit to obedience and animals lack the faculties of reason. This constitutes an overture to the Aristotelian criterion of truth that is largely from male reason and the categories of relations that underscore the superiority of masculine rationalism. These categories describe relational classifications that exclude animals from the categories of rationality, an obvious error that remains at the cornerstone of societies based on monotheism in the modern world. It is worth noting, there is no evidence provided for the truth of these claims, other than Aristotle's own opinion:

Reason is the "manly" element in the soul, which was opposed to the inferior and corrupting "female" elements, which included the supposedly "soft" areas of the emotions and the senses." So, rationalism inscribes culture a series of dualistic oppositions between reason, abstraction, spirit, and the senses on the other. Reason in the human was lodged in the higher body and especially the head, not in the base bodily regions below the waist, and in the case of the larger world the seat of reason and value is in a timeless abstract higher realm beyond the lower material domain of earth.⁷⁹

The knowledge of the eternal abstract sphere of God expands a dualistic opposition that disappears alternative forms of rationality that could emerge based on ecological nature. Some ecofeminist philosophers argue that dualistic rationalism constructs a maladapted system that operates from a monological concept of the world. This consists of a self-enclosed system that resists change, believes in an irrational domination towards the "other," and is entrenched in

⁷⁸Aristotle, *Politics*, book 1, chapter 4-5: *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. R. McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941): 1132-1133.

⁷⁹Val Plumwood, *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason* (London: Routledge, 2002), 20.

denialism of its flawed methods. Some scholars argue that the crisis of reason is largely due to “monological habits unable to adapt themselves to the needs of the Earth and to the boundaries of other life forms”⁸⁰ Furthermore, Plumwood states that: “The dominant forms of reason-economic, political, scientific and ethical/prudential—are failing us because they are subject to a systematic pattern of distortions and illusions which they are historically embedded and which they are unable to see or reflect upon.”⁸¹

Conclusions

In this chapter, I have illustrated how doctrines central to the philosophical and theological discourse of Christianity, in particular within Catholicism, have contributed to the development of several problematic paradigms that persist to this day in hampering our attempts to alleviate the climate crisis.

As I will show in subsequent chapters, some Christian views have historically aligned with imperialism, patriarchy, fossil fuel use, and anti-Indigenous attitudes. It is not an exaggeration to refer to these four conditions - imperialism, patriarchy, fossil fuel use, and anti-Indigenous discourses about nature – as the matrix from which the current climate disaster was born. Nevertheless, it is certainly possible that such stances reflect the vested interests of the religious hierarchies and are at odds with some or even most of the followers of Christian churches. The democratic deficit we are currently experiencing politically– where elected leaders ignore the wishes of their constituents in favor of their donors, corresponds with the problem facing Christian congregations, many of whom will have to call their leaders to account before any meaningful change can occur.

⁸⁰ Val Plumwood, *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason* (London: Routledge, 2002), 15.

⁸¹ Plumwood, *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason*, 16.

Chapter Two
Economic and Religious Discourses: Catholic thought and the Climate Disaster

Introduction

This chapter explains how two central shifts in thinking fostered ambivalent and indifferent attitudes towards the environment. The first regards the Catholic Church's convictions on the primacy of humanity over nature according to theological vision. The second focuses on capitalist's ideas of prioritizing growth in profits and scale over environmental sustainability. In the previous chapter, I explained how clerical discourse, primarily from the Catholic Church, maintains the status quo. Rather than demonstrating solidarity with marginalized communities experiencing the burden of the climate crisis, the Church campaigns in favor of maintaining patriarchal society and expected gender roles.

As a matter of fact, these positions often put the Church in conflict with organizations that link a direct link between gender and worsening of the environment such as U.N. population and development programs. For example, since the mid-1990s, the Vatican's anti-gender discourse was created in reaction to feminist activists and scholars, and has become an "emblem, the metonymy, and the keystone of the theories that affirm that masculinity and femininity social constructs, or, worse, as in feminist materialists analysis, that men and women are not natural groups but social antagonist classes."⁸² One of the arguments against "gender ideology" by the Vatican is their problem with the deconstruction of their religious view of sexual order that they see as the destruction of the social order. Sara Garbagnoli explains how the Vatican rejects gender ideology based on it "fostering the belief that a fluid and

⁸²Sara Garbagnoli, "Against the Heresy of Immanence: Vatican's 'Gender' As a New Rhetorical Device against the Denaturalisation of the Sexual Order," *Religion and Gender* 6, no. 2 (2016): 189.

polymorphous sexuality would be the origin of individual identity,” viewed as the “self-destruction of humankind” according to the Vatican.⁸³ The Vatican’s understanding of gender empowerment in this way is problematic for gender and environmental discourse.

For years now, many climate experts have warned about the crisis and its global hazards to the human world. However, this critical information has been intercepted through misinformation campaigns. Many scholars in the field of climate discourse note the failures of governments to act on the climate crisis, yet the polluting industries directly responsible for global warming have mounted efforts to cast doubt about the crisis. The public relations campaigns of the 1970’s exposed by Melissa Aronczyk and Maria I. Espinoza demonstrate how these campaigns were a response to climate change gaining attention a decade earlier in the United States. The 1963 book *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson was a catalyst for congressional hearings on the dangers of chemical pesticides to the environment and human health.⁸⁴

The public relations campaigns launched by polluting industries in the 1970’s continue to spread misinformation about the direct consequences their products and business models have on the environment. From the historical climate record, we know that the warming of ocean currents, the so-called *El Niño* (the boy) weather effect in the 1990’s was one of the first major signs of climate change. Although the media reported the extreme hurricanes caused by the *El Niño* effect, climate change was never revealed as its cause. At this instance it can be argued that public relations campaigns were successful and the ecological damage caused by petroleum-based damaging operations remained hidden from the public.

⁸³Sara Garbagnoli, “Against the Heresy of Immanence: Vatican’s ‘Gender’ As a New Rhetorical Device against the Denaturalisation of the Sexual Order,” *Religion and Gender* 6, no. 2 (2016): 189.

⁸⁴Melissa Aronczyk, and Maria I. Espinoza. *A Strategic Nature: Public Relations and the Politics of American Environmentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), 78.

The *El Niño* weather event demonstrates how everything in nature is interconnected; if one ecosystem is impacted, the damage can manifest in other regions that are geographically distant. Global climate change has provoked disruptions to the harmony and balance of interconnected ocean and weather systems. For example, the island nations in the Pacific Ocean were the first to bear the consequences of *El Niño* climate phenomenon. New Zealand, Fiji, Tonga, Samoa and many other island nations, depend on healthy coral reefs that act as natural levies, dissolving the hurricane's intensity before it reaches the mainland. The on-going climate breakdown has ended these natural ecological defenses by overheating the Pacific Ocean and thus causing "bleaching" of the coral reefs, which essentially means the death of the reefs through prolonged heat exposure.⁸⁵

Many in the modern world may have difficulties recognizing how coral reef bleaching and other climate disasters result from dominant economic and religious discourse. This chapter explains how two central shifts in thinking fostered ambivalent and indifferent attitudes towards the environment. The first regards the Catholic Church's discourse related to what constitutes value in the human world through religious ideas. The second involves economic rationalism constituting views determined by the producers of capital that dictate value under capitalism. One of the main values disseminated by economic rationalism adds a religious dimension to all activities related to economic well-being. This idea emerged from Max Weber's thesis on how modern religions such as Calvinism and Protestantism enhanced capitalism through religious ideas. These ideas were also found in the views of Benjamin Franklin, who actively linked

⁸⁵Andrea Torrice, *Rising Waters: Global Warming and the Fate of the Pacific Islands* (Reading, PA: Bullfrog Films, 2000) <https://docuseek2-com.ccl.idm.oclc.org/bf-rw>. This documentary showcases the climate and environmental impact of climate change on Pacific Islands like Tonga. It shows how elements of coral reefs have washed ashore due to bleaching from the warming of the oceans.

money and profit with religious systems and ideas. Without this “spirit”, the evolution of the capitalist system would never have occurred.

These dominant thought systems operating in the world today have influence over both the psychological and ontological dimensions of human life. These factors directly influence how we think and therefore how we move in the world. How we think about nature and others matters in the context of climate discourse. The scope of consideration bestowed on the climate must overcome antithetical beliefs, values, and worldviews that have up to this point advanced the crisis. I will explain how the central view at the core of economic rationalism represents a form of irrationality about nature.

This irrationality is heavily invested in formulating discourse and strategies about nature through a profit-logic lens and paradigm. For example, economic rationalism underlines neo-Cartesian rationalist positions, rendering the environment “unconscious” and “dead.” Thus, making it easier to declare human reason dominant and powerful over nature. This perspective undergirds many of the illogical, erroneous and unscientific views about keeping humans hyper-separated from nature. Ecofeminist philosopher Val Plumwood claims that “monological and strongly anthropocentric views” emerge from the hyper-separation “between subject and object positions in the knowledge relation, between human reasoner and non-human ‘object’ is now strongly marked.”⁸⁶

Many philosophies, sciences, and religions in the West follow neo-Cartesian rationalist positions of various stripes.⁸⁷ Plumwood suggests this also includes thinkers whom one would see as allies of her position, for example animal theorists such as Peter Singer. Plumwood suggests that Singer continues to espouse Cartesian methodologies by polarizing the concepts of

⁸⁶Val Plumwood, *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason* (London: Routledge, 2002), 49.

⁸⁷Plumwood, *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason*, 146-47.

mind and nature, excluding non-mammals and vegetation like trees from having rights to life. Singer claims trees are non-sentient, making no difference whether humans chop them down or not, a view which certainly seems naïve given the global impact the destruction of, say, the Amazonian rainforest is having on our entire planet. Even thinkers who seem to be radical in the area of climate discourse often remain chained to philosophical views that underline the foundations of economic and religious discourse. These discourses often minimize human vulnerability through an attitude claiming remoteness as a form of invulnerability from nature. By deluding ourselves into thinking our moral status is superior to animals and plants, we conceptually remove ourselves from the life arena that we share with them. The idea of divine intervention justifies disdain and neglect towards nature, since humans can liberate themselves from accountability, leaving it to God to sort out the climate crisis. The epistemic and ethical considerations of nature have failed and have been overthrown by human-centered enclosure and interests.

The chapter is divided into two main sections; the first examines the meaning of economic rationalism. I discuss various themes employed by economic rationalism and how they manifest in society, such as public relations campaigns that have worked for decades to maintain secrecy concerning the climate disaster and distort the effects of climate change. I explain how Christian monotheism propagates monological and monocultural ontologies that impact our understanding of economics and the environment in ways that work to maintain the status quo of capitalism, with its associated anti-Indigenous and anti-nature stance. This section explains how “corporate speak” and “Vatican speak” promotes climate engagement in order to gain praise on acting on the crisis but, in reality, strategically inserts ideological views mainly incompatible

with climate solutions. In other words, major corporations and the Vatican have embarked on remarkably similar “green-washing” campaigns.

The second part examines the Church’s religious ideologies about gender and nature contained within Church documents such as *Rerum Novarum*, and *Laudato Si’* the latest encyclical on climate change. The Church encyclicals symbolize the Catholic response to societal changes and their impact on Christian life. As late as 2015, the Vatican declared an annual council to reestablish the importance of Christian family values under the perceived threat of gender ideology. In the same year, the encyclical *Laudato Si’* came out in response to the climate crisis. This chapter demonstrates how the Church’s reaction to gender ideology seems more urgent and important compared to the response presented to the climate crisis.

The prominent attention to gender ideology is relevant to how the Church acts on the climate crisis. I examine how religious discourses about the environment and its intersections with gender impact ecological breakdown. The last section contains concluding remarks and connections to chapter three.

Economic rationalism: roots in the sixteenth century

Economic rationalism is an umbrella term explaining attitudes and perspectives about nature as a mere resource available on behalf of profit. I explain how economic rationalism emerges from methodologies of closure denying views perceived to obstruct the logic of profit. Economic rationalism has its roots in the idea of capitalism as progressing through a “invisible hand” coined by Adam Smith in the *Wealth of Nations* (1776). I argue that this idea has religious undertones, equating profit logic beyond human intervention into the realm of the

“invisible hand” represented as the free market.⁸⁸ I connect this view with the monotheistic view of God in the Catholic faith. Until we understand how capitalists built new structures of commerce and enterprise can we have a clearer perspective about how these structures precipitated the climate collapse that we are currently experiencing.

The instrumentalization of nature as a mere resource employed to benefit economic prosperity is a rationality developed through the evolution of capitalism. The early encounter between European and Native American societies provoked new capitalist structures linking globalized resources considered “available” to the service of the free market. Vandana Shiva claims that corporations such as commercial forestry paradigms, use the word “sustainability” in terms of supply to the market, “not the reproduction of an ecosystem in its biological diversity or hydrological and climatic stability.”⁸⁹ This example forms part of economic rationalism dependence on certain narratives that obscures operations intended for greater access to capital.

The coming together of the Americas and Europe in the early centuries following the encounter of these two distinct cultures. Jack Weatherford states how the most important monument to capitalism ensuing a new world-system was made possible through the Native American gold and silver. For example, the silver mined in Potosí, what is now Peru, appears in the phrase *vale un Potosí*, meaning “worth a Potosí” in the famous Spanish literary work *Don Quixote de la Mancha* by Miguel de Cervantes.⁹⁰ In the first years following the Spanish discovery of Potosí thousands of Africans were brought to work in the mines but soon died from

⁸⁸Val Plumwood, *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason* (London: Routledge, 2002), 88.

⁸⁹Vandana Shiva, *Monocultures of the Mind: Perspectives on Biodiversity and Biotechnology* (London: Zed Books, Ltd., 1997), 14.

⁹⁰Jack Weatherford, *Indian Givers: How the Native Americans Transformed the World* (New York: Broadway Books, 2010), 26.

the high altitude. In the end, the American silver swallowed the lives of eight million Indigenous miners and destroyed the ecological integrity of the Peruvian mountains.

Today there is a second mountain rising from the valley floor next to Sumaj Orcko “that arose from the millions of crushed rock residue after the precious metal was extracted. The people call this artificial mountain Huakajchi, the mountain that cried.”⁹¹ The Incans named one mountain Sumaj Orcko meaning ‘beautiful hill’ before the Spanish named it Cerro Rico “rich hill.” Many years before the Spanish empire, the Native societies who lived near these rich supplies were instructed to stay away from the precious metals found inside the mountains. The Incan emperor Huayna, while visiting Sumaj Orcko, heard a thundering voice telling him to stay away from the silver destined for a different owner.⁹² How does society develop ecological rationality by seeing ecological systems such as mountain ranges as they are, without expecting revenue from its precious metals? From the Native perspective the answer rests on communication with ecological nature, to learn how to live in harmony and balance with nature.

Many stories surfaced in Europe about the abundant gold cities in the Americas driving voyages from Kansas to Patagonia in search of gold treasures. Though the stories were mostly based on legends, we see seedings involving a corporate mindset that sees ecological resources as readily available to the “first” person who can commodify it, instrumentalize it, or mine it without consideration towards the ecological consequences or effects. This economic rationale constitutes economic rationalism exhibiting moral fatalism through negligible attitudes about the environment as inconsequential to their survival. In this manner, economic rationalism reproduces knowledge about the environment through narrow and simplistic terms that

⁹¹Jack Weatherford, *Indian Givers: How the Native Americans Transformed the World* (New York: Broadway Books, 2010), 24.

⁹²Weatherford, *Indian Givers How the Native Americans Transformed the World*, 7.

symbolically and literally “chop” nature away from human understanding. For example, forests, mountains and rivers have important meanings for Native peoples. For some they represent symbols of their gods and for others they are considered persons and relatives. Thus, Indigenous peoples may never comprehend the economic rationale involved in the destruction or exploitation of these ecosystems.

Following the post-1492 European arrival in the Americas, many exploitative, violent, and ruthless accounts were practiced in the name of Christian and economic hegemonic views. But due to the hagiographies portraying figures responsible for the violence against the Native Americans as legendary and saintly, it becomes difficult to know what really happened. The sycophants with pseudo-scholarship only serve to vindicate the destruction, exploitation, and horrendous violence committed against Native peoples. Thus, advancing profit logic to its deadly ends that continues to this day through the processes of misinformation campaigns justifying and obscuring the violent exploitation of natural resources and marginalized peoples.

The scholar David Ewing Duncan writes in the book *Hernando de Soto: a savage quest in the Americas* about the importance of accuracy and scholarship, specifically about the sixteenth century figure of Hernando de Soto (1500-1541). This narrative provides examples of how economic rationalism and religious views intersect towards a common goal. For the Native societies who encountered Soto, Duncan says it must have been like encountering “an apocalyptic figure, a terrifying and utterly alien who appeared at the edge of their world to offer impossible ultimatums, backed by an internal killing machine.”⁹³ Soto had gained honors as a “hero” for the Incan conquest from Charles V and amassed extraordinary riches from the

¹¹David Ewing Duncan, *Hernando De Soto: A Savage Quest in the Americas* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), xxxv.

Americas. His riches came from colonizing efforts, including torturing Native peoples and working them to death for gold in Panama, Nicaragua, and Peru.

These riches did not seem to satisfy Soto since he carried out a second deadly expedition in the Old South from 1539 to 1543 where he encountered the ancient Mississippian civilization. Soto helped destroy this ancient Native society “in an apocalypse so thorough that archeologists only recently have begun to understand the strange mounds and ruined cities left behind.”⁹⁴ The significance of these deadly expeditions against Native Americans goes beyond what Jack Weatherford states that for each culture destroyed we lose a worldview that “creates a different way with unique knowledge, unique words, and unique understandings.”⁹⁵ The vanishing of Native societies in the Americas directly impacted climatic changes. These civilizations were not only living in harmony and balance with nature but also contributing to a global climate function. Thus, when the Indigenous peoples of the Americas began dying from European colonization, a “mini” ice age occurred, as the sudden large-scale loss of Indigenous peoples left nature without the sustaining knowledge of Native peoples, resulting in imbalance.

Some of the mythmaking about Soto, insists that he was more humane, less focused on gold and interested in settlements and saving souls; nonetheless, Soto should not be dismissed as a psychotic killer obsessed with finding cities of gold with his six-hundred man army. He must be understood as a product of the paradoxical world being invented through religious and economic conversion, plunder and deadly violence, causing the vanishing of thousands of Native American societies from what is now Mississippi to Panama. Duncan summarizes in the passage

⁹⁴David Ewing Duncan, *Hernando De Soto: A Savage Quest in the Americas* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), xxvii.

⁹⁵Jack Weatherford, *Indian Givers: How Native Americans Transformed the World* (New York: Broadway Books, 2010), 325.

below how the sixteenth century Church together with Spain constructed a discourse about God who sanctifies conquest and riches:

For sixteenth century Spain, the church was more than a set of ideas, or even a way of life. It was all-embracing entity that excited a great fervor among a people fighting a war for centuries to defend the Christian faith, a shattering victory over the Moors in Granada in 1492—capping off the conquest of Iberia begun in the eighth century. In fact, little in Soto’s youth would have matter more than this great triumph of a nation passionately believed they were the chosen people of God...The Spanish God—who is more a god of war to Soto and his ilk than love or humanity....and why few countries could match Spain’s ferocity and violence in worshipping and defending their version of God, a deity as paradoxical as Spain itself—composed of fire and blood, love and hate, life and death, and most of all, an intensity of purpose that drove men like Soto across the ocean to conquer half a hemisphere in the space of a single generation.⁹⁶

This context provides a broader and nuanced understanding explaining how Soto and many like him acted in atrocious and horrendous ways towards Native peoples based on economic and religious ideologies. The Church benefited from the riches it amassed during these centuries. These actions are the result of a discourse concerning finding a “paradise” on earth, a paradise that is viewed as Christian, laden with gold, and requiring no effort, as Indigenous slaves would allow the Europeans to enjoy a life of ease and luxury. This desire for fame, luxury, comfort and money remains a key engine of our current state of climate breakdown.

Some Europeans traded in good faith with Natives societies. For example, prior to European settlement in 1602 and 1603 Native peoples from the regions of Massachusetts and Virginia traded their medicine and flavoring, but they failed to be profitable on the London markets.⁹⁷ Thus, Europeans sought resources for enrichment that would prove as lucrative as harvesting the American forests. This mentality that constitutes the roots of economic

⁹⁶David Ewing Duncan, *Hernando De Soto: A Savage Quest in the Americas* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 12.

⁹⁷Jack Weatherford, *Native Roots: How Indians Enriched America* (New York: Crown Publishers,1991), 51.

rationalism drove the British to exploit the giant white pines of the Eastern United States used to build their navy and thus surpassing the rest of Europe. The white pines were the tallest trees known to Europe at the time, since they grew to two-hundred fifty feet, with a diameter of five feet discovered in abundance from Maine to Massachusetts.⁹⁸ In this sense, the American forest systems helped grow the system of global capitalism that remains today. The destructive plundering of the Americas radically transformed the modern world, and set the wheels of resources extractivism into motion.

There is a big difference between the use of natural resources for local benefit in a sustainable fashion, and exploitation of the natural resources for profit. For example, Charles Goodyear had a patent for accidentally inventing rubber in 1839; however according to anthropologist Jack Weatherford, rubber had been used by the Native Americans for untold millennia. The Quechua Incas called rubber *caoutchouc* extracted from the rubber tree, *Hevea brasiliensis*. When heated and mixed with sulfur, it became a resilient substance without the associated foul smell and stickiness. The Natives made raincoats, rubber-coated ponchos, rubber-soled shoes, rubber bottles for transporting liquids and many other uses. It is said that Columbus and many Spaniards knew about rubber from witnessing the Natives in those early centuries, but considered it an odd curiosity. Thus, early Europeans in the Americas quickly forgot about the rubber they saw in their quest for “good silver, tobacco, and other profitable products.”⁹⁹ The encounter with American human technology and science were stripped from their original inventors. This trend continues today, with western philosophy, religion, psychology and literature all structured as disciplines around an attempt to bury the influence of native and

⁹⁸Jack Weatherford, *Native Roots: How Indians Enriched America* (New York: Crowns Publishing, 1991), 52.

⁹⁹Weatherford, *Native Roots: How Indians Enriched America*, 62.

Indigenous societies, and the influence of non-European cultures on the intellectual and scientific world.

The riches of the Americas, such as gold and silver, gave rise to numerous legends about buried treasures. One such legend, El Dorado meaning “golden man”, is a story of a golden man in the Americas who built a city made gold. Weatherford claims this story comes from the Natives societies living near Lake Guatavita located ten thousand feet above sea-level in the Colombian mountains. The leader of the tribe performed religious sacrifices by covering his body in gold dust to be washed by the lake as a form of religious sacrifice to the god of the lake.¹⁰⁰ The Natives believed this gold sacrifice pleased the god of the lake in continuing its life force for the tribes existence. This view of gold held by Native peoples and the way Europeans understood gold is an important distinction. The latter view rationalized gold into the ultimate search and attainment, giving it “godlike” qualities, while the former viewed gold as one commodity among many sacrificed for the life-giving features of the lake.

Therefore, the Indigenous peoples “prized gold but more in an ascetic or religious sense than in a mercenary one, “and were aware these precious metals could not alternate as food or be exchanged for food.”¹⁰¹ The Native peoples used many of the same materials the Europeans later mass produced and exploited. The Europeans transformed gold and silver into money capitalism, a system the Native peoples would not find attractive since this form of currency cannot be eaten. For example, the Aztec civilization prior to 1492, used the cocoa bean as the primary form of currency and “Aztec cooks whipped the chocolate with water and honey to make a frothy refreshing drink they called *chocoatl* in the Nahuatl language.”¹⁰² Thus, the reign of a currency

¹⁰⁰Jack Weatherford, *Indian Givers How Native Americans Transformed the World* (New York: Broadway Books, 2010), 9.

¹⁰¹Weatherford, *Indian Givers How Native Americans Transformed the World*, 10.

¹⁰²Weatherford, *Indian Givers How Native Americans Transformed the World*, 265.

that cannot be eaten and mass production of everyday uses were constructed by the dominant economic rationalism coming from Europe; nevertheless, many Native societies had no recourse but to involve themselves with the new capitalist structures that remain till today.

It is important to understand how Native societies today are not uniform on the topic of capitalism. For example, Native American scholar David R. Newhouse says that Indigenous peoples such as the Tlingit in the Pacific Northwest gained community prestige by giving their wealth away.¹⁰³ The act of accumulating goods was therefore viewed in a positive way, given that these goods would be distributed. Newhouse makes the case that the Native peoples today must find ways to absorb and counter the worst effects of capitalism, in similar ways to the Tlingit. Newhouse says that capitalism, like Christianity:

is an extremely adaptive, effective, efficient, and seductive...in its ability to absorb new things and still retain its essence. Aboriginal peoples are also extremely adaptive. We have survived here, albeit in a diminished number, despite the attempts to assimilate us. Yet I am not convinced that we can survive the Borg of capitalism. We will *be* absorbed one way or another. What we can do is mediate the worst effects of capitalism through the continued use of our values and the transformation of these values into institutional actions. The world that we used to live in no longer exists.¹⁰⁴

I agree with Newhouse's statement that the world looks different from what it used to be at the height of Indigenous civilizations. I believe this is a major challenge in terms of how we can translate Native values into modern life. But I disagree with the view that capitalism is a highly adaptive and efficient system that can be simply injected with Native values, offsetting its worst effects. The rationality used to make products such as plastics and radioactive waste which cannot be safely disposed of without damaging the environment makes capitalism a highly

¹⁰³ David R. Newhouse, "Resistance is Futile: Aboriginals Meet the Borg of Capitalism," *Ethics and Capitalism*, eds. John Douglas Bishop (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 148.

¹⁰⁴Newhouse, "Resistance is Futile: Aboriginals Meet the Borg of Capitalism", 154.

inefficient system. This is even more obvious at the micro-level, where supply chains and production practices often lead not only to massive environmental damage, but also incredible amounts of waste. In this sense, perhaps plastic is the epitome of capitalist thinking: unnecessary and polluting, its now almost universal use is a prime cause of climate breakdown.

Capitalism as a non-adaptive system is evident in its exclusion of Indigenous economies and trading practices. This means that the reformation of capitalism cannot simply inject justice or Native values, since at the core, capitalism is an anti-nature and anti-Indigenous discourse. Is it possible to reimagine human sustenance and survival without having to destroy nature? What alternatives exist that consider nature at every economic step? Chapter three attempts to address this question with examples of the Native American economies.

The Aztec civilization had developed in central Mexico highly evolved cities long before the Spanish arrival and conquest. They called them “*altepetl*...organized according to a cellular or modular logic in which the various parts of the metropolis correspond to an orderly cyclical rotation of labor duties and payments to the sovereign, the *altepetl* is not simply replaced by European urban forms... but neither does it survive intact.”¹⁰⁵ The *altepetl* system continues today but it is important to deconstruct the idea that “payments to the sovereign” are equivalent to the modern meaning of this term. For example, the payments were in the form of food, but no family went hungry. The idea that Native societies had a “sovereign” or “emperor” were mischaracterizations by Europeans.

The Spanish believed the leader of the Aztec system, famously known as Moctezuma, held the same power as the Spanish king. One major difference between the Aztec system and

¹⁰⁵Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Commonwealth* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), 68.

European monarchy appears in the disobedient and violent treatment of Moctezuma following his capture by the Spanish. This contrasts with a European sense of fealty to monarchs no matter how they act; simply by being a “monarch”, they assume a special place. This is not the case in Indigenous societies. The supreme speaker of Indigenous societies knew how to truthfully convey the stories of the nation. If found to have acted against truth or jeopardized the safety of the tribe, the speaker would be removed, as Montezuma himself experienced. In this manner, the European characterization of Native American societies having “emperors” or Kings is in fact a mischaracterization of the role of the supreme speaker. Therefore, the hierarchical structures of monarchy and the Church are not replicated in the Native societies, demonstrating “the depth of democratic roots among Native Americans.”¹⁰⁶

The corporate exploitation of raw materials and forced labor have its roots in the sixteenth century. On the one hand, Christian colonization by the Spanish empire developed the precursor to factories, mining operations, logging companies becoming conglomerates and multinational corporations. On the other hand, the Native Americans resisted the wholesale exploitation, control, and hoarding of natural resources by those who used deadly and violent means. Thousands upon thousands of Indigenous cultures and peoples were sacrificed for a new capitalist system impacting the world today. How does the intensity and ferocity that drove the early European expeditions to seek cities of gold in America transform the world today?

The rationality of wealth expansion has become a self-enclosed system highly immovable despite its destructive and violent implementations against nature and Indigenous peoples. But in the last five hundred years, millions around the world have experienced the negative effects of

¹⁰⁶Jack Weatherford, *Indian Givers: How Native Americans Transformed the World* (New York: Broadway Books, 2010), 187.

capitalism. Though many attempt to greenwash and sanitize the worst features of the system, the fact remains that it has proven to be a socially destabilizing system.

Thousands of Native peoples in the Americas and globally have witnessed the apocalypse of their worlds, making the way for a new world order founded on their destruction. The Hurons from North America insisted to the first French ethnographer of the 1700s that Europeans had lost their freedom due to their incessant use of “thine” and “mine.”¹⁰⁷

The origins of economic rationalism are visible in the sixteenth century, demonstrating religious and economic discourse seeking to find advantage over others through possession of wealth. In economic rationalism, the concept of wealth is connected to societal power, meaning those who own capital determine the laws, rules, and operations by which millions of consumers are forced to comply. This section attempted to develop two important things. The first concept examined the roots of economic rationalism in the sixteenth century discourse about cities of gold. Secondly, the reductionist perspective that focuses entirely on financial wealth continues to be destructive towards non-Western cultures and peoples.

The sixteenth century Church and economic rationalism

Gerald Horn, a scholar in African American history, explores the roots of capitalism in what he calls the “potency” of the sixteenth century. Horn claims that the fragmentation of Christianity following Martin Luther’s break from the Catholic Church in 1517 provoked endless religious wars throughout Europe. Horn says, “the abject terror of the horrendous Protestant-Catholic conflict in Europe was in a sense a dress rehearsal and precedent for what was visited

¹⁰⁷Jack Weatherford, *Native Roots: How Indians Enriched America* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1991), 159.

upon indigenes in the Americas and their African counterparts.”¹⁰⁸ The “One True Faith” perspective facilitated by the Vatican sided with Spain and Portugal at the Treaty of Tordesillas upon their adherence to Catholicism.¹⁰⁹

The Church sanctified dividing the world between Christian lands and those countries yet to be Christianized. The Church essentially laid claim to all discovered lands. The “Vatican’s role became one as a major landowner and enterpriser” involved in sanctioning economic rationalism in its early stages.¹¹⁰ Though Horn notes how the Spanish monarchy began to suffer major losses, forcing them to sell Church properties to build their defenses, turning what they called a “barbaric” religious system into “civilization”, in line with the Church’s colonial economic propaganda. By the late sixteenth century, slave revolts by captured Indigenous and Africans in the Caribbean were proving difficult for Spain to quell, giving England and France an opportunity to exploit in their attempts to colonize those island nations. Jack Weatherford argues that Spain ruled the largest empire compared to any in the world today, although by the 1700’s the country had bankrupted itself through its ceaseless expeditions.¹¹¹ The English shipbuilding technology looted from the North American forests proved decisive against the Spanish empire and its influence, as the British navy came to dominate. Horn and other scholars contend Protestant England surpassed Catholic Spain its deadly and torturous colonization methods. The British for example differed from the Spanish in their attempts to codify laws regarding business, capital, and property rights that would dictate the structure of subsequent societies, and relegate those subjugated to a permanently inferior economic position. This settler-

¹⁰⁸ Gerald Horn, *The Dawning of the Apocalypse: The Roots of Slavery, White Supremacy, Settler Colonialism, and Capitalism in the Long Sixteenth Century* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2020), 27.

¹⁰⁹ Horn, *The Dawning of the Apocalypse*, 27.

¹¹⁰ Horn, *The Dawning of the Apocalypse*, 46.

¹¹¹ Horn, *The Dawning of the Apocalypse*, 210.

colonial system was first used to colonize Ireland, and is the basis of much of the white supremacist discourse within the modern United States legal and economic systems according to Gerald Horne.

Benjamin Franklin is perhaps the key figure in helping to transition this mindset to the modern world. The thesis set forth by Max Weber examines the writings of Benjamin Franklin, who introduces ideas about moneymaking that “come close to certain religious ideas such as inhibition to enjoyment seen in Christian monasteries.”¹¹² Franklin wrote devotedly about the moral and spiritual motivation towards capitalist enterprise. Weber says that the moral and religious discourse accompanying the development of capitalism would never have taken root in ancient and medieval times where usury and profit glorification were scorned.¹¹³ Through this radical shift in thinking about economics, Weber describes an irrational element about whether the only true motivation for humans is to exist for business.¹¹⁴ This question provokes the issue of whether alternative views about economy exist? Native American economic systems discussed in detail in chapter three, provide examples of economic systems that center sustenance, sustainability, food justice, and climate compatible agricultural practices.

Christian principles are often circumvented when they clash with the idea of holding ill-gotten capitalist assets. The wealth of the Catholic Church does not translate to the Catholic community due to its centralized structure, while the decentralized organization of Protestant churches naturally extends the wealth to the whole Protestant community. Regarding this point, the centralized and hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church mimics hierarchical corporate structures. It is worth noting that corporate structures are used in business to maximize profit

¹¹²Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethics and the “Spirit” of Capitalism*, ed. Peter Baehr and Gordon C. Wells (Penguin Books, 2002), 23.

¹¹³Weber, *The Protestant Ethics and the “Spirit” of Capitalism*, 12.

¹¹⁴Weber, *The Protestant Ethics and the “Spirit” of Capitalism*, 23.

with minimal or no external oversight. The Church is organized like a hierarchical corporation and uses corporate greenwashing to address the climate crisis.

The sociological study on Protestant affinity to capitalism in Weber's thesis reveals the psychological dimensions that Christianity and capitalism share. This is not an insubstantial point, especially when we consider the important role mass psychology, marketing etc. have in creating a discourse that denies the impact of capitalism on the destruction of the earth. It seems clear that, psychologically at least, we are still enmeshed in static structures of thought that have solidified human fixation on money and economic prosperity as a signpost of personal achievement.

Christian monotheism: monoculture and monological thought

This section will discuss the impact Christian monotheism has on the ways we think about nature. The critique is based on the Church's emphasis on the one-dimensional aspects of the Divine, excluding the idea of multiplicity present in God. Therefore, centering the idea of one God who is primarily male in the figure of Jesus Christ limits and reduces the emanations and manifestations of the Divine. Christian and Hindu monotheism share views, yet one notable and significant difference between these religious traditions rests with Brahmin's transcendental dimension represented in androgenous, female, and male figures alike.

The first part examines how a one-dimensional aspect of the Christian God fosters the idea of the One against the Many, represented by the biodiversity in nature. The anthropocentric and male-centric interpretations of God are key elements of Church discourse. I show how the one-dimensional lens establishes systems of thought dictating power over nature. In the second part, I examine how monocultures related to fundamental human systems such as agriculture are impacted negatively by this paradigm. Ecofeminist philosopher Vandana Shiva argues that

agricultural systems currently in operation are responsible for the destruction of biodiversity in the world. For example, monocultural paradigms dismiss multi-cropping systems that have proven sustainable and regenerative to the soil. The economic interests involved in cultivating monocrops become the operating rationalist position. Thus, monocultures impact and threaten the earth's soil through harsh chemical pesticides that are required to allow monocrop cultivation.

Monological views and economic rationalism

How do monological views and economic rationalism inform each other? God discourse constructs two realms – the earthly and the divine, with one “shadowing” the other. The divine world is understood in two ways. Chapter one discusses some of Augustine's views on the distinctions found in his version of these two realms, the city of God and the earthly city. The pious acts commanded by God and later transposed onto the earthly city confirm how discourse about the environment is characterized as a place without any spiritual and religious value. This section explains how categorizing the distinctions between the Divine and the environment confirms hyper separation between humanity and nature.

God discourse proposes views based on abstract characterizations about Divine knowing. The false dichotomy that forces humans to choose between history on the one hand and nature on the other, prioritizes human-centeredness and promotes a hierarchical attitude over nature. The false dichotomy arises when the human mind and its consciousness are viewed as emerging from someplace else, more special than non-human knowing, distinct from the realm of natural occurrences. The emphasis on the one God, one book and one idea of the afterlife, either a heaven or a hell, prompts a sense of distance from nature that results in a cultural phenomenon of

ecological denial driven by dominant religious ideologies, confident in their interpretation of the will of the One.¹¹⁵ The cosmological knowledge required to understand our embeddedness within nature is abandoned easily, replaced by another senses of cosmology, the idea of God. Unlike with nature, we must find ways of introducing God as He does not appear to us as nature does. Thus, abstract and spiritualized concepts about the human-God relationship fill the space where human's natural embedded state use to stand. For example, monological paradigms background and oppress nature through the glorification of human reason, needs, and development. Val Plumwood states that the monological perspectives have “weakened a sense of reality of our embeddedness in nature is seen in the cultural phenomenon of ecological denial which refuses to admit the reality and seriousness of the ecological crisis.”¹¹⁶ The psychological and ontological dimensions involved in ecological denial manifest through mythologies about nature. The magnification of Lockean concepts based on rationalist positions about autonomy and property central to establishing neoliberal capitalist systems.

Monocultural thought and agriculture

The agricultural systems of the world constitute interconnected systems dependent on the global climate. For example, in drought-prone regions, the cultivation of certain crops has proven difficult without the water needed to grow the plants. At the level of soil, the chemicals in pesticides used to bolster yields of monocrops damage the soil and cause it to lose its vitality, killing the potential for longer term cultivation. These chemicals have an equal damaging effect to the atmosphere. These hegemonic patterns of thought “identify the biosphere as “Other”,”

¹¹⁵Val Plumwood, *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason* (London: Routledge, 2002) 97.

¹¹⁶Plumwood, *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason*, 97.

passive and without limits, its frontiers an invitation to invasion” explain how nature is strategically rationalized.¹¹⁷

Several abstract and metaphysical characteristics of God stand in opposition to the “seemingly” mortality of the physical world. Can the idea of “immortality” be visible in nature? Plant experts say that plants remain alive despite exhibiting more “dead” shrub. Do humans have the same chance? It is difficult to say for certain, yet without doubt the human body will require external support to function, while the plant may not require much to endure between the delicate balance of death and life. The hierarchical structures that situate the (soil) matter below human consciousness and rationality ignore the fact that the human mind exists through interconnection with nature. Scientists, as well as religious devotees of religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism and others also hold to this interpretation of the natural world.

Vandana Shiva says that the impact of “monocultures of the mind” is that a one-dimensional production system increases commodity flow in one direction while generating multiple scarcities and impoverishment to the ecology and life of marginalized peoples.¹¹⁸ Shiva explains how the California strawberry is sprayed with chemicals in order to withstand ice-forming bacteria preventing them from freezing in the colder months. The chemical spray used on the plant causes ice-crystals in the atmosphere of local weather systems impacting global warming.¹¹⁹ The need for chemicals on food cultivation year round neglects to account for its residual impact on local weather and demonstrates how the self-enclosed system of capitalism is unwilling to pause strawberry production in the colder months due to fear of lost profit. All other considerations are moot it seems.

¹¹⁷ Plumwood, *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason*, 16.

¹¹⁸ Vandana Shiva, *Monocultures of the Mind: Perspectives on Biodiversity and Biotechnology* (London, Zed Books, Ltd., 1997), 147.

¹¹⁹ Shiva, *Monocultures of the Mind: Perspectives on Biodiversity and Biotechnology*, 100-101.

The idea of universal knowledge resembles hierarchical and homogenous ways of thinking about nature. The monocultures of the mind constitute a homogeneous method constructed by displacement of local knowledge of the environment; the detailed analysis required of the diverse eco-systems, how each system needs to be sustained in accordance with local climate and populations both human and animal, is instead replaced by an all-encompassing sense that nature belongs to God and therefore our efforts are both unnecessary and doomed as futile.

Vandana Shiva's use of the term "monocultures" has various meanings. For example, the dominant agribusiness sectors prefer one crop for mass cultivation, rather than using multi-crops that lessen soil damage and require less input. This means the agribusiness model prefers crops requiring high input, while crop diversity is preferred in local agricultural methods. The Indigenous systems of agriculture traditionally use multi-crop cultivation perspectives, based on indigenous and localized knowledge of the environment. There is a misconception that universal knowledge is not based on a contextual and localized tradition, such as the Euro-American views of the universal that come from a particular contextual location that spread across the world and came to be viewed as universal knowledge.¹²⁰ According to Shiva, dominant monocultures of the mind actively oppose indigenous systems of knowledge about earth, excluding in particular the knowing of Indigenous peoples and their environments. The monocultures of the mind focus on: "reductionist categories of yield and productivity allow a higher destruction that affects future yields. They also exclude the perception of the two systems differ dramatically in terms of inputs."¹²¹ A monocultural perspective always assumes, based on evidence provided by a

¹²⁰Vandana Shiva, *Monocultures of the Mind :Perspectives on Biodiversity and Biotechnology* (London: Zed Books Ltd.,1993), 11.

¹²¹Shiva, *Monocultures of the Mind: Perspectives on Biodiversity and Biotechnology*, 42.

“higher” source not shared by others, that their perspective is correct without the need for justification; this is despite of the empirical evidence to the contrary, which any person can access and see as true regardless of ideology. For example, the “Ethnobotanical work among India’s many diverse tribes is also uncovering the deep, systematic knowledge of forests among them...A young illiterate Irula boy from a settlement near Kotagiri identified 37 different varieties of plant gave their Irula names and their different uses.”¹²²

The Earth knowledge of Indigenous peoples as Shiva notes, is common to many Indigenous peoples who depend on their immediate environments for livelihood. They recognize the need to know the ecosystems that surround them in direct and intimate ways. The dominant knowledge systems, i.e., monocultural attitude towards nature, diminishes and disappears this localized knowing through, “Being inherently fragmenting and having built in obsolescence, dominant knowledge creates alienation of wisdom from knowledge and dispenses with the former.”¹²³ Again, it is worth noting that this universal perspective precludes the possibility of argument, debate or evidence against it. In fact, even the evidence of one’s own eyes is downgraded, as the destruction of our natural habitat by our own habits and norms is viewed as part of “God’s plan for the world”, or some other such phrase that is inaccessible to non-believers; in essence, this kind of discourse is authoritarian, as it puts an end to all possible debates.

The dominant approach to nature and its biodiverse resources constitutes reductionist approaches that are centralized and uniform. For example, localized knowledge of the forest that is part of the Irula educational life constitutes a futuristic knowledge system.¹²⁴ The

¹²²Shiva, *Monocultures of the Mind: Perspectives on Biodiversity and Biotechnology*, 15.

¹²³Vandana Shiva, *Monocultures of the Mind :Perspectives on Biodiversity and Biotechnology* (London: Zed Books Ltd., 1993), 60.

¹²⁴Shiva, *Monocultures of the Mind: Perspectives on Biodiversity and Biotechnology*, 89.

disappearance of local knowledge is a challenge to the millions of indigenous peoples denied the ability to farm and grow crops for their own sustenance, since arable land is increasingly acquired by global food corporations. The monocultural view of ecological nature constitutes a perverse view that transforms basic needs required for survival for many life forms into a domain of profit and exploitation. This has exacerbated the ecological crisis and displaced tens of thousands of local and Indigenous farmers. It violates the biodiversity and complexity of nature; this also begs the question: can monotheist views and their secular supporters find a way to understand that the on-going starvation and destruction of non-human species is itself a crime against their own supposed Creator who they claim to worship? How then does one approach a Creator whose supposed own creation we are now destroying?

Corporate speak and the Vatican

This section examines the language corporations employ to placate calls from millions of citizens to end their destructive business models. The language corporations express is meant to persuade the public to remain loyal to their products. Through the process of greenwashing and misinformation campaigns, many companies have accomplished this goal. For the corporate world, the climate crisis they have accelerated becomes another opportunity to insidiously confuse the public. How can the public become informed about what is truly happening in the world if multinational companies spend millions on keeping this information hidden?

One insidious corporate method observable to anyone looking closely relates to how corporate greenwashing places responsibility on individual consumption habits; the violence against life itself through the existence of animal factories, machine made fast food, and petroleum-based transportation are hidden from the consumer. It offers no recourse since humans

depend on basic necessities that have been manufactured into commodities under capitalism.

Weber speaks on this point on how capitalism cast a universal designation giving no other recourse:

Today's capitalists economic order is a monstrous cosmos, into which the individual, is born and which in practice is for he, at least as an individual, simply a given, an immutable shell..., in which he is caught up in relationships of the "market," the norms of its economic activity. The manufacturer who consistently defies these norms will just as surely be forced out of business as the worker who cannot or will not conform will be thrown out of work.¹²⁵

Weber explains how loyalty is an underpinning principle in capitalism that demands all individuals to conform to a destructive "monstrous" cosmos. I connect the example of economic rationalism and its loyalty to the logic of profit with the religious discourse about loyalty to God over nature, leading the Church to establish a negative view towards the environment. A second corporate scheme employed involves product greenwashing. This method guarantees that capitalist profits gained from mass production of basic amenities remains. Thus, the basic human rights to sustenance and shelter are whittled away through the powerful discourse of economic rationalism.

The capitalist system is so socially destabilizing that it gives rise to authoritarianism and religious ideologies immersed in Christian perspectives. As mentioned above, far-right politicians in Europe and the United States continue to align themselves with Christianity as a means to establish their political power. Does this mean that capitalism and Christianity have a telos of destruction? The Japanese philosopher Tosaka Jun (1900-1945) argued that capitalism inevitably leads to fascism. From a Japanese perspective, this seems like a logical notion, since it

¹²⁵Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethics and the "Spirit" of Capitalism*, eds. Peter Baehr and Gordon C. Wells (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), 13.

took less than fifty years for Japan to move from the forced introduction of capitalism in 1868, to an outright fascist regime by 1932, which eventually led to the near destruction of the country in 1945. Since Tosaka Jun was murdered while in police custody, it seems his theory unfortunately also played out in practice. Those amongst the Christian community who seem to welcome the apocalyptic dimensions characterized in the last chapter of the New Testament, may do well to pay closer attention to the historical realities of societal collapse.

These forms of negligent and bad faith discourses involve the economic rationalism of capitalism. The meaning of economic rationalism involves centering profit as a rationale guiding economic activity and trade permanently. Under dominant economic rationalism, anything that moves away from profit disposition is considered suspicious. The challenges to economic rationalism are met with a kind of God discourse applied to capitalism through the concept of the ‘invisible hand’ guiding the market to its natural ends. Therefore, human interventions have become superfluous due to the free market rationale permeating everything in the human world, just as God will find a way for us beyond the climate crisis. In both cases, this is simply magical thinking, and is a form of illogicality we as a species can no longer afford.

Another overlap between the models of the Church and corporate structures underscores the importance of One person at the uppermost position. This hierarchical configuration is influenced by the concept of One God overseeing the whole of creation. The status of the CEO and Holy See, who are primarily male, mirror a one-dimensional characterization of a male-centric God. The climate pledges promised by the corporation CEO and the papacy seldom translate into climate action. This is largely due to economic and religious views that compel institutions to pledge loyalty to the ideologies of capitalism. The Church remains beholden to religious ideologies about gender, and thus will not approve UN gender climate programs that

are central to a coherent and effective response to the climate disaster. In a similar fashion, corporations will use climate pledges to appear as if they are acting on the crisis but remain committed to profit logic. This section attempted to explain how the Church hierarchy echoes economic rationalism analogous to multinational companies. The next section discusses how the Vatican adopts corporate greenwashing to insulate itself from any responsibility.

Church encyclicals and economic rationalism

I have define economic rationalism as views about capital and it is values as The Vatican has a tradition of issuing encyclicals that respond to cultural and societal changes. For example, in *Rerum Novarum* (1891) the realities of the industrial age such as labor exploitation resulting in the cycle of poverty are discussed. The document condemns labor exploitation and expresses worry for the exploitation of labor workers and their low wages and was a pivotal moment that has set a model for subsequent encyclicals; nonetheless, the Holy See asserts that socialism with its lack of the concept of private property must be rejected entirely.

Some scholars note that one of the main reasons why the European Catholic Church in 1891 the year *Rerum Novarum* was published, the French Revolution stirred political and economic unrest “which included loss of land, prestige, and various political privileges. Many Catholic leaders were in a reactive mode, suspicious of movements oriented toward social equality and labor rights; instead, the European Catholic Church saw wealthy elites as its allies in a politically tumultuous and unpredictable world.”¹²⁶

Therefore, the encyclical condemns economic destitution, but is not committed to changing its religious ideologies about private property with roots in the sixteenth century.

¹²⁶ Sharon Erickson Nepstad, *Catholic Social Activism: Progressive Movements in the United States* (New York University Press, 2019), 4.

Hence, *Rerum Novarum* critiques the economic conditions fostered by automation but makes no attempt to call for its rejection. Does this mean the Church ideologically aligns itself with capitalism because it champions private property rights? What role does gender play in the Church's understanding of economic rationalism and the climate crisis? It is worth noting that the Vatican is considered by many to be one of the biggest holders of private property in the world. Whether this plays any role in their stance is open to debate.

This section attempts to explain how Church encyclicals like *Rerum Novarum* and the more recent *Laudato Si'* express concern for societal ills impacting human life, but rarely employ their institutional power to act on behalf of social justice. On the contrary, given the opportunity to demonstrate their concern for climate breakdown by approving UN gender climate programs, the Catholic Church outright rejected this position. Given that private property is perhaps the key assumption of capitalism, it seems that the Church's emphasis on the importance of private property is in fact contradictory, as the doctrine of private property is a key factor in economic and social inequality. Hence, the Church, like any self-respecting capitalist corporation, signals its virtuous position in theory, while paradoxically supporting both economically and practically the very inequalities that led to the problem in the first place. It is much like a petroleum supplier suggesting that they are the ones leading the way on green solutions, while making huge profits from the Earth's destruction.

Vatican document "Rerum Novarum" and economic rationalism

This section examines the 1891 Church encyclical *Rerum Novarum* as it relates to economic rationalism. Leo XIII set the precedent for how to approach matters of societal and economic turmoil. *Rerum Novarum: On Capital and Labor* provided some of the most influential statements from the Vatican. In 1991, John Paul II dedicated *Centesimus Annus*, the hundredth

year commemoration of *Rerum Novarum*. The encyclical responds to the harsh conditions of the working classes in 1891 Europe who were "living in better conditions than slavery itself" but otherwise not any better.¹²⁷ The text condemns the growing gap between the *have and have not*s yet condemns socialism as an economic alternative, without proper insight into how it works.

In *Rerum Novarum* the first encyclical on labor and capital, the Church denounces socialism on the basis that it will cause more suffering to working people, whose jealousy of the rich and their lawful property will lead to their desire to steal in order to fulfill community needs.¹²⁸ *Rerum Novarum* warns that economic inequality negatively impacts society but proclaims that ultimately the free market helps individuals rise out of poverty. How does the Church determine which positions are compatible and those that are not compatible with Christian views? This section argues that the Church rarely deviates from its ideological views, therefore any concern shown towards a social issue cannot deviate from orthodox views.

Laudato Si' and economic rationale

Many commentators were effulgent in their praise of *Laudato Si'*, praising the Church for being one of the few religious institutions to directly address the climate crisis. Despite this seemingly progressive move by the Church under the leadership of Francis I, the content of the encyclical resembles corporate speak and is equivalent to corporate greenwashing. The language and views of *Laudato Si'* seek to place responsibility for the climate crisis on individual

¹²⁷Leo XIII, "*Rerum Novarum*": *On Capital and Labor*, Roman Catholic Church, 1891 paragraph 3. Accessed January 12, 2022. https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum.html

¹²⁸Leo XIII, "*Rerum Novarum*": *On Capital and Labor*, Roman Catholic Church, 1891, paragraph 2. Accessed January 12, 2022. https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum.html

consumers and their habits. This position draws readers into concern about the ecological crisis on a personal level, rather than on a systemic level. This is a corporate tool, used to assure consumers that their product of choice is not part of the problem. The idea that an individual consumer is responsible for their own choices, and thus individuals are responsible for reducing climate destruction, is one means by which corporations socialize their personal responsibility for the climate disaster, suggesting consumers are freely choosing these polluting options. Yet, the reality is quite different. In the late 1990's car manufacturers began to sell sport utility vehicles. Nobody needs an SUV, and without being offered such a vehicle, no consumer would seek one out; but advertising convinced a slew of middle-class consumers to purchase these gas-guzzling machines that pose a massive risk both to the climate in the long term and to any unfortunate road user who is struck by these oversized polluters. There are similarities here with the issue of plastic bag levies. We have been told that by bringing our own bags to the supermarket, we can help the climate. And yet, the real question is, why are plastic bags offered in the first place? The sleight-of-hand involved in corporate speak assuring consumers of "green" products intends in fact to dupe the public, making them believe they are equally if not more responsible than capitalist structures for the climate crisis.

In both cases, the Church and corporations employ language and views that give the impression that the public are somehow culpable for the crisis through their consumption habits. Further, the language of *Laudato Si'* employs gendered language to speak about nature through female pronouns. This speaks to the intersection between gender and climate change, but only through mirroring the oppression of women to speak about nature in the same manner.

The Church hierarchy uses inclusive pronouns to explain how nature, who is like a mother-sister, has been neglected and mistreated. But what about the one-dimensional

characteristics of God-father discourse and its impact on the climate crisis? The interpretations of women's role in society and concepts about nature intersect because they are both considered the "weaker" entity. The passage below explains how Church orthodoxy underlines many of the views driving anti-gender and anti-poverty perspectives:

The Church insist that its tradition is primal. In terms of morality and views on women they advance an anti-gender agenda in spite of the many evolutionary changes to human biology, gender, and social norms for men and women in society. Yet, in the economic realm massive economic changes that occur in the mid-nineteenth century onward, methods identified as distinct even from the earlier capitalistic establishments of the sixteenth century remain unchallenged by the Church. The dignity of the human person in the midst of abject poverty is less an issue then their moral decisions. For example, in the 2006 encyclical, *Deus caritas est*, Pope Benedict XVI, "challenges the scriptural bases of and mystify ideologically the power of the poor. He claims that the apostolic mandate to share all things in common is impractical in the modern world and moreover that the Christian community should not engage such questions of social justice but leave them to governments to resolve."¹²⁹

The Church's commitment to religious ideology expressed by doctrines and traditions impedes serious consideration for social and climate justice. This happens through ignorance about the connections between climate justice and gender inclusion. *Laudato Si'* discusses how the climate breakdown furthers the impoverishment of peoples in the global South but dismisses how gender oppressions impact these outcomes. Furthermore, encyclicals guide the Catholic community on economic structures and their impact on society. In terms of the climate crisis, the moral and theological underpinnings of *Laudato Si'* remain loyal to tradition. For example, the encyclical thoroughly distinguishes its discourse on the climate crisis from any potential confusion with panentheism. This reveals how the Church rarely deviates from orthodox God discourse never accommodates for non-hierarchical perspectives and the idea that God might be

¹²⁹Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Commonwealth* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), 46.

found within nature not above it. Preserving this doctrinal purity is, it seems, more important than addressing United Nations concerns about how gender inequality fuels the climate disaster.

Laudato Si' states that human overconsumption is a major problem driving climate breakdown. This line of discourse places individual culpability as the focus at the heart of the climate crisis. The consumption habits of individuals are transformed into moral problems. On this point, Francis I says in the encyclical, “Purchasing is always a moral – and not simply economic – act” and adds that today, “the issue of environmental degradation challenges us to examine our lifestyle.”¹³⁰ Much like the “commitment to green solutions” we hear from petroleum companies who rake in billions of dollars a year through selling their polluting products, the Catholic Church is engaged here in both greenwashing and gaslighting. The Church is itself explicitly denying the validity of a key means of alleviating the climate crisis, the creation of a more equitable society through socialist policies. By insisting that the doctrine of private property remains untouched, they have effectively ensured that social mobility is impossible, ring-fenced as it is by property ownership. If one does not own property, it is almost impossible to establish generational wealth. Given that the housing market in the United States operates in openly racist ways, and that lack of access to private property is one of the means of maintaining racism and inequality, we must wonder by what means the Church thinks the climate crisis can actually be solved? Are we back at plastic bag levies?

Another obvious alternative to the consumerism critiqued by Francis I is the Indigenous perspective, as consumerism is not a concept known to Indigenous peoples. Similarly, one could

¹³⁰Francis, “*Laudato Si’: On Care of Our Common Home*,” Roman Catholic Church, 2015, paragraph, 206. Accessed January 13, 2022. https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

argue that the life of Jesus also sets an example; yet the Church has already usurped Jesus' position as a human example by positing his physicality as secondary to his realization of the abstract glory of God. The life of Jesus in fact resembles in some ways the Indigenous spirit, where a lack of resources is not equivalent to being an object who is poor, and who must be suffering due to their poverty. In this sense, both Jesus and Indigenous societies reject the correlation between material wealth, private property and happiness. On what basis then, is private property so important for the Catholic Church? Does it afford happiness in their philosophy? Does it provide access to God? Do they see it as essential for a stable society? Or perhaps it is because the Catholic Church is so embedded within capitalist structures, it finds itself supporting even those aspects of capitalist philosophy that are clearly and obviously morally repugnant. As I show throughout this paper, the Vatican is linked with capitalism in many ways, one of which is their mutual anti-Indigenous stance.

Gender in Laudato Si'

Some scholars have noted a new stage in the role of the Vatican with the arrival of Francis I. They identify how, unlike his predecessor, he holds a non-accusatory tone, especially on moral issues such as the politics of sexuality. For example, Francis I struck a progressive note in the mainstream media with an empathetic view of homosexuality during his first visit as Pope to Rio de Janeiro in 2013. Nonetheless, despite the rhetoric, this speech did not move the Church towards egalitarian practice, quite the opposite. The Church has enacted an explicit anti-gender agenda impacting the empowerment of non-binary persons and women. In this sense, the progressive statements employed by Francis I and *Laudato Si'* represent a form of "religious washing" in that you can appear open to change, but when given the opportunity to advocate for gender inequality at the UN, the Church responds with resounding disapproval. The church

doctrine remains permanent, while the modifications to modalities of expression in public definitions of sexual politics have changed.

Patriarchal language patriarchy is still present in *Laudato Si'* from the comparison between earth as a “wounded sister” and mother who must be cared by a human male savior, to its characterization of the ecological crisis. For example, *Laudato Si'* speaks of the family of creation where nature is a vulnerable sister and nurturing mother, reflecting patriarchal attributes to women with nature and fragility.¹³¹ Feminist scholar Agnes Brazal claims that these patriarchal undertones misconstrue women’s agency. It achieves this through the religious feminine undermining women’s agency and confining women to the household.

The encyclical integrates important climate data that contextualizes the environmental predicament, yet the document is criticized for not recognizing decades of feminist scholarship in ecological discourse. This demonstrates the anti-gender agenda, refusing to consider the experts’ advice on how mitigation of climate breakdown requires gender equality. The Church still refuses to reform its religious ideologies to meet the challenges of the climate crisis; this means first and foremost reconsidering their position on gender empowerment. Francis I has written on gender ideology and has explicitly condemned transgenderism as an action that goes against God’s creation of male and female genders. This is a perfect example of Vandana Shiva’s monological thinking. It is also false, as the existence of transgender people is attested to from the beginning of the historical record.

The hierarchical thinking found in *Laudato Si'* is problematic. Agnes Brazal argues that the portrayal of the Christian family continues in hierarchical terms in *Laudato Si'* and places the female person of the family as secondary to the father, who is represented as the head of the

¹³¹Agnes M. Brazal, “Ethics of Care in *Laudato Si'*: A Postcolonial Ecofeminist Critique,” *The Journal of the Britain & Ireland School of Feminist Theology* 29, no. 3 (2021): 220.

household. The encyclical does not attempt to hide its preference for the traditional God-Creator-Father as the supreme being who oversees the earth, understood in the encyclical as “earth-mother” or as a “sister” who requires care. Brazal makes note of the uneven treatment of the feminine in the encyclical. It claims that one essential aspect of the feminine is towards care of others, while also associating nature with female pronouns.

These two distinct applications of the feminine undermine nature and women simultaneously through outmoded metaphors of a religious feminine. This causes more harm than good according to Brazal. For example, in the Philippines, some indigenous groups believe that the metaphor for God is expansive enough to include both mother and father. This is different from what Francis I says in *Laudato Si'* as God the father alone. Francis maintains a complementarity view that is a traditional Christian position espoused by John Paul II:

This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life. This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she “groans in travail” (Rom 8:22). We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (Gen 2:7); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air, and we receive life and refreshment from her waters.¹³²

The above passage presents two portrayals of nature that are also found *Laudato Si'*. The first concern is the way nature is anthropomorphized as a wounded sister and mother who cries

¹³²Francis, “*Laudato Si': On Care of Our Common Home*,” Roman Catholic Church, 2015, paragraph, 2. Accessed January 13, 2022. https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

out due to the overconsumption of earthly resources. Secondly, he presents nature as co-dependent on God, who gives her the gifts of resources because she is not independent from God the father. Thirdly, he states as well that our bodies are made of earth and therefore intrinsically part of nature.

The idea of both nature and the feminine as being helpless and requiring the aid of one God or man, is a problematic discourse on a number of levels. Firstly, it creates a “hero to the rescue mentality”, as the wounded heroine pines for her salvation. This infantilizes both women and the Church’s own members, who are being told by their leadership to expect some type of heroic intervention. Like a marvel movie, a man or superhuman will turn up, and everything will be as it should be. This is the type of thinking that prompts the idea that electric cars will solve the crisis, or recycling your household trash is the main issue, and so forth. The fact is that the climate disaster is now so advanced that multiple systems essential to the harmonious and balanced functioning of our environment are beginning to collapse. A complete moratorium on the use of all fossil fuels implemented immediately would constitute only a solid starting point. The coalescing of a variety of different problems under the banner of “the climate crisis” has allowed institutions to portray the crisis as less complex, and therefore less serious, than one would imagine, suggesting an easy solution is possible. An easy solution to this crisis is not possible.

God the father is always the key figure, even if He is in the background, nature and all her elaborate and magnificent glory is really only His; he has loaned it to her, in a sense. With one or two alterations, the previous sentence could be transformed into the very definition of patriarchy. This language is damaging, as it suggests there is always the possibility that nature will be regenerated through God’s intervention. God is also abstract, and so in a sense, lies

behind the physical reality of nature. Such thinking creates an alienation from nature, from the fact of our being nature ourselves. As I elaborated in the introduction, women have been at the forefront of the climate crisis response, and empowering female and non-binary populations will be key to finding solutions.

Francis I writes eloquently about how we too are of the earth, that we are nature itself. This is a sentiment ecofeminists and indigenous peoples also agree with; yet this egalitarian position is a classic wolf in sheep's clothing. His claim is that we are all equal in mother earth, that we all contain the elements within us. Francis I neglects to mention, however, that this does not equate to "we are all equal under God". God, who the encyclical tells us is obviously superior to nature, has preferences for certain types of people, i.e. people who are Catholics. This idea drives the Catholic Church to practice proselytization; in the case of many Indigenous communities the length and breadth of the Americas, this amounted to forced conversion and cultural destruction. Not only does God prefer Catholics, but has a special preference for a small group of Catholics, known commonly as Popes, who have gained from God a form of infallibility on matters of faith and morals.

There is nothing essentially wrong with any of this, as the encyclical is aimed at Catholics themselves. Nonetheless, as a response to the gravity of the climate situation, *Laudato Si'* is insufficient. For example, suggesting we should care about the climate disaster because we are a part of nature, while having already denigrated nature as inferior to God in the previous paragraph, is unlikely to motivate Catholics to become more climate conscious in their consumer habits. Francis I could have simply stated that we are destroying God's creation through our selfishness, and that a series of changes must be made; instead, he chose to emphasize patriarchal

language, emphasize the distinction between nature and God, and othering nature as an abused woman incapable of agency.

Therefore, on the basis of the above, I conclude that *Laudato Si'* is Vatican greenwashing; and much like corporate greenwashing, it speaks duplicitously to two groups simultaneously. The first group is the general public, or the members of the group. Many of these people may be worried about climate change, and so these public declarations function as reassurance from the hierarchy that the problem is being dealt with. In reality, however, these declarations are empty of substance and contain no concrete changes or solutions. It is essentially a public relations exercise. Thus, they serve to reassure a second group also, the power brokers, who want to maintain what is usually a very lucrative status quo. The Vatican, having profited from capitalism through the accumulation of material wealth, private property, political power and access to markets for proselytization, has no reason to question the wisdom of the prevailing system. Capitalism is a system that encourages consumers to make anti-nature choices, and then blames the consumer when the products they have been provided with destroy the earth. This is precisely what Francis I did in this instance.

Economic rationalism and its impact on nature

Indigenous peoples viewed their entire societies as designed to continue the relationship of mutual dependence and benefit with nature. This view is at the cornerstone of Indigenous perspectives on the environment; however, this balance was lost with the loss of life incurred following first contact with European colonizers. The Indigenous peoples of the Americas demonstrate a positive view of nature through their religious and agricultural practices. Indigenous agricultural systems focus less on profit, exploitation, and control and more on

harmony and balance. The knowledge of the land is an example of Indigenous climatic perspectives that serve as an alternative vision for positive human activity with nature. An attitude of exploitation will inevitably lead to the type of imbalances we see today, and as a result, we will have to live in struggle, rather than in harmony, with nature. Given our previously illustrated embeddedness, it seems likely that a struggle with nature is one we humans will inevitably lose.

Indigenous perspectives of God and the world promote ecology, equity, and efficiency. The perseveration of diversity ensures ecological stability and efficiency within multidimensional processes such as organic agricultural input. In the dominant agricultural systems, a one-dimensional framework is not only inefficient and environmentally costly but undermines the sustainable outcomes of biodiversity and Indigenous cropping systems. The bioengineering system that patented seeds that constitute the building blocks of the human food chain, are then priced for private global corporations. “Complex organisms which have evolved over millennia in nature, and through the contributions of the [global South] peasants, tribals and healers are reduced to their parts, and treated as mere inputs into genetic engineering.”¹³³ The ecological degradation of the atmosphere and the resulting disaster for all its inhabitants is a secondary concern behind the entirely human-created, and therefore in a sense fictional “global economy.”¹³⁴

¹³³Vandana Shiva. *Monocultures of the Mind: Perspectives on Biodiversity and Biotechnology* (London: Zed Books Ltd., 1997), 50.

¹³⁴Shiva, *Monocultures of the Mind: Perspectives on Biodiversity and Biotechnology*, 50.

Climate change and anti-Gender views

This section explores the question of how patriarchal religious ideologies impact gender and climate discourse. The oppression of women has been religiously decreed by the Catholic Church through its patriarchal traditions forbidding gender inclusion. The appeal to patriarchal structures and traditions validates the sustained marginalization of women by their exclusion from dominant economic or religious institutions. For example, male representation in historical accounts about leaders in nation-states and the Church overwhelms all female participation. In the case of the framers of the United States constitution, women were decisively excluded from economic, socio-political, and religious leadership and representation.

Sally Wagner Roesch notes how women's exclusion contradicts the Haudenosaunee political influence on the U.S. Constitution. The reason being that Native women in Haudenosaunee society followed a matriarchal hierarchy where women had more power than men in many political and economic decisions. For example, the military leaders could only declare war if the council of mothers, which functions like congress oversight, agreed to provisions for war. The women were owners of horses and land, and held full custody over their children. Many Euro-American women who visited Haudenosaunee women through friendly relations in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century would at times scold their Native American friends for giving away a horse without a male presence.¹³⁵ The framers decisively excluded women, a move demonstrating at least one juncture where they differed fundamentally from the Haudenosaunee's political influence.

Regarding gender discourse, the Church follows many of its religious and traditional ideologies discussed in chapter one. This section expands on the Church's views towards gender

¹³⁵Sally Roesch Wagner, *The Untold Story of the Iroquois Influence on Early Feminists : Essays* (Aberdeen: Sky Carrier Press, 1996) 3.

to include how this attitude impacts gender relations under economic rationalism. How did the phrase “gender ideology” become part of the Church’s lexicon related to gender discourse? The phrase first appeared in a 1995 pamphlet titled, “Gender: the Deconstruction of Women” written by a U.S. Catholic-based journalist, Dale O’Leary. Many leaders of the Church including, Joseph Ratzinger, who would later become Pope, were inspired by the phrase.

The Church uses gender ideology to distinguish between good and bad Catholic feminists and to form alliances with the international and interfaith communities to work against gender ideology.¹³⁶ This has become evident at the United Nations, where many gender and climate policies are being considered, but the Church with its allies are determined to suppress these programs. Thus, UN climate solutions intended to empower women, girls, and non-binary persons from marginalized communities with work in climate solutions have been thwarted by the Church’s religious and ideological fundamentalism concerning gender. This view is similar to the stubborn and self-enclosed system operating in economic rationalism. The unwillingness to even consider alternative possibilities, even when they are both more logical and consistent.

These views on gender are encoded through hierarchical thinking, instantly forming dualistic categories that place “beings” in either superior or inferior categories according to their closeness to God. For example, the Church traditionally views men, particularly celibate men dedicated to the Christian life, closer to God than a woman. Those considered part of the gender category, such as women and non-binary persons, are placed within an inferior status. Thus, there are ample examples in a multitude of Church documents that illustrate the importance of this ideology, some of which were discussed in chapter one. The problem with these categories in relation to economic rationalism is how they normalize the idea of maximum profitability

¹³⁶Agnieszka Graff, and Elzbieta Korolczuk. *Anti-Gender Politics in the Populist Moment* (London: Routledge, 2021), 39.

through exploited and conquered nature, and the exploitation of human bodies in the form of exploited labor.

The demarcation of the One and the Many/Other forms One as independent, while the Many/Other is viewed as dependent on the One. The Many/Other constitutes ecological nature as a matrix of life and death processes, consisting of laws applicable to a majority of earthly life forms that share the need for sustenance and shelter. The One constitutes the omnipotent mind that represents homogenous and uniform views of biodiversity.¹³⁷ The forms of rationalism that produce anthropocentric and androcentric modes of thought must operate out of patriarchal societies whose key models center the human mind, particularly a male omnipotent mind, as the origin and sustainer of all life, and who communicates only through these male dominated structures.

The anti-gender position is problematic to climate progress. The increasingly common sight of natural disasters exacerbates pre-existing social conditions that situate non-gendered persons, women, and girls in vulnerable situations. Following natural disasters in the global South, women and girls are vulnerable to exploitation and sexual trafficking.¹³⁸ This anti-feminine perspective and sentiment within Christian doctrine develops into anti-gender perspectives that diminish and obscures attributes of gender fluidity to the Divine. For example, “the topic of gender ideology around the world has been a controversial and heated debate, mostly due to the challenges gender identity and fluidity present to “traditional” forms of thinking about gender. “The present wave of global ultraconservative activism – with its characteristic focus on the word gender – is rooted in the Vatican’s opposition to gender equality

¹³⁷Vandana Shiva, *Monocultures of the Mind: Perspectives in Biodiversity and Biotechnology* (London: Zed Books Ltd.,1997), 89.

¹³⁸Alyssa Banford and Cameron Kiely Froude, “Ecofeminism and Natural Disasters: Sri Lankan Women Post-Tsunami,” *Journal of International Women’s Studies* 15, no. 2 (January 2015): 171.

policies promoted on the transnational level after the 1995 Beijing World Conference on Women. At the time, a loose- knit cooperation of multi- denominational organizations and groups coalesced around “traditional family values.”¹³⁹

Christian concepts have been extended to establish power and reinforce hegemonic forms of domination in secular society. The idea of a Christian universal church was reinforced in the fourth century. A universal church that is called to convert all peoples and nations was created. Over time, this universal mission became identified with political and economic imperialism; the doctrine of an elect people who alone represents the true God became a doctrinal justification for expansionism and imperialism. Through such followers, the religion of the male transcendent God was seen as destined to triumph over all other peoples of the earth. This imperialism was then linked with the militaristic God and warrior Messiah of Hebrew apocalyptic thought, who will defeat the enemies of God in a bloody war of good against evil.¹⁴⁰ Ruether points to the image of God that developed out of the experiences peoples faced during the destruction of their worlds. This is shown in the example of the Spanish God who was understood as a god of war during the sixteenth century.

This militaristic God and his followers engage as representatives of reason in which the male elite is not concerned with what happens to the body of the other situated in the lower stratum of God’s cosmic order. This cosmic order is composed of patriarchal and androcentric views that situate a male adjacent figure at the top. The God who rules this comic order reinforces the one-dimensional perspective of the cosmos that makes the Many submit to the will of the One male God.

¹³⁹Agnieszka Graff and Elzbieta Korolczuk, *Anti-Gender Politics in the Populist Moment* (London: Routledge, 2021), 5.

¹⁴⁰Rosemary Radford Ruether, “Politics of God and the Christian tradition,” *Feminist Theology* 17, no. 3. (2009): 331.

Conclusions

This chapter discussed the Church's weak responses to climate change and the capitalist exploitative system driving the warming of the planet. In many ways, the Church hierarchy is more concerned with articulating its institutional tradition and status in the political and social arena. This concern outweighs any planetary consciousness or constructive means to assist marginalized peoples who will meet a wretched future caused by hyper-capitalism. For example, the Church would rather not discuss the connections between gender and climate change driving UN programs deemed necessary to deal with the climate crisis. The Church's negative campaign towards gender policies relates to establishing its own religious ideologies about gender, proving indifference to climate solutions.

What explains the Church's disapproval towards policies empowering girls, women, and non-binary people to work for climate solutions? The Christian ontological dualisms elevating spirit and male, while interiorizing nature and female may explain why the Church fails to connect gender and climate change. These dualistic views emerge from Cartesian models of hierarchy, elevating male-dominated religious institutions with powerful rebuttal strategies. For this reason, the anti-gender campaign is premised on how gender ideology leads to fundamental changes mandated by the Christian God. But what of the assault against human dignity happening now in so many different ways under the status quo?

For example, the Church has yet to condemn the destruction of habitats in the global South caused by mega-projects such as dams, highways, and mining-operations in forested areas, resulting in a limiting of opportunity for survival and dignified life.¹⁴¹ Therefore, any climate reform that challenges dominant economic or religious ideologies faces deeper foundational

¹⁴¹Vandana Shiva, *Monocultures of the Mind: Perspectives on Biodiversity and Biotechnology* (London: Zed Books, Ltd., 1997), 68.

barriers: *denialism* of the other, meaning “in an androcentric context, the contribution of women to any collective undertaking is denied, treated as inessential, or as not worth noticing.”¹⁴²

Similarly, an anthropocentric culture *backgrounding* nature signifies seeing the human, “as outside of and apart from a plastic, passive, and ‘dead’ nature which is conceived in mechanical terms as lacking in qualities such as mind and agency that are seen as exclusive to humans.”¹⁴³

In the Anthropocene, denialism and backgrounding formed part of the logic of othering, which became foundational to many social institutions that use human rationality to suppress what the natural world teaches. Therefore, countering these enormous challenges demands consideration towards alternative worldviews that are fundamentally distinct from each other. The appeal for fundamental societal restructuring does not necessarily mean new methods, but a retrieval of the human past that has been hidden through colonization and religious imperialism. Until we examine socio-historical moments that led to societal restructuring, we cannot envision fundamental changes today. The first step towards climate reform involves alternative worldviews drastically unlike the current dominant interpretations. Some aspects of God discourse facilitate a world of growing conformity to the climate crisis. This restructuring could also involve how Catholics understand their God and its relation to nature.

This chapter has argued that economic rationalism and religious discourse about the environment work in tandem to thwart meaningful climate solutions changes, which are viewed as threatening to continuing capitalist operations. The illusion of disembeddedness is guided by how far humans have lost track of nature through “losing track of ourselves as ecologically constrained beings.”¹⁴⁴

¹⁴²Val Plumwood, *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason* (London: Routledge, 2002), 104.

¹⁴³ Plumwood, *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason*, 105.

¹⁴⁴ Plumwood, *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason*, 97.

Therefore, the rational methods and religious discourse employed by capitalism and the Church influence the way people live and think about their ecosystems. Melissa Aronczyk and Melissa I. Espinoza trace the evolution of public relations as information and influence campaigns designed against climate policies. They propose holding climate forums, showing better, clearer data, and having informed debate will slightly move the needle forward and lead to a more knowledgeable discourse. They argue that deconstruction of cherished concepts and reformulation of the essential human-nature relationality is essential for prompting societal and economic change. I will build on this idea in chapter three, exploring Indigenous climatic perspectives and how they transform the ways we think about economics, society, philosophy and religion. The values conceived by Native societies discussed in the next chapter demonstrate how societal structures can function without destruction of the environment for profit, animal cruelty involved in factory farming, or the oppression of women and nonbinary peoples due to their gender.

Chapter Three:
Indigenous Climatic Perspective: Approaches to the Climate Breakdown

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I explained how clerical discourse, primarily from the Catholic Church, maintains the status quo. Rather than demonstrating solidarity with marginalized communities experiencing the burden of the climate crisis, the Church campaigns in favor of maintaining patriarchal society and expected gender roles. Thus, questions arise as to whether the Church can support UN Sustainable development programs that require alliances with non-Christians and different ethnic groups such as Native American and Indigenous societies? Many Native American religious practices center the human-nature relationship. Would the Church consider an alliance with Native American religious leaders at the United Nations on matters related to gender empowerment and environmental programs? This chapter explains how Native religious understandings about the environment are not only climate compatible but determine how Native societies are structured.

During the 1960s the Native American movement illuminated the political challenges many tribes faced regarding legal access to their sacred lands and their religious freedoms. After three long decades battling with problems such as poverty and decreasing population numbers, Native Americans from all the Americas united with the international Indigenous community at the United Nations. Their status as the first inhabitants and nations living within colonized territories such as the Americas, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand proved legally complex. In recent years, nations like Australia and New Zealand have begun to center the values and languages of Indigenous peoples within academic research and climate change politics. They

have attempted to embrace with authenticity the Native positions relevant to Native American societies.¹⁴⁵

The 1990's presented Native peoples with the opportunity for globalized visibility supported by the United Nations, which dedicated the year 1993 to Indigenous peoples. Native American cultures were introduced to the popular imagination through television programs such as *Star Trek: Voyager* (1995-2001) which included a Native character and many other Indigenous themes. In the academic world, Native and non-Native scholars like Bruce E. Johansen, Barbara A. Mann, Donald Grinde Jr., Jack Weatherford and Vine Deloria Jr. published numerous accounts asserting the intellectual and philosophical achievements of Native communities, including the influence thesis, which suggests that Iroquois democratic political government structures influenced the framers of the U.S. Constitution. Even the Church belatedly canonized Juan Diego Cuauhtlatotzin as the first Native American saint.

During the 1990's the burgeoning neoliberal discourse emerged on the global scene while hiding the climate destabilization this economic agenda posed for the world. Because Indigenous societies were always cognizant about the consequences involved in ecological destruction for the benefit of the capitalist markets, they became seen as "enemies" of capitalist reasoning. Thus, much of the discontent and protests by Natives peoples and the reasons why they were engaged in these demonstrations were hidden from academic and public discourse. Research is difficult to find, but I would argue that it is likely that the disappearance of the Indigenous agenda from the academy coincided with an influx funding from the fossil fuel industry. This happened in the 1990's when many Indigenous movements were finding a voice on the international stage with

¹⁴⁵This reference is based on my personal research observations in terms of the common geographical areas that have in the last five years discussed climate change combined with Indigenous methods, with special emphasis on universities and governmental agencies in Australia and New Zealand.

the United Nations to bring awareness to the extractivism structures of global capitalism and its threat to their survival and the depletion of natural resources. Many university students in recent decades have petitioned their institutions to divest from fossil fuels, indicating how numerous sectors in society, including universities, operate with business models designed to make profit from fossil fuel investment. This does not indicate that universities are intentionally wanting to contribute to the climate crisis; rather it indicates how the globalized capitalist system in its evolutionary trajectory has integrated fossil fuels in every social sector, such as food systems, schools, pensions, and the insurance industry.

At the level of intellectual scholarship, Indigenous peoples are not included in the traditional canons within the nation's historical narratives. This chapter moves beyond the perspective of Indigenous peoples as memorialized to particular places and times, no longer extant and without significance for our world today. This chapter will show how we need to integrate Indigenous science and technology as a key element of our climate solutions.

Many Native perspectives on science and technology emerge from values based on interconnectedness with nature, yet these insights are traditionally ignored within Western religion and philosophy. Such views are worth revisiting, particularly because they offer methods proven efficient and ecologically sustainable. These practical methods can also help us understand how to theorize about the well-being of the climate and the associated environment in mind. The purported view that the human past was filled with violence and exploitation of nature equivalent to modern times is absurd and contrary to all scientific evidence. The capitalist model is exploitative not only of nature and marginalized people of color, but also of women.

The patriarchal views in dominant economic and religious thought obscure women's work in society by minimizing the labor involved in childrearing, which is expected to be done

mainly by the mother. In some Native societies that follow matrilineal lines, children are reared primarily by the mother and community. Feminist scholar Sally Wagner Roesch writes on the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) matrifocal traditions. Wagner explains how these matriarchal structures influence the distinct male behavior of young teenage Iroquois, promoting humble service and respect towards their mothers as leaders in their household, economic, and political systems.¹⁴⁶

This chapter explains how the Indigenous Climatic Perspectives (ICP) derives from the values of Native societies. I demonstrate how these values are based on historical accounts about the organization of Native societies and how these structures exemplify democratic ideals. It is important to consider how dominant knowledge about our world is mainly constructed from the “winners” perspective. In the case of the Native societies, “losing” has meant a devastating loss for them but also for our world today. For example, sustainable practices that preserve and strengthen ecosystems that are regarded by experts as climate solutions can be found in Indigenous economics, governance and religions. The philosophies underlining Indigenous societal values are based on harmonious and balanced relations with nature with some practices tracing back millennia. This chapter details some of the archeological and scientific evidence that corroborates the Native depictions of planetary geological and climatic events. Native views reduce the imbalance and disharmony caused by dominant views that favor dualistic and hierarchical thinking.

I expand on the Indigenous scholar Vine Deloria Jr.’s claim that Native religions and science share commonalities and his use of the terms Indigenous scientific and technological views. Deloria Jr. claims that the compatibility between Indigenous religion and science lays the

¹⁴⁶Sally Roesch Wagner, *The Untold Story of the Iroquois Influence on Early Feminists : Essays* (Aberdeen: Sky Carrier Press, 1996), 1.

foundations “for bringing back to the world the view of a unified whole if possible.”¹⁴⁷ I expand on the compatibility between the values developed by Native societies and climate discourse. I introduce the umbrella phrase *Indigenous climatic perspectives* involving four values that emerge directly from Native views: 1) accountability and reciprocity generate mutual strength; 2) sustainability and sustenance create balance and harmony with nature; 3) complete interspecies ethics; and 4) non-human centered and non-hierarchical values formed through matrifocal structuring.

The first part of the chapter will discuss values from Native philosophies and religions, laying the groundwork for regenerative climate sustainability. The Native perspectives demonstrate advanced geological and climatic knowledge based on their religious and philosophical views about the environment. The second part of the chapter explains how Native accounts about climate and geological events are confirmed by modern science and are shown to be compatible with climate discourse. The third part examines Indigenous views on gender and social organization, showing how they represent egalitarian values. At the end of the chapter, I demonstrate why Indigenous climatic perspectives (ICP) are essential to climate dialogue. I then speak on the need to combine ICP with examples from our world today impacted by the ecological crisis discussed more in detail in chapter four.

Indigenous social structures emerge through a dialogue with the environment where limitations, hazards, and possibilities are dictated by the natural ecosystem itself. For example, the Hopi people, an ancient Native American tribe, grow blue corn in the deserts of Arizona, a cultivation technology being considered for drought prone areas in Africa today.¹⁴⁸ The Hopi

¹⁴⁷Vine Deloria, Jr., *God Is Red: A Native View of Religion* (Whet Ridge: Fulcrum Publishing, 2003), 91-92.

¹⁴⁸Jack Weatherford, *Indian Givers: How Native Americans Transformed the World* (New York: Broadway Books, 2010), 123-24.

knowledge of agriculture is intrinsically connected to their religious practices, and thus imperative for their livelihood and survival in the harsh desert ecosystem. For this reason, the Hopi have always resisted external pressures from imperialism and religious conversion, fearing that to acquiesce in modern technological and political ideologies may result in the permanent loss of their unique technologies and ways of living. Historical accounts note the ecclesiastical quarrels between rival Catholic groups who had claimed a monopoly of souls in the northern territories of Nueva España. The Franciscans and Jesuits sent missionaries to Hopi communities but were met with resistance at every turn.¹⁴⁹

Despite the conversion efforts, the Hopi endured in preserving the religious practices that they consider directly linked to their survival and cosmological story, a point discussed further in the chapter. Though many Native societies in the Americas and globally have incorporated Christianity within their traditions, knowledge of their respective ecosystems continues to be centered on their traditional pre-Christian religious practices. On the other hand, Christianity has not incorporated much from Indigenous perspectives in regard to ecological religious practices.

Common practice by churches and government officials throughout historical times have based their theories about racial and religious superiority on denying Indigenous religious practices and legal status.¹⁵⁰ Nevertheless, the ancient human past has been preserved through Indigenous traditions whose earth knowledge and social practices can be a source of relevant information for climate discourse today. This chapter establishes an introduction to Indigenous climatic perspectives that lie outside the concept of conceivable rationality discussed in chapter

¹⁴⁹Thomas E. Sheridan, et.al, “Jesuits versus Franciscans and the Hopi Mission,” *Moquis and Kastilam: Hopis, Spaniards, and the Trauma of History, Volume II, 1680–1781* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2020), 265-270.

¹⁵⁰Shawn Wilson, *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2006), 46.

one. Once we understand how Native societies relate to nature beyond what we know, an important kind of eco-human rationality becomes possible. For example, the way the West thinks and practices agriculture, economy, and governance are vastly different from Native structures. Some scholars locate Indigenous knowledge within the scientific and natural histories of the planet directly connected with the creation of diverse cultures and ecosystems.¹⁵¹ The Indigenous climate perspectives are systematically developed through each section, describing the relevant and unique methodological and spiritual technologies found in historical and contemporary Indigenous communities.

Indigenous views on Religion and Philosophy

This section investigates expressions of belief, practice, and thought within Native views, expanding the meaning of religion and philosophy beyond human-centered and self-enclosed perspectives. For example, in the dominant view, Western ontology and logic are uncritically accepted as universal truths.¹⁵² In the particular case of logic, philosophers such as Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) argued in his *Logical Investigations* that humans could not even think without the truths of Aristotelian logic. Thus, Non-Western perspectives are cosigned to the category of “Other”, and their knowledge is relegated to folklore and myth. Nevertheless, many Native views are premised on ancient knowledge. This section considers these ontological views that say something distinct about planetary existence.

In this chapter, the term *dominant* is used to describe Christian, Eurocentric, heterosexual, male-dominated perspectives. *Indigenous* refers to peoples who identify with

¹⁵¹Vandana Shiva, *Monocultures of the Mind: Perspectives on Biodiversity and Biotechnology* (London: Zed Books, Ltd., 1997), 136-37.

¹⁵² Vine Deloria Jr., *God Is Red: A Native View of Religion* (Wheat Ridge: Fulcrum Publishing, 2003), 165.

Aboriginal, First Nations and Native ancestors in the Americas and other countries around the world.¹⁵³ In many ways, Indigenous knowledge has historically been considered as secondary, irrelevant, primitive, and relegated to the categories of folklore and mythology. The counterarguments in this section demystify these biases and erroneous labels that discount Native perspectives and highlight the link between religious and philosophical acumen and eco-discernment. Until we situate Native systems within both theoretical and praxiological interpretations, we will fail to incorporate the important strategies that will guide our own societies towards eco-noble views.

This section begins with a description of Indigenous philosophical values on interrelatedness. The second part surveys Indigenous religious themes on the nature of existence, God, and the environment. Many Native traditions, however, have disappeared through colonialism and capitalist globalization, whose interrelated methodologies of egoism, oppression, and religious fundamentalism are so destabilizing that they have caused the destruction of entire ecosystems. Many Native traditional pre-Christian religions have been changed after centuries of dominant religious imperialism, thus making detailed and specific interpretations of Indigenous religious and philosophical views on a systematic scale quite challenging, especially for Native societies which have disappeared. But plenty of archeological, sociological, and anthropological evidence suggest that Native American communities across the Americas were mostly egalitarian and democratic. The lack of evidence concerning idolization of monarchs, weapons, or military drawings in Native American settlements is significant.

¹⁵³Shawn Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2008), 34-35.

Indigenous Philosophical views

Many prominent figures of the European Enlightenment age debated ideals such as democracy and liberty, but where did these ideals emerge? The ideas of personal liberty lacked an extensive lineage in the Old World since freedom was considered the ability for a city, nation, or tribe to defend itself against other such groups.¹⁵⁴ The idea of personal liberty and equality became known to Europe through the writings of the early transatlantic explorers who observed Indigenous societies. For example, the philosophical writings of Thomas Moore and Michel De Montaigne discussed at length the American Indians and their egalitarian social conditions that were free of political institutions, military, poverty, and money. The French adventurer Louis Armand de Lom d'Arce, Baron de Lahontan, considered one of the first ethnographers, stayed with the Huron Indians of Canada from 1683-1694.

This experience allowed Lahontan to compare the way of life in Native and European societies. Furthermore, French readers had the opportunity to enter the minds of Hurons who explained to Lahontan how they were born masters of their own bodies and subject only to the great Spirit.¹⁵⁵ By 1704, Lahontan became an international celebrity and his writings in the *New Voyages to America* written a year earlier were adopted to the 1721 stage play *Arlequin Sauvage*. This play is said to have influenced Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1788) greatly and encouraged his lifelong philosophical inquiry into American Indian concepts of freedom and democracy. There were other figures who found Native societies so impressive that they compared them to virtues proposed by the ancient Greeks. For example, in 1724 the French Jesuit Father Joseph Francois Lafitau published *Customs of the American Savages Compared with those of Earliest*

¹⁵⁴Jack Weatherford, *Indian Givers: How the Native Americans Transformed the World* (New York: Broadway Books, 2010), 156.

¹⁵⁵Weatherford, *Indian Givers: How the Native Americans Transformed the World*, 159.

Times, where he intimated that the Mohawk American Indians might have been actual descendants of refugees from the Greek Trojan wars and thus transferred their virtues to America.¹⁵⁶

The Native Indians as exemplars of liberty had a profound impact on the politics, religion and philosophy of Thomas Paine (1737-1809). Paine arrived in Philadelphia in 1774 to visit Benjamin Franklin. His first contact with Native societies was as secretary commissioner negotiating with the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) confederacy; he subsequently became intimately acquainted with their government structures and became a lifelong advocate of Native models for how society should be organized.¹⁵⁷ In the subsequent generation of philosophers, Alexis de Tocqueville followed in the same path as Thomas Paine when he wrote *Democracy in America* concerning equality and freedom, and argued European tribes prior to becoming “civilized” lived in similar ways to Native Americans.¹⁵⁸

While a large contingent of philosophers and thinkers saw the Native peoples as an example to help civilize the turbulent inequalities and cruelties of everyday life in monarchical Europe, other thinkers sought to defend the status quo of Christianity and Imperialism through denigrating the ideas of the Native societies, most often through discriminatory and logically fallacious depictions of Native peoples. The term “noble savage” was one coined to represent this perspective. A prime example is Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) who, in his 1651 book *Leviathan* attacks these ideals of liberty. Here Hobbes coined the now infamous phrase concerning life in Indigenous communities being “nasty, brutish and short”; he claimed that the natural state of man was “war of all against all” and only by a ruler can individuals finally be

¹⁵⁶Jack Weatherford, *Indian Givers: How the Native Americans Transformed the World* (New York: Broadway Books, 2010), 161.

¹⁵⁷Weatherford, *Indian Givers: How the Native Americans Transformed the World*, 162.

¹⁵⁸Weatherford, *Indian Givers: How the Native Americans Transformed the World*, 164.

protected from the savagery of others.¹⁵⁹ Subsequent philosophers like Voltaire (1694-1778) joined with Hobbes in disparaging Native peoples and their way of life. In 1772, Immanuel Kant wrote philosophical lectures attacking the idea of American Indian democracy since they are “incapable of civilization” and described them as having “no motive force, for they are without affection and passion.”¹⁶⁰

Community vs. Individual

In the West, the philosophical tradition is delivered through prominent thinkers and intellectuals who conceptualize human existence to such a degree that it is considered beyond context and time. The sense of detachment results in apparently objective positions, untainted by personal biases, or lower body impulses; thus philosophical inquiry is primarily a mental activity, limited to the thinking function of the human mind. Hence, philosophy and rationality itself are transformed into an ontological event beyond the constraints of the physical body. Philosophy in its traditional conceptions has no need to consider praxis as the purpose is pure theory.

Who is the philosopher in native societies? One could perhaps make a case for several figures; nevertheless, here I wish to argue in favor of the scout as an Indigenous philosopher. The fundamental differences in philosophical assumptions between capitalist Euro-America and Indigenous societies is already highlighted by this very choice: the scout has practical knowledge, whereas the philosopher is abstract; the scout uses their body as much as their mind,

¹⁵⁹Jack Weatherford, *Indian Givers: How the Native Americans Transformed the World* (New York: Broadway Books, 2010), 164-165.

¹⁶⁰Weatherford, *Indian Givers: How the Native Americans Transformed the World*, 165. I have also found this same argument in Peter K.J. Park, *Africa, Asia and the History of Philosophy: Racism in the formation of the Philosophical canon 1789-1830*. This book covers the influence of white supremacist philosophy in Kant and Hegel in particular.

whereas the philosopher uses only his mind. These are differences in underlying conceptions of what role a philosopher can fill in society, not only within the current historical framework where philosophy is an academic discipline. Within the history of western philosophy there are several strands of interpretation to the question of “what is philosophy?”. French scholar Pierre Hadot (1922-2010) in his *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, states that many of the Greek and Roman philosophical schools practiced philosophy as a spiritual discipline linked to everyday life.

In Native societies, the scout is given a position of moral responsibility. They must exercise their knowledge and powers of observation. For the Plains Indians, the scout holds an important status in society. The scout has numerous responsibilities, such as analyzing the weather, identifying sources of game, as well as monitoring any potential enemy threat to their territories.¹⁶¹ The role of scout is so sacred that lying to the community is punished by death or banishment.

As a repository of the oral tradition of the group, the scout had to prove themselves physically, spiritually and mentally capable of articulating the traditions of the tribe. Various tests were formulated to assess the scout’s capacities in these areas. In order to become a scout, one needs to have achieved personal feats that represent the tribe’s knowledge, virtues and identity. Since one of the key aspects of the scout’s job was to tell stories of the great accomplishments of others, they should have an awareness of what it is like to prove their character. The stories about the personal accomplishments of the scouts are scrutinized by observations and testimony from various family members, and thus it is important not to exaggerate since relatives are called to witness.¹⁶² In many Native communities, to embellish,

¹⁶¹Vine Deloria, Jr., *Red Earth White Lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact* (Golden: Fulcrum Publishing, 1997), 39.

¹⁶²Deloria Jr., *Red Earth White Lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact*, 39.

laud, or exaggerate stories is prohibited, as the consequences of such dishonesty can be severe for the community at large.¹⁶³ Deloria Jr., furthermore explains how Native American societies adhere to distinct requirements for knowledge holders, those who are considered most suitable for passing on the traditions to the next generation, such as philosophers, historians, and shamans, are considered important leaders of the community.

Interspecies philosophy

The dominant philosophical perspective overvalues human-centered knowledge, estimating it superior to all else in nature. For example, Cartesian interpretations concerning consciousness accomplish two things: the non-human sphere is excluded from the criterion of consciousness, and human rationality is accorded supremacy. The animal world is considered “automata entirely lacking consciousness,” and the natural sphere made of trees, soil, and plants have “no conscious experience at all.”¹⁶⁴ The concept of rational supremacy involves forcing irrelevant or human-centric divisions onto life species and arguing that these very divisions justify the superiority of human rationality. A version of this argument is used when suggesting that we do not have to give animals moral consideration because they cannot reason; the ability to reason is not a morally relevant difference unless you have already elevated human reason above all else as an *a-priori* foundational principle. Thus, the lives of those in the inferior category become subservient to the rational structures formed through human-centered monological thought. This logic, when translated into the economic realm, gives rise to a radical “ends justify the means” economic model: those in the subservient position are instruments of the arbiters of rationality. Yet, there is a case to be made for multiple rationalities, depending

¹⁶³Deloria Jr., *Red Earth White Lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact*, 39.

¹⁶⁴Val Plumwood, *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason* (London: Routledge, 2002), 149.

on context and the accumulation of causes and conditions. For example, in the rationality of the natural world, that manifests distinctly in different regions. One may point to the example of how, once a predator has made a kill, they will not continue to hunt.

In this way, we see how reason conceived in the Euro-American tradition, enshrines exploitation of nature which subsequently emerges as racism, the exploitation of people; these ideas are logically linked to one another and imply each other. Rene Descartes (1596-1650) is considered in the philosophical canon of Euro-America as the philosopher who bridges the gap between the philosophically uninspired middle ages to the new scientific mindset of modern Europe. Unfortunately for those who laud Descartes as a pioneer, his explorations of ontological questions about the nature of humanity and planetary existence remained rooted in a dogmatic Christian view of reality. One key area in which Descartes focused on was the differences between the human and non-human world. A Cartesian mindset concerning the separation of mind and matter, the elevation of the former as above the latter, in line with Christian doctrine, was coupled with a devaluation of all that was considered part of the physical world.

This perspective is now enshrined as methodology in many fields of science and the humanities. Despite the theoretical and practical flaws, this position remains unchallenged. According to ecofeminist philosopher Val Plumwood, Descartes exclusion of animals from consciousness and from being considered a “person” endowed with rights is considered now, in the midst of climate breakdown, and considering what we now know about animals, as mostly incorrect; nonetheless, the dualism of “human-realm” and “animal-realm” remains politically untouchable and attempts to deconstruct this paradigm are often viewed with disdain. Even some environmental ethicists appeal to human rationality as higher in the chain of beings.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵Val Plumwood, *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason* (London: Routledge, 2002), 143-44.

Indigenous communities do not accept such dualistic hierarchies of human, animal and nature. In such worldviews, everything in nature, including the soil, is sacred and equal to human life, and thus nothing is considered superior to anything else. Indeed, many Native peoples view mountains and rivers as relatives and some imbue them with religious amazement. For example, the Warm Springs peoples in Oregon never hunt or fish above certain lines of latitude out of respect for mountain spirits and a sense of religious awe towards the mountains.¹⁶⁶ Humans are not perceived as the center of the universe or understood to possess superior knowledge about the earth. Indigenous people believe they are intrinsically and inherently earth-formed beings who simply look different from other species. Recent scientific advancements in DNA technology have shown this perspective to be correct, as humans share up to 98% of our genetic material with other mammals, such as rats.

The content of the current dominant perspective is a discourse supporting climate destruction and cannot be repackaged or reformulated; to accommodate outmoded interpretations and ontological concepts is to neglect the fundamental gaps that exist in these frameworks – gaps between theory and practice, gaps concerning how a system like capitalism, based on exploitation, can continue within a model of non-exploitation, and so on. Similarly, the radical idea that the animal and plant world are inferior neglects to account for how, unlike humans, they work in harmony with nature, never engaging in mass destruction of the environment. This example can be considered itself a form of rationality recognized and shared by Indigenous peoples, with the recognition that capitalism is in itself, despite the protestations of its philosophical advocates throughout the centuries, doomed by its own inherent irrationality of exploitation and endless desire. The conflation between Indigenous views based on praxis in

¹⁶⁶Vine Deloria, *Red Earth, White Lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact* (Golden: Fulcrum Publishing, 1997), 182.

accordance with natural balance and harmony on the one side, with an entirely conceptual theoretical system divorced from both history and the physical reality of human life on the other may well prove impossible; luckily for us, it may not be necessary, as the indigenous perspective is currently the only one complete enough to provide a blueprint out of the current cycle of climatic destruction.

From the Indigenous perspectives, self-consideration never exists apart from the health and well-being of nature. One key philosophical Indigenous perspective considers how humans are like other species in the world, and thus subject to similar fates. For example, the urban environment, custom built for human life, insulates us from the reality that humans can be prey for other species. When entering other ecosystems – for example when urban dwellers venture into deserts, forests, rivers, or mountains - the propensity for injury increases due to exposure to the natural elements and potential predators. These environments are home to sizable species, poisonous plants, and insects with the potential to cause harm to the human body. Therefore, some Western experiences of nature as “wild”, describe it as a dangerous place, or a place of curiosity, a place to be conquered to prove to oneself the superiority of the human and their need to dominate territory or establish stories of self-aggrandizement.

Indigenous societies thus set limits to how humans may engage with nature. These limits do not necessarily begin when damage is being done; rather, one nurtures a relationship at times by keeping a respectful distance, limiting access to certain geographical locations like mountains where spirits are believed to reside. Further, the idea of interspecies ethics is not theoretical, but rather focuses on means of establishing effective communication with animals; communicating with animals via a sixth sense is not unusual from an Indigenous perspective, but even simply learning how to observe animals without the presuppositions of scientific experimentation

interfering is a useful and effective method. It is this rationale that lies behind the tendency for scientific findings concerning cat and dog behavior to simply confirm what those with animal companions already knew from observation. .This view is distinct from the dominant view about nature and animals as lacking consciousness, and thus, unable to communicate with humans.

Indigenous Religions

It is important to briefly consider the Church's views on Indigenous peoples, including how these views impacted perceptions of Native religions in the popular imagination. The Church opposes pagan or panentheistic views, the very ideas often seen as a hallmark of Indigenous religions that have communal and religious experiences with nature. These forms of Native religions have been discredited as lacking universal truths by the Church and by western philosophy, relegating them to the level of constructed legends and myths. While scholars have attempted to defend this idea of Native religious insight as "myth" by suggesting it equates to "secret or sacred truth", its popular connotation alters how Native religions are portrayed.¹⁶⁷ Religious intolerance against Indigenous views its roots in the sixteenth century. The Catholic Church played a prominent role during the colonization of the Americas, propelling conversion and missionary work in Native societies with all the cruelty that comes with those determined to convince others that they alone are in possession of the universal "Truth".

Many Christians who came into contact with Native religions called them "savage" or "demonic" forms of pagan religions. The Christian missionary schools reeducated Native American children away from their customs and towards Christianity and Euro-American worldviews. For example, in 1882 the U.S. government forced schools and Christian missions on

¹⁶⁷Vine Deloria Jr. *Red Earth White Lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact* (Golden: Fulcrum Publishing, 1997), 167.

ancient Hopi settlements. The intent was to “convert” and “civilize” the Hopi due to their long history of resistance to Spanish conquest; however, U.S. government policies have managed to slightly change Hopi life.¹⁶⁸ Here we can see how this is not a haphazard tendency; the religious indoctrination of native peoples with Christian ideology over time removes them from nature centered discourse and abstracts one from the living reality of communing with nature by emphasizing instead an abstract God from which one is, despite being born in His image, essentially and forever estranged from. Despite this, there is much to be said for a Native perspective and critique of Christian positions, especially regarding hard-wired negative perceptions about nature, some of which were discussed in chapters one and two; such discourses explain why climate destruction has received so little attention from many Christians, especially in the United States.

Christian Pro-Life Arguments: Human-centric “Life” limits

What does pro-life mean according to Christian discourse? How is this position different from Native American religious views? From the Catholic Church position, pro-life signifies defending human life from conception in the female womb through to the point of death. The Church promotes respect for human dignity, yet this concern rarely extends to poor mothers who have little access to food for their children. The Church’s exclusion of female leadership makes it difficult to understand the needs a mother may have concerning their children, home, education, and religious formation.

Native religious views often consider animals and nature an equal part of life. In one example, the Hopi creation story speaks of how the first humans emerged through Spiderwoman

¹⁶⁸John D. Loftin, *Religion and Hopi Life: In the Twentieth Century* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), 72.

mating with a human male, highlighting the conjoining of the human and non-human aspects within nature. The inclusion and concern for non-human species in religious ceremonies and cosmologies demonstrates how Native pro-life perspectives go beyond anthropocentric concerns. Many Native societies were fully in communion with nature since they revered the life-giving features of nature such as forests and rivers. The pro-life argument in the Christian context strictly adheres to the defense of human life over any other life forms. This explains why Christians rarely protest the destruction of God's creation - of forests, rivers, and lands - by global corporations. In this way, it is more appropriate to rename and redirect Christian pro-life views towards a "pro-human reproduction" position. The ecosystems such as forests that nourish millions of species and assist in keeping the climate systems balanced are disregarded in the dominant Christian pro-life discussion.

In Northern California, the Yurok and Karok tribes protested logging companies through a court case, but unfortunately the corporation won, facilitating the building of a road into the forest through the tribes' religious ceremonial lands.¹⁶⁹ The surrounding Christian churches could have protested alongside the Native groups to defend the forests but many were absent. This absence constitutes one practical example of the impact of anthropocentric Christian pro-life arguments, by excluding nature and other species from the opportunity at life and flourishing. They also miss an opportunity to establish bonds of fellowship with their fellow humans.

Hence, the Christian "pro-Life" position is a misnomer; this position is focused narrowly on human reproductive contexts. For Indigenous religions, which value the health of the natural environment, the times are difficult. The ecological challenges to Indigenous religious and

¹⁶⁹Vine Deloria Jr., *God Is Red: A Native View of Religion* (Wheat Ridge: Fulcrum Publishing, 2003), 247-48.

spiritual ceremonies involving the life conservation of whole ecosystems represent more fully a pro-life experience going beyond human centeredness. The religious sensibilities of Indigenous societies are literally working to maintain the environment. Nonetheless, difficulties remain for those who wish to practice in the modern world: noise pollution caused by planes, highways, shopping centers, and many other urbanized constructs prevent many Native tribes from experiencing the history and context which gave rise to Indigenous religion and philosophy. The dominant discourse – which is both Christian and capitalist – creates the conditions that force many Indigenous communities to accept religions and philosophies that are not their own. Indigenous religions practice a comprehensive system of celebrating the cycles of existence and death. In relation to the pro-life argument, Native religious practices include all species beyond human life.

Indigenous environmental philosophy

Some scholars view Indigenous peoples as always environmentally conscious and spiritually connected to nature. Others argue that any scholarship that attempts to recall Indigenous wisdom falls prey to the Noble savage myth that idealizes Indigenous peoples as benevolent. While others like Four Arrows have intentionally thrown the proverbial baby out with the bathwater. In this case, Four Arrows argues that “bathwater” symbolizes the false images of Indigenous peoples as peaceful, innocent, and relegated to an unlivable past. The “baby” represents authentic worldviews that may offer alternatives to the climate breakdown caused by “free-market globalization, greed, war, and ecological ignorance.”¹⁷⁰ The positive

¹⁷⁰ Wahinkpe Topa (Four Arrows), “Introduction”, in *Unlearning the Language of Conquest: Scholars Explore Anti-Indianism in America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 19.

contributions of the native past is not negated as they are denied the possibility of existing in the first place. The images of Native peoples are constructed by others.¹⁷¹

The environmentalist, ecofeminist studies, and climate-consciousness movements of the 1990's interconnected with Indigenous views, such as focus on interconnections between nature and humans. The positive outcome of this involvement with American Indian culture is that it spurred the Native communities to revisit their own histories with new information, and the blessing from the elders to discuss these issues in communal contexts. A growing scholarly consensus concerning the impact of Native American culture on the development of European philosophy, particularly during the "Age of Enlightenment", points to the influence of Indian, East Asian and Indigenous thought. Visitors to the New World observed in amazement the "personal liberty, in particular their freedom from rulers and from social classes based on ownership of property" in many native communities.¹⁷² This provoked much philosophical and political writing. Sir Thomas More incorporated the characteristics of native societies, especially the information found in the popular letters of Amerigo Vespucci, in his 1516 book *Utopia*, which later was translated into all the major European languages.¹⁷³

Indigenous scholar Jack D. Forbes cites what Christopher Columbus reported when he reached the West Indies. He described the way of life of the natives as generous, without idolatry or sect, they believed in the power and goodness of the sky and were able to navigate the seas. Forbes proceeds to describe how Columbus writes about how he enslaved these "loving" people, sending thousands of them to Europe and Africa for profit. Forbes argues that Columbus, like his

¹⁷¹Wahinkpe Topa (Four Arrows), "Introduction", in *Unlearning the Language of Conquest: Scholars Explore Anti-Indianism in America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 19.

¹⁷²Jack Weatherford, *Indian Givers: How Native Americans Transformed the World* (New York: Broadway Books, 2010), 156.

¹⁷³Weatherford, *Indian Givers: How Native Americans Transformed the World*, 156-57.

fellow European exploiters, suffered from a contagious psychological disease called *Wètiko psychosis*. Forbes describes the *wètiko* psychosis as the opposite of sanity, or healthy normality among humans and other living creatures, which involves respect for all life forms. The *Wètiko* psychosis does not respect other life forms and ultimately takes them for granted.¹⁷⁴

This style of living did not result in slackness or lack of interest in trade or commerce, as is often incorrectly suggested. Jack Weatherford says that the Cahokia Indigenous societies that lived in what is now the Missouri and Mississippi regions pre-date European contact. From archeological discoveries it has been concluded that the Cahokia societies had established an impressive trade route that reached the southern states. While very little is known about the Cahokia as they did not write down their traditions, some scholars have contested the accuracy of the influence of their ideas. The problem of written authentication is a method by which western scholarship has often sought to denigrate the importance of Native culture and learning; yet no word is necessary on the vast reconstruction required to recreate many of Aristotle's texts into their "original" forms; we are also aware from the history of western philosophy that even when outside influences are acknowledged by those within the canon of philosophy, such as W.F. Leibniz (1646-1716) and Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) acknowledging their work is based on Asian sources, there is resistance. In the case of Schopenhauer for example, the rebuttal to the importance of Asian philosophy appears in G.W.F. Hegel (1770-1831) and his *Philosophy of History* (1830) where he denies that there is any history of real philosophy in Asia. Despite obvious and profound interactions between Greek and Indian cultures, the importance of Chinese thought, Hegel simply denies, by his own decree, philosophy to the entire continent of Asia for

¹⁷⁴Jack D. Forbes, *Columbus and Other Cannibals : The Wètiko Disease of Exploitation, Imperialism and Terrorism*. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2008), 21.

all its history. Such views filter through scholarship and help establish dominant interpretations that cement the status quo. Even today, I would wager a large number of professors of philosophy in U.S. institutions may well adhere to the view that philosophy began in Greece.

The possibilities of opening a dialogue to include marginalized communities whose historical, political, economic, and societal contributions have been either dismissed, disregarded, or intentionally made invisible or maligned is a central tenet of all democratic processes. For the most part, contributions by Native peoples have been traditionally discounted and placed outside political and economic discourse. Indigenous peoples from all over the world have contributed to the ideas of democracy, ecological awareness, individual freedoms, universal human rights, equal distribution of wealth, and respect for women's political leadership. The ideas of free speech function within a healthy democratic process, where all voices are heard, but from the university curriculum we see that not all voices and cultural backgrounds are given due credit for their contributions to the formation of culture, politics, philosophy and economics. The indigenous perspective enhances the true meaning of what John Stuart Mill had in mind with the evolution of his moral philosophy of utilitarianism, a philosophy which places emphasis on the greatest good for the greatest number, but which has failed due to its incompatibility with capitalist culture. By centering Native ontologies, cosmologies and epistemologies as valid methods of enhancing human thought and flourishing, we may find a means to integrate educational goals with opportunities to enhance climate awareness and climate-conscious societal customs and institutions.

Indigenous voices

The indigenous voice has been hidden and distorted in many of the academic disciplines and fields currently operating in universities across the United States. We have spoken here about philosophy, but there is reason to believe that each and every discipline currently in place in English-speaking universities has its beginnings in racism, violence, cultural appropriation, cultural misappropriation or exploitation of Native ideas and positions. I propose that universities open their doors to allow public interaction through the creation of a contested space where the public can debate these views and their implications with experts in a respectful and democratic format. The climate crisis is a reality that is increasingly becoming evident for millions of people around the globe. Many of the causes of the climate crisis are due to monocultural thinking and living that do not allow for alternative ways of living that facilitate a more balanced and peaceful approach. Indigenous governance and political systems require us to “...desire to sit under the Same Tree of Peace”; perhaps this could be an image by which we can revise what a university can and should be, and to arrest the current trend towards university brands prioritizing marketing and profit.

Indigenous economies and governance

The idea of Indigenous economies goes beyond the economic realm, centering sustainability above profit, and ensuring the needs of the entire community are met as equally and fairly as possible. The individual does not have the liberty to prioritize their own economic desires above the needs of others. Nevertheless, Indigenous scholars offer distinct perspectives on how Native peoples view capitalism. In chapter two, I introduced David Newhouse’s concepts about how Native Americans already participate in capitalism and have the opportunity

to transform it through their own values.¹⁷⁵ It should be noted however that few if any important capitalist theorists espouse his position regarding how capitalism should function; nonetheless, Indigenous cultures and peoples constitute some of the first peoples to be systematically destroyed by this very same capitalist system, so it remains somewhat utopian to consider that the two can be reconciled in the manner suggested by Newhouse. The model proposed in this paper is, I believe, a more complete and also realistic alternative model of politics and governance that support climate justice in our world today based on Indigenous principles.

This perspective allows for an introduction to Indigenous societies as models and co-nation builders. The societies of Indigenous peoples open up different worlds, dispels climate denialism and propaganda and confusion about who in fact is responsible for the climate crisis and its acceleration. Indigenous alternatives to economics and governance provide a means of understanding innovative, environmentally beneficial technologies to enhance biodiversity. The key ideas to challenge are the philosophical and cultural assumptions concerning Amerindians that establish Indigenous peoples as lacking autonomous and rational abilities to govern themselves, ideas that oftentimes Indigenous peoples themselves then internalize.

This is a common reaction to colonialism all over the world. In the popular cultural imagination, many erroneous images associate Native peoples with “primitive” societies, but this chapter demonstrates how these misconceptions are disseminated to maintain a sense of Euro-American cultural hegemony and establish boundaries preventing Native peoples from fully engaging with societal change. Many Indigenous societies exhibited societal norms that we ourselves are striving and failing to enact today. For example, the existence of matriarchal

¹⁷⁵See David Newhouse, “Resistance is Futile: Aboriginals Peoples Meet the Borg of Capitalism,” *Ethics and Capitalism*, ed. John Douglas Bishop (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).

societies represented in Native American tribes and had a tremendous influence on the thought of influential to early European settlers, particularly those involved in establishing democratic norms and women's rights.

In the early sixteenth century European settlers and Native Americans maintained friendly relations. The U.S. Founding figures like John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson often discussed the government of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) confederacy who they knew personally. In this section, I will explore how the Indigenous economic, political and governmental systems emphasize concepts such as reciprocity, responsibility, nobility, and interconnectedness, concepts which are far divorced from many of the political ideals found in Europe, such as the exhortation to duplicity found in Machiavelli's *The Prince*, a key handbook of European political thought and praxis. These powerful connections explain the ways Indigenous peoples develop and understand commerce and government structures. Many scholars have proposed the influence theory which states how the founding fathers were not only inspired by the democracy of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) confederacy but modeled many U.S. government structures after their example.

Historical facts about the friendly trading relations between Native Americans and European settlers existed prior to the existence of the United States government have been either purposely forgotten or lost in the annals of time; nonetheless, the writings of the founding fathers John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and Benjamin Franklin suggest both friendliness and much mutual respect with the Iroquois federation. In the 1990s, a group of Native and non-native scholars established conferences and writings about Native American societies as originators of democracy, freedom, and egalitarian values.¹⁷⁶ The six nations ended all aggression between

¹⁷⁶See Bruce E. Johansen, Donald Grinde Jr., and Barbara A. Mann, *et.al. Debating Democracy: Native American Legacy of Freedom* (Santa Fe: Clear Light Publishers,1998).

each other in order to form a federation governed under the *Great Law of Peace*, laying the foundations of non-violence and democracy within their societies. To ensure democracy and non-violence, the Iroquois established political institutions including caucuses, a convention system to nominate presidential candidates, elected officials, and impeachment of elected officials who did not uphold the oath of the *Great Law of Peace*.¹⁷⁷

The striking resemblance of the newly formed U.S. government to the Iroquois federation is apparent, however, one stark difference was the exclusion of women from political office, something unheard of for the matriarchal society of the Haudenosaunee. There seems little doubt that there has been a concerted effort to expunge the historical record of the influence of Native American politics on the establishment of democratic norms, processes and systems of government adopted by the white settlers. Adding insult to injury Native societies were denied the freedom to practice their language, spiritual, and religious practices constituting the loss of a unique way of life. With the systems of capitalism and communism, economic concerns are centered. This is, in my opinion, one of the reasons why both systems have failed so spectacularly. By placing money at the center of human concern, it is impossible to build an equitable society. Many Native American societies incorporate religious views within their economic and governing systems, yet this did not negatively impact the abilities of Native societies to trade. Trade routes were easily accessible to many tribes within North America, with trade one of the means to invigorate society with new items and ideas. It is not necessary to have profit the sole motivator and result of a desire to trade.

It is worth noting that Marxism as proposed by Marx and Engels bears resemblance to certain communal structures in Native societies. The idea that all peoples are entitled to a hot

¹⁷⁷Bruce E. Johansen, Donald Grinde Jr., and Barbara A. Mann, *Debating Democracy: Native American Legacy of Freedom* (Santa Fe: Clear Light Publishers, 1998), 123.

meal and shelter, have been conceived in Marxist theory, and most likely inspired by literature that had spread all across Europe concerning Indigenous societies that practiced these views. Benjamin Franklin is another example; writing to a friend he notes that Euro-American colonialists taken prisoner by Indigenous tribes, often voluntarily renounced their own communities to escape into the woods and live with Indigenous peoples.¹⁷⁸ These converts to Indigenous societies favored the political and social freedoms afforded them in Indigenous societies. Despite often subsistence levels of food acquisition, communal systems of mutual assistance helped alleviate poverty and hunger. While there is certainly a sense of overlap between the early models of Marxism and some of the most enticing and egalitarian aspects of Native societies, it is nevertheless true to say that Marxism continues to operate primarily as a model of economics. The justification for assuming state control of economics is then extended to other aspects of the community. Concern for the economic welfare of all does not equate to concern for the entire person, and without the freedoms and rights to expression, communist societies devolve into anti-democratic paradigms. I believe this is why many Indigenous scholars push against this comparison to Marxism based on the behavior and beliefs of the Native American societies. Economics cannot be the ruling principle and cannot extend itself into the interior world of societal members without violating their right to freedom of thought. For Native communities the individual is not subjugated to their societal function, but the function assigned them is a starting part for further spiritual and practical exploration.

¹⁷⁸David Graeber and D. Wengrow, *The Dawn of Everything : A New History of Humanity* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2021), 30.

Indigenous spiritual technologies, science, and climate change

Resistance to changing conditions, hostile environments and invasion from without are factors in the dismantling and destruction of numerous tribal cultures since the arrival of the Europeans to the Americas. It is therefore somewhat ironic that in order to understand the origins of human civilization, western science and scholarship is required to analyze the histories of Native peoples in an attempt to understand migration and its relation to climatic disruption in previous eras. Unfortunately, scholarship on Indigenous communities, their beliefs and cultural philosophies remains shrouded in layers of historical misinterpretation.

One such example is the popular yet scientifically implausible Bering Strait theory. In this context, western scientific rationalism turned ancient and self-aware Indigenous societies into objects of study, objects that may or not be aware of their own significance or the significance of the actions that were ascribed to them. Moreover, the Indigenous people who are the objects of this study are then forced to accept the western account of their own origins as true, despite its patent falsity.

The Bering Strait theory was scientific orthodoxy for almost two hundred years and claimed that Paleo-Indians crossed an ice corridor bridging Siberia to Alaska 12,000 years ago. Indigenous scholars cast doubt on this theory since, “you would have to move the [Paleo-Indians] very quickly across the Alaskan mountains, down the so-called ice corridor to approximately Montana, and have them do an abrupt right hand turn out the glacial sheet and head directly across Idaho to the central Washington area. The odds of this kind of travel are minimal to impossible.”¹⁷⁹ Archeological evidence found in Siberia indicates that these early humans of the Paleolithic age never travelled towards the western route required to traverse the

¹⁷⁹Vine Deloria Jr. *Red Earth White Lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact* (Golden: Fulcrum Publishing, 1997), 196.

ice sheets to reach Alaska. The Bering Strait crossing, according to Indigenous scholars, involves an almost impossible trek through numerous glaciated mountainous ranges, and deep freeze barren landmass for hundreds of miles.¹⁸⁰ It would require superhuman endurance, and its entirely illogical. Thus, early humans must have found a different route other than the Bering Strait.

The arrival date of Paleo-Indians to the Americas has traditionally been set at 12,000 years ago. This has been disputed through carbon dating, and it now appears certain that the true date of arrival is much earlier. Sites subjected to archaeological analysis and carbon dating confirm the presence of Paleo-Indians in the Western Hemisphere 40,000 to 200,000 years ago. For example, one site called *El Horno*, located seventy-five miles from Mexico City, is estimated by U.S. geological surveys as dated to 250,000 years ago. In another example, evidence unearthed in Sheguiandah Canada, date back to between 30,000 and 100,000 years ago.¹⁸¹ These geological findings throw into question familiar narratives of the human past portrayed in limited terms, when in fact these findings present a more exciting historical account of the human past involving advanced science, philosophies, peace-loving peoples, and sustainable agriculture.

By what means did Paleo-Indians arrive in the Western Hemisphere? Sea travel from the Pacific islands region is one alternative explanation. Long distance sea travel is common amongst Hawaiian and Polynesian cultures; these journeys are facilitated by a detailed understanding of ocean currents and ecosystems.¹⁸² Perhaps these findings may seem unrelated to present climate discourse, but until we rediscover a human knowledge deliberately sustainable and harmonious with nature, we risk the loss of these alternative perspectives. When we compare

¹⁸⁰Vine Deloria Jr. *Red Earth White Lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact* (Golden, Co: Fulcrum Publishing, 1997), 82.

¹⁸¹ Deloria Jr., *Red Earth White Lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact*, 82.

¹⁸² Deloria Jr., *Red Earth White Lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact*, 34.

what we know of these ancient societies and their economic systems with the capitalist system of today, we see the Indigenous systems are extremely robust, preserving climate stability over long periods of geological time. On the other hand, capitalism has succeeded in driving the environment to breakdown in a little over five hundred years. Is our technologically advanced society ready for the major environmental breakdown that is currently underway? The failure of all nations, from the United States to Germany, in preventing the impact of climate breakdown and its impact on their populations suggest, that our current tools are inadequate. Are we willing to look towards Indigenous science and technology for a possible answer?

Indigenous perspectives: religion and Science

Indigenous scholars maintain that every human society has a sense of creation, a story of the beginning of the world. Vine Deloria Jr. states that some human societies were able to create a written record of what happened in the past, in the example of Hebrews who wrote about floods and other geological phenomenon experienced by ancient peoples in the Old Testament. Deloria Jr., says that the Hebrew story of earthly creation became influential to most people through the spread of Christianity.¹⁸³ For Indigenous peoples however, the human relationship is about metaphysical and spiritual relationality. Hence, Indigenous views on interconnectedness with nature and animals signify a distinct alternative to the cosmic Christ.

Indigenous societies rarely have One Savior within their cosmological views that is centered primarily at the foundation of their religious views. For example, the Hopi “are not polytheistic; rather, they worship one spiritual substance that manifests itself in many modes of

¹⁸³Vine Deloria Jr., *Red Earth, White Lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact* (Golden, Co: Fulcrum Publishing, 1997), 23.

being.”¹⁸⁴ The deep integration of the non-human world is viewed in the creation story involving the Spider woman responsible for creating the first humans and the Ant species given the task to help those who followed the promise to keep balanced relations with others and nature.¹⁸⁵ One may see here a closer connection with Hindu and Buddhist culture, rather than the monological dependence on one God represented in one book, a recipe for intolerance and indoctrination unless understood with great care.

Indigenous and western religious perspectives

How do Indigenous scientific perspectives relate to religion? Is there a compatibility which may lead us to further investigate the practical benefits of Indigenous scientific and religious views? There is a strong case to be made that in the fields of agro-science, sustainability, environmental sciences, astronomy, ecological archiving and sustainable medicines. Indigenous religious views are more compatible with modern scientific view of nature. This potential treasure trove of climate assisting technologies is not unknown to the Western world but have been exploited for profit rather than engaged for the benefit of society. Similarly, many in the scientific community still view Indigenous knowledge as inherently unscientific. Secondly, the Christian religious atmosphere is based on static beliefs that at best interpret nature as background to a Divine cosmic drama. In this regard, Christian views that describe animosity, indifference, and unjust treatment of nature are reflected in a deficient and defiant discourse towards climate change. There is a very real sense amongst certain more fundamentalist Christian groups that the destruction of biological nature is in fact positive and

¹⁸⁴John D. Loftin, *Religion and Hopi Life: Religion in the Twentieth Century* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1994),15.

¹⁸⁵See Frank Waters, and Oswald White Bear Fredericks. *Book of the Hopi* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1969).

will fulfill the destiny they believe is theirs through their own interpretation of the Bible. This has implications for how Christians respond to the climate crisis. For example, conservative groups like the Cornwall Alliance argue that “concerns over global warming are ‘speculative’, ‘unfounded or undue’, and that the risks to human health caused by such warming are ‘low and largely hypothetical’, that affirms climate change is ‘driven primarily by variations in non-human forces.’”¹⁸⁶ The Cornwall Alliance and many other evangelical groups that actively champion the continuation of fossil fuels find justifications for their views by a denial of human embeddedness with nature justified by religious doctrine. The radical dependence on Divine promise and intervention allows these Christian conservative groups to feel a form of protection against climate change.

These groups are certainly not indicative of all Christian perspectives, there is nonetheless a sense that this position is easy to adhere to for a Christian given the underlying hostility towards nature in the texts, doctrines and practices of institutional Christianity. Dualistic rationalism in Christian discourse on God and nature establishes dominant and limited epistemological systems about the relationship between reason and nature, body and spirit, and male and female, to the extent that these constitute different entities and realities. In the religions of many pre-Christian peoples such as the Indigenous ancient religious systems of the Americas male and female attributes are both considered aspects of the Divine. The male representation of God and the female representation of God worked together to bring life to earth. In the Hopi religious and creation stories, the Creator is represented by Father Sun ignites the first breath of life after Spider Mother shapes the first early creatures.

¹⁸⁶Karin Edvardsson Björnberg, Helena Röcklinsberg, and Per Sandin. “Cornwallism and Arguments against Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reductions,” *Environmental Values* 29, no. 6 (2020):15.

The Spider Mother represents earth and is responsible for weaving twins who represent the north and south axis poles essential to life on earth. In this Hopi story a multidimensional plurality is displayed, a one God who still incorporates a polytheistic perspective; in other words, a pluralistic vision of a God is possible, and placing this God in opposition to and enmity with nature is not necessary, even in the context of monotheism. It is necessary to demystify the erroneous categories applied to Indigenous religious practices by Euro-American scholars: terms like superstition, paganism, and witchcraft were used to describe these practices. This discourse served to elevate the position of Christianity as a rational religion adjacent to the success of western science and economics.¹⁸⁷ This issue is not limited to indigenous religions; the entire category of “world religions” is an invention of the western academy, and one that viewed both Buddhism and Hinduism as suitable only in the forms that the Christian commentators thought palatable. So, for example, the words of the Buddha from the Theravada tradition were seen as philosophically sophisticated and so accepted, but the Tantra of Buddhist and Hindu ascetics was dismissed as degenerate as it embraced, rather than rejected, the physical world and its associated practices such as sexuality. Indeed, one could argue that Tantra is the realm most similar to indigenous religious perspectives. Nonetheless, even the Theravada tradition, so revered by early English scholars from the Pali text society, contained elements deemed unsuitable for the manner in which they wanted to present Buddhism – as a rational philosophy. Therefore, their translations of the early texts of the monastic code, the Vinaya, left out all statements concerning miracles performed by the Buddha, and all the very copious references to sexual behavior in the monastic rules were also not translated.

¹⁸⁷Vine Deloria Jr., *God Is Red: A Native View of Religion* (Wheat Ridge: Fulcrum Publishing, 2003),89.

Perhaps somewhat unintentionally, modern science affirms the practical benefits of many indigenous religious practices, such as the rain and corn dances, through scientific studies on positive correlation between plant growth and vibration.¹⁸⁸ An important aspect of human understanding of nature remains a mystery, therefore, to regain knowledge of Indigenous religious views of nature and the Divine is an indispensable tool for climate discourse. The Hopi have a different view of religion, in particular the concept of God. For the Hopi, God or the Father Creator is the Sun. Their mother is Earth. The Hopi concept of God is distinct from the Christian concept of God that is more abstract “The one who takes good care of us from above is the Sun and not the Christian concept of God. Hopis are sun worshipers.”¹⁸⁹ The nature of the Sun is as the central character in the cultivation of life, a theme repeated in many Indigenous societies.

Indigenous scientific perspectives on climate change

This section discusses the ways Indigenous observations of the natural world and its varied phenomena, and the methods they used to record such events, for example rock drawings, serve a similar scientific function to empirically witnessing an event and recording the aftermath. Many astronomers in the modern era have confirmed the accuracy of many Indigenous astronomical recordings, some dating back thousands of years. For example, on July 4, 1054, modern astronomers discovered that a supernova passed through earth’s orbit and was visible in the sky for three weeks. In the U.S: “One cave in California, and on rock carvings and paintings in Arizona and New Mexico, there are representations of a crescent moon with a bright object quite near it. There are speculations that the early people of North America saw the supernova

¹⁸⁸Deloria Jr., *God Is Red: A Native View of Religion*,89.

¹⁸⁹ Robert Boissiere, *Meditations with the Hopi* (Santa Fe: Bear & Company, 1986), 17.

and made a record to verify for subsequent generations that such thing had happened.”¹⁹⁰ The absence of any record of the supernova phenomenon in Europe is due to the Christian view held at the time that regarded the heavens as constant, untainted by such celestial spectacles; hence the phenomena was most likely simply ignored so as not to suggest Divine inconsistency, and what we could have learned from it or other such natural events have been lost.

It appears that the Native tribes of North America were not deterred by such rigid views of the heavens, and thus devotedly recorded the supernova phenomenon.¹⁹¹ This is one example of how certain Native societies had systems of religious and scientific investigation that were mutually compatible. In this sense, it is fair to say that Indigenous are more compatible with modern scientific observation than other monotheistic conceptions of God.

Perhaps the most extreme example of the Native peoples of the Americas and their extensive recording of planetary phenomena is found in the suggestion that the Hopi people both experienced and recorded one of the most intense and unusual phenomena imaginable: the switching of the position of the Earth’s magnetic poles. As we shall see shortly, this event is estimated to have occurred forty-two thousand years ago. There is a growing scientific consensus that climate change may in fact be accelerating the possibility of this event reoccurring in the not too distant future.

Native cosmologies and climate discourse

In Hopi cosmology, Taiowa the Creator of this world commands humans to follow the Plan for Creation that involves song and praise to Father Sun and Mother Earth. Taiowa creates Four Worlds with the help of his nephew Sótuknang. The first World Tokpela, the Creator,

¹⁹⁰Vine Deloria Jr., *God Is Red: A Native View of Religion* (Wheat Ridge: Fulcrum Publishing, 2003), 134.

¹⁹¹Vine Deloria Jr., *God Is Red: A Native View of Religion* (Wheat Ridge: Fulcrum Publishing, 2003), 135.

Taiowa, existed among endless space, until he created Sótuknang who he commanded to create a plan for life in this endless space. Sótuknang created the universes, each half solid and half water, with gentle and peaceful air movement.¹⁹² Sótuknang went to the universe where Tokpela, the First World resided and created out of her remains Kókyangwúti, Spider Woman. From her saliva mixed with earth, Kókyangwúti, created the twins; Pöqánghoya and Palöngawhoya, who helped keep the world in order, when life is put upon it. After they accomplished their duties, they were sent to the world axis; Pöqánghoya was sent to the north pole, and Palöngawhoya was sent to the south pole.¹⁹³ The First World, Tokpela ends after Taiowa commands Sótuknang to destroy life on earth with fire from below and above. In the Second World, Tokpa, Taiowa orders Sótuknang to command the twins Pöqánghoya (North pole) and Palöngawhoya (South pole) to abandon their post where they were sent to keep the world in order. The destruction of Tokpa comes after the majority of people become engrossed in greed for material wealth, violence and suspicion against one another.

Taiowa gathers the few who practice and remember the Plan for Creation. He places them under the protection of the Ant people who care for them underground, while life is destroyed above through the reversal of the magnetic poles.¹⁹⁴ The destruction of Tokpa, the Second World, has significant parallels to an environmental crisis forty-two thousand years ago. The geological archive recorded the reversal of Earth's magnetic poles from the ancient kauri tree in New Zealand. The global impact of the magnetic pole reversal is unclear, however there is substantial evidence of archeological, ecological changes, and extinction events caused by this event.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹²Frank Waters and Oswald White Bear Fredericks, *Book of the Hopi* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1969), 4-5.

¹⁹³Frank Waters and Oswald White Bear Fredericks, *Book of the Hopi* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1969), 4-5.

¹⁹⁴Waters and Fredericks, *Book of the Hopi*, 3-4.

¹⁹⁵Alan Cooper, et al. "A Global Environmental Crisis 42,000 Years Ago." *Science* 371, 6531 (2021): 811.

Whether Hopi cosmology is comparable to the Old Testament Genesis story of creation is debatable. Within Hopi history however, there is one very pertinent and clear ecological prediction. After the destruction of Kuskurza, the Third World, those that remember the Plan for Creation emerge from underground to live in Túwaqachi, the Fourth World, which is the present-day world. The Hopi clans are instructed to follow the Creator's star to the four corners of the continent. When the clans reach the Artic circle, Sótuknang prevents them destroying the mountain of snow for passage to the other side. Sótuknang tells them that the Artic circle is the "North Back Door" to the Fourth World and destroying it would result in a catastrophic flood that would fundamentally change of this world and lead to its destruction.

The Spider clan who initiates this event at the Artic circle are ordained to breed evil and wickedness.¹⁹⁶ The Hopi religious narratives are analogous to present-day climate predictions that confirm, "heatwaves at both Earth's poles are causing alarm among climate scientists, who have warned the "unprecedented" events could signal faster and abrupt climate breakdown."¹⁹⁷ Indigenous climate perspectives are, in fact, more *rational* and *practical* than Euro-American views of nature. Val Plumwood explains one reason for this:

if western philosophy is to avoid its implicit eurocentrism in dismissing as 'primitive' or less than rational the non-western cultures that often frame the world thoroughly intentional and expressly narrative, communicative and agentic terms. But then we consider all these factors in our choice of framework, it is clear that adopting a stance that allows us to experience an intentional rich world is not only just as rational as the reductive stance... it is in our present circumstances more *rational*.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ Frank Waters and Oswald White Bear Fredericks, *Book of the Hopi* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1969), 47-48.

¹⁹⁷ Fiona Harvey, "Heatwaves at both of Earth's poles alarm climate scientists," *The Guardian*, March 20, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/mar/20/heatwaves-at-both-of-earth-poles-alarm-climate-scientists>

¹⁹⁸ Val Plumwood, *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason* (London: Routledge, 2002), 178.

It may be the case that the parallels between Hopi religious cosmology and the archaeological and planetary records, but it is nonetheless true that observation is the first step to understanding of the complex processes that have come to define life on this planet. That the Hopi have been embedded within these natural systems for tens of thousands of years suggests at the very least their voices on ecological issues should be included.

The current approaches to the climate crisis focus on the devastation to ecosystems and species, decline in food systems, and societal collapse. These are the consequences of the capitalist system that posits itself as the only economic alternative; yet how can capitalism assist in solving the problem of climate change when it emerged precisely from the flawed logic of its methodological underpinnings. In this sense, the climate breakdown is a crisis of culture and religious vision that refuses space for change and self-reflection.

Gender concepts in Indigenous societies

The patriarchal exploitative models prevalent in modern society are not natural occurrences; for example, the problematic tendencies towards authoritarianism prominent in patriarchal structures assert that the system is a certainty and cannot be altered. Yet, this discourse is asserted only due to the deliberate scholarly obscuration on the historical reality of matriarchal social leadership. By calling into question the very historical authenticity of matriarchal societies, their place as an alternative to the modern system is veiled

Feminists and feminist theory are not uniform blocs that accept uncritically a set of historical presuppositions. There are scholarly positions that cast doubt on the literal historical truth of matriarchal societies. The rationale for such claims centers upon a lack of sociological

evidence or substantial written records.¹⁹⁹ Rosemary Radford Ruether argues that in the search for female religious symbols in the human past, feminists interpretations must guard from elaborating the existence of matriarchal structures based on partial and incomplete archeological evidence. The criteria Ruether bestows to the past are based on methodologies employed today to understand human relations to religious symbols. The assumption of western scholarship, that absence of textual evidence means evidence is unlikely to exist, betrays a naiveté concerning the ease with which a written record can be manipulated. Nonetheless, in the case of the Harrapan civilization, there are compelling reasons to suggest that at least in this instance, a matriarchal society did exist and indeed flourished.

For example, inaccessible methods of inquiry such as sociological research and written records in past generations complicate certainties about female religious symbols; nevertheless, Ruether neglects the accounts of nineteenth century suffragette women who experienced life with the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) women. The suffragettes leaders like Elizabeth Stanton Gage and Matilda Joslyn Gage wrote extensively about the ways Iroquois women lived under matrilineal societies, and indeed many of their writings cast an unfavorable light on the nature of discrimination and sexual violence prevalent in white settler society, and its corresponding absence in Indigenous culture.²⁰⁰

The ways we come to think about gender norms are fashioned by cultural and religious discourse. This section explores three questions concerning gender norms in Indigenous societies, and at points compares these views to the Church's perspectives on gender. Gender will be analyzed through an Indigenous egalitarian paradigm. The Indigenous perspective assets

¹⁹⁹Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Goddess and the Divine Feminine: A Western Religious History* (London: University of California Press, 2005), 307.

²⁰⁰Sally Roesch Wagner, *The untold story of the Iroquois influence on early feminists: Essays* (Aberdeen: Sky carrier Press, 1996), 5.

a noble view of nature and therefore a noble view of women. I use men and women gender identifiers with openness to their expansion and beyond secular and religious understanding of gender norms.

The manner in which gender is interpreted by society differs distinctly depending on whether the overarching paradigm is patriarchal or matriarchal. It is important to note that patriarchal societies exacerbate differences between genders, insisting on concrete and categorical distinctions between genders. Patriarchy also insists on clear and distinct gender markers, ensuring a monological approach that denies the possibility of change or evolution. The experiences of oppression suffered by women under this system is, according to ecofeminist scholar Ivone Gebara, the means by which women then learn to abuse others. The historical alienation and injustice everyone can see manifest in society is not limited to men. For women the capacity to perpetuate authoritarian, hierarchy, intolerance, and violence in the household trickles into society. The effects on women are devastating since they mirror authoritarian practices facilitating acceptance of these structures in the public sphere. The urgent need to renounce all forms of violence against women remains a priority, but as Gebara points out, we still need to view humanity as a totality of good and bad.²⁰¹

Non-binary concepts in Indigenous societies

Traditional Indigenous perspectives are often naturally gender inclusive; one example is provided below of the *Two-Spirit* people who were recognized and accepted in Polynesian Indigenous societies. This example shows gender expansion is not a recent phenomenon but has been part of Indigenous societies for millennia. However, many two spirit people now face

²⁰¹Ivone Gebara, *Out of the Depths: Women's Experience of Evil and Salvation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 95.

violence and discrimination. Many experts and transgender activist themselves conclude that Christian views of gender cause confusion for many who cannot understand the Indigenous cultural underpinnings of gender inclusion.

For example, in Tonga there is a non-binary group who refer to themselves as *Leiti*; they are expected to work in society without any rights, and under the threat of violence. They take care of dignitaries' children, royal family members, and the catholic church events, but always within the capacity of a server, caregiver, or nanny."²⁰² The Leiti are viewed by society "as "useful" because they perform the "dirty work" as the Leiti affirm in their stories. This is their value which is not based on who they are, but on their usefulness to others. The stigma works on an insidious level, because the Letiti are present at masses, funerals, government conferences and other public spaces, but they have no legal rights, and are threatened by laws that view men who dress as women as worthy of imprisonment. The mixture of personal intolerance and Christian dogmas hostile to non-binary peoples and perspectives has led to a profound cultural shift in the life of Polynesian islands towards a less open attitude to non-gender conforming persons.

Conclusions

The climate crisis will force all citizens to reevaluate our way of life. The "things" that we think we cannot survive without will be threatened with removal as the climate situation worsens. The Indigenous peoples in the world center accountability to the non-human world as a core value since this responsibility is tied in mutuality dependent existence. In other words, the Indigenous perspectives about nature represent not only respect but also the meaning and

²⁰²Hinaleimoana Wong-Kalu and Ilaisaane Sisi'uno Helu, *Leitis in Waiting* (Qwaves, 2018): Accessed March 14, 2022.

purpose in their intentions to live in balance and harmony with nature. This principal strategy underlining the Indigenous climatic perspective entails ultimate balance, which animals, plants, and nature involve themselves with “naturally”. This means non-human species tend towards harmonious and balanced relations, more than they engage in competition, discrimination, and mass destruction. For example, the tree branches are constantly working in unison to bring balance to the tree and never in competition with one another. The responsibility for the ecological destruction and its consequences that we are currently experiencing rests squarely on the shoulders of human activity. This fact alone suggests it is within the power of human ingenuity to reassess the current dominant paradigm and implement a more rational, less brutal and more harmonious alternative. This alternative option is outlined here as the Indigenous climatic perspectives, and will be further elaborated in the next chapter

The Indigenous climatic perspective is a powerful paradigm that is not only different to dominant perspectives but resists the machination and industrialization of nature that is characteristic of both capitalism and communism. Many Native societies have lived successfully according to their own cultures and values that predate the European arrival. The sustainable principles grounded in Indigenous ancient practices are fundamentally proven as eco-survival methods necessary for the long-term survival of Indigenous societies. Indigenous methods were constantly evolving, reinventing themselves again and again, but the guiding principle remains the same balance and harmony with nature, reincorporates as strength.

*Chapter Four:
Ecological Culture and Citizenship in the Age of Climate Change*

Introduction

Activists, concerned citizens, scientists, and young people are amongst the groups beginning to challenge the ideologies causing the climate breakdown. These groups and others will increasingly require ingenuity and resilience to live within the ecosystems of the future which, at current projections, will suffer multiple breakdowns at a variety of junctures. Social, economic, medical, educational and political systems will become less cohesive and eventually will collapse entirely. Yet, we do not need to rely on projections of future doom; we have ample evidence of the catastrophic impacts of the climate disaster already. Millions of people all around the world have died or been displaced due to extreme weather events related to climate breakdown. The extreme weather patterns common in many places illustrate the need for an ecological citizenship. This perspective is orientated towards achieving sustainable goals and carries within itself the means to produce expansive and effective social programs.

The ecological citizenship paradigms will require knowledge that climate reports communicate to be disseminated in more common and practical ways. We have to go beyond the current means of interpreting and accessing climate reports, as if they are abstract and inconsequential. The changes required to offset much of the damage from climate change will require local urban changes. The localized transformation can then spread outward, but at the start the emphasis would most likely be small-scale, including local and eco-communal urban planning as a core transformative value. For example, an ecological citizenship approach looks to localized forms of communication reporting on climate and environmental changes in municipalities and the regions.

For example, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is a body in the United Nations reports on the socio-economic, scientific, and technical assessment of climate change.. The IPCC report brings together governments and environmental experts from around the world to report climate change affects culture, food systems, weather patterns. There have been several IPCC reports, one such assessment on oceans and the cryosphere in 2019. says, “the polar regions are losing ice, and their oceans are changing rapidly. The consequences of the polar transition extend to the whole planet and are affecting people in multiple ways.”²⁰³ The report goes onto describe how global warming is causing the rapid melting of ice landmass with global ripple effects reaching the human food chain systems. The report explains that “services provided to people by the ocean and/or cryosphere include food and freshwater, renewable energy, health and wellbeing, cultural values, trade and transport.”²⁰⁴ Climatic disasters could well throw regions and indeed entire countries into emergency food rationing situations; in this chapter, I discuss how such a situation occurred in Cuba. While the cause was political rather than environmental, the result was a country thrown headfirst into food insecurity had no option to turn to eco-friendly, sustainable agricultural practices.

The government needed to buy the country time to build up its levels of self-sufficiency and particularly to meet basic food requirements for population demands. Many of the strategies used by the Cubans to ward off this crisis are similar to Native approaches to agriculture and land cultivation. In this chapter, I use an Indigenous climatic perspective and ecofeminist lens to examine the Special Period in Peace Time endeavor. By amplifying some of the strategies use in response to the food crisis, it is possible to formulate strategies and identify important structures

²⁰³H-O. Pörtner, et al., IPCC, 2019: Technical Summary, *Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate*: <https://www.ipcc.ch/srocc/chapter/technical-summary/>

²⁰⁴H-O. Pörtner, et al., IPCC, 2019: Technical Summary, *IPCC Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate*: <https://www.ipcc.ch/srocc/chapter/technical-summary/>

that could also be employed in the context of the modern urban environment. This is one of the key element of the ecological citizenship framework: no space is outside of our biosphere, including cities. In this way, urban dwellers can grow to develop new strategies that can then be adapted by other cities around the world. I propose that being an “urban dweller” does not mean one has to be distanced from the natural world. Pride in ecological urban dwelling can be a unifying banner that connects people across cultures and languages.

One interesting way to connect peoples from diverse backgrounds is to discuss climate changes in the Paleocene age. The scientific discoveries is to place traditional cosmologies in conversation with Western science. For example, climate reports such as the IPCC Special Report on oceans and the cryosphere illustrate the melting of the arctic ice landmasses. An ecological citizenship framework examines earth history and its parallels not only to climate reports today but to Native American cosmologies. Curiously, what scientists learned about climate change in the Paleocene age bears striking resemblance to Native American traditional understandings. The “ice worlds” play a major role in Native American religious thought systems. Some of these earth narratives warn how the ice regions of the earth must never be disturbed by human activity or the destruction of the earth may quickly follow.

The Hopi creation account presented in chapter three prophesies that this present time constitutes the fourth and last world. After the destruction of this world there is no indication of a fifth planetary rejuvenation. How can these Native American earth narratives help us understand what is happening in our world today? Are the climate reports confirming what has already been prophesized by Native Americans long before the development of Western science? How do we move these cosmological stories relegated to myth into the realm of social and ecological ontology?

In many ways, this chapter concretizes what can be done about the climate crisis by applying Native American agricultural sustainable practices. I intersect Native societal values with the sociology of urban planning and agroecologies to construct a climate oriented program for ecological citizenship and eco-communal living. Many experts and scientists confirm the need for human cities to find climate solutions according to the needs of their immediate ecosystems. For example, millions of people are congregated in urban areas, making them crucial from which to address climate change. The ecological citizenship paradigm illustrates practical climate solutions by studying how the principles of Native civilizations functioned within different ecological zones.

Some cities, like Singapore, have already attempting to find innovative and natural solutions relevant to their geographical and cultural context. It is my hope that the solutions presented here may be primarily applicable to modern American urban landscapes. The ecological citizenship paradigm will promote with human technologies and understandings of nature that are free from harmful and ineffective mechanical and industrialized methods. For example, an ecological citizenship paradigm investigates low-impact agricultural practices beneficial to both ecosystems and people. Many recent studies on agroecologies demonstrate the advances in agricultural practices either newly proposed or built upon pre-existing models. Climate reports support our understanding of the real-world impact of the crisis on human food systems, cultures, and societies, but they rarely connect them to larger planetary understandings of earth and its history.

How do we refer to the climate age? Scholars and scientists have debated the validity of the term “Anthropocene”. This term defines a period in which human impact is significant enough to alter the planetary environment. The starting date of the Anthropocene has been

debated, and two separate dates are provided for its beginnings. Some suggest the end of the eighteenth century in line with the industrial revolution. By contrast, others argue that climate change began five thousand years ago with the advent of agricultural practices, suggesting that human industry and its impact on the planet -began earlier than the eighteenth century. The start of the capitalist industrial age ushered in the capitalist extractivism associated with fossil fuels, and thus the circular model of encouraging energy consumption so that more fossil fuels could be extracted. The resulting pollution generated in the extraction and use of fossil fuels was then justified as the only way to facilitate modern life, an inevitable price we have to pay if we want to continue using so much energy.

One particular challenge at the level of discourse involves attitude and behavioral shifts in cherished concepts regarding our understanding of the natural world. The multinational corporations and companies that cause the most ecological damage have found strategic ways to greenwash their operations in order to appear concerned about the crisis, but in fact keep hidden their continued exploitation and pollution of the environment. One key and often hidden aspect of the corporate greenwashing agenda is centered on the political implications of urban redevelopment programs funded by global real estate investments. The ideology of private property is then empowered to prevent community-based, ecologically beneficial reimagining of the function and appearance of urban space.

Are cities public spaces? What kind of autonomy do we have within urban spaces? Increasingly, public spaces have been sold to the highest bidder; the public is to be bombarded by advertising – visual, auditory, and often subconscious – without their consent. We do not see public information campaigns regarding the best sustainable practices for households. We must deconstruct how corporate technologies promote only one style of life, that of consumerism, the very

lifestyle that is causing climate breakdown. How can public spaces become free from the market-forces and thrive on communal sustainability? The urban community has the potential to refashion the nature of the cities we inhabit.

The structure of this chapter is divided into four sections. The first section examines eco-epistemologies that contribute theoretical frameworks grounding the idea of ecological citizenship. I argue that theoretical steps based on eco-realities contribute to the foundations of a new image of “citizenry for a climate changing planet”. In the second part, I examine the sociology of agroecologies and their potential impact on cities undergoing climate disasters and other pressures, especially food scarcity. I then introduce the sociology of post-petroleum systems drawing from the example of Cuba’s food crisis of the 1990s. The eco-response to the food crisis proves that nations can work together to avert catastrophic events such as an energy crisis. Thirdly, I explain how social urban ecologies present climate coping mechanisms at the level of urban planning. Finally I provide brief concluding remarks about the chapter.

Eco-epistemologies and concepts of eco-knowledge

This section focuses on the basic concept of knowing: what do we know and how this knowledge is conveyed. What are the eco-epistemologies that reframe our knowing about nature with the knowledge expressed by nature in its ecological processes? In what way can we understand nature as a central aspect of who we are as a fundamental species? How do we categorize our knowing? Why do historical male figures in society hold credible epistemologies while women hold less credibility in the sphere of rationality? Why are written historical records better sources of knowledge than oral traditions? How does oral and experiential traditions impart knowledge about the world in different ways to the written record? How does the

Amerindian perspective of microbiology and ecology deconstruct what we know about the human body and microbes? I will answer these questions from a multidisciplinary lens based on the Amerindian systems and ecofeminist epistemologies that center women's movements. I introduce ecofeminist epistemologies followed by the Amerindian systems.

The epistemological and ontological dimensions of how we understand reality contribute to the ways we move in the world. Feminist philosopher Miranda Fricker examines epistemic objectification that “demotes the subject to object, relegated from the role of active epistemic agent, and confined to the role of passive state of affairs from which knowledge might be gleaned.”²⁰⁶ Fricker claims that epistemic injustice is visible in the ways some knowledges, particularly those that are male-centric, hold more weight than women's knowledge and ways of thinking. I expand on this view from an ecofeminist perspective that claims that the knowledge of the environment is oftentimes disregarded by human-centered epistemologies. Doing our thinking with nature in relation to every social sector will become imperative for a climate-changing world.

Miranda Fricker describes epistemic injustices as perpetuating male social power in society and objectifying women's knowing as less credible than men's authority and knowledge. In this sense, the intellectual and experiential knowledge of women is devalued and suppressed. This epistemic injustice has implications for women's knowing. For example, many early ecofeminist scholars based their academic and intellectual formations on the praxis of women's ecological movements. The Chipko movement in India has become an inspiration for many ecofeminist proposals including this current one. The ecological and creative movements led by Indian women have been engaged in the climate struggle for hundreds of years, with participants

²⁰⁶Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power & the Ethics of Knowing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 132.

sacrificing their lives to prevent deforestation. In this sense, women's epistemological knowledge is relegated to the field of action and praxis. This informs how the majority of women's knowledge is intrinsically linked to ecological action rather than confined to historical written accounts.

In the age of climate change, it is deadly to be an environmental activist in the global South, where many have been subjected to violence, up to and including murder. The violent acts against people who protest the destruction of forests, rivers, and oceans in African and Latin America indicate how resource extractivism engages in destructive and violent business models. For example, "[in]the last two decades, Latin America has witnessed a massive expansion of resource extraction."²⁰⁷ In 2016, Bertha Cáceres (1971-2016), the Honduran environmental activist of Lenca tribal nation, was murdered for her work protesting against the construction of a hydroelectric dam backed by transnational companies. She was the co-founder of the Council of Indigenous Peoples of Honduras (Copinh).²⁰⁸

Fricker argues that power and identity work against women since dominant society is primarily constructed from the knowledge of men. This has an impact on women such as self-censoring or passively accepting the authority of male knowledge. For example, the knowledge of astronomers, economists, historians, inventors, philosophers, and scientists have shaped cultural and political worldviews. Historically, the vast majority of these societal experts have historically been male, and thus the "facts" produced by male knowledge can be easily outweighed to women's experience of rationality. This lopsided and heavy reliance on male

²⁰⁷Andrea Sempértegui, "Indigenous Women's Activism, Ecofeminism, and Extractivism: Partial Connections in the Ecuadorian Amazon," *Politics & Gender* 17, no. 1 (2021): 197.

²⁰⁸ Liz Ford, "Bertha Cáceres: My Mother's is not the first assassination. I don't want another," *The Guardian*, March 16, 2016. Accessed October 30, 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2016/mar/16/bertha-caceres-bertha-honduras-not-first-human-rights-defender-assassinated>

knowledge has produced dualistic mindsets about why the feminine principle must be excluded from epistemological consideration. This means the exclusion of female knowledge from the lenses and perspectives used by humans to understand the nature of reality (ontology) earth, and society. In this regard, the climate discourse necessitates women's knowledge that goes beyond essentializing and burdening women with double work to find climate solutions.

The distinction found in women's knowledge is relegated to the areas dominated and shaped by women, such as agriculture, households, food systems, and domestic multi-rearing. This means women have greater knowledge in these areas compared to men due to their primary involvement in the care sector for the earth and society. In this sense, climate discourse requires an ecofeminist epistemology that can conceptualize the feminine principles of "knowing" how to care for others. Thus, the practical and theoretical insights retrieved from women's knowledge are translated into climate practices and policies that mitigate environmental disasters.

Fricker warns that social power held primarily by male agents, such as government leaders, presents obstacles and limitations to the extent women's knowledge can influence social power. Social power exercised in public is not a new phenomenon but has existed in the Euro-American historical contexts. For example, "in olden times, a gentleman of noble birth had a right to dismiss a person of lower birth (working class) simply on that person of lower class who acts in subversive ways towards the gentleman."²⁰⁹ These forms of social power that continues today in the example of the billionaire class who extend their political and societal power by controlling the means of information and knowledge. For example, in recent decades many local newspapers, unable to compete with giant media conglomerate have disappeared, impacting knowledge about neighborhoods and ecosystems.

²⁰⁹Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 15.

Therefore, many are forced to rely on mainstream forms of knowledge that the billionaire class, Wall Street, and the fossil fuel industry have curated to advance their agendas. For the economically and socially powerful, the state of the environment is the last thing on their mind, since they believe their wealth can shield them from the worst effects of the climate crisis. The billionaire class is the logical end game of capitalism, meaning powerful individuals amass incredible amounts of wealth based on the exploitation of natural resources and working-class people. The hoarding effects of wealth demanded by capitalism have constructed new forms of knowing and behaving in the world. This example demonstrates how social ranking categorization stems from the rationalization of wealth how we think and behave in the world.

How does women's knowledge about the practical aspects of living in society get discredited? Fricker argues that epistemic confidence is harmed through the "identity prejudice in respects to gender, and/or ethnicity, and/or class" that multiply the effects of epistemic injustices.²¹⁰ What does it mean for marginalized groups whose knowledge not only suffered multiple epistemic injustices but whose hermeneutical lens is structurally discriminated against? The epistemic injustices against women formulate her voice as "both morally immature and as less rational."²¹¹ Fricker describes how dominant male epistemologies active communicated in the world today; these epistemologies normalize exploitative capitalist structures, many of which are responsible for the environmental disaster.

What forms of eco-epistemologies can human societies adopt that can lead towards embeddedness with nature in fundamental ways? Ecofeminist philosopher Val Plumwood says dominant epistemologies are typically masculine and human-centered, and thus one-sided. Thus,

²¹⁰Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 2007), 162.

²¹¹Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, 160.

monological views of nature are propagated by those with a vested interest in reducing our awareness of nature-centered discourses. These “privileged groups tend to be epistemically remote and distant from the awareness of their own and nature’s vulnerability and limits.”²¹²

Therefore, eco-solidarity is challenged by the impact the climate has on some groups of people and their awareness of climate change. In this way, an ecological citizenship frameworks aims to include multiple cultural and religious experiences from underrepresented values such as Native American and Indigenous perspectives.

The powerful male leaders in modern capitalist societies, such as some billionaires, operate from authoritarian positions in regard to extending their social and economic power to all environments. In many ways, these male leaders use their economic power to maintain a discourse about the importance of their social power. Therefore, shaping a narrow, masculine, and limited cultural discourse that underlines capitalist agendas. The ancient earth knowledge based on women’s ecological commitments has virtually disappeared from public knowledge. While it may be possible to pinpoint specific historical events or periods where such knowledge was targeted in a destructive fashion, it seems likely that the disappearance of such knowledge is the result of systemic and pervasive monocultural and monological assimilation of feminine epistemologies.

The eco-epistemologies that comprise the ecological citizenship paradigms center on local forms of communications and can be tailored for mainstream climate oriented ideas. For example, concerned citizens can organize public coalitions to advocate for climate solutions in urban spaces. These eco-communal associations can begin to demand from city and state governments for climate-oriented jobs where young people and people of all ages can work

²¹²Val Plumwood, *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason* (London: Routledge, 2002), 132.

towards sustainable solutions. An eco-epistemology deconstructs the need to base money, capitalism, and an extractivist mentality that views natural resources as the source of profit and therefore tends to favor extractivist mentality. The challenge is whether human societies can transform at the level of thought, specifically how we think about the natural environment. In this sense, we must break down the function of dominant economic systems and how they affect life on earth. I argued in this section how discourse has a real life impact on human lives, in particular how we think and move in the world. The dominant forms of discourse used by powerful religious and economic agents influence how people act and behave in the world. Resisting this anti-Nature discourse in favor of climate conscious solutions must begin in the urban space.

Feminist philosopher Miranda Fricker argues that within Euro-American epistemologies, feminist ethics is notably distinct in its epistemic practices. Fricker argues how questions of justice and social power in Western societies connect to the ideals of reason and its entanglement with power. Thus, the relations of power and their influence on reason have historically marginalized voices out of prejudice about their credibility. If we apply this to climate discourse, we reach the region of non-human rights that are featured in the lowest consideration, excluded from ethical and moral consideration, as well as considerations of justice.

The operation of power in the case of climate epistemologies lies with misinformation campaigns obscuring the reality of the climate crisis. How can we begin to see ourselves as embedded with nature in fundamental ways that transform epistemologies towards a basis of knowledge with nature? What are these dominant epistemologies communicating about our world? Val Plumwood claims that dominant epistemologies are typically on the side of the knower within a monological approach of knowledge. What are the eco-epistemologies that

reframe our knowing about nature with the knowledge expressed by nature in its ecological processes? How does our emphasis on human-centered and patriarchal epistemologies limit our knowledge of nature's complex ecological processes?

Native American and Indigenous knowledge: agriculture practices

This section discusses how Native American agricultural technology is a key aspect of the ecological citizenship paradigm that promotes both climate knowledge and practical implementation of environmentally sustainable paradigms for food cultivation and production. Some scholars argue that Indigenous sustainable farming methods have been rarely studied. While these points may contain some truth, there are historical examples of research about Indigenous practices and knowledge on the level of governmental partnership. For instance,

From the year 2000 to 2012, two different international programmes have carried out action research to strengthen indigenous knowledge and practices and to enhance endogenous development (development from within). These programmes covered 16 different countries worldwide: Bolivia, Mexico, Guatemala, Chile and Colombia, Ghana, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Uganda and South Africa, Norway, the Netherlands, India, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Indonesia. The first programme was COMPAS, a programme in which several NGOs and a number of universities carried out fieldwork.²¹³

The findings of the program demonstrate the kinds of ecological citizenship paradigms that can be applied to agricultural practices from Indigenous and Natives American peoples. In the studies on Latin America the report highlights the Andean Indigenous cultures and practices. For instance, the effort of the program intended to “learn the ways of learning” and “ways of

²¹³Wright, Julia, “Re-Chanting Agriculture: Farming with Hidden Half of Nature,” In *Subtle Agroecologies: Farming with Hidden Half of Nature*. 3–20. Ed. Julia Wright (Boca Raton: CRC Press, 2021), 23.

knowing” of other worldviews. From the international report on Latin America the report revealed how:

the Andean worldview the natural social and spiritual world are united. Sacred-time space (Pacha Mama) goes beyond the physical or socio-economic domains. There is a spiral notion of time that is not separated from the space (territory); the first ordering principle is relation: everything is relation and leads to a reciprocal relation between humans animals, plants, rocks, water, wind, sun, moon, and stars. These relations are embodied in astronomy, rituals and festas. In these cultures, learning takes place by experiencing the relation between the human, the natural, and the spiritual worlds. ‘It is through our connection to Pacha Mama that we Learn.’²¹⁴

The term Pacha Mama means Mother Earth in Quechua Inca language. The Andean peoples who speak primarily Quechua and primarily reside in Bolivia and Peru. The report explains the various ways in which nature and the cosmos are centered in the Native American civilizations. In recent decades Indigenous and Native peoples have been involved in the “process towards the 2030 Agenda, the final resolution “Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” that contains, “numerous elements that can go towards articulating the development concerns of indigenous peoples.”²¹⁵

These examples strengthen the goal of this chapter that involves unearthing climate-sustainable practices from Native American agricultural practices. In order to implement these types of programs it is essential to include modern examples by countries and environmental experts. The programs and strategies undertaken by human societies in modern times can direct

²¹⁴Betrus Haverkort, “From the Mainstreaming of Western Science to the Co-Evolution of Different Science: Addressing Cognitive Injustice in *Subtle Agroecologies: Farming with Hidden Half of Nature*, ed. Julia Wright, (Boca Raton: CRC Press, 2021), 24.

²¹⁵ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs: Indigenous Peoples, “ Indigenous Peoples and the 2023 Agenda.” Accessed November 28, 2022. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/focus-areas/post-2015-agenda/the-sustainable-development-goals-sdgs-and-indigenous.html>

us towards ideas of agroecologies, creative and resilient food practices, and sustainable methods can achieve the aversion of an energy and food crisis. For example, during the fall of the Soviet bloc in the early 1990's, Cuba found itself politically and economically isolated. The country was faced with a food crisis almost overnight. This period of rapid transition forced the Cuban nation into a self-imposed state of emergency that transformed their agricultural worldview systems.²¹⁶

Many Native American societies have faced challenges regarding the cultivation of food, in particular unfavorable conditions. The example of Cuba is slightly distinct from Native American communities. Cuba's reliance on a petroleum based food sector implied that elementary steps would need to be taken in order to advance on securing the food systems. In Native American agricultural methods other practices are believed to be involved in the growth of food or amount of rain such as ritual, religious and spiritual traditions. The sustainable based practices found in many Native American agricultural practices extends to other efficient knowledge about geological and climatic phenomenon.

For example, a team of geologists from the University of South Wales recently led a study of the ancient Kauri tree log in Ngawha, New Zealand. Through carbon dating of the Kauri tree, the geologists were able to confirm that the earth's magnetic poles reversed temporarily forty-two thousand years ago. This event caused electrical and radiation storms as the earth's atmosphere could no longer absorb electromagnetic radiation coming from space.²¹⁷ The study indicates how this cataclysmic global event is most likely responsible for forcing humans to seek shelter inside caves. These kinds of insight into climatic and geological changes in earth's

²¹⁶Julia Wright, "Re-Chanting Agriculture: Farming with Hidden Half of Nature," in *Subtle Agroecologies: Farming with Hidden Half of Nature*, ed. Julia Wright, (Boca Raton: CRC Press, 2021), 4.

²¹⁷Alan Cooper, et.al, "A Global Environmental Crisis 42,000 Years Ago", *Science* 371, no. 6531 (2021): 811.

history reminds modern thinkers about the kind of planet we live on, and how we have lost track of earth knowledge. The Kauri tree findings also suggest that Native American accounts describing a similar geological and climatic event may provide a corroborating historical account. As discussed in chapter three, the Hopi creation story draws similar conclusions to those found in the scientific study of the Kauri tree. The destruction of the third world Topka is given to humans on the condition that they care for the earth, but they fail on this command. The creator is forced to destroy the third world by the reversal of the magnetic poles while they hide underground with the ant people.

The Hopi cosmological story shares elements with the scientific findings from the Kauri tree. Archeological evidence dates the city of Cahokia in Mississippi, as well as other settlements in Ohio and Arkansas, back several thousand years and cities and towns in Ohio and Arkansas Rivers have been traced to thousands of years ago.²¹⁸ In this regard, can the Hopi creation and cosmological narrative date back to forty-two thousand years ago? Is it important to use the multidisciplinary approach to the climate breakdown that includes materials and knowledge from various sources such as the Native American and Indigenous perspectives and values. These views are climate compatible and some such as gardening at home, require little equipment to perform.

There are many methods by which one can study and understand history, including written records, archeological records, and oral histories. Academic scholarship presents, either implicitly or explicitly, written records as of higher historical veracity than oral traditions. Scholars have long recognized that written accounts can be altered, misinterpreted, mistranslated or otherwise tampered with, and so safeguards are put in place to ensure one is dealing with

²¹⁸Jack Weatherford, *Native Roots: How the Indians Enriched America* (New York: Crown Publishers Inc., 1991), 11.

authentic documents. Similarly, historians of oral history point to rigorous standards within societies concerning the passing down of such traditions. For example as discussed in chapter three, the supreme leader of the nation or tribe was held to a high standard of verification in his storytelling. The supreme leader was prohibited from deceiving the community in any way or risk replacement. In this sense, the authority the supreme leader/speaker held linked to their honesty and truthfulness in oral tradition. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude, there is no scholastic or logical reason why historians should hold written documents as a higher level of evidence than oral histories simply on the basis of the historical model itself. Each historical context, written or oral, must be evaluated on its own terms and within the confines of its own specificities.

Scientific mapping of Earth's history is now confined to specialist scientific departments. While there may be variance in terms of how Indigenous societies mapped Earth's history when compared to modern scientific theories, it is nonetheless noteworthy that the knowledge itself was considered important for the community at large; curiosity about the world itself based on first-hand experience. These forms of planetary tracking could return to public discourses about tracking the ecosystem. It is likely that Native and Indigenous peoples did not simply arrive at a location and know instinctively how to live in a peaceful and harmonious manner. The act of observation played an important role for early peoples, and they evolved their techniques over millennia. Native oral traditions go beyond folklore and myths due to their scientific precision and observable data of climatic and geological events. Given the massive scale of the loss of such knowledge, we may not ever know the extent of how much crucial knowledge relating to our biosphere died with the destruction of Indigenous societies.

The format of Native accounts of earth history can no longer remain confined to myths; rather they should be surveyed for their climatological and geological understanding of the planet. The supposed lack of “scientific” frameworks in Native societies is a form of racist discourse against Indigenous peoples that undermines the interpretative depth of Native social and ontological discourse. Social anthropologist and biologist Cesar E. Giraldo Herrera points to the mechanisms that are used to subvert Native discourses and views about the world:

authoritative deployment of artistic, literary, academic, and scientific discourses, including anthropological discourses of the Other, as forms of epistemic violence, undermining how non-Western peoples perceive and understand themselves and reality. This colonization of thought underlays the control, suppression, and exploitation of non-Westerners even after they become politically emancipated. Real emancipation requires a decolonization of thought, a re-evaluation of non-Western forms of art, of telling stories, of thinking, and understanding the world.²¹⁹

Many post-colonial scholars have made us aware of the persistent and deep rooted alienation caused by the Western colonial project. Science, philosophy, religious studies and other academic disciplines have been used to enshrine negative stereotypes of Indigenous intellectual life. The scientific consideration and public research on non-Western ontologies such as Native American ontological concepts of the world and their impact to climate discourses are exploited, controlled and suppressed. This epistemic violence against non-Western thought systems as they relate to climate dialogue represents a massive loss of earth knowledge constructive to climate-oriented solutions.

For example, Native American contributions to the modern social and political world have largely been ignored. For many Indigenous societies living within a diverse range of climatic

²¹⁹Cesar E. Giraldo Herrera, *Microbes and Other Shamanic Beings* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 2.

conditions, forests served as organic labs where Native American developed medicinal knowledge of microbes and plants, systems of knowledge that would later serve as the basis for the modern scientific disciplines of etiology and microbiology. For example, the substance chloroquine, which recently entered the public imagination during the Covid-19 pandemic, is a good example of a “modern” medicine with Indigenous roots. The Quechua-speaking Incas of the Andes understood well the medicinal properties of plants and trees in the Andes and Amazon from which the ancient discovery of *quina-quina* stems. The Quechua name *quina-quina* means “bark of barks” due to the seemingly miraculous powers found in the bitter-sweet bark that grows on Peruvian trees nine thousand feet in the mountains.²²⁰

In 1902, Sir Ronald Ross received a Noble Prize for (re-)discovering the medicinal properties of *quina-quina* as a basis to cure malaria and its side effects.²²¹ The botanical sources of Amerindian medicine are not intended for patent or mass production. The eco-epistemologies of ecological citizenship outlined here facilitates localized knowledge born of experiential interaction with nature as a means to enhance our immediate experience of the natural world. The narrative accounts of climatic and geological events by Indigenous peoples illustrate how these societies investigated, studied, and eventually developed not only harmonious relationships with nature but practiced medicinal extraction to heal both human and animal bodies. For ecological citizenship paradigms the awareness of alternative ways of relating and knowing about the environment is an important first step. The medicinal and botanical knowledge of Native societies were undertaken for the benefit of the community and its advancement.

²²⁰Jack Weatherford, *Indian Givers: How Native Americans Transformed the World* (New York: Broadway Books, 2010), 226.

²²¹Weatherford, *Indian Givers: How Native Americans Transformed the World*, 227.

One of the key ideas is that knowledge of nature, and the means by which this knowledge is acquired, become matters central to public interests and well-being. In the post-1492 world, Indigenous methods have been rejected because they resist the industrialization of nature responsible for the climate chaos. The turn to Native American and Indigenous practices allows us to reimagine structures that actually existed as communal economies, ensuring well-being, gender equality, and climate awareness and sustainability. In this sense, the human past becomes knowledge about earth outside the linear historical understanding of human history as a series of human-centered events. In terms of climate understanding, the Native communities represent climate advanced societies worthy of imitation in modern times. These proposals advance biodiversity and regenerative methods that consider nature's diversity and take knowledge and respect for nature into account even within the urban environment. Margaret Kovach explains that Indigenous episteme includes ethically and spiritually based understanding about the relationality of people, nature, and the cosmos.²²²

Agroecologies: Post-petroleum food systems

How do we work with nature and human technology when the dominant energy and food sources become scarce? What kinds of discourses support new perspectives and values open to climate transformation? What does it mean to cultivate with nature by relying on the organic process nature expresses? This section examines three practices that answer these questions and formulate the ecological citizenship paradigm. The climate breakdown affects virtually every sector of global societies, including one of the most important: food systems. Through the economic activity involved in capitalist globalization, localized agricultural practice has largely

²²²Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts*. Second edition. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021), 67.

disappeared, making way for industrialized mechanisms. For example, many Euro-American farmers adopted Native American farming methods from the colonial times until the 1930s. Overtime, however, the United States government recommended the farmers abandon the Native American practices like “hilling,” which involves planting corn on small mounds in fields without plowing, or the practice of crop rotation corn, squash, and beans to reduce plant destruction by pests.²²³ The Native peoples used three forms of crops: reducing the need for plant destruction by pesticides.

Many climate experts, and, in particular, the latest IPCC report, have warned that climate change has started to affect food systems. What lessons can be drawn from post-petroleum food structures? How can societies build from scratch what is no longer available at the grocery stores? I suggest that moving towards ecological citizenship will require global citizens to form coalitions to lobby their governments. I argue that alternative systems of bartering exchange within communities can flourish by exchanging food stuff and other products. In the age of climate change, many global human sectors will be forced to adapt to changing climate and scarcities at an ever-increasing rate under climate breakdown.

The UN Women Watch: Women, Gender, and Climate Change illustrate the ways decline in biodiversity impact poor communities, in particular women and girls in the Global South. In many parts of the world, locating fuel for the household is increasingly more difficult to secure. For example, “women and girls become more vulnerable to injuries from carrying heavy loads long distances, and also face increased risk of sexual harassment and assault”: nevertheless, the Indigenous women’s “wealth of knowledge on the environment that indigenous people and communities possess. Indigenous knowledge comprises: an understanding of wild ancestors of

²²³Jack Weatherford, *Indian Givers: How Native Americans Transformed the World* (New York: Broadway Books, 2010), 106.

food, medicinal plants and domestic animals; symbiotic relations with ecosystems.”²²⁵ In this sense, the UN Women Watch organization works towards strengthening gender equality and empowering women to develop sustainable practices based on their cultural knowledge.

In recent decades interests in agroecological methods as “ecologically based farming approaches” and “organic biodynamic farming and permaculture” has increased.²²⁶ For example, one agroecological practice extrapolated from ‘Special Period in Peace Time’ during the Cuban energy crisis illustrate agroecologically based farming. The successful method of smallholder farming adopted after the Cuban country were forced to rely sustainable practices shows how small-scale farming has positive effects for food security. The reliance on cultural-agricultural ‘philosophies’ were “heavily industrialised conceptualisation or worldview of agriculture, based on a belief in technological expertise which manifested through the design of large-scale monocultures, high levels of specialisation and mechanisation, and reliance on chemical inputs.”²²⁷ Because these industrialized practices had to be abandoned, the Cuban farmers and scientist had to improvise and reliance on nature’s mastery to support their efforts.

The Cuban experience provides a glimpse of what could occur in western societies in the near future. The climate crisis threatens the food systems of the world today, and knowledge about offsetting these threats will become part of climate politics and dialogue. Cuba provides a concrete example of how communities and peoples can work together to avert the worst of a food crisis. Many other countries facing threats to their food systems have many examples to turn to in order to get inspired to implement similar programs in their contexts. The ecological

²²⁵UN Women Watch: Women, Gender Equality and Climate Change, *Fact Sheet*. Accessed November 21, 2022. <https://www.unwomen.org/en>

²²⁶Julia Wright, “Re-Chanting Agriculture: Farming with Hidden Half of Nature,” in *Subtle Agroecologies: Farming with Hidden Half of Nature*, ed. Julia Wright, (Boca Raton: CRC Press, 2021), 5

²²⁷Wright, “Re-Chanting Agriculture: Farming with Hidden Half of Nature”, 5.

national program implemented by the island nation of Cuba develops conceptions about how nations can prepare.

This new societal food scarcity also forced the Cuban nation to a vegetarian diet until they could find ways to provide meat again. The establishment of smallholder farmers worked with teams of scientists and engineers who travelled to each farmer to discuss sustainable and organic methods of farming. In other words, the lack of machinery, agrochemicals, and fertilizers drove the Cuban people to find alternatives to agricultural practices in order to avert a food crisis. This meant depending on the hidden knowledge of nature that had to abide with the natural processes of nature, without the acceleration of agrochemical inputs or machinery to speed up the cultivation process.

Our relationship to food and the environment has been intrinsic to our human condition from the beginning. It seems possible that our own physical constitutions will be impacted if the environment in which we live continues to degrade. It is essential to provide an in-depth analysis to the climate breakdown that involves the study of the whole person. It is possible that climate destruction is having unknown deleterious impacts on individual and public health; given the unprecedented nature of this crisis, one wonders whether neuro-biological, psychiatric and other such disorders are likely to increase? ²³⁰

²³⁰ Recent studies in psychology and the brain illustrate how human behavior in terms of cooperation is changing towards more individualism. This has important implications for climate-related discourses since cooperation among peoples is required to find climate solutions. Julia Wright explores this possibility with a discussion of recent scholarship on how structures within the brain are beginning to alter in line with climate breakdown. Julia Wright says, “more in-depth understanding of this condition has been provided by acclaimed scholar and psychiatrist Iain McGilchrist. Gilchrist’s treatise (*The Master and his Emissary: the Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World*, 2019) concerns the bihemispheric structure of the brain, with the right hemisphere’s insightful and holistic approach moderating the left hemisphere’s reductionism. In a healthy individual, he explains, the left and right hemispheres of the brain work together, with the right (‘the Master’) taking the major decisions that the left (‘the emissary’) then carries out. The problem has arisen that, rather than cooperating, these hemispheres have become involved in a power struggle and this, McGilchrist asserts, has given rise to many aspects of contemporary Western culture”. Julia Wright, Re-Chanting Agriculture: Farming with Hidden Half of Nature,” in *Subtle Agroecologies: Farming with Hidden Half of Nature*, ed. Julia Wright, (Boca Raton: CRC Press, 2021), 46.

The Cuban example highlights how governments must implement creative measures to avoid being caught off-guard by a sudden climate related threat to national or international food systems. Governments around the world can apply climate oriented-initiatives to combat climate change. For example, it may entail sacrificing food options, such as meat consumption, for a day, month, a year, or long -term in order to reduce carbon emissions impacting climate disaster. Further, reducing fast food restaurants known to increase carbon emission through the use of mass animal farming, instead purchasing affordable meats in order to sell it at economical prizes to communities and peoples with low-wages and income. Therefore, food systems are embedded into gender, race, and socio-economic intersections that determine what kinds of foods are available in a respective context.

For example, not only will local urban farming reduce the injustices involved in food systems, but address urban spaces plagued with the inability to access foodstuff due to the complex and poor social infrastructures. The injustices practiced at the global agricultural and food systems can easily be overcome through urban gardens and local restaurants managed by the community with ingredients sourced at the local level. These initiatives encourage healthy nutrition and deny the rationale for fast food restaurants, reducing reliance on fossil fuel dependent transportation and animal farming. These climate related threads that connects food systems, communities, and the fossil fuel dependency interconnect at the climatic, health, economic, and societal disciplines. These initiatives will increasingly reduce the need for fast food industry and its impact on carbon emissions.

This raises the question why our public spaces are flooded with businesses and advertisements promoting fossil fuel related products and other products and services damaging

to the environment? A change in mindset for urban dwellers is crucial to the implementation of Indigenous climatic perspectives. Furthermore, the reliance on profit driven food systems developed from monocultural views and large scale-industrial mechanized processes advances air pollution via use of highways, aircraft and shipping to transport goods across large distances. Other industrial operations that add to the superfluous and destructive nature of industrialized farming include, “the powering of irrigation pumps, production of fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides, mechanization for crop production, storage, drying and processing, production of animal feeds and maintenance of animal operations, and the transportation of farm inputs and outputs.”²³³ The Cuban nation self-imposed a state of emergency declaring the need to sacrifice living standards and accept certain extreme social conditions for a limited period of time, such as insufficient availability of foodstuffs, or waiting long hours for public transportation.

The example of Cuba does not indicate the most successful or unique example of food cultivation and technologies but does illustrate to many nations who are under the threat of climate change impacting their food systems that there is a way to avoid the problem. It is also important to note that such ecologically aware systems are most effective when implemented slowly, an option not available to Cuba. Knowledge of food cultivation and agronomic practices designed to produce food for peoples in urban areas, is a prime example of how the Cuba experience can be applicable. Many people in cities mostly purchase their food from grocery stores or farmer’s market. Therefore, urban planning and food systems facing climate disaster will require the implementation of urban gardens and smallholder famers like in Cuba.

While world governments have yet to implement sustainable steps towards a post-petroleum food system, the Cuban energy crisis demonstrates how small-scale farming methods

²³³ Julia Wright, *Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security in an Era of Oil Scarcity: Lessons from Cuba* (London, UK: Earthscan, 2009), 12.

can advance more knowledge about nature by the urban population, via household gardening. For example, the “import shortages grew more visible, the state decreed that all fallow and unused urban land be cultivated in perpetuity (*en usufructo*) and free from taxes. People from all professions took up this opportunity and, supported by the state, developed an intensive network of cultivated plots.”²³⁴ Thus, by 1998 there were “more than 26,000 urban gardens, producing 540,000 tons of fresh fruits and vegetables” facilitated by the governmental programs.²³⁵

The finite resources used to power global cities from fuels are threatened to deplete at a time in the future, therefore, alternative forms of energy will be required beyond the ones we know about now. There are examples from entire societies on what will happen without these finite resources powering food systems and so many critical and essential services. The example of post-petroleum Cuba allows us to understand the scale of action required to address climate breakdown in the urban context, but mostly in the governmental level which allows for a mobilization towards these forms of national projects. The challenge for urban and rural inhabitants remains the same, how does the ecological background of our lives become something we connect with in order to become more ecologically aware of our ecosystems?

Social urban ecology

This section examines two aspects of climate-sustainable urban planning. The first part introduces the sociological work of the Austrian scholar Otto Neurath (1882-1945) and his pragmatic strategies for eco-communal living.²³⁷ Then I discuss how Native American architecture

²³⁴Julia Wright, *Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security in an Era of Oil Scarcity: Lessons from Cuba* (London, UK: Earthscan, 2009), 5.

²³⁵ Wright, *Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security in an Era of Oil Scarcity: Lessons from Cuba*, 6.

²³⁷While the work of Otto Neurath is perhaps not well known as it could be, he has been called the “social engineer of happiness” for how he conceived urbanism with ecological, cultural, economic, mental, and psychological approaches. His vision for a global polis appealed to a democratic sense of education and knowledge that could promote solidarity across cultures and languages. See Nadar Vossoughian, *Otto Neurath: The Language of the Global Polis* (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 2011)

and urban planning are developed from cultural, religious, and ecological knowledge of nature. I claim that Indigenous technologies serve as examples by which societies can sustain themselves while also providing forms of eco-sustainable economies. I explain how some of the pragmatic strategies developed by Otto Neurath can instruct ecological citizenship paradigms in the areas of urban planning. The purpose of climate-sustainable methods constitutes an ecological citizenship with theoretical and praxiological implications. This section demonstrates how ecologically based communal economies and urban spaces can be developed in a variety of socioeconomic contexts.

Self-help urbanism provides climate-sustainable knowledge applied to multipurposed concerns, such as community shelter, food access areas, and urban agriculture. Individuals can participate in self-urbanism without needing to be fully literate. From an ecological citizenship perspective the work of Otto Neurath represents a significant example on turning theory into praxis a trend often not noted in Western philosophy. The work of Neurath represents a quest for sustainable solutions to the major problems facing modern life, such as food and housing insecurity, and alternative ways of living. He proposed numerous urban planning at the national level to address the war ravaged city of Vienna following the First World War. Neurath strategized programs such as individual housing with communal allotments and the production of knowledge via public spaces open to all workers. The urban planning proposals by Neurath grant modern thinkers a blueprint to expand into these kinds of multipurposed community-based solutions. For example, one of the many programs Neurath established was the Austrian Settlement and Allotment Garden Association that included self-help designing of emergency dwellings. Individuals learned how to construct their own sustainable homes and gardens within

a shared communal allotment. These could be converted into work sheds or storage area after they have served their purpose.²³⁸

The Allotment Garden Association, “is helping to gradually undo the modern metropolis by leaving apartment construction and administration to cooperatives, housing groups and related organizations...and by consolidating all matters relating to housing construction, from the production of raw materials to the construction of finished homes” Neurath proposed.²³⁹ The Allotment Association soon partnered with the Viennese Adult Education Society to develop training schools for the purpose of “educational and pedagogically-based programmes that promote self-help”, and offer training in the areas of architecture, counseling, interior design, and organizing.²⁴⁰ This kind of example can be implemented into urban spaces to support climate-sustainable initiatives. In addition to sustainable housing development projects, Neurath established the Museum for Society and Economy, that constituted semi-permanent storefront spaces for pictorial language. For instance, the Museum, “offered information about a range of issues, such as the world’s merchant seaman and their national affiliations, urban growth in New York, and the incidence of unemployment in three different countries” that were presented in pictorial language such as diagrams, graphs, and pictographs.²⁴¹

Among numerous examples, the most famous of Neurath’s pictographs are used for gender designated restrooms.²⁴² The work of Neurath can be applied to climate awareness via pictographs with knowledge about climate change applicable across different cultures and

²³⁸ Nadar Vossoughian, *Otto Neurath: The Language of the Global Polis* (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2011), 35.

²³⁹ Vossoughian, *Otto Neurath: The Language of the Global Polis*, 31-32.

²⁴⁰ Vossoughian, *Otto Neurath: The Language of the Global Polis*, 32.

²⁴¹ Vossoughian, *Otto Neurath: The Language of the Global Polis*, 82.

²⁴² The gender and restroom controversy in recent years poses problem for this particular pictograph, but the original meaning of the pictograph was to provide the public with information about urban spaces without the need for language. The pictograph method can be applied to climate awareness which produces knowledge about the climate crisis without being limited to individual languages.

societies. One example, such as items in the supermarket with sustainably sourced labels can be applied to a variety of everyday products. The labels as pictographs will function to “keep track” of the amount of carbon emission a product or service released in the atmosphere. The public sphere can be informed on climate-related pollution with pictographs that measure the level of toxic chemicals in the atmosphere in a given urban location. The idea of pictographs along the lines of Neurath’s work is to extend them to universal knowledge about climate crisis without the limitations of language.

For Neurath, the Museum for Society and Economy was an apparatus for offering the public knowledge about the environment, society, and economics. In many ways, the diagrams graphic charts and pictorial designs Neurath developed were “leveraged in the production of knowledge and public space” and in the service of democratic relations allowing any worker to partake in knowledge via the public space.²⁴³ Thus, pragmatic solutions that promote eco-communal living across cultures and socioeconomic classes via the arts and self-help urbanism formulate alternative solutions to the climate crisis impacting urban life. Neurath offers pragmatic solutions based on social urban ecology in the age of climate change. The modern public sphere is influenced by the neoliberal economic policies. The pragmatic strategies developed by Neurath for urban sustainability, such as self-help housing and the production of knowledge in public spaces via the Museum of Society and Economy represent viable examples for climate-sustainable related urban planning. While Neurath developed innovative and sustainable urban planning to promote community in the modern metropolis, some critiqued his inability to think about the masses outside his view of them as a community. For example, Neurath was viewed as “a narrow technocrat and naïve utopian” by twentieth thinkers

²⁴³Nadar Vossoughian, *Otto Neurath: The Language of the Global Polis* (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2011), 87.

from both the left such as Max Horkheimer and from the right Friedrich von Hayek.²⁴⁴ Yet, Neurath challenges modern thinkers to engage in pragmatic projects that consider well-being in the modern global polis. For Neurath the production of knowledge and public spaces can either promote economic divisions and corporate advertisement or it can engage the public with ideas about eco-communal living.

Neoliberal cities

Corporate industries use resources such as mass advertisement and media in urban spaces for the purpose of promoting profits. Neurath proposed using the same mechanisms to promote community in urban spaces. This section focuses on how corporate advertisements promote neoliberal cities. What does it mean for public health when corporate advertisement and billboards bombard without public consent? In recent years, these kinds of public advertisements have been challenged in cities around the world. For example, the mayor of London put a ban on junk food advertisement in the subways and buses.²⁴⁵ This public health strategy is intended to reduce childhood obesity, and demonstrates the links between corporate advertisements and its psychological impact on young generations. While junk food commercials are types of methods used to create passive consumers, the algorithms online intended to sell products and ideas are allowed to continue despite their health risks.

This makes the public square an even more contested space since the public cannot opt out of viewing these forms of pervasive commercials but must endure them in daily urban life. How does climate misinformation manifest through the types of advertisements and algorithms being

²⁴⁴Nadar Vossoughian, *Otto Neurath: The Language of the Global Polis* (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2011), 144.

²⁴⁵Sarah Boseley, "London mayor to ban junk food ads on tubes and buses." May 2018. Accessed October 31, 2022. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/may/11/junk-food-ads-to-be-banned-london-tubes-and-buses-sadiq-khan>

shown to the public? I claim that the invisibility of climate breakdown in urban contexts and lack of public knowledge about the topic a result of through the corporate practices that arrest the development of such knowledge and prevent it from being debated. The climate discourse will need to contend with how cities develop green spaces that promote mental and physical health are developed without the input of market-forces. These are concerns and questions at the center of climate dialogue and ecological citizenship.

Corporate industries such as airline and automobile industries, fast food, and fast fashion, among others to introduce climate friendly campaigns to “greenwash” their activities in the eyes of the public, while most of their manufacturing practices, products and distribution channels involve environmental violence and climate damage. Governments and city councils should not sell off their public space if the subsequent advertisements are for products and services that are public health hazards. While banning advertisements intended for corporate profits seems utopian, practical results can be accomplished at the level of social urban ecology.

These concerns are part of the larger climate discourse that entails issues surrounding public health, economics, and the sociology of health, and ecological spaces. The urban context is a contested space where market and non-market forces are in a constant battle for which system can outlive the other. The capitalist structures of today have proven successful in many cities across the world. The climate breakdown will require human ingenuity and technologies based on traditional Indigenous systems. The work of sociologist Otto Neurath on urban theorizations and experimentations combined with Indigenous structures will serve as models to climate- oriented solutions for eco-urban communal living.

Numerous climate scientists have warned that corporations most responsible for the climate crisis refuse to stop their operations. These climate scientists have redirected their hopes onto societal

transformations of cities and lifestyles that put less pressure on the climate. The major cities in the world have become spaces where consumerism thrives and has high visibility. I claim that due to this reality, the urban areas are contested spaces where either capitalism triumphs by expanding anti-climate values and ideals, or the public demands radical transformations resulting in healthier cities. One example of the former can be seen in Los Angeles, where many advertisements and billboards on side of busses, airports, and highway billboards have been joined in recent years by large televisions in order to expose commuters to products and ideas at a rapid pace.

Scholars argue that the city is a space where the implications of neoliberal expectations are grafted onto urban architecture. The seductive and “flashy architecture, an abundance of pseudo-public space, predictable public art, corporate shopping and dining chains, superficial greenwashing, restricted mobility, and a general aura of affluence” only appeals to a small elite who can afford to enjoy that being depicted in the advertisement.²⁴⁶ Furthermore, the discourse used to promote neoliberal interpretations of urban living “makes the case for distinctiveness and novelty” and creates the sense in residents that they are “pioneers in a bold urban experiment aimed at forming a new community revolving around creativity.”²⁴⁷ The construction of such communities can represent pretty and novel architectural visuals, but are otherwise functionless in terms of promoting a healthy and eco-friendly urban environment.

²⁴⁶Christoph Lindner, and Gerard F. Sandoval, eds. *Aesthetics of Gentrification: Seductive Spaces and Exclusive Communities in the Neoliberal City* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2021), 11.

²⁴⁷Lindner, and Sandoval, eds. *Aesthetics of Gentrification: Seductive Spaces and Exclusive Communities in the Neoliberal City*, 11.

Eco-communal living

The pragmatic solutions to housing and educational opportunities for working families bears comparison to certain examples from Native American economic systems and urban planning. For example, Neurath contested many economic and political hierarchies in Vienna after the First World War. His focus on sustainable urban spaces challenged the economic and social structures of his time in order to inspired alternatives from the spirit of social utility, rejecting how elitism neglects economic and political concerns. He reconceptualized the concept of ideal urban planning, questioning dominant economic epistemic assumptions about cities and human societies. Therefore, how does social urban ecology and human societies transform locally to reflect healthy communities. These concerns are exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The urban context will undergo fundamental changes as the climate crisis worsens, perhaps one possible change will require communities to separate into smaller communities to preserve food systems. These kinds of concerns and questions are essential for ecological citizenship.

The participatory urban planning strategies developed by Neurath are reminiscent of Native American societies in terms of social organization, architecture and urban planning. For example, throughout North America the colonists borrowed and imitated Indigenous architecture techniques. Many Indigenous civilizations, whether small or large, constructed and designed their cities in accordance with the limitations and realities of an ecological zone. In the Great Plains of North America the early European settlers imitated Native American dwellings such as,

semisubterranean sod houses in imitation of Indian houses and earth lodges. These well-insulated homes withstand the ravages of the severe continental winters and summers and provided protection from tornadoes that plow across the plains. Later, when the pioneers became more prosperous, they bought lumber shipped in from the woodland zones, and they left the sod homes in more traditional European-style

wooden houses built aboveground. Heating and cooling costs such house have proved high, and annually a few hundred of them must be replaced because of the destructive tornadoes.²⁴⁸

In this sense, the dominant forms of social organization and urban planning do not consider the limitations and realities of a given ecological zone. As the illustration above demonstrates, Native American sod homes proved more efficient at protecting homes during tornadoes. This demonstrates that Indigenous peoples in the Americas were cognizant of the limitations imposed upon them by the environment, and sought ways to live in harmony with these limits. The sociological accounts of Native American communities illustrate how they lived in the ways Neurath and others proposed, a manner which is in line with the principles of climate sustainability, harmony, and peace amongst peoples. Human alienation from the natural environment plays a major role in how economics and social structures develop within society. The idea of ecological citizenship is a paradigm that can aid us in overcoming this sense of alienation.

Ecological Citizenship

At the core of the idea of ecological citizenship is an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches, incorporating both theoretical and practical climate solutions. It is important to regulate resource use at moderate levels for everyone to in the community to enjoy is a fundamental principle of communal resource awareness. These kinds of movements assist the public in developing true knowledge that is not manipulated by fossil fuel funded media or “greenwashing” campaigns. The way to neutralize these views is to formulate local and

²⁴⁸Jack Weatherford, *Indian Givers: How Native American Transformed the World* (New York: Broadway Books, 2010), 291.

municipal urban planning guidelines that support the environmental needs of the local community.

In this way ecological citizenship is a model that establishes an active interest in the environment at a local level, where individuals can work within their levels of expertise to contribute to the well-being of their local environment. This type of ecological citizenship will allow for a holistic approach to climate discourse and planning, where human spaces are shared with non-human species. These kinds of policy reform will combine economic and societal development with natural ecosystems as a fourth stake holder. The Indigenous perspectives have historically resisted the instrumentalization and mechanical treatment of natural resources.

Many Indigenous practices – scientific, religious, economic and cultural- have been disrupted by colonialism. This means that Indigenous and Native societies have not been able to develop organically without the interruption of capitalism and dominant governmental policies impacting their responses to the climate chaos. Thus, I present in this chapter a combination of Indigenous views with compatible perspectives that similar emphasize community, sustainability and responsible resource use. These traits are part of an eco-epistemology that supports an ecological citizenship paradigm. The eco-epistemologies proposed in this section are founded on creative and non-conventional methods that develop alternative conceptions of human virtue, prioritizing care for the non-human world.²⁴⁹

The COVID-19 pandemic, the public health crisis impacting all over the world, has prompted a social and economic crisis. The crisis has exacerbated the social inequalities arising from the intersections of race, gender, and class. The urban context is an opportunity to consider what some scholars describe as “eco-health” approaches, reaffirming the idea of “healthy cities”

²⁴⁹ Val Plumwood, *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason* (London, UK: Routledge, 2002), 169.

with both environmental and public health initiatives combining to contribute to climate sustainable solutions that promote human flourishing.²⁵⁰

Ecofeminism and Ecological Citizenship

The ecological citizenship paradigm can transform human societies at the level of urban planning, emphasizing societal and economic structures that center the health of the public and the environment. Profit intensive farming practices are deeply inefficient in the long term, and the realization that Indigenous methods of farming and conservation are beginning to gain traction once again in mainstream scientific circles. The fact that our modern system of chemically enhanced industrial farming is causing food scarcity around the world. The monopolization of land, monocropping and the use of ever more toxic fertilizers are only a sample of the practices that have contribution to our current climate situation.

The ecological citizenship model suggests an alternative to neoliberal capitalism. In the 1980's, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher infamously suggested that “there is no alternative” to capitalism, expressed by the acronym TINA. This perspective sums up the monocultural and monological thinking at the heart of capitalism. This idea creates an unhealthy fixation with one means of living, If human societies are told continually that no alternatives exist we will most likely want to find solutions within the paradigms that created the problem. This keeps us stuck in a loop, with the possibility of an alternative model disallowed from the outset. However, the climate breakdown does not afford humans the excuse to believe there are no alternatives to the destructive economic system of capitalism. The failure of this system is

²⁵⁰ Margarita Triguero-Mas, et al., “Healthy Cities After Covid-19 Pandemic: The Just Ecofeminist Healthy Cities Approach.” *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 76, no. 4 (2022): 354.

obvious and indisputable. A system that leads to the destruction of those who espouse it cannot be justified logically other than as a form of nihilism. The model of ecological citizenship offers an alternative that is both philosophically justifiable, but also morally and practically superior. Ecological citizenship paradigms and activities dissolve dominant responses with small, self-help changes that restore how we think about nature.

Feminism like many other fields in the humanities and beyond will be pressured to engage with the implications of ecological issues since the relevance of ecology as a political force shaping life in meaningful ways.²⁵¹ Some feminist proposals call for more socialist and egalitarian based economies to offset and reject the exploitation of capitalism. In recent decades, some feminist scholars have proposed an update to Marxist perspectives that go beyond an emphasis on economic systemization of human labor and the role of natural resources. The economic rights and participatory dimensions advocated by Marxist views allows us to imagine more just economic structures. The problem with Marxist proposals involves its foundational concern for economic function in politics and society. This is distinct from the eco-communal economies of Indigenous societies. For example, unlike Marxist proposals, some Native views of social economies reject monetary systems and the industrialization of labor systems. All Indigenous societies reject the idea that one's primary means of achieving happiness is the accumulation of capital or property.²⁵²

Ecofeminist scholars are searching for new economic alternative to address the climate breakdown and are finding interesting perspectives in Marxist analysis. Nevertheless, Marxist responses also alienate the local level, so central to ecological citizenship, as the local is

²⁵¹Johanna Oksala, "Feminism, Capitalism, and Ecology," *Hypatia* 3, no. 2 (Spring 2018): 217.

²⁵²See, Vine Deloria Jr., "Circling the Old Same Rock," in *Marxism and Native Americans*, ed. Ward Churchill (Boston: South End Press, 1992): 113-37.

subsumed within broader interests. Local and regional initiatives linked to unique contexts and providing productive, sustainable, and easy to communicate praxiological climate interactions, will provide a key bulwark against continuing climate damage. Many of these structures are central to Indigenous communities, and are also suggested by Otto Neurath's self-help urbanism. Essentially however, ecofeminism and Indigenous climatic perspectives are in agreement concerning the major issues that need to be addressed in order for real progress on climate sustainability to begin.

Ecofeminist approaches to the climate crisis go beyond scientific and cultural binaries that demystify nature. These movements involve strategic resistance to extractive economies that form part of an ecological citizenship and politics. In this regard, the climate disaster can only be mitigated if it is met with political will that matches the scale of the disaster. In this sense, despite my critique of certain trends, ecofeminism remains a vital cog within the conception of ecological citizenship.

Conclusions

The ecological citizenship framework outlined in this chapter are formed through theoretical findings in four areas; eco-epistemologies, agroecologies, Indigenous values and the sociology of the city. This model calls for a transdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach to the political challenges presented by climate change. My research in this chapter draws together a range of experiences and reflections on Indigenous structures, agroecologies, experimental urbanism, ecofeminism, and environmental culture. All of these models challenge the current dominant models and discourses. This chapter also examined the values of ecological citizenship with potential to transform the environmental, societal, and political sectors. These eco-strategies

make possible not only models for climate oriented thought systems but openness to eco-communal living that generates renewable energy and do the least harm to nature.

This work focused on both constructive and deconstructive modes of argument and discourse. Both forms of discourse are required in order to respond effectively to a crisis that is unprecedented in terms of scale, complexity and potential impacts. Hence the material in this thesis is drawn from a variety of different fields and perspectives, but even when ideas are drawn from western perspectives, they are interpreted through the overriding lens of Indigenous climatic perspectives. We ask always, does this discourse or praxis assist us in balancing and harmonizing our relationship with nature? Establishing normative discourses that enhance our relationship with nature, and critiquing those discourses which demean nature as an instrument for the fulfillment of human desires and experiences, or which advocate for the destruction of the physical world for economic goals. This chapter has attempt to show how the ecological citizenship paradigm provides a practical starting point for conceiving of an alternative to climate disaster.

Conclusion

This work focused on both constructive and deconstructive modes of argument and discourse. Both forms of discourse are required in order to respond effectively to a crisis that is unprecedented in terms of scale, complexity and potential impacts. Hence the material in this thesis is drawn from a variety of different fields and perspectives, but even when ideas are drawn from western perspectives, they are interpreted through the overriding lens of Indigenous climatic perspectives. We ask always, does this discourse or praxis assist us in balancing and harmonizing our relationship with nature? Establishing normative discourses that enhance our relationship with nature, and critiquing those discourses which demean nature as an instrument for the fulfillment of human desires and experiences, or which advocate for the destruction of the physical world for economic goals.

One key element of the Indigenous climatic perspective is its practical application. I do not suggest that wholesale change in attitudes and discourses can happen overnight, far from it. Nonetheless, the Indigenous climatic perspective always begins with a local context – with communities working together incrementally, with step-by-step processes envisaging a gradual movement away from quick fixes promised by technology to a more organic and holistic vision of how minor everyday behaviors can lay foundations for future sustainable practices. In this sense, the concept of ecological citizenship establishes a discourse of planetary concerns combined with local knowledge and activities limited to the regional or even village level. The establishment of environmental cultures must not be seen as a complex or overwhelming global task but broken down into smaller regional projects involving eco-communal living outside corporate models.

I have shown how nature discourse is not isolated from other forms of discourse. Within Christianity we can draw a direct theoretical line between Christian opinions on women and nature and the practical disaster of the European witch trials. In the same manner, we can see how Christian discourse and conceptual certainties such as patriarchy, rationalism and white (Christian) supremacy have influenced corporate capitalist attitudes towards nature. These attitudes themselves are still being disseminated through mass and social media outlets, as the last stand of the fossil fuel industry continues – demanding profits at any and all cost.

The picture painted in this thesis may be bleak, yet there are reasons to be cautiously optimistic. At the very least, after decades of obscurity by the fossil fuel industry, the true scale of our addiction to capitalism is now visible, thanks to research from initiatives such as the “living online report” by the *World Resource Institute Global Forest Review*. This interactive online format offer knowledge about the climate crisis and its effects on deforestation that is complementary not a replacement for official climate assessment reports. The online institute provides information via interactive graphics and easy to use maps and dashboards to understand the process of deforestation. For example, in 2021 the institute recorded that “3.75 million hectares of loss that occurred within tropical primary rainforests —areas of critical importance for carbon storage and biodiversity — equivalent to a rate of 10 football pitches a minute. Tropical primary forest loss in 2021 resulted in 2.5 Gt of carbon dioxide emissions.”²⁵³ While this platform excludes populations without broadband access, they represent educational and

²⁵³ While the World Resources Institute: Global Forest Review is an essential technological tool that supports climate awareness in relation to deforestation, it is “meant to complement, not replace, official assessment reports linked to international policy frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Climate Agreement, the New York Declaration on Forests, and the Convention on Biological Diversity. These policy frameworks have established specific indicators for tracking progress towards quantitative targets, and these indicators require reliable data to be effectively collected and analyzed. We have designed the Global Forest Review indicators to align with common goals that cut across these policy frameworks so that they can contribute to these official monitoring and measurement processes.”

<https://research.wri.org/gfr/latest-analysis-deforestation-trends?akid=3555.144557.p4n353&rd=1&t=8>

interactive tools for climate-related projects on the effects of deforestation that impact food systems and accelerate species extinctions.

The *Scientific American* is an online source translated from a published magazine contributing to knowledge about the environment, health, science, technology, and society. It is considered the oldest continuously published magazine in the United States. For example, *Scientific American* publishes research by environmental experts describing climate changes and how they affect non-humans. The International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species²⁵⁴ is a “network of thousands of researchers around the world who assess the risks facing each species. These are then incorporated into a ranking that ranges from ‘least concern’ to ‘critically endangered’ for those species still found in the wild. (Beyond that are the categories of ‘extinct in the wild’ and ‘extinct’) Though the list holds no legal weight, it can serve as ‘the first call to conservation action.’”²⁵⁵ In this way, a record of how climate change is transforming life on earth and making it more difficult to survival not only for humans but animals and plant species, forms part of an interspecies climate discourse.

The IUCN can represent a way of memorializing extinct species that have existed on earth. It is a way of giving them representation as a species and its characteristics, what it did for shelter, food, or mating. The memorial serves to illustrate how extraordinary earth's diversity can hold millions of species unique in its shape and size, and preferred ecosystems. Still it

²⁵⁴“The abalone is a marine mollusk widely considered a seafood delicacy. Nearly 40 percent of the world's 54 abalone species are now threatened with extinction, primarily because of unsustainable harvesting and poaching, the IUCN says. Pollution, disease and marine heat waves exacerbated by climate change have compounded these animals' plight.” Andrea Thompson, “As the World Scrambles to Halt Biodiversity Loss, ‘Things Are Getting Worse,’” *The Scientific American*. December 9, 2022. Accessed December 9, 2022.

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/as-the-world-scrambles-to-halt-biodiversity-loss-things-are-getting-worse/>

²⁵⁵Andrea Thompson, “As the World Scrambles to Halt Biodiversity Loss, ‘Things Are Getting Worse,’” *The Scientific American*. December 9, 2022. Accessed December 9, 2022.

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/as-the-world-scrambles-to-halt-biodiversity-loss-things-are-getting-worse/>

remains that all earthly species rely on a healthy biome. The awareness about species whether microscopic or reptilian seen as “most distinct” from human bodies has become more urgent than ever. The interspecies climate discourse expands how we can think about nature including balance as to how nature is investigated, talked about, studied, and how these can be adapted to center eco-sensitive and climate knowledge.

This work invites all those who are concerned about climate change to become involved in discourse and praxis surrounding potential solutions. Christians and members of other groups have the same position and value to this world as all other beings, and so their voices are welcomed and appreciated within the context of Indigenous climatic perspectives. This research does not intend to alienate Christians, in particular Roman Catholics. For example, Trócaire is an Irish Catholic organization that works with, “people of all faiths and none, and with a wide range of organisations. We don’t endorse all the positions of our partners, but we believe in working collaboratively with others in areas where we share the same objectives for change.”²⁵⁶ This work is in the spirit of corporation between Indigenous and Christians who want to work on finding solutions to the climate crisis. Is it this kind of corporation I hope my work can provoke for others who would like to stay within the field of religious studies and to expand how we think about religious discourses. This corporation will also be required to solve the environmental challenges with a sense of humanitarian advocacy of planetary well-being both in macro and micro ways.

I can debate the issues but the goal of my critique is to stimulate a response regarding climate solutions that considers Indigenous and Native American perspectives. Can the Church

²⁵⁶“Trócaire is the Irish language word for “compassion”. For almost 50 years Trócaire has put the compassion of Irish people into action. Trócaire is an agency of the Irish Catholic Church. We are the Irish member of the Caritas Internationalis federation.” <https://www.trocaire.org/about/>

support non-Christian groups working towards better environmental conditions in the global South? Is the Church willing to support reproductive justice in light of climate change affecting the lives of millions of climate refugees?

As my research has shown, both Christianity and capitalism position themselves as a “universal category”, one that assumes priority and gives itself permission to assume its own truth is applicable to all. When I speak about discourse, it is really a sense that discourse should be open, be welcoming and offer clarity and insight. Discourse that reduces others to instruments, which insists on its own inexorable logic that dominates and subjugates, then we are involved not in discourse but in ideology, propaganda and dogmatism. My critique of Christianity in this work is due to its insistence on the latter form of discourse my hope is Christians and others will add an inclusivity within their discourses that facilitates leadership roles for women and non-binary peoples within a context of co-operation with nature.

Regarding the issue of climate breakdown, everything we hold dear is at stake, for both beings who are alive now and for future generations of human and non-human life. The Indigenous approach to nature discourse and action provides a practical and sustainable model for envisioning a new future without climate disasters as a regular occurrence. Yet, for some, the cure is worse than the illness, as the implementation of Indigenous models of climate protection would constitute a “loss of face” for hardline Christian and capitalist discourse that implicitly rejects the idea that Indigenous people have anything to offer the modern world. It is my hope that we will not succumb to such hubris and folly. The irony of Christian, capitalistic exploitation of nature and native peoples might come full circle: just as the Spanish colonialists were alarmed to see the Aztecs eating gold flakes as garnish, we may eventually be left in a situation where the realization that money cannot serve the function of food will dawn. By that

stage, it will already be too late. My hope, as an Indigenous person, is that this scenario remains only an old Indigenous joke, rather than a prophecy for future generations.

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