INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

UMI

A Bell & Howell Information Company
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor MI 48106-1346 USA
313/761-4700 800/521-0600

NOTE TO USERS

The original manuscript received by UMI contains broken or light print. All efforts were made to acquire the highest quality manuscript from the author or school. Page(s) were microfilmed as received.

This reproduction is the best copy available

UMI

**A PHILOSOPHICAL CRITIQUE OF THE ECOFEMINIST
THEOLOGIES OF SALLIE MCFAGUE AND CAROL CHRIST**

by

Gary Blondeau, Ph.D. (Phil)

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Masters of Arts
Department of Religion

Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario
May 21, 1998
copyright
1998, Gary Blondeau

National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Acquisitions et
services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file / Votre référence

Our file / Notre référence

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-32360-9

**Thesis Acceptance Form
M.A. Candidate**

The undersigned recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
and Research acceptance of the thesis

**A PHILOSOPHICAL CRITIQUE OF THE ECOFEMINIST
THEOLOGIES OF SALLIE MCFAGUE AND CAROL CHRIST**

submitted by Gary Blondeau, B.A.
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Joe Ramisch, Thesis Supervisor

Co-ordinator of Religion

Carleton University

14 May 1998
date

ABSTRACT

The ecological crisis, which is driven in part by an oppressive Christian teleology, could be relieved in part by adopting a revised ecofeminist theology of nature. It would have to combine a realist ethical grounding and a metaphorical theology. The revisions required of the metaphorical theologies of McFague and Christ are fourfold: 1) the problem of moral relativism requires that the value of the natural world derives from the presence in it of an immanent Goddess, 2) the immanence of the Goddess is not embodiment but is the temporal passage of time showing forth the mystery, creativity, and telos of the Goddess as Great Mother, 3) the postmodernist antirealism in their theologies would have to be replaced by a combination of Goddess realism and a metaphorical agapistic ethics, and 4) the radical ecofeminist approach of Christ is preferable to the reformist one of McFague.

Table of Contents

	page
Abstract	iii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Appendices	v
Introduction	1
Chapter One - Rhetorical Ecofeminist Ethics	7
- Sallie McFague's Rhetorical Ecofeminist Ethics	7
- Carol Christ's Rhetorical Ecofeminist Ethics	16
- Discussion of Some Problems in their Rhetorical Ecofeminist Ethics	18
Chapter Two - The Embodiment of God/Goddess	32
- Sallie McFague's View of God's Embodiment	32
- Carol Christ's View of Goddess's Embodiment	35
- Some Arguments for God/Goddess Immanence	36
- Discussion of Some Problems in their Views of the Embodiment of God/Goddess	38
- God/Goddess Immanence as Embodiment	38
- The Goddess's Immanence as Her Creative Activity	40
Chapter Three - The Impasse of Objectivism and Relativism	46
- Sallie McFague's Postmodernist Epistemology	46
- Carol Christ's Postmodernist Epistemology	49
- Discussion of the Tension of Objectivism and Relativism in their Epistemologies	52
- The Problem of the Tension between Objectivism and Relativism	52
- The Problem of Pragmatic Truth	57
- A Refurbished Design Argument for Goddess Realism	62
Chapter Four - Reformist Versus Radical Theologies	80
- Sallie McFague's Reformist Theology	80
- Carol Christ's Radical Theology	81
- Discussion of Some Difficulties in their Reformist/Radical Theologies	84
- Some Difficulties in McFague's Reformist Theology	85
- Some Issues for Goddess Religion	88
Conclusions	97
References	98
Bibliography	105
Appendix	109

**A PHILOSOPHICAL CRITIQUE OF THE ECOFEMINIST THEOLOGIES OF SALLIE
MCFAGUE AND CAROL CHRIST**

INTRODUCTION - In a classic countercultural article published in 1967 Lynn White indicted Judeo-Christian theology as a causal factor in the mistreatment of the environment. He says:

What people do about their ecology depends on what they think about themselves in relation to things around them. Human ecology is deeply conditioned by beliefs about our nature and destiny - that is, by religion...

Our daily habits of action, for example, are dominated by an implicit faith in perpetual progress.

It [environmental oppression] is rooted in, and is indefensible apart from, Judeo-Christian teleology.¹

What White refers to as Judeo-Christian teleology will be called either theism, the belief in one God, the creator and ruler of the universe and man, or Christian theology, depending on the point under consideration. This theism states in brief that there is a dualism of God and man made in his image (imago dei), and the universe including women, animals, plants, and matter. God's glory and handiwork may be seen in the creation, but the more extreme forms of the dualism, owing to the early influence of Greek philosophy on the church fathers, say that the universe is inferior to God and man made in his image. This theism further states that man has dominion over the creation to do with as he sees fit, even if that includes resource depletion and environmental pollution. In addition, that is, to the fact of man's semi-divinity in the imago dei which raises him above the natural world, there is a divine injunction for him to be the master, possessor, and conqueror of the

natural world. The injunction is an important moral imperative which has the highest moral authority for a Christian because it represents the will of God. Key statements of the injunction are given in Genesis and The Book of Psalms. These statements are:

And God said...let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth...

[A]nd God said unto them...subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth...

Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hand; thou hast put all things under his feet.²

White's critique, coming as it did in the aftermath of the counter-cultural revolution of the 1960s and amidst the rising controversy concerning the environment, brought forth different responses. Some said that ideology (ideology being our world view, our view of the world and our place in it) was not responsible for the ecological crisis, and that social action, environmental laws, and more technology³ were sufficient to deal with the environmental problem. Others, not convinced by the response of shallow ecology, called for an ideological change. The latter response is the view of deep ecology.

The Christian response to the ecological problem is divisible into those who think that there are resources within Christianity to deal with the problem and those who do not. The first group are the reformists, and the second group are the revolutionaries or radicals. The reformists admit that there is much in Christian theology that sanctions the oppression of the earth, but they also think that there are materials such as images, stories, examples, and teachings within Christianity that set a positive standard for the proper management⁴ of the natural world. The radicals are former Christians who have

broken with the Christian tradition because they see its core symbols as oppressive, and have joined either secular movements, or non-Christian religious ones.⁵ Amongst these two groups are feminist religious thinkers. In this thesis two recent feminist religious thinkers from the past twenty-five years are considered. Sallie McFague is a reformist who critiques the patriarchal (rule of the fathers) oppression of the natural world, but who thinks that there are materials within the Christian tradition that may help to alleviate the oppression. Carol Christ is a radical feminist and former Christian who does not think that there is anything salutary within the Christian tradition that could help the ecological movement. She turned rather to a nature worshipping, pagan mysticism as a source of nature appreciation. A central question is whether one can identify and critique the core symbols of Christianity and still be a Christian.⁶

The responses of these two reformist and revolutionary ecofeminist thinkers to the ecological problem consist of two parts, one deconstructive and one reconstructive. McFague and Christ both critique patriarchal Christian theology as morally oppressive, and expose the role of Christian theism as an expression of the vested interests of the patriarchy and as a sanction of that oppression. Following upon the deconstructive critique of patriarchy they develop a reconstructive vision of a balanced ecological relationship of people to the natural world.

They both appeal to a common element in the Christian tradition as a basis for their reconstructive ecological visions, the agapistic ethics. It is assumed herein that the Christian tradition, which is surely diverse, includes both patriarchal and agapistic elements. Also,

both feminists appeal to a postmodernist, antirealist epistemology to support their agapistic ethics. (Some of these terms are defined shortly.) While their critique of the patriarchal ideology of theism is correct, in my view, and their agapistic ethics is a strong starting basis for defending an ecological world view, there are problems with their common project. There are four problems. First, there is the problem of moral relativism. While agape is a strong basis for defending an ecological world view, it suffers from a moral relativism. That is, it does not rule out the patriarchal oppression of the environment if one is minded that way. Second, the ecological world view of both McFague and Christ appeals to the embodiment of the divine within nature as opposed to patriarchal theism which sees God as transcending the universe. The view of McFague and Christ that God/Goddess is immanent within nature suffers from a faulty analogy of the mind-body relationship. Third, there is a contradiction between the realist reconstructions and antirealist deconstructions of these feminists. That is, their panentheistic (God/Goddess is in nature but not nature) views of an embodied God/Goddess combine a modernist realist epistemology and a postmodernist antirealist epistemology, which logically repel each other. Fourth, there is a foundational conflict in their ecofeminist theologies between the reformist and radical stances each feminist takes. The conflict is between the reformist view that Christianity is reformable by non-patriarchal Christian symbols and the view that it is not. (The terms "realism" and "antirealism" are defined below on page 5, and 56.)

It is accepted here that there is an ideological factor in the current ecological crisis, that it is patriarchal Christian theism, and that

both McFague's and Christ's efforts to correct this harmful ideology are partly successful. An effort is accordingly made in this thesis to carry out four tasks. First, their reconstructive visions are analyzed philosophically to compare and contrast them. Second, an analysis is undertaken of these reconstructive visions to determine how far they are successful. Third, and as a consequence of the second task, an analysis is carried out of the four problems mentioned above with a view to finding a better reconstructive vision. Fourth, a modification of Christ's religion of the Goddess is developed as the preferred eco-theology to address the central problem of this thesis, that of the environment.

Realism is the view that there is a reality independent of human experience and language, and that we can in some way know something about that reality. The realist epistemology (a theory of knowledge concerning the origin, nature and limits of knowledge) appealed to herein is a theory of knowledge that like McFague's and Christ's post-modernist epistemologies rejects the idea that we as human knowers can have a direct access to truth in religion and science. Accordingly, the realist epistemology adopted in this thesis rejects naive realism which assumes that we can directly compare the truth of a factual statement with the state of affairs it is true of. But, unlike McFague and Christ who accept a pragmatic view of factual truth according to which an idea is true if it works, the indirect realism adopted herein holds that both religious and scientific realities are indirectly knowable. That is, this indirect realism holds that there are religious and scientific realities that we can indirectly have access to and know something about. In short, this indirect realism holds that if religious

beliefs and scientific theories (which explain our experience in different ways: e.g., God and electrons) are pragmatically successful, then an explanation of why the beliefs and theories are successful is that they are probably true, i.e., agree with religious and scientific facts. A religious belief is successful if it makes sense of our experience, and a scientific theory is successful if it anticipates the course of our experience.

Marjori Suchocki^{*}, in a review of the idea of God in feminist philosophy, says that feminist religious thinkers respond to the tendency of patriarchal theologians to use the concept of God to define men and male roles in four ways. These include: i) rejection of the transcendence of God in favor of a wholly immanent God, ii) replacement of God with Goddess, iii) reconsideration of the linguistic structure by which we name a reality beyond ourselves as God at all, and iv) reconceptualization of the presuppositions concerning the nature of reality as a whole, whether God or the world. In this thesis, the responses of McFague and Christ are considered from the standpoint of the philosophy of religion. I am neither a feminist nor a student of theology or ecology. Rather as a student of the philosophy of religion, who is sympathetic to the causes of feminism, postmodernist epistemologies, and ecology, I will critique two feminist religious thinkers from the standpoint of the philosophy of religion and develop a modification of one of their views as a suggested answer to the central environmental problem defined above by White.

* "The Idea of God in Feminist Philosophy," Hypatia, v.9., n.4, (Fall 1994), 58.

CHAPTER ONE - RHETORICAL ECOFEMINIST ETHICS

Sallie McFague's Rhetorical Ecofeminist Ethics

In her latest book The Body of God Sallie McFague develops what she calls an ecological theology. Her point of departure is criticism, such as that of White mentioned in the introduction, of Christianity's ideological contribution to the oppression of the environment. She responds to White's criticism, and attempts to reconstruct a Christian theology that respects the environment. She admits that criticism which assumes that Christian theology is entirely responsible for the environmental crisis is unfair, but says that theism must assume some degree of responsibility for environmental oppression. Christianity's particular contribution to that oppression, she says, is an ideology which says that God's people have dominion over the earth and its creatures. An ideology is a belief system of a social group that contains a world view (a general outlook on the universe and our place in it) which expresses and protects that group's vested interests. McFague's aim is to develop a theology which corrects the traditional ecologically harmful theology of Christianity. Her theology aims at promoting respect for the environment by developing a religious ecological ethics.

She describes the ideology behind Christian oppression of the natural world as follows:

If we are capable of extinguishing ourselves and most if not all other life, metaphors that support attitudes of distance from, and domination of, other human beings and non-human life must be recognized as dangerous. No matter how ancient a metaphorical tradition may be and regardless of its credentials in Scripture, liturgy, and creedal statements, it must still be discarded if it threatens the continuation of life itself. What possible case can be made for metaphors of the God-world relationship which encourage attitudes on the part of human beings destructive of themselves as well as of the cosmos which supports all life? If the heart of the Christian gospel is the salvific power of God, triumphalist metaphors cannot express that reality in our time, whatever their appropriateness may have been in the past.¹

While McFague is ready to jettison the ecologically oppressive ideology of traditional Christianity, the fact is clear that in the quotation she does not want to abandon Christian sources entirely. Rather she undertakes as a reformist feminist Christian to find in the traditional Christian sources new metaphors, or better new interpretations of old metaphors, for understanding the God-world relationship in ways that are conducive to life enhancement and not to life oppression.

She calls the traditional ideology of Christianity, oppressive of the natural world, monarchical Christianity. The model of monarchical Christianity (a model being a metaphor with staying power which organizes and makes sense of experience in an effective way) is described by Barbour as follows:

The monarchical model of God as King was developed systematically, both in Jewish thought (God as Lord and King of the universe), in medieval Christian thought (with its emphasis on divine omnipotence), and in the Reformation (especially in Calvin's insistence on God's sovereignty). In the portrayal of God's relation to the [natural] world, the dominant western historical model has been that of the absolute monarch ruling over his kingdom.²

McFague develops a three point criticism of the God-natural world model. It is: 1) God is distant from the natural world, 2) he (the use of gendered language follows McFague) relates only to the human part of the

world, and 3) he controls the natural world through domination and benevolence. The monarchical model of the God-natural world relationship sets God in his heaven above, so to speak, the space and time of the universe. God is absent from the natural world and is not present in it. As such the natural world does not share in God's presence and value. It is excluded from the *imago dei* unlike man. This is in effect a dualism that sets God as supreme value and goodness over against the natural world which lacks that value and goodness. Also, the model is anthropocentric. It concentrates on God and his human subjects and neglects the nonhuman part of the universe. That is, the nonhuman part of the universe is either neglected, or is seen as serving human purposes only. The subject of the first two points of her criticism is the hierarchical dualism that separates God as supreme value and man made in his image from the natural world which is not made in his image. Point 3) says that God and those made in his image rule the natural world and use it as they see fit. Benevolence is shown by God to those who obey him, and they are passive in their obedience to his commands. One does not question the authority of a king whose commands lay out how the natural world is to be treated, even if that treatment seems to be harsh. In short, the monarchical model of God's relationship to the universe encourages a hierarchical dualism that sets up a large gap between God as the highest value and the universe that lacks that value, and the model defines man in the image of God and sanctions his use of the universe in ways conducive to man's benefit. In sum, McFague's critique of this model is that as an ideology it is conducive to the mistreatment of the natural world, and that this is morally wrong.

One further aspect of McFague's criticism of the monarchical model of the God-natural world relationship needs to be described. She says:

Since writing that book [Metaphorical Theology] I have come to see patriarchal as well as imperialistic, triumphalist metaphors for God in an increasingly grim light: this language is not only idolatrous and irrelevant - besides being oppressive to many who not identify with it - but it may also work against the continuation of life on our planet. Our nuclear capability places human beings of the late twentieth century on the verge of eliminating not only themselves but also most if not all other forms of life on earth. In this unprecedented danger, we must ask ourselves whether the Judeo-Christian tradition's triumphalist imagery for the relationship between God and the world is helpful or harmful. Does it support human responsibility for the fate of the earth, or does it, by looking to either divine power or providence shift the burden to God? If a case can be made, as I believe it can, that traditional imperialistic imagery of God is opposed to life, its continuation and fulfillment, then we must give serious attention to alternatives.³

McFague says that the monarchical model of God is idolatrous, irrelevant, and oppressive. The monarchical model of God is the result of a literal interpretation of the model of God as king and ruler. Considering an example of literalism, God is said to be above the bright, blue sky in his heaven. Literalism, McFague says, is idolatrous because using human images for speaking about God denies his mystery. Also, the model is irrelevant because literal stories about God go out of date with the advance of science. This is the God-of-the-gaps in scientific explanation, and McFague rejects it. That is, whenever a phenomenon cannot be explained by science God is invoked to explain it, but eventually a scientific explanation is found and the God explanation is retired. Most fundamentally the monarchical model of the God-natural world relationship is dangerous, says McFague, because it promotes a potential nuclear and ecological omnicide.

Even if it is granted that the model does promote ecological omnicide, it must be asked, although the question seems outrageous, why

this outcome should be avoided. McFague clearly attaches a value judgment to her claims about the patriarchal model of the God-natural world relationship. Her argument in support of this value judgment is questioned later.

McFague is interested in more than just deconstructive work; she is concerned to develop a reconstructive theology of the relationship of God and the natural world that will have positive ecological benefits. Her argument for a reconstructive model of the relationship is interesting because of its logical structure. She says:

If God is physical, then the aesthetic and the ethical unite: praising God in and through the beauty of bodies entails caring for the most basic needs of all bodies on the planet. If God is physical, then the divine becomes part of the everyday, part of the pain and pleasure of bodily existence...

Awareness of the intricate, interdependent network of life, with God at its center as well as at every periphery, needs to become part of our daily, functioning sensibility: the model of God as the parent, lover, and friend of the world as God's body is a promising candidate to give imaginative reality to that sensibility.⁴

A number of points emerge in the argument which indicate how her reconstructive theology works. A first point is that she employs a metaphorical theology. A second is that in her metaphorical theology she imagines God as embodied in the universe rather than as existing in a state transcending the space and time of the universe, as he is in the monarchical model of Christianity. A third point is that she supports her ecological theology with a skeptical, postmodernist epistemology.

The first point in McFague's reconstructive theology is that the language of theology ought to be expressed in metaphors, and not in concepts. She summarizes her view that ecological theology ought to be expressed in metaphors in this way:

A metaphor is a word or phrase used inappropriately. It belongs properly in one context but is being used in another: the arm of the chair, war as a chess game, God the father. From Aristotle until recently, metaphor has been seen mainly as a poetic device to embellish or decorate. The idea was that in metaphor one used a word or phrase inappropriately but one need not have: whatever was being expressed could be said directly without the metaphor. Increasingly, however, the idea of metaphor as unsubstitutable is winning acceptance: what a metaphor expresses cannot be said directly or apart from it, for if it could be, one would have said it directly. Here, metaphor is a strategy of desperation, not decoration; it is an attempt to say something about the unfamiliar in terms of the familiar, an attempt to speak about what we do not know in terms of what we know. Not all metaphors fit this definition, for many are so enmeshed in conventional language (the arm of the chair) that we do not notice them and some have become so familiar that we do not recognize them as attempting to express the unfamiliar (God the father). But a fresh metaphor, such as in the remark that "war is a chess game," immediately sparks our imaginations to think of war, a very complex phenomenon, as viewed through a concrete grid or screen, the game of chess...

Metaphor always has the character of "is" and "is not": an assumption is made but as a likely account rather than a definition...

In conclusion, we recall that human thought and language grow and change by seeing one thing in terms of another: they are intrinsically metaphorical. Explicit or alive metaphors make us aware of this mobile, tensive character of our way of being in the world. The distinctive features of alive metaphors can be summed up in the following way: a metaphor is an assertion or judgment of similarity and difference between two thoughts in permanent tension with one another, which redescribes reality in an open-ended way but has structural as well as affective power.⁵

Some of McFague's key claims about metaphor are expressed in the quotation. A metaphor is different from a simile which expresses a comparison between two similar things. A metaphor says expressly that two things which are different are identical in some respect. A metaphor, for McFague, is more than a poetic device; it is revelatory. We say that God is a father meaning that although he does not have a body and cannot copulate with a goddess to produce a baby god he can relate to humans in ways that are the same as our relationships to our fathers. A metaphor differs from a concept. Concepts are metaphors that have gone flat and lost their metaphorical quality. On the one

hand, concepts speak about the familiar, everyday and usual character of a thing about which we already know nearly all there is to know about it. On the other hand, metaphors are open in that they have an "is" and "is not" character. They express a partial, familiar claim about something, but in the shock of their identity claim about two different things they make us see a novel aspect of the familiar thing. They, as McFague says, make us understand the new in terms of the old and reveal the unfamiliar in terms of the familiar. An unknown feature of God as father is revealed to us in this metaphor, if we did not realize this before encountering the metaphor. For example, the patriarchal God is revealed by the metaphor of God the father as loving. Whether the two metaphors of God the king and God the father are compatible is an acute question to ask McFague.

The epistemological aspects of metaphor are, in my view, the most interesting part of McFague's idea of a metaphorical theology. Consider the aforementioned metaphor of God the father. The metaphor says that God is a father in some ways, but that in other ways he is not. Other aspects of God's relationships to us have to be expressed by other metaphors such as God the mother, friend, and lover. Metaphors, for McFague, are open-ended, tensive, and risky. And by extension so is her metaphorical theology. That is, a theology based on metaphors is uncertain, unlike a theology based on familiar concepts that express a reassuring truth about God.

The "is" and "is not" character of metaphors is important to McFague in two ways. First, the "is" and "is not" character is compatible with her view that God is a mystery that cannot be known. She says:

To say that heuristic theology [one that experiments with different metaphors for God] is pluralistic is to insist that, since no metaphor or model refers properly or directly to God, many are necessary. All are inappropriate, partial, and inadequate; the most that can be said is that some aspect or aspects of the God-world relationship are illuminated by this or that model in a fashion relevant to a particular time and place. Models of God are not definitions of God but likely accounts of experiences of relating to God with the help of relationships we know and understand. If one accepts that metaphors (and all language about God) are principally adverbial, having to do with how we relate to God rather than defining the nature of God, then no metaphors or models can be reified, petrified, or expanded so as to exclude all others. One can, for instance, include many possibilities: we can envisage relating to God as to a father and a mother, to a healer and liberator, to the sun and a mountain. As definitions of God, these possibilities are mutually exclusive; as models expressing experiences of relating to God, they are mutually enriching.⁶

First she says in the quotation that neither a metaphor nor a model can describe God's nature, although a reference to God is assumed as a term in our relationship to him. This is because, for McFague, God's mystery cannot be known. She says: "Too often, especially when faced with novel metaphors for God, we shrink from them because we think they are attempting to define the divine nature and being. No human words can describe God..."⁷ The best we can do in speaking about God, using God-talk, in her view, is to use metaphors to express partially some aspect of an experience of relating to God. The most that we can know is the experience of relating to "him" and that he exists as a term in that relationship. This position is her critical realism, although as we shall see it would be better to call it skeptical realism.

A second point made in the quotation is that a theology which literalizes its understanding of God in an attempt to describe the divine nature leads, as we have seen, to idolatry and irrelevance. These two prohibitions on God-talk are, as we have seen, an important part of her critique of patriarchy. An equally important part, as we

shall see, is her common creation story. She stresses the parallel between the common evolution of the universe and humans as a metaphor that can create feelings of empathy and benevolence for the creation which we are a part of. That we share this common evolution is the ecological basis for our feeling at home and at one with the universe. The metaphor of the common creation, for McFague, adds to the metaphors of God as father, mother, friend, lover, etc,. Finally, she says that many metaphors used to speak about God express various facets of our relationships to God, and that they are mutually compatible and enriching aspects of these experiences.

Some further remarks may clarify McFague's idea of a metaphorical theology. First, metaphors in showing the unfamiliar in terms of the familiar do not show the nature of God, because, for McFague, that is a mystery. She seems to think of metaphors for God as being models for our ethical behavior rather than as models of what God is. As models for our ethical behavior they say how we as moral agents ought to behave, how we should treat others, and as such they function as icons (moral ideals) to be imitated. This is thus her understanding of the imago dei doctrine: not that our nature reflects that of God, but that our nature which we make as we act and make moral choices should be such that it is accordance with an agapistic set of moral ideals. As God as a loving father first related to us in this way so should we act toward the natural world. Second, the use of this iconic, metaphorical language which says how we ought to act is persuasive. It persuades us to adopt and act upon an agapistic set of Christian moral ideals. Thus God-talk both expresses a Christian's commitment to these values, and rhetorically persuades its audience to imitate agapistic values.

Carol Christ's Rhetorical Ecofeminist Ethics

Christ's theology shares many similarities with that of McFague, and although there are some fine differences between their views, the former argues as a radical feminist with a postmodernist epistemology for an ecological ethic. Given the many similarities the account of Christ's theology is shorter than that of McFague's in each of chapters one through four.

Christ assumes that ideology is a factor influencing the everyday actions we perform. She says:

A mythos is a culturally shared system of symbols and rituals that defines what is real and valuable. An ethos is a way of life expressed in the everyday activities, customs, social institutions, and moral sensibility of a culture. A mythos supports an ethos, telling us that certain ways of living and acting are appropriate because they put us in touch with what is real and valuable. Conversely, the living of an ethos reinforces the sense that the mythos to which it is connected is true.⁸

The ethos, the way of life of a culture, is dependent on its mythos, its deep values. For patriarchy, its mythos determines its ethos.

Christ outlines a deconstructive critique of patriarchal Christianity's oppression of the environment, and develops a reconstructive ecofeminist ethics in defense of the environment. She says:

The dualistic understanding of perfection expressed by Plato became the model for philosophical and Christian theological understandings of God as a disembodied mind or spirit, totally transcendent of the world, of nature, of change. Woman's body and its changeable nature became the image of all that was imperfect, corrupt, and physical. These conceptions became fixed as the polar opposites of dualistic and hierarchical thinking: the unchanging is valued over the changing; soul or mind over body; spirit over nature; rational over irrational; spiritual over sexual; male over female.⁹

The statement is quite clear and forceful. She sees value or hierar-

chical dualism, Christian theism, as the ideological source of much of
 10
 our culture's oppression of the natural world. This dualism stresses
 the opposition of eternity inhabited by God, and the natural world in-
 habited by man, and attaches to the former the values of perfection and
 uncorruptibility and to the latter the values of imperfection and cor-
 ruptibility. Taken in conjunction with the well-known injunction of
Genesis, quoted in the introduction, to have dominion over the natural
 world, Christian hierarchical dualism sanctions the use and abuse of
 the environment.

Like McFague, Christ offers a reconstructive defense of the envi-
 ronment that is driven by feeling, but, unlike McFague, Christ appeals
 to a different driver. Christ appeals to an erotic aspect of nature,
 while McFague with her common creation story appeals to feelings of
 commonality and sympathy. Christ says:

The basis of ethics is the feeling of deep connection to all people
 and to all beings in the web of life...

Insofar as each of us has managed to survive while bearing the
 weight of violence in our personal and collective pasts, we have
 each experienced the power of intelligent love that grounds all
 beings in the web of life. This has become the basis for morality
 and moral transformation...

Though these visions [of the Goddess] come to us through wo-
 men, they do not belong to women exclusively. They offer insights
 essential to us all, containing clues to a spirituality that can
 reawaken our sense of our connection to all living things, to the
 force within us and without us. If we experience our connection to
 this finite and changing earth deeply, then we must find the
 thought of its destruction or mutilation intolerable. When we know
 this finite changing earth as our true home and accept our own in-
 evitable death, then we must know as well that spirituality is the
 celebration of our immersion in all that is and is changing.¹¹

She says that the basis of an environmental ethics is the feeling of
 deep connection of ourselves with the earth. Her view is similar to
 McFague's view that our feeling of having a common development with the
 earth leads us to respect it. Also Christ says that we can experience

the power of intelligent love of the Goddess which can provide a basis for an environmental ethics. Christ says:

In Diving Deep and Surfacing I discussed visions like Griffin's as examples of nature mysticism, and I named nature mysticism as one of the sources of women's spiritual vision...¹²

Christ also appeals to a nature mysticism, derived from Susan Griffin, to inspire a feeling of deep connection with the earth and a consequent sympathy for its well-being.

Like McFague, she sees that there is a close connection between what we believe and feel, and the way we act. This is Christ's commitment to a pragmatism, like McFague. What specifically distinguishes Christ's view from that of McFague's common creation story and the feelings of respect for the earth that it inspires is Christ's nature mysticism. As said, this is a kind of erotic oneness with the earth which makes us want to respect it and care for its well-being.

One thing is notable about Christ's environmental ethics. This is that she talks of a feeling of deep erotic connection to the earth as the basis for an ecological ethics. There is an ambiguity in her claim. A distinction is needed, surely, between a psychological basis for an ethics and a justificatory basis. The first basis concerns what motives, feelings, inclinations, etc., drive a moral agent to act. The second basis concerns what it is that makes an action right. They are not the same thing, and to confuse them is a mistake. The point is developed in the critique of Christ's environmental ethics that follows.

Discussion of Some Problems in their Rhetorical Ecofeminist Ethics

A problem exists in McFague's ethical argument against patriarchal

Christianity, and a similar one exists in Christ's erotic argument for loving the earth. McFague says that if God is physical and embodied in the natural world, then with a unified aesthetic and ethical sensibility we ought to care for the most basic needs of all the bodies on the planet. Further, she says that if we believe that God is at the center of all life on earth and is embodied within the world we will have an enhanced ecological sensibility. The multiple models of God the lover, parent, friend, and as embodied together, as well as the common creation story, McFague says, will promote that sensibility.

In one way McFague's argument is correct, and in another way, in my view, it is not. She makes a good case for adopting an imagistic, metaphorical theology that driven by an agapistic sensibility will lead to beneficial environmental action. The metaphors of God the father, mother, lover, friend, and as embodied, as well as the common creation story, are powerful images that promote an ecological sensibility, which McFague thinks we need. According to her praxiological epistemology, action is guided by thought, and thought is not an end in itself as it is in speculative Christian theology.

A problem with McFague's ecological ethical argument, and the similar argument of Christ, is that McFague has put the cart before the horse. The question could be put to McFague: even if these metaphors do promote an ecological sensibility, why should we promote that sensibility? She simply assumes that we ought to have an ecological sensibility, and then offers us a compelling praxiological account of what images would lead us to adopt that sensibility. But no reason is given by her why we ought to adopt that sensibility. That is, she assumes that we ought to adopt the sensibility and offers us images that would

function to promote it. As such her argument begs the question against those who as Christians accept the monarchical model of God which they probably do not know leads to environmental exploitation, and even if they did know of it gives them no reason why they should not exploit the world's resources. And her case is equally logically non-compelling against those who do not believe in God such as atheists, or adherents of religions other than Christianity. Against these people McFague's argument is not convincing because it is question begging.

The circularity of her argument is apparent in the first quoted statement of it. She says: "If God is physical, the aesthetic and ethical unite: praising God in and through the beauty of bodies entails caring for the most basic needs of all bodies on the planet." Her argument is valid but it is completely hypothetical: if God exists, and if he is embodied, then etc. She offers us no reason for believing that God exists, is embodied, is a father, mother, lover, friend, etc. As said, this leaves people with no ecological sensibility unconvinced. Although she rejects propositional theology and adopts instead a praxiological theology, she needs to reverse the logic of the argument if it is to have a wide and objective appeal.

Alison Jaggar in a general discussion of feminist ethics refers by implication to the problem faced by McFague's and Christ's ecological arguments. Jaggar says about relativistic ethics:

The specter that haunts this regional understanding of ethics [in which the patriarchal idea of a universal reason to base ethics on is gone] is, of course, the specter of relativism. Although the term "relativism" may be interpreted in a number of different ways, one of its central meanings is expressed by Gilbert Harman, whose naturalism "denies that there are universal basic moral demands and says different people are subject to different basic moral demands depending on the social customs, practices, conventions, values and principles that they accept." (1984) Such a view would seem to pre-

clude feminist moral criticism of the domination of women [and nature] where this is an accepted social practice and even to entail that only feminists are bound by feminist [environmental] ethics...

Against the relativist tendency in feminist ethics should be set feminism's concern that its moral critique of the practices (and theory) of the larger society - and perhaps even the practices (and theory) of other societies - should be objectively justified.¹³

These statements, which apply in particular to feminist ecological ethics, imply that: 1) followers of patriarchy need not respect nature and only feminists and environmentalists need do so, and 2) there is a need for an objective, universal ethics of the environment. The upshot of the relativism in McFague's and Christ's subjective ethics is that preservation of the environment is binding only for those who want to preserve it, and that if dominators who accept an ethics of domination want to exploit the environment, then it is morally acceptable for them to do so! This result is, as said, a very real problem for an environmental ethics in that it entails moral relativism.

The extent to which the moral relativism inherent in Christ's position, and in that of McFague's, leads to a real problem is noted by Kathleen Sands. She says:

In "Toward a Paradigm Shift," Christ makes eros a foundation of theological method. Over against the "myth of objectivity," she proposes that religious studies begin from eros and empathy, where eros means "a passion to connect, the desire to understand the experience of another, the desire to deepen our understanding of the world, the passion to transform or preserve the world as we understand it more deeply." In short, she argues, "eros is love," and "at its best our scholarship becomes a way of loving others and the world more deeply."¹⁴

Sands points out that Christ's rhetorical argument for the preservation of the natural world depends on both empathy and eros. These, as we have argued, lack the objectivity required to avoid moral relativism. Sands adds:

There are two routes of withdrawal from moral purism [the idealistic view that eros is free from destructive elements] and its destructive consequences: one moves towards nihilism; the other engages with tragedy...

Unwilling to engage with the tragic, Christ's theology veers her against her obvious intent toward ethical nihilism.¹⁵

According to this characterization of Christ's ethics, beside the implication that her view of eros is somewhat naive, she refuses to engage with an existentialist ethics of tragedy and veers instead toward the nihilistic. This is because, for Sands, Christ has overlooked destructive elements that may be present in eros, but it is clear that the upshot is the same as my claim that Christ's (and McFague's) ethics tend toward moral relativism. If moral relativism is the outcome of the ecofeminist ethics of both theologians, then moral nihilism, that anything goes, is indeed the outcome of their ethics.

J. Baird Callicott comments on "the central theoretical problem of any future environmental ethics" as follows:

In a programmatic paper published in 1973 Richard Routley dramatically delineated, but did not attempt to solve, the central theoretical problem for any future environmental ethics. What Routley called "dominant Western ethical traditions," or what might better be labeled "normal Western ethics," provide, he claimed in effect, only instrumental, not intrinsic, value for nonhuman natural entities and nature as a whole.¹⁶

In general, Callicott is saying that traditional Western ethics, e.g., Christian ethics, Kantian ethics, utilitarianism, etc., fail to provide an effective environmental ethics. This is because they cannot assign an objective value to the nonhuman world. In short, again, moral relativism follows. Callicott appeals to Human ethics, and argues in a way similar to that of McFague and Christ for an environmental ethics based on altruistic emotions and feelings.

Callicott distinguishes between intrinsic and inherent value. He

says:

Let something be said to possess intrinsic value, on the one hand, if its value is objective and independent of all valuing consciousness. On the other, let something be said to possess inherent value, if (while its value is not independent of all valuing consciousness) it is valued for itself and not only and merely because it serves as a means to satisfy the desires, further the interests, or occasion the preferred experiences of the valuers.¹⁷

The passage contains in effect a tripartite distinction between intrinsic value, inherent value, and instrumental value. What I have referred to as objective value is what Callicott calls intrinsic value. Something has this value if its value is independent of all valuing consciousness. The instrumental value of something is the value it has as a means to satisfy the desires and interests of someone. The middle value of something, between the objectivity of intrinsic value and the subjectivity of instrumental value, is that of inherent value. Inherent value shares with instrumental that both are dependent on the valuing consciousness, i.e., are subjective. But inherent value is not what is conducive to what we want, to what satisfies our interests and desires. There is an altruistic element in inherent value that is absent from intrinsic and instrumental value, and the former value is what Callicott wants to base environmental ethics on. As said, his position is similar overall to that both of McFague and Christ. His introduction of the tripartite distinction between these kinds of value thus serves as a basis to further discuss and clarify the problem of moral relativism in the ecofeminist theologies of McFague and Christ.

Callicott's environmental ethical argument depends, he says, on what ecology in the twentieth century has disclosed about our relationship to the natural world, and on what Hume called the moral sentiments. Callicott says:

Now, as Hume observed, not only have we sympathy for our fellows, we are also naturally endowed with a sentiment, the proper object of which is society itself. Ecology and the environmental sciences thus inform us of the existence of something which is a proper object of one of our most fundamental moral passions. The biotic community is a proper object of that passion which is activated by the contemplation of the complexity, diversity, integrity, and stability of the community to which we belong.¹⁸

Callicott's ethical defense of the environment derives from the moral philosophy of Hume. Hume's ethics is driven by altruistic sentiments such as sympathy. This is similar to the argument of McFague which turns on feelings of oneness with the universe which has undergone a common creation and evolution with us, and to Christ's argument based on erotic feelings derived from nature mysticism. Callicott's environmental argument derives from ecology, but it ultimately depends on the idea of the inherent value the environment has. Callicott, McFague, and Christ all defend the inherent value of the natural world.

The central problem of any future environmental ethics is, in Callicott's words, that of its objectivity. The problem can be raised in a number of forms. One form is the objection raised by G.E. Moore against a naturalistic ethics, i.e., one that equates moral goodness with a natural property such as being pleasurable. Callicott says:

A sincere skeptic is always entitled to ask why reason, pleasure, order, etc., or whatever is good and/or why rational, sentient, organized, etc., beings should therefore be intrinsically valuable. In the end, all a naturalistic advocate can do is to commend a property to our evaluative faculty of judgment or evaluative sensibilities.¹⁹

If we say with McFague that we ought to respect the natural world because the common creation story recommends it, or with Christ that we ought to respect the environment because we erotically are attached to it, the question could always be asked: even if we have these feelings for the natural world why should we respect it? The fact, for example,

that the natural world is our home and that we feel at home in it does not entail that it wrong for us to mistreat it by resource depletion and pollution. Or in Hume's own words, no amount of facts concerning our attitudes or beliefs about the earth entails any obligations on our part to that world. An "is" does not entail an "ought." The subjectivity and relativity of an environmental ethics follows. The dilemma that results is that either natural things have an intrinsic value of their own, which they do not seem to have, or they have a subjective, inherent value, which leads to moral relativism. In the end the moral nihilism which Sands sees in Christ's environmental ethics prevails in the moral relativism which Callicott sees in environmental ethics.

A possible solution to the problem of moral relativism in environmental ethics is suggested by an objective reading of the religion of the Goddess. If Christ's religion of the Goddess were read in a realist way, which the postmodernist Christ does not do, then perhaps the problem could be solved. Such an objectivist religious ethics would be a combination of the realism exemplified by Christian theological ethics and the immanence of the Goddess. That is, like the objective religious ethics of Christianity it could locate the source of value in a Goddess who exists independently of human experience and language, and like Goddess religion it could see the source of the natural value in the universe in a Goddess who exists within the universe. Although the ethics of Christian theism could provide the wanted objectivity of intrinsic value it could not ground an environmental ethics as the feminist critique indicates.

Paula Gunn Allen, a Sioux Indian feminist, states a belief in a real, immanent female deity in this way:

There is a spirit that pervades everything, that is capable of powerful song and radiant movement, and that moves in and out of the mind. The colors of this spirit are multitudinous, a glowing, pulsing rainbow. Old Spider Woman is one name for this quintessential spirit, and Serpent Woman is another. Corn Woman is one aspect of her, and Earth Woman is another, and what they together have made is called Creation, Earth, creatures, plants, and light...

This spirit, this power of intelligence, has many names and many emblems. She appears on the plains, in the forests, in the great canyons, on the mesas, beneath the seas. To her we owe our very breath, and to her our prayers are sent blown on pollen, on corn meal, planted into the earth on feather-sticks, spit onto the water, burned and sent to her on the wind. Her variety and multiplicity testify to her complexity: she is the true creatrix for she is thought itself, from which all else is born. She is the necessary precondition for material creation, and she, like all her creation, is fundamentally female - potential and primary.²⁰

Gunn Allen, who is a source of Christ's nature mysticism, states many of the claims affirmed herein: the Goddess requires a plurality of images, no one being sufficient to express her nature; she is the spirit of intelligent thought immanent in the natural world; and she is the creatrix of all material creation. Unlike the postmodernist Christ, Gunn Allen seems to affirm a realist belief in the religion of the Goddess, which holds that she exists as the immanent intelligence in the universe, is the creative source of all beings, order, and change in the universe, and is the ethical source of the value in the world that requires our respect. Gunn Allen's theological realism is more like the belief realism of Christ, which is one side of the latter.

An argument for an objective ecological ethics is as follows:

The Goddess exists and is immanent in the natural world,
We ought to respect the divine,

Hence, we ought to respect the natural world.

This is a logically valid argument: the premises entail the conclusion. The cogency of the argument, the truth of its conclusion, depends on the truth of its premises. The truth of the major premise, that the Goddess exists immanently in the natural world, will be argued for in chapter three. The minor premise of the argument, that we ought to respect the divine, is analytically true, i.e., it is a conceptual truth. A further presupposition of the argument is the correspondence view of factual truth, which is also argued for in chapter three.

A feature of the argument is that it not troubled by the subjectivity problem raised by Moore via Callicott for environmental ethics, such as that of McFague and Christ. If the Goddess exists and is immanent in nature, then the world participates in the worth and goodness of the Goddess. Given that it is a conceptual truth that we ought to respect the divine, and that the natural world participates in the divine, we ought then to respect the natural world. If the claims that there is an immanent divinity in nature, and that a correspondence view of factual truth is possible are defensible, then there are objective grounds for an ecological ethics in the religion of the Goddess. As said, the two premises of the argument are defended in chapter three, and they are a departure from both McFague's reformist Christian ethics and Christ's postmodernist version of the Goddess religion.

McFague claims as part of her ecological ethics that we need to return to a second naiveté. This she understands as a return to the most basic roots of our being by a conscious, informed route when an intuitive acceptance of these roots is no longer possible as it was
 21
 in our youth. The attainment of the second naiveté is by an informed, conscious route that depends on educating ourselves about our rela-

tions to other beings and the environment, e.g., the common creation story of evolutionary science, and ecology. She says:

What such [an ecological] study often does is return us to a state of wonder, curiosity, and affection that we as children had for other animals. Children often possess wide powers of sympathy for injured animals, demonstrating a natural affection for members of other species that we need to develop rather than squelch...

But we can at least make a partial return to this mixed community [of children and animals] by way of a "second naiveté," a way that involves educating ourselves on our genuine, deep, and concrete forms of interrelatedness with other life-forms.²²

McFague is not, on my reading of her, advocating a nostalgic return to some past, idyllic communal relationship with the natural world, but rather is advocating the cultivation of informed, and conscious feelings of empathy and relatedness to the world. The means to this end is the informing of her theology with the scientifically based common creation story. For Christ, the reunion with nature is based on stories from a nature mysticism that tell us that we ought to love the earth as we ought to love our human companions. The belief in an ancient European matriarchy, which Christ lays stress on, could be best seen as a myth whose function would be to help us return to a second childhood ruled by a mother in which we would feel in harmony with our earth home. It seems clear that the myth of the ancient matriarchy need not be taken literally as a description of some golden age in ancient Europe. Thus, the myth (or hypothesis of the Goddess, as Christ refers to it) of the Goddess, for her, has as its primary function the creation of a moral icon that would improve our relationship to the earth. This postmodernist interpretation of the myth of the Goddess and the ancient matriarchy would avoid much acrimonious and political debate about its existence.

David Bromell raises a difficulty for McFague's idea of returning to

a second naiveté, while he accepts that some informed and educated way of returning to it is necessary. He says:

The chief difficulty concerns the relation between a metaphorically or story-based theology and the more abstract level of systematic reflection. McFague sets up a double antinomy of metaphoric versus discursive statements, and lived action versus abstraction...

This question of the relation between metaphorical theology and systematic reflection is important, because only abstract theology can ask the critical question, "Yes, but is it true?"²³

Bromell's question arises in the context of our day and age in which the language and categories of discursive reason are indispensable, and in which the force of our western consciousness imposes this mode of reflection on our very existence as literate, intelligent beings.²⁴ The difficulty raised by Bromell for McFague's metaphorical theology is that we live in a civilization that is conceptually literate and in which the mytho-poetic mode of discourse is not dominant. McFague and Christ appeal to the mytho-poetic discourse of an earlier era (pre-Socratic?), whether that of childhood or history, to mitigate the environmental degradation brought on partially by the discursive mode of patriarchal ideology. The trouble with Gunn Allen's nature mysticism is that it not only appeals to a foreign Goddess, it is couched in a mytho-poetic style that the positivist or scientifically minded philosopher would just smile at. Further, if the mytho-poetic language of McFague's or Christ's theologies work in the sense that they make sense of our experience, a good question to ask then is: why? And a good answer would be that they are true, e.g., the religion of the Goddess makes sense of our experience probably because the Goddess exists.

Bromell's difficulty must be seen as both real and urgent if the

ecological project of McFague and Christ is to be effective. How, then, is the difficulty to be addressed? What I propose is both the mytho-poetic and the discursive modes of theology be recognized as indispensable to McFague's and Christ's ecofeminist theologies. The project of combining the two approaches in an environmental ethics is suggested herein as a combination of the mytho-poetic language of the image of the Goddess as the principle of intelligent embodied love and the discursive language of the embodied Goddess as the objective cause of the order, change, and value in the natural world.

The belief in the Goddess could carry the message of McFague's common creation story that we are all part of a common evolving creation, and feelings of sympathy towards the common creation would result if the story was accepted. Similarly, the belief in the Goddess could promote the sense of mystical oneness with the earth, and resultant erotic feelings of union with it would produce respect for it. The challenge presented by Bromell is to communicate to others who do not have an ecological sensibility the environmental message in a language that is convincing today. Bromell requires this language to be the language and categories of discursive reason. In chapter three an approach to Goddess theology is outlined that includes an argument for the existence of the Goddess as the immanent cause of the order and change in the natural world, as an objective reality who is immanent in nature, benevolent, creative, the source of order, involved in change, and interrelated with all other things in the universe. In support of this attempt at a refurbished natural theology, an account is outlined of a revised correspondence view of factual truth. In this way, the common creation story of McFague could be accepted as fac-

tually true and acted on so as respect the earth. There would not be an opposition of the metaphorical and the discursive in such a theology. The universal, disinterested truth claims of this theology could provide the systematic background for the foreground metaphorical theologies of McFague and Christ. Eventually, natural philosophy, natural theology, and ecology could form the systematic background for the metaphorical mythos required by McFague and Christ that would support their ecological ethos.

CHAPTER TWO - THE EMBODIMENT OF GOD/GODDESS

Sallie McFague's View of God's Embodiment

One of the metaphors which McFague uses to illuminate the God-natural world relationship in her ecological theology is that of the world as the body of God. She says:

We are suggesting, then, that we think of God metaphorically as the spirit that is the breath, the life, of the universe, a universe that comes from God and could be seen as the body of God...

In this body model, God would not be transcendent over the universe in the sense of external to or apart from, but would be the source, power, and goal - the spirit - that enlivens (and loves) the entire process and its material forms. The transcendence of God, then, is the preeminent or primary spirit of the universe...

A metaphor to express this source of all life is not the Architect who constructs a world, but the Mother who encloses reality in her womb, bodying it forth, generating all life from her being...¹

While the quotation does speak of God the mother, McFague continues to favor the metaphor of God the father as a metaphor with staying power, a model. The metaphor of the universe as the body of God includes a number of claims. First, God is not transcendent over the natural world as he is in Christian theism. Rather he is immanent in the universe. Second, the manner of his immanence is that of embodiment. This view is similar to the anima mundi view of the God-natural world relationship according to which God is to the world as our spirit is to our body. McFague's theology is thus a panentheism in which God is in the world, but is not the world as in pantheism. She says: "Pantheism says that God is embodied, necessarily and totally;

traditional theism claims that God is disembodied, necessarily and totally; panentheism suggests that God is embodied but not necessarily and totally."² She favors the last. Third, the natural world as enlivened by the spirit or breath of God is not composed of dead, passive, unconscious matter as it is in the view of classical physics, which is closely allied with Christian theism (Newton's natural theology was the capstone of natural philosophy or physics), but is active, self-moving, and in a process of change. Fourth, God transcends the natural world, for McFague, in the sense that he is the source of its life. Two lingering aspects of the metaphor of God's embodiment, which are discussed later, are that God is the cause, source, of the life in nature, and that God is creative.

At least three models of God come together in McFague's ecological theology. These are the models of God the father, mother, and the universe as the body of God. These three metaphors function to promote our respect for the earth, as opposed to the model of God the monarch which sanctions the oppression of the environment.

McFague writes under the influence of certain process theologians such as Ian Barbour. They hold a view of time according to which Becoming, or change, is more important than Being, that which is changeless.

McFague says:

One of the principal insights we gained from studying scientific models was that they focus not on picturing entities but on comparing and contrasting processes, relations, and structures. The contemporary assumption operative not only in science but in many other fields as well is that "entities," whether personal selves or physical phenomena, exist only in relationships and that the process or network of relationships is more basic than the substantial individual."³

If the view of process philosophy is applied to the case of an agent

who acts, the agent becomes what the agent does: a network of processes or structures replaces the older idea of a thing or of an agent who acts. The tendency to emphasize processes over things in process thought impacts on McFague's account of God's embodiment, as we shall see.

McFague introduces in addition to the breath of life model for understanding God's relationship to the earth the model of agency.

She says:

Finally, the strongest argument for personal metaphors in our time is that the current understanding of personal agency allows personal metaphors to reflect a view of God's activity in the world as radically relational, immamental, interdependent, and non-interventionist...

We will conclude that combining the organic (the world as the body of God) and the agential (God as the spirit of the body) results in a personal and ecological way of reimagining the tradition's Lord of creation in terms compatible with contemporary science.⁴

McFague wants to combine two important metaphors in an ecological model of God's relationship to the earth. These two metaphors are those of God's embodiment as the breath of life of the world's body, and God as agent. But her metaphor of God as spiritual agent is conditioned by her view that God's activity in the world is radically relational and immamental. Here her borrowing of the idea of replacing substance with function, what a thing is with what it does, from process thought comes into play. God's agency is, accordingly, seen as being in radical process or change. As the breath of life he is a process or change or a network of relationships between aspects of the living universe. Later it will be asked whether her borrowing of the language of radical process thought is compatible with the combined metaphors of God as the breath of life and as an agent.

Carol Christ's View of Goddess's Embodiment

An important aspect of Christ's ecofeminist theology is her view of the God-natural world relationship. Again it is similar to that of McFague and differs from it only in details. Christ sees the Goddess as immanent in the universe, as the source of change in the world, and as responsible for the interrelatedness of all natural things. She says:

And rather than putting us in touch with a "changeless" God who stands above the world, Goddess rituals connect us to a divinity who is known within nature and who personifies change...

As fully immanent, the Goddess is embodied in the finite, changing world. She is known in rock and flower and in the human heart, just as in the theologies of immanence. [A theology for feminist theologians is an account of the Goddess.] As the organism uniting the cells of the earth body, the Goddess is the firm foundation of changing life. As the mind, soul, or enlivening power of the world body, the Goddess is intelligent, aware, alive, a kind of "person" with whom we can enter into relation...

It seems logical to acknowledge that the whole universe is the body of Goddess.⁵

Christ, in her realist moments, means these statements to be taken literally, e.g., according to Naomi Goldenberg she prays to the Goddess. The themes that the Goddess is the source of the change in the universe, is responsible for the unity of the world, and is immanent in the natural world are all present in these statements. Like McFague's view of God, Christ's view of the Goddess accepts that she is embodied as in the view of the anima mundi, the world soul hypothesis. But, unlike McFague's view, Christ's view sees the Goddess as the principle of intelligent, embodied love in the universe. McFague's metaphor of God as the breath of life of the universe differs in the apparent lack of intelligence in the breath of life principle which could, for example, inhabit a carrot.

There are two further aspects of the Goddess for Christ. They are

that the Goddess is creative and real. Christ says:

Of the three aspects of the Goddess as Giver, Taker, and Renewer of Life, only the first refers to the Goddess as Mother. Moreover, the Goddess as the Giver of Life is more accurately called Creatress, since she gives birth to plants and animals as well as human children...

In the vision developed in this book, the Goddess is the power of intelligent embodied love that is the ground of all being. The earth is the body of the Goddess. All beings are interdependent in the web of life. Nature is intelligent, alive, and aware.⁶

As mother, the Goddess is creative and brings forth all beings that exist in the natural world. She exists as the world soul, and the earth (the universe) is her body. And further she is the ground of being, the causal source of order in the universe. Later, these views, in particular Christ's belief realism, will be seen to conflict with her post-modern epistemology. Here Christ's Goddess realism is most evident.

There are a number of metaphors for the embodiment of God/Goddess in these two theologians. For McFague, God is the breath of life animating the universe, and like a mother is its source of life. Christ, like McFague, shares the creatrix-mother image for the embodiment of the Goddess, but differs slightly on the Goddess as the principle of intelligent, embodied love, i.e., a personal metaphor is introduced.

Some Arguments for God/Goddess Immanence

Grace Jantzen, writing as a theologian and philosopher, defends the idea that God is embodied, and she claims that the idea of God as embodied would lead us to respect nature and would encourage ecological responsibility.⁷ Barbour says about Jantzen:

Grace Jantzen, in God's World, God's Body, starts by defending a holistic understanding of the human person as a psychosomatic unity, citing support from the Old Testament and recent psychology and philosophy. She rejects the classical mind/body dualism

with its devaluation of matter and the body. The God/world relation is analogous to that of the person/body, rather than mind/body or soul/body. Jantzen thinks that the classical view of God as disembodied spirit is a product of Christian Platonism that contrasted eternal forms with a lower realm of temporal matter; this view held that God is immutable and therefore immaterial.⁸

There are three arguments for embodiment. First, there is the moral argument that links Christian theology to the oppression of the natural world. Given that we act according to a mythos which determines our ethos, the mythos of monarchical Christianity has sanctioned the exploitation of the environment. If correct, this argument supports the need for a theological concept of God as embodied in the world. An embodied God, argue McFague and Christ, leads us to respect the natural world.

A second argument comes from Jantzen. She points out that the idea of an embodied God entails the idea that God acts in time.⁹ The idea of God the monarch who inhabits eternity locates his creative activity beyond time and space. He speaks the world into existence and time and space along with it. The concept of atemporal creativity, Jantzen says, is derived from Greek philosophy by patriarchal Christianity. It is, she says, incompatible with some biblical images of God's creative activity. The analogy of Genesis 2:7 of God as the potter who forms man from the dust of the ground and breaths the breath of life into him is an analogy that is closer to human temporal activity than is the idea that God speaks time and the world into existence.

A third argument, also available from Jantzen, is a very compelling logical argument, in my view. If the concept of action is a temporal one, that is, an action begins at a certain time, lasts for a certain duration of time, and ends at a certain time, then speaking of God's

action analogously brings along with it the assumption that God acts in time. To speak of God's timeless acts carried out, as it were, in eternity is a meaningless way of speaking, at least if ordinary language is the source of theological language. God's act of speaking the world into existence and time with it, thus requires that God act in time. But if time did not exist until he speaks it into existence, then God's act of creative speaking cannot be in time at all. Newton, like Jantzen, found this way of speaking about God's creative activity problematic,¹⁰ and located his activity in Absolute Time. Accordingly, as we shall see in chapter three, Newton argues for the existence of God in Absolute Time and Space from evidence of design in relative time and space.

There are thus, I submit, compelling arguments for seeing God as embodied in the universe, and as acting in Absolute (or relative) Time and Space as the case may be.

Discussion of Some Problems in their Views of the Embodiment of God/Goddess

God/Goddess Immanence as Embodiment

While both McFague and Christ affirm the embodiment of God/Goddess, there are difficulties in their ideas of divine embodiment. First, the analogy of the embodiment of God/Goddess presented by them is a metaphorical way of imagining the world relationship. As seen in chapter one, unless the analogy is taken literally there can be no objective legitimation of their ecological ethics. That is, the analogy must be taken literally and God/Goddess seen as actually immanent in the universe if their ethics is to avoid moral relativism.

Second, as the foregoing paragraph suggests, the analogy even if taken literally does not seem to be correct. McFague, for example,¹¹ regards God as being embodied in the world as the breath of life. She says that this metaphor combines God as body with God as spirit in a unity. To say that the universe is the body of God is to take the analogy of the self and the body in a way that invites embarrassing questions. If so, then we should ask whether God has a black hole for a brain, the Milky Way galaxy for a nervous system, and a gigantic, human appearance. The cosmos does not seem to have the construction of a body, especially that of a human body. If it did then biology would replace physics as the basic science, and a cosmic biology replace astrophysics. Whatever is made of these disanalogies, a case has to be made by McFague that the universe is like a large animal, or even a large vegetable, if she is to say plausibly that the cosmos is the body of God. In the case of the earth, her argument might be more workable because the earth's outer layer, the biosphere, is alive and teeming with life. A further shortcoming of the analogy stating that the self is to the body as God is to the world is that there are problems with the first part of the analogy that have yet to be solved. There is, for example, the problem of how the self affects and is affected by the body unless the self is physical in some way. Large philosophical questions exist here which would have to be clarified if the self-body analogy were used to clarify the God-universe analogy, despite claims¹² to the contrary by recent materialists.

Third, McFague's analogy of the world as God's body with God as its breath of life seems to lack the notion of mind as a directing agency. On the one hand, there is the intuition that God ought to be aware and

intelligent as well as a voluntary agent if he is held to be worthy of being called God and worshipped. A breath of life that animates the cosmos, while important ethically, does not seem to be much like our idea of what God is, but more like some primitive, animistic idea of what God is. On the other hand, if God is thought of as the directing the cosmos, then this veers in the direction of the monarchical idea of God as the controlling and dominating God, which McFague would not welcome. It must be admitted in fairness to McFague, that she does pay some attention to what she calls the agency model of God, and the question then is whether the agency model of God could be employed in her reconstructed model so as to avoid the problems of patriarchy.¹³

What is wanted are models of the self-body relationship and of the God/Goddess-natural world relationship that are: 1) conceptually feasible, and 2) morally enhancing. The model of the self-world relationship that we have derives from Descartes, and is parallel to and a part of the patriarchal model (understanding) of the God-world relationship. Both are conceptually absurd, and morally oppressive. The way past both problematic models would perhaps be to see both the self and the divinity as embodied in the natural world. Samuel Alexander has an analogy that might be useful. He says that "Time is the mind of space."¹⁴ Alexander's analogy suggests that it would be useful to think of the mental as temporal structure, and the corporeal as spatial structure.

The Goddess's Immanence as Her Creative Activity

A way past some, if not all, of these difficulties would be to abandon the analogy of embodiment as the model for God's/Goddess's immanence, and to adopt some less troublesome model of immanence. In

short, the model proposed herein is to see the Goddess's immanence in terms of the model of the Goddess as mother, which both McFague and Christ also support, if only metaphorically.

It was noted that McFague says that the metaphor of God the mother is an acceptable way of thinking about God, and that Christ sees the Goddess as the primary image for thinking about divinity. A chief characteristic of the Goddess is her creative motherhood.

It is characteristic of the patriarchal view of time that it de-means Becoming, and relegates it to the status of the moving image of eternity in Plato. This is to say with the Platonists that time is unreal. In patriarchal science, philosophy, and theology time is seen as a serial order of point instants which are ordered by the relation "is earlier than." All point instants, events, are equally existent in the time series, and they differ only in their position in the time series. The feminist, organic view of time sees time in terms of Becoming and change. Events in this view of time are either past, present, or future, and are of a finite duration and not of no duration like point events in the patriarchal time series. The future is open, the past is closed, and present is what exists and is in the flux of happening. The first view of time stresses permanence, and the second stresses change. There is no real change in the first view of time, only difference. There is real change in the second view of time, and it is ontological change. In the second view, the future as not yet becomes, the present is the flux of becoming, and the past is what was and whose effects exist. The feminist, organic view of time thus celebrates coming into being, persisting in being, and passing out of being. The patriarchal view of time relegates Becoming to the inferior status of being mind-

dependent, i.e., if there were no human observers there would be no illusion of temporal Becoming. A.N. Whitehead supports feminists here.

In Christ's view of the Goddess, she is the ground of being. Although Christ sees the ground of being feature as a metaphor, it suggests that there is a causal relationship between the activity of the Goddess and the creative change that permeates the natural world. Clearly a realist view of the Goddess's activity is consistent with her activity as being temporal. The realist view thus avoids the problem of talking about the activity of God in eternity. The Goddess as the ground of being acts in time and in some sense is within time itself. This is a key part of the claim that she is immanent within nature, and that she is responsible for the order and change that pervade nature.

The key metaphor for understanding the activity of the Goddess as the source of the order and change in the natural world is that of the image of the Great Mother.¹⁵ Nature in accord with a literal understanding of the image is the scene or theater of the temporal creative activity of the Goddess, and the various entities in the natural world are the products of that creativity. The creative mother as a metaphor for the Goddess's causal immanence thus has the following properties: 1) she is not embodied in the way envisaged by the anima mundi view of McFague and Christ, 2) the key to her immanence is her existence in sensible, relative time itself, 3) her activity of creating spatial-temporal things is the passage of time itself, and 4) she is the origin of the change that pervades nature as well as its order. The claim that the Goddess is immanent in the world is a presupposition of the objectivity argument of chapter one. Three theologi-

cal claims about the Goddess which I want to make are that: i) the Goddess's telos is seen in her creation, proliferation, and sustenance of living things and non-living things, ii) her creative activity is the ontological passage of time itself from the future to the present and to the past, and iii) she is the source of the spatial and temporal existence and mystery of living and non-living things which she shares with them. In short, her creative activity is the passage of time.

It was said that McFague's use of the metaphor of God as the embodied breath of life to support her ecological ethics is partly taken from process thinkers. There is a difficulty in her notion of God's embodiment which derives from her use of the ideas of process thinkers. According to her view, God is embodied in the universe as its breath
16
of life, and at the same time is a spiritual agent. While it seems reasonable to include the model of God as an embodied agent who controls the world body to some extent (God is thus intelligent and like a human being is in control of his actions, whereas the life in a vegetable seems to be a poor metaphor for God), there is a problem with her overall model of God's relationship to the universe. If God is thought of as being radically in process, as McFague thinks, and as a network of relationships, then the question is: what is God exactly on this account? First, if God is not a substance or thing that acts but is rather a process or change, then how intelligible is this? God acts but he is not an agent who acts; instead he is the activity, the process itself. But the idea of action, as we ordinarily understand it, requires logically that there is an agent that performs the action. If there is no agent to perform the action, then there is no action, and God as an agent becomes replaced by the odd view that he is

a process or change initiating nothing and initiated by nothing.

Second, if God is nothing but a network of relationships, then what is he really? A relationship, as we ordinarily understand it, is a relationship between terms that are things, or other relationships. In the first case, considering the relationship of being a father either there is a father that stands in relationship to us or there is not. If God is our heavenly father, then he is a substance, thing, etc. that stands in that relationship, or there is no relationship at all. McFague wants us to accept that we experience relationships to God as a father, but given her view that there are no things and only networks of relationships, there can be no sense in which God is a substance-term of the relationship of being a father. The upshot is that McFague's acceptance of the Whiteheadian doctrine of radical process is at odds both with her acceptance of the agential model of God and with her view that we experience relationships to God which we express in various metaphors of him, as the concepts are ordinarily used.

McFague suggests a way out of the foregoing conceptual dilemma, although she may not be explicitly aware of the dilemma. In keeping with the principle of charity mentioned in the introduction according to which the strongest possible interpretation should be placed on an author, it should be noted that she says:

That tradition is of God as spirit - not Holy Ghost, which suggests the unearthly and disembodied, nor initially the Holy Spirit, which has been focused largely on human beings and especially the followers of Christ, but the spirit of God, the divine wind that "swept over the face of the waters" prior to creation, the life-giving breath given to all creatures, and the dynamic movement that creates, recreates, and transcreates throughout the universe. Spirit, as wind, breath, life is the most basic and most inclusive way to express centered embodiment.¹⁷

Here the metaphor McFague employs for understanding God's embodiment

is that of the breath of life that vivifies the body of the universe. But she emphasizes that the breath of life is an agent that creates, recreates, and transcreates all throughout the universe. God cannot be simply a process of creation, etc., that she speaks of because that interpretation of her metaphor would introduce all the conceptual distortion above in her metaphor of God as the breath of life. Rather God should be seen as an agent who creates, recreates, and transcreates. This suggestion ties in well with Christ's metaphor of the Goddess as the creative Great Mother. Overall it is preferable to see the Goddess's immanence not as embodiment, but rather as her activity in time as the source of all purposeful, creative change and order in the universe.

CHAPTER THREE - THE IMPASSE OF OBJECTIVISM AND RELATIVISM

Sallie McFague's Postmodernist Epistemology

McFague has a postmodernist epistemology. She says:

How does one come to accept a model as true? We live within the model, testing our wager [on alternative models] by its consequences. These consequences are both theoretical and practical. An adequate model will be illuminating, fruitful, have relatively comprehensive explanatory ability, be relatively consistent, be able to deal with anomalies, and so on. This largely, though not totally, functional, pragmatic view of truth stresses heavily the implications of certain models for the quality of human and nonhuman life. A praxis orientation does not deny the possibility of the "shy ontological claim," but it does acknowledge both the mystery of God and the importance of truth as practical wisdom...

To believe that a perspective or construct is meaningful and true because it is useful in the conduct of life is as old and honored a tradition as the view that one should accept it because it corresponds to an ideal, eternal reality. The first tradition is Aristotelian, privileging a pragmatic, practical, concrete view of truth, while the second is Platonic, insisting on an idealistic, abstract, speculative view...

The point is that we do have a choice [between constructs], and since the choice is not between reality and a picture of reality, but between two pictures of reality, factors other than correspondence with reality must enter.¹

There are two views of truth considered here. One is the correspondence view of truth, according to which a statement is true if and only if it corresponds to the state of affairs it describes. The other view is the pragmatic view of truth, according to which a belief (a statement one is inclined to act on as true) is true if it works successfully when acted on. McFague clearly opts for the latter view of truth and rejects the Platonic version of the correspondence view of truth. (This is the historic version of the correspondence view.) McFague holds a

postmodernist position on the nature of factual truth, which is what is at issue here and not logical truth, e.g., " $30 + 50 = 80$ ". She says that there is no direct access to the reality our true statements are true of whether they are truths of science or religion. Rather there are different readings of a scientific or religious text, and not one correct literal reading of a text. In line with her view that God's nature is a mystery, she sees various models of God as different readings of our various experiences of relating to God as reported by different people. She considers and rejects, as said, the Platonic version of the correspondence view of factual truth, according to which a true statement agrees with an ideal, absolute, eternal reality - a patriarchal view. This is not the only way in which the correspondence view of factual truth may be understood, but it is the received one.

McFague mentions some criteria of theological truth. One is a "weakened" version of the correspondence view of truth. According to Terrence Reynolds, McFague, a reformed Christian feminist, takes the position that a criterion of an acceptable theology is that it is consistent with the Christian tradition.² The elements of the Christian tradition she wants her metaphorical theology to be consistent with are, for example, certain aspects of Jesus's and Paul's lives and teachings, the agapistic element. The weakened version of the correspondence view of truth accepted by McFague would better be called a coherence view of truth, and it is not further considered as a correspondence view.

Finally, she calls her epistemological position critical realism. She says:

The epistemology that lies behind this statement [that metaphor both creates and discovers truth] is, of course, "critical realism," and it is, as we recall, the view not only of high

view supporters of models in science [realism about scientific models] but also of Ian Ramsey and Paul Ricoeur. Constructive thinkers in any field (poetry, religion, philosophy, science, political theory, and so forth) are critical realists to the extent they believe that all perception and interpretation is metaphorical - that is, indirect (seeing or interpreting "this" as "that") - and who also hold that their constructions are not heuristic fictions but discoveries of some aspect of the structure of reality.³

McFague construes models in a seemingly realist fashion, that is, as descriptive of some aspect of reality beyond human experience which they reveal. The quotation could be read in line with McFague's ambiguity about realism and antirealism as saying that models describe reality as we find it. But using a distinction from Geertz between models for and models of we can understand McFague's critical realism⁴ consistently. If we understand her to say that models in science and religion discover reality, then this would contradict her postmodernist rejection of the correspondence view of truth. Geertz's idea of a model of is perhaps not what she is talking about as a critical realist. Geertz's alternative idea of models for is likely what McFague is thinking about when she speaks as a critical realist. Religious models are, accordingly, icons for human behavior, or metaphors in McFague's terminology, which set norms and examples for human behavior. They are created by the imagination of the theologian and also perhaps arise out of the irrational aspects of human nature such as the unconscious, and persuade people to act in a certain manner. In McFague's case, she says that the metaphor of God the father influences people to value the environment. This is the sense in which, for her, reality is created and discovered, at least religious reality, and this sense is consistent with her rejection of the correspondence view of truth.

There is another way in which McFague's critical realism about models of reality may be understood that is consistent with her postmodernist epistemology. She denies that there are successful models of scientific and religious reality, but she affirms that there are successful realist models in everyday life. That is, she rejects claims that we can know that God exists, inhabits eternity, is responsible for the order in the universe, etc., and she is inclined to reject realist claims in science also, in line with her rejection of the correspondence view of truth. But, as a pragmatist, she accepts truth claims about the everyday world, e.g., that objects exist, that people exist, etc., in the correspondence sense. This is to accept realist claims about the everyday world: that there is an external world, that people are real, and that they can causally bring about certain effects in the world successfully. This same acceptance of realism about everyday objects and people can be seen in her apparent acceptance of science's making successful predictions, the so-called low view of science. Whether or not her critical realism is successful in drawing a distinction between everyday realism, on the one hand, and scientific and religious antirealism, on the other, is a question that is not considered herein.

Carol Christ's Postmodernist Epistemology

Another aspect of Christ's ecofeminist theology is her epistemology, her theory of knowledge. Like McFague, she has a postmodernist theology, which is, in my view, at odds with itself. She outlines certain criteria for an acceptable theology, i.e., an account or theology of the Goddess. She says:

In developing a systematic thea-logy of the Goddess it is important to be as clear, coherent, and consistent as possible. To be clear means that after thinking long and hard, I will express the meaning I have discovered in the simplest language I can find...

To be coherent means that the insights must hold together and create a paradigm or interpretive framework that helps us make sense of the world and our lives. To be consistent means that ideas developed in reflection on one issue are carried over into the discussion of others so that the thea-logy as a whole can be seen to be governed by an internal logic and a number of basic insights.⁵

In brief, Christ's criteria for an acceptable theology require that a theology is expressed in simple language, makes sense of her experience, and is internally consistent.

In her epistemology she makes a distinction between the mythos of objectivity and embodied thinking. She says:

Feminist analysis reveals that scholarship that has been presented to us as objective, rational, analytical, dispassionate, disinterested, and true, is rooted in the passion to honor, legitimate, and preserve elite male power. Feminists understand that the ethos of scholarly objectivity is in fact mythos. We know that there is no dispassionate, disinterested scholarship...

Empathetic scholarship draws on all the standard tools of research, including gathering historical data, careful attention to detail, analysis, criticism, concern for truth. But as we use the tools of traditional scholarly research, we transform them. We unmask the biases and the passions that are hidden in traditional scholarship, and we freely admit our own. We are beginning to write "in a different voice," one that interweaves scholarly analysis with a personal standpoint.⁶

The mythos of objectivity aims at disinterested, absolute (independent), universal, speculative truth, while the empathetic scholarship aimed at by the feminist wants interested, relative, particular truth. Her position about truth is postmodernist.

The terms "absolute" and "objective" need to be defined. "Absolute" means "independent of all other things," and "objective" means "independent of human language and experience." Accordingly, "relative" means "dependent in some way," and "subjective" means "dependent on human language and experience."

She accepts the postmodernist view concerning the relativity of truth. She says:

All experiences are shaped by the lens through which we view them. The lens of interpretation includes factors of which we are aware, as well as those of which we are not aware, the "fundamental assumptions", which are unconsciously presupposed...

To write of experiences and interpretations suggests that there are discrete moments of pure experience, followed by discrete moments of interpretation. But most of the time, experience and interpretation are an ever-shifting but seamless web. Both experiences and interpretations are built up of other experiences and interpretations. Though there are times when we reflect consciously, and others when we react impulsively or intuitively, and even times when we change worldviews, there is no moment of pure experience, no moment of pure interpretation.⁷

What she is denying is what McFague refers to as direct, or immediate, access to reality. In the absolute, Platonic view of knowledge we can at some times gain access to the true nature of things by employing the right method, say, to God's essence, free from speculation, mistakes, errors, inferences, hypotheses, preconceptions, etc. This unmediated experience yields knowledge that is timelessly true, universally true, and free from any personal taint of error. In line with postmodernism, Christ rejects the view of Platonic truth (and the miserable rationalism it spawns), and accepts that our preconceptions, expectations, and ways of viewing the world color everything we experience and believe. Truth is thus relative to our vested interests, and approaches more to ideology than to impersonal, universal truth.

And like McFague, Christ rejects the correspondence view of truth and favors a pragmatic view. She says:

I agree with modernism and post-modernism that we must be suspicious of all claims to universal truth, to a direct correspondence between our visions and ontological reality...

While we ought not to assume that these [religious] experiences and visions can be objectively proved to all by rational argumentation, we nonetheless acknowledge that they function as grounding for our day to day lives...

But we can also scrutinize and argue for our positions, as Davaney suggests [as a radical relativist], both in terms of their pragmatic value and their ability to explain a broad range of experiences beyond our own.⁸

In line with her rejection of the Platonic notion of a direct, unmediated access to reality and truth, she denies that we can compare reality with our ideas of it. Truth, for her, is what works. Rather than being dispassionate, a pragmatic truth concerns what we believe, act on successfully, and want to be true.

Discussion of the Impasse of Objectivism and Relativism in their Epistemologies

The Problem of the Tension between Objectivism and Relativism

There are a number of problems in the epistemologies of McFague and Christ. A summary of the first problem, and from which the title of the chapter is taken, is stated by Davaney as follows:

However, it is my contention that the feminist thinkers examined in this essay implicitly still assume such ultimate foundations and hence have yet to provide a way beyond the impasse of objectivism and relativism.⁹

While Davaney examines other feminists than McFague and Christ in her essay, her overall characterization of the problem applies to them also. What are the alternatives referred to by Davaney as objectivism and relativism? She says:

These [two central issues which have bedeviled the modern period] are the Enlightenment-inspired quest for certain truth and the countermodern recognition of the historical and, hence, relative character of all claims to truth. This essay will argue that these themes have re-emerged in feminist theology's claim of a normative vision and in its assertion of the perspectival and conditioned nature of all human knowledge. Further, I will suggest that these assertions stand in problematic and unresolved relation to one another within much feminist thought and that what further alternatives may emerge in feminist theology will depend, in good part,

on how these tensions are confronted and resolved and moved beyond.¹⁰

The problem which Davaney identifies within feminist theology as the impasse (a position from which there is no escape) of objectivism and relativism is the tension that exists between claims of a realist kind, on the one hand, and of a perspectival, antirealist kind, on the other. The first alternative, objectivism, is a hangover from the tradition of Christian theology which makes claims to a certain knowledge about God as part of its ethical stance on the environment. The second alternative, relativism, is an expression of the postmodernist sensibility that all factual truth claims in science and theology have at best only pragmatic value, or are at worst ideological expressions of vested interests such as the drive to dominate nature.

Reynolds, following Davaney's lead, discusses the modernist-postmodernist tension in the theologies of McFague and Christ. He says about McFague:

McFague never denies the existence of an objective, trans-historical referent for her claims; in fact, she affirms it. She does, however, deny that we can refer directly to it, or make "referential truth claims" about it...

Nevertheless, the ontological and epistemological distance she establishes between her constructions and the divine referent in which she believes is such that she cannot make referential truth claims about it beyond its existence.¹¹

And he says about Christ:

Christ concurs with Davaney that it is wise to be "suspicious of all claims to universal truth," and to any "direct correspondence between our visions and ontological reality"...

Christ proposes that feminists assert their claims about truth out of their commitments of faith, fully aware that they are relative in the sense of justification, relative to context, but not necessarily lacking reference to truth as a result...

Christ believes that theological claims do refer to a divine agent, albeit indirectly, and that truth is to be understood as correspondence to the "real," or at least as more than instrumental.¹²

McFague's position is, at first glance, free from tension. She says, on the one hand, that claims about God do refer to a reality beyond language. On the other hand, she says that we cannot know anything to be true about the nature of God because his essence is a mystery. We use metaphors to express our various experiences of relating to God, but these tell us nothing about God. The latter attitude toward truth is consistent with her postmodernist, pragmatic view of truth. The view is her critical realism. Christ's position appears to be more problematical, at first glance. As a postmodernist, she rejects the correspondence view of truth, and yet as a believer in the Goddess asserts her existence as the principle of intelligent, embodied love who is the ground of being. Christ's position has the same realist-antirealist tension as that of McFague, but the latter's position is more sophisticated.

McFague thinks that we can know that God exists, but that we cannot know anything about his nature because of his mystery. Her critical realism leads to skeptical realism. Assuming with McFague that God's existence is somehow known but his essence is not, we end up with a wholly mysterious God. The God who is "the something I know not what" of the philosopher Kant is the subject of skeptical realism. It is, in my view, completely unsatisfactory. How does an agnostic position of this kind differ from a cognitive nihilism that sees God as equivalent to nothing at all? McFague cannot avoid the difficulty by saying that her theology is adverbial, and not a adjectival one. That is, she might say at this point that we experience certain relationships to God as the referent of our metaphors which express these relationships. In saying that God is a father we are saying that we experience him in

this way, but, adds McFague, this does not say that he is literally a father. If God is a term in a relationship of us to him as a heavenly father, then he must have the attributes of being a father if the relationship is to hold. Again, this assumes that she uses language in the everyday sense. If not, then she owes us an explanation of what her position is, if it is to be free from tension. McFague's theology, lacking this explanation, thus appears to be caught in the tension Reynolds describes in her theology.

Christ, for her part, also cannot escape the problem. She wants, on the one hand, to deny that there is a correspondence between our images of the Goddess and her reality, but, on the other hand, she says that the Goddess is the power of intelligent, embodied love in the universe and the ground of being. The latter statement does look like a commitment to Goddess realism, on Christ's part. If so, then Christ as well as McFague are realists as a hangover from their Christian pasts and self-conscious postmodernists and antirealists in their up front theologies. This is a contradiction in their epistemological views.

A way out of the difficulty is suggested by some remarks of Barbour who says:

I cannot agree with those postmodernist feminists who recommend that we should reject objectivity and accept relativism. Western thought has indeed been dualistic, and men have perhaps been particularly prone to dichotomize experience. But the answer is surely to avoid dichotomies, not merely to relativize them. Nor do we want to perpetuate them in inverted form by rejecting the first term and affirming the second of each polarity.¹³

Consistent with Barbour's view, truth is affirmed herein as objective if it corresponds to a contingent fact, but it is relative to the contingency of the fact and to the interest we have in our belief system.

In McFague's case, an egress from the objectivism/relativism im-

passe is available by making a distinction between the essence and existence of God. The tension in her thought arises from insisting as a realist on referring to God without description and insisting as an antirealist on God's mystery as well as on the metaphorical character of God-talk. The term "realist" means someone who thinks that the term "God/Goddess" refers to an entity out there about which something can be known independent of human language and experience. The term "anti-realist" means someone who denies that such a term refers, i.e., who denies that it has a referring function at all and who says that the term has a rhetorical function such as declaring one's intention to follow an agapistic way of life. The believer and the skeptic are both realists. The believer in God thinks that the term "God" refers to God, and that he can reasonably be believed to exist in some way. The skeptic agrees that the term "God" is meant to refer and that such a being may exist, but says that we cannot know whether or not such a being exists. Even the atheist agrees that the term "God" is meant to refer, but he/she thinks that there is evidence against the existence of such a being. The antirealist denies that the term "God/Goddess" is meant to refer at all, and says that the term has a non-referring function such as declaring one's religious/ethical intentions. As such the antirealist position undercuts the theistic, skeptical, and atheistical positions. In this way, both McFague and Christ as postmodernists are antirealists about God/Goddess-talk.

Returning to the problem, rather than regarding the natural world as the body of God we could regard the Goddess as the first cause of the orderly changes in the natural world that occur therein. This is the proposed reinterpretation of her embodiment discussed at the end of

chapter two. A main trait of the Goddess as the Great Mother is her creativity. Her creativity is thus her essence, or at least a main part of it, and it is intelligible. The aspect of the Goddess that is mysterious is the manner in which she is responsible for the existence of the universe. Following the empirical philosophy of David Hume, we say¹⁴ that the existence of something is equivalent to it as an existent. The Goddess's existence is the source of the existence of particular things, physical objects, that are extended in space and last for a period of time. Her existence is the source of their spatial and temporal existence. Because the existence of the Goddess is a mystery it follows that so is their's. Rather than saying that the world is the body of the Goddess as Christ does, we could say that as the creatrix she is responsible for the existence of the natural world as its source. Because, following Hume, existence is an unanalyzable mystery, then, on the one hand, the manner of her existence and immanence are unknowable. Her essence as the source of the orderly change in the natural world, on the other hand, is intelligible and expressed in the changes for which she is responsible. Her creativity as the first cause is what is intelligible, and what is studied by science. Contrary to McFague's view of God, the Goddess can be referred to and described in her essence as the ground of being, but her immanence as the source of the temporal and spatial existence of things remains mysterious. These remarks are sketchy and vague, but they are an attempt to address the problem of the tension of objectivism/relativism in McFague.

The Problem of Pragmatic Truth

A problem that exists in their epistemologies concerns their prag-

matic/postmodernist views of truth. The problem has the form of a dilemma: either they adopt a strong version of pragmatism which is miraculous, or they adopt a weak version which is self-refuting.

From the discussion of their epistemologies it is clear that they accept a pragmatic view of truth. As pragmatists, they accept a model as true if it works. "Workability" can be understood in two senses: one strong and one weak. In the strong sense of "workable" a model is true if when I act on it as a plan it leads to successful results. If, as feminist theologians hold, the point of thought is to guide action, then successful actions could be explained by supposing that the thought they were guided by was true in the correspondence sense. If a thought that when acted on yielded successful results and was not true in a correspondence sense, then this outcome would be a fluke. That is, it would be miraculous in a case like this, and especially in repeated cases without fail, that the thought guiding action was successful and not true. Consider the case in which a remarkable number of cures were brought about by a faith healer. If medical science confirmed that the cures were not brought about by trickery or medical skill, then ruling out chance as improbable an explanation would be that some real cause, God, had affected the cures via the healer.

A realist epistemology or theory of knowledge holds that there is a reality which is independent of human experience and language, and about which something can be known. The naive realist thinks that he/she can have a direct access to reality to determine whether his/her claims about it are true in the correspondence sense. An indirect or moderate realist holds that there is no direct access to reality, but says that if an idea works successfully and without fail, then the idea

is probably true in the correspondence sense. This view is adopted.

A distinction is helpful at this point between moderate realism and radical relativism. Moderate realism is the view that there is no one absolutely correct reading of a text which is read directly off the text and checked by a direct inspection of the reality the text describes. The text can be from science or theology and concern theoretical entities like electrons or the Goddess. Moderate realism insists that amongst the relative factors that affect the truth of the text and its interpretation is the contingent fact the text is about. Radical relativism agrees with moderate realism that there is no one correct reading of the text that is available by direct access to truth. But radical relativism insists that amongst the relative factors influencing the interpretation there is no truth of the matter no matter how indirectly accessible it may be. Moderate realism agrees with radical relativism in rejecting naive realism's claim that there is a direct access to the correct reading of a text, but differs from radical relativism in holding that despite the influence of various factors on textual interpretation an indirect access to contingent truth is possible.

Taking truth in the weak sense as above, the truth is what some social group accepts. That is, truth is consensus, and a belief is true if it fits into and coheres with the rest of the beliefs in a system. The trouble with this sense of "true" is that it leads to self-refutation. If truth is what is in agreement with the rest of the beliefs in a system, then the view that truth is consensus, radical relativism, if true must be true by consensus. That is, if the radical relativist holds that a belief or view is true because it fits with the rest of the beliefs or views in a system, then the radical relativist's view

of truth is true because it fits with his, the radical relativist's, system. Thus the view that truth is consensus is true for radical relativists, but if I am not a radical relativist, but instead, say, a moderate realist, then this view of truth is not true for me. In short, the radical relativist's view of truth is self-refuting. The objection applies to both McFague and Christ who adopt the pragmatic view of truth, where this is understood in the weak sense of "workability." A radical relativist view of truth like a radical relativist view of morality can lead to problems for their supporters of the self-refuting kind.

What McFague and Christ could do to avoid the foregoing dilemma is to adopt moderate realism as opposed to radical relativism. This moderate realism would include a revised correspondence view of truth. According to this, McFague and Christ are right to reject the Platonic version of the correspondence view of truth. According to the Platonic version, a statement is true if and only if it corresponds to an absolute, ideal, eternally true fact. On the revised correspondence view of truth, a statement is true if and only if it agrees with some existing **contingent** fact. Should the fact ceased to exist, i.e., become past in time, then the statement is false. This is not, as said, the Platonic version of the correspondence view of truth, according to which a fact that becomes past in time merely recedes into the past as a kind of place or position that is earlier than the present. The statement if true remains eternally true. The revised correspondence view of truth says that amongst the factors affecting the truth of a statement is the contingent existence of the fact the statement is true of. Also, the revised view accepts the postmodernist point that

there is no direct access to reality as the naive realist holds, and rather says with moderate realism that we indirectly (causally) know that a statement is probably true if when we act on it as a belief it works. That is, it accepts that one reading of a text is probably correct.

The above comments about realism need to be elaborated to bring out: 1) how it relates to both thinkers, and 2) whether a realist epistemology can be sympathetic to either religious thinker.

How is the idea of an indirect realist epistemology related to both of them? They both support a pragmatic view of truth, and reject the naive realist view of truth. The Platonic version of the correspondence view of truth which holds that we can have direct intellectual access to an eternal truth is also rejected by them. The revised correspondence view of truth and moderate realism adopted herein also reject both the naive realism of the ordinary man and the Platonic view of eternal truth. A statement such as "It is raining now" is true today but tomorrow when it has stopped raining is false, according to the revised correspondence view of truth. The revised view of truth accepts objective correspondence to a contingent fact unlike the Platonic view, but also admits that the pragmatic view of McFague and Christ is important.

Can the revised correspondence view of truth and moderate realism be sympathetic to either thinker? Largely no. They reject realism in science and religion, but accept it for ordinary life. On the last point there is agreement. The key criticism made of their pragmatic view of truth is that it cannot account for the apparent miracle that certain beliefs when acted upon are successful and without fail. A way to account for the success of acting on scientific and religious beliefs is to assume that such beliefs are true in the revised sense of

correspondence. Hence, although pragmatism is a factor in any acceptable view of truth there has also to be a correspondence sense of truth. The revised view of truth is sympathetic to the demands of pragmatism, but seeks for a revised sense of correspondence to account for the fact of pragmatic success.

A Refurbished Design Argument for Goddess Realism

Having addressed some epistemic problems in McFague's and Christ's theologies and suggested solutions to them, their ecological argument of chapter one will be reformulated. Rather than arguing that if we want to preserve the environment we ought to accept models of it which encourage that preservation (which is question begging and morally relative), the revised argument is:

The Goddess exists and is inherent in the natural world,
We ought to respect that which is divine,

Hence, we ought to respect and not exploit the natural world.

The revised ecological ethical argument is objective, being based on an objective premise and a conceptual truth. The key premise is the first one that the Goddess exists and is immanent in the universe. The second premise is a conceptual truth: it would be a contradiction to say that we ought to disrespect the divine.

An argument for the first premise will be outlined that attempts to capture the objectivity of the traditional patriarchal design argument for the existence of God, but whose content is similar to realist claims made by Carol Christ about the Goddess. In her somewhat inconsistent case, statements about the Goddess are to be construed as

pragmatic images, not literally true, except when she speaks as a realist. In the argument presented herein statements about the Goddess are intended as literally true, e.g., that the Goddess exists in the natural world.

Why is an argument from design considered at all? The answer is that unless Christ's hypothesis of the Goddess is defended objectively her ecological ethics founders on the problem of moral relativism. A refurbished design argument for the existence of a Goddess immanent in the natural world and responsible for its order is outlined, after considering some problems with the traditional design argument for God's existence.

It could also be asked: why consider the traditional design arguments for the existence of God at all when philosophical criticism has shown them to be intellectually bankrupt? Given the moral need for some argument in favor of the existence of an immanent Goddess in the natural world, and the difficulties in the traditional design arguments for the existence of God, then a refurbished argument for the Goddess's existence is required that avoids major objections to the traditional design arguments.

Still another way of asking the foregoing question is: if natural theology is, as McFague says, a failed project, then why not simply adopt a theology of nature as she does? It is true that traditional patriarchal theology is a failed project, and especially the argument from design is a failure, but: 1) because the traditional patriarchal design argument is a failure it does not follow logically that all attempts at a design argument must fail, and 2) an attempt at a refurbished Goddess panentheism might succeed where theism failed.

The logic of the overall argument in support of the Goddess's existence is as follows. It will be argued that unless there is a reason for the order in the natural world it would be a miracle that it occurs. The best candidate for a reason amongst chance, the nature of matter, and mind is the latter. Three forms of the classical statement of the design argument are considered and criticized: those of Paley, Newton, and Planck. Following this, an objective version of Christ's Goddess hypothesis is defended that avoids the criticisms.

The order in the natural world either has an explanation, or it has none. If it has no explanation, then it would be a complete fluke that the universe is as orderly as it is if there were no reason for the order. Three explanations are available for the order: chance, the nature of matter, and mind. The order in the universe cannot be due to chance because chance favors disorder, and it would be extremely improbable although not impossible for chance to produce order. If we accept the premise of classical physics that matter is passive, stupid, and unaware, then its nature cannot explain order. Also, the appeal to the nature of matter to explain the order of phenomena leads to micro-models for explanation. The micromodels say that matter consists of small particles of matter that act according to their nature. The explanation of their nature will have to be explained in turn in terms of even finer grained micromatter, and an infinite regress of explanations arises. What is at issue is not the infinity or finiteness of explanation, but rather what counts as an adequate explanation. The point can be expressed by saying that a chain of efficient causes does not adequately explain the order it exhibits. If it is supposed that there is a wider chain of efficient causes that includes the first chain and

which explains it thereby, then this answer fails. For example, it could be supposed that the reason why unsupported heavier than air bodies fall when released is the law of gravity, where this is the wider conformity of all falling bodies in the universe. Although there is a predictive explanation given for the smaller chain of efficient causes when it is included in a wider chain of efficient causes, the wider chain itself stands in need of explanation. Because a wider chain of efficient causes does not adequately explain another smaller chain it includes, such a chain could only be explained by a true cause. Such a cause could be a mind that initiates effects and order from its own free action, intelligence, and awareness. If this brief argument is plausible, then only a mind could adequately explain a chain of efficient causes in nature. The argument could be extended to say that the hierarchical order of efficient causes in the universe must be explained by some originating mind.

There are at least three different forms of the argument from design. The first is an inductive argument from the order in nature to God as its cause. The argument was used by Paley to establish the existence of an anthropocentric God who is a kind of magnified, powerful human agent. The second is an abductive argument used by Newton for the existence of a God embodied in Absolute Time and Space who is responsible for the order in nature. The third is an abductive argument used by Planck for a disembodied God. A final argument, advocated here, is an abductive argument for an embodied Goddess.

An inductive inference is an argument by analogy from a relationship that we experience in everyday life (watchmakers make watches) to a broader relationship that we could observe (God designs universes).

66

An abductive inference is also an argument by analogy from a relationship that we experience in everyday life (mathematicians design computer programs) to a relationship that we cannot in principle experience (God, the supreme mathematician, designed the universe according to mathematical laws). An abductive inference is to a hypothesis.

(1) a. An Inductive Argument for an Embodied God

Paley says:

...in crossing a heath, suppose I pitched my foot against a stone, and were asked how the stone came to be there, I might possibly answer, that for anything I knew to the contrary, it might have lain there forever...

But suppose I find a watch upon the heath, and it should be inquired about how the watch happened to be in that place, I should hardly think of the answer which I had given before — that, for anything I knew, the watch may always have been there.¹⁵

Paley goes on to say that the existence of the watch requires a watchmaker because the arrangement of its parts could not be explained by chance. The analogy Paley sets up is "God is to the universe as the watchmaker is to the watch." An inductive argument goes from a limited to a wider aspect of our experience. Paley's inductive argument goes by way of analogy from the watch-watchmaker relationship to the wider relationship of the universe and God, its designer.

This anthropocentric argument was criticized by Hume. It is an instance of employing what McFague calls the God-of-the-gaps. If some effect is unexplained, then God is invoked as an explanation of the effect, in this case the order of the universe. The effect is soon explained by science, and the God-of-the-gaps explanation becomes redundant. This is how Hume disposes of the standard, anthropocentric form of the design argument, and the criticism is accepted by McFague.

McFague further discusses a historical reason for rejecting the project of a natural theology. It includes two well-known examples of the failure of natural theology to find empirical support in the science of its day. They are those of Paley and Newton. The reason McFague gives for the demise of natural theology after Newton is that:

Needless to say in this day, several hundred years after David Hume and Immanuel Kant devastated the so-called arguments for the existence of God, these traces are often scarcely more than faint trails in the sand.¹⁶

The devastation of the arguments of natural theology for the existence of God included that of the design argument. Besides Hume's and Kant's criticisms of the design argument, there is the objection to such arguments that:

This is a dangerous game, called physico-theology by one interpreter - basing theology on science - an enterprise with a long history of failure...

As Ernan McMullin notes: "Making God a 'God-of-the-gaps' is a risky business. Gap-closing is the business of science. To rest belief in God on the presence of gaps in the explanatory chain is to put religion against science, ultimately..."¹⁷

(1) b. An Abductive Argument for an Embodied God

Newton, like Paley, employed an argument from design for the existence of God. But whereas Paley employed the argument largely in support of natural theology, Newton also used theism as an explanatory hypothesis to understand natural phenomena in his natural philosophy. That is, Newton employed natural theology as the capstone of his physics, and saw in his Principia Mathematica a means of persuading

18

men to believe in the Christian God. He says:

This most beautiful system of sun, planets, and comets could only proceed from the council and dominion of an intelligent and powerful Being...

This Being governs all things, not as the soul of the world, but as Lord over all...

He is eternal and infinite, omnipotent and omniscient; that is, his duration reaches from eternity to eternity; he governs all things and knows all things that are or can be done. He is not eternity or infinity, but eternal and infinite; he is not duration or space, but he endures and is present. He endures forever and is everywhere present; and, by existing always and everywhere, he constitutes duration and space...

All that diversity of natural things which we find suited to different times and places could arise from nothing but the ideas and will of a Being necessarily existing...

There exists an infinite and omnipresent spirit in which matter is moved according to mathematical laws.¹⁹

Certain features of the argument are noteworthy. First, Newton wants to explain the system of nature which his own Principia Mathematica powerfully exhibited. Second, the order in the system could not arise from chance, but it must arise from a being who is not the soul of the world. Newton's God is rather an all powerful, all knowing, eternal cause, "a Lord over all," in Newton's words. Third, the God of Newton does not, unlike the first cause of Planck, inhabit eternity. Rather he inhabits Absolute Time and Space. Considering time, Newton says: "Absolute, true, and mathematical time, of itself, and from its own nature, flows equably without relation to anything external..."²⁰ Absolute Time (and Space) are independent of the sensible, relative time (and space) of everyday experience, the time of past, present, and future, as the terms are ordinarily understood. Being without relation to anything external (Newton's words), there cannot be any causal relations between events and acts in Absolute Time and events and acts in the sensible, relative time of everyday experience. A further feature of Newton's Absolute Time is that the laws of nature which the naturalistic philosopher seeks to know and formulate are deterministic. That is, given a knowledge of the laws and initial conditions the

natural philosopher could like God predict in principle what the future of the universe will be. A final point is that while Newton does not slide down the slope into pantheism, so to speak, he says that God, a spirit, inhabits Absolute Space and Time, which brings him closer to an immanent God than to the transcendent God of Planck.

While Newton's argument does not suffer from the naiveté of Paley's argument, there is a main difficulty in it. This is that the absoluteness of Newton's Absolute Time condemns it to being unknowable via causal relations. Newton's argument for the existence of God, and contrariwise his theistic explanation of the order in the natural world, depend on a causal inference from the order in the sensible, relative time of everyday experience to the intelligence and power of a deity not in that order. But because, in Newton's words, Absolute Time flows equably without relation to anything external it cannot stand in temporal, and hence causal relations, to events and phenomena in sensible, relative time. Without such relations there can be no possible causal inference to God's activity in Absolute Time. There can be at best only a compatibility between God's activity and events in sensible, relative time. But no unique causal relation between God's actions in Absolute Time and observable effects in sensible, relative time is knowable. A multiplicity of gods in Absolute Time each controlling his own little order of events in the universe is equally as good an explanation as is Newton's God hypothesis. The name for this situation is underdeterminism, and it amounts to skepticism about Newton's theism.

(1) c. An Abductive Argument for a Disembodied God

The natural philosopher, Planck, has a recent five step statement of the design argument. Planck says:

As long as there exists a physical science, it has as its highest and most coveted aim the solution of the problem to condense all natural phenomena which have been observed into one simple principle, that allows the computation of past and more especially of future processes from present ones. It is in the nature of the case that this aim has neither been reached today, nor will it ever be completely attained...

Amid the more or less general laws which mark the achievements of physical science during the course of the last centuries, the principle of least action is perhaps that which, as regards form and content, may claim that have come nearest to that ideal final aim of theoretical research...

Planck...connected his quantum theory with the principle of least action and intimated that the action was associated with whole multiples of h , which he designated the "elementary quantum of action." At a later period, after the relationship between the action integral [a summation over the action or angular momentum of a physical system] and quantum theory [a fundamental theory which says that all radiant energy is exchanged in discrete amounts or quanta] had been made more explicit, Planck posed the question as to the more penetrating implications of this situation. [Planck asks:] Can it be that the astonishing simplicity of this relation [between the action integral and the quantum theory] rests once again upon chance? It is becoming more and more difficult to believe this. On the contrary, the impression forces itself upon us with elemental power that Leibniz's principle of least action can afford the key to a deeper understanding of the quantum of action...

In fact, the least-action principle introduces an entirely new idea into the concept of causality: the *causa efficiens*, which operates from the present into the future and makes future situations appear as determined by earlier ones, is joined by the *causa finalis* for which, inversely, the future - namely, a definite goal - serves as the premise from which there can be deduced the development of the processes which lead to this goal.²¹

First, according to Planck's statement of the design argument, all natural phenomena could eventually be explained ideally by subsuming them under a pyramid of natural laws (generalizations about natural phenomena of the form "All A's are B" that permit quantitative predictions to be made about them) that culminate in one single ultimate principle. The simple ultimate principle allows the computation of all past and future events from a knowledge of present events. Second, the

principle of least action is, for Planck, the most likely candidate principle for being the simple ultimate explanatory principle. The principle of least action says that over a reaction path in space-time the path that is an extremum, e.g., a minimum, is the path that the reaction will take. Of all the possible paths through space, a light ray takes the shortest path, which exemplifies the principle of a minimum distance. Third, the principle of least action includes the quantum of action of modern physics, that is, it introduces the idea that changes in the natural world occur only in finite amounts and not in infinitely small amounts as in classical physics. Fourth, the principle of least action introduces into the explanation of events, in addition to efficient causes, final causes. Fifth, the introduction of final causes into the explanation of natural phenomena suggests the presence²² of a rational, purposive will governing the natural world.

Planck's God exists in eternity, but his creative actions cannot be conceived without reference to time. The intelligent cause of the order of natural things is, for Planck, located in eternity. The cause is not active in the sensible, relative time and space of natural things but in eternity. This is the timeless order inhabited by God in his nunc stans, the fixed now. Human agents act in the nunc fluens, the flowing now of the present. The problem with Planck's argument concerns the analogy to human causality. God acts as an intelligent cause in an order devoid of the sensible, relative time and space that we human agents act in. But here is where Planck's analogy breaks down. Human causality involves a human conative effort that occurs in time contiguous to the event it brings about, that precedes the event in time, and that is always in our experience conjoined to the event. But God's

analogous conative cause cannot be related in any of these three required temporal ways to events in the natural order. Hence, the analogy to human causality breaks down, and it becomes incoherent thereby.

(2) An Abductive Argument for an Embodied Goddess

According to Christ's Goddess realism as expressed in the Goddess hypothesis the Goddess exists and is embodied in the natural world. It must be remembered that, for Christ, there is an ambiguity in her view. On the one hand, she, speaking as a belief realist, accepts the objective existence of the Goddess. On the other hand, she speaks as a post-modernist antirealist and denies that Goddess-talk has a referring function at all. Goddess-talk serves rather to express Goddess worshippers commitment to a way of life based on Goddess principles and to persuade others to take up this way of life. In this chapter the realist option is emphasized to avoid the moral problem which Christ's ecofeminist ethics incurs, moral relativism.

The hypothesis of the Goddess is adopted herein for its ability to explain the order in nature as in natural theology, as well as for its ability to make sense of our experience. Christ's statement of the Goddess hypothesis is as follows: "the Goddess is the power of the intelligent embodied love that is the ground of all being." As intelligent she is the rational purposive will governing nature. As creative she is the origin of all creatures and creative processes in the universe. As embodied love she is the source of the agape that grounds environmental ethics. And as the ground of being she is the causal origin of all the order in the natural world. All of these features would flow from her nature as the Great Mother. The difference, of course, be-

tween these characteristics of the Goddess and those in the foregoing statement of Christ is that the characteristics are meant literally and objectively in support of the objective ecological ethics argument of chapter one.

The assumption of panentheism, the Goddess hypothesis, adopted and modified from Christ, avoids the main problems discussed above with the traditional patriarchal design arguments for the existence of God: arguments (1) a - c.

In sum, the problem with Paley's theism is that it is naive. It is bothered by the God-of-the-gaps problem noted by McFague. The explanatory hypothesis of the Goddess does not have this problem because the Goddess is not postulated to be a supernatural efficient cause that explains a phenomenon until the correct naturalistic efficient cause explanation is found. Rather the entire order of efficient causes and effects in sensible, relative time and space is explained by the Goddess's intelligent activity.

The problem with Newton's theistic explanation of the order in nature is that God's causal activity in Absolute Time and Space is without relation to anything external, and hence causal relations cannot be known to hold between God's causal activity and events in the natural world. Skepticism about Newton's theism results. This problem does not exist for the explanatory hypothesis of the Goddess because she acts in the sensible, relative space and time of everyday experience.

The problems with Planck's explanatory theism are that the idea of God's activity in eternity beyond time is incoherent, and that the analogy to a disembodied God is weak. The first problem does not exist for

Goddess panentheism because she acts within the natural order. The second problem does not exist for Goddess panentheism also because the Goddess is embodied in the natural order in terms of her creative activity as the passage of time.

Either the Goddess acts in sensible, relative time and space as an efficient cause, or she acts as a formal-final cause. If she acts as an efficient cause, then she simply acts analogously to the magnified man-God of anthropocentrism, and the problems of Paley's theism follow which McFague criticized as the failed project of natural theology. As a formal-final cause, the Goddess acts in sensible, relative time and space. This view of her causality is not to be construed as consisting of an act of her will followed invariably by an order of efficient effects in the everyday space-time framework. Rather she acts in conjunction with the creative passage of time. The mental in nature consists of temporal relations, and the bodily consists of spatial relations. Also, the view of her causality derives from the nature mysticism of Gunn Allen. The latter says that the Goddess is Thought Woman or the creatrix. The future is the not yet which potentially comes to be. The present is the now or creative flux of Becoming. And the past is that which did exist and whose effects are present. The Goddess as Thought Woman is responsible for the order of creative change in its mental aspects. Also there is the mystery of her existence. She is the source of the existence and mystery of particular things. Her activity is the birthing and creating of finite things in the process of Becoming. Her teleological activity consists in the creation of things as the Great Mother, and her telos is to produce a variety of flourishing things. Her mysterious existential aspect is

the mysterious existential grounding she gives to things, and her mental aspects (not seen as consciousness as in patriarchal philosophies but as temporal structure) are seen in the order of change and the aim which she exhibits in bringing things forth. These claims are all part of the Goddess hypothesis adopted herein, and it is testable as true by its ability to predict our experience as a scientific hypothesis, and its ability to make sense of our experience as a religious hypothesis.

Christ, although speaking in a postmodernist way, says that the Goddess is the ground of being. The expression, "ground of being," is not understood by Christ as saying that God is the cause of the existence of or order in the universe. Rather Christ sees the Goddess as the ground of being in the sense that she gives meaning and value to life. The Goddess hypothesis, for Christ, explains, i.e., gives meaning to, our experience. It does not explain the world's order as does the natural theologies of Paley, Newton and Planck. For Christ, God as the ground of being is not the cause of order, but is the sustainer of her life, makes sense of her experience, and affirms her self-esteem.

In Planck's statement of the design argument it was said that the explanatory, unifying power of extremum principles in physics, which are principles of the simplest explanation, is an expression of divine teleology in nature. Consistent with the Goddess panentheism advocated herein, the ultimate law of everything in physics, expressed as a simplicity principle, is an expression of the teleology of the Goddess. This sketchy account needs to be filled out, preferably in physical theory. If Planck's black body radiation law is the fundamental equation of the old quantum theory, and if the theory is the best candidate for the theory of everything, then Planck's equation could be a description of

the basic flux of Becoming in the universe which shows forth the intelligence, purpose, and creativity of the Great Mother.

A question that might be asked at this point is: how does the Goddess realism supported herein differ from that of Christ in her Goddess religion? It does so in two ways. First, while Christ's Goddess religion is ambiguous between a Goddess realism that affirms her existence and a Goddess antirealism that affirms only the rhetorical use of Goddess-talk, the position supported herein is unambiguously realist. Second, the position is supported by the design argument, which is a form of argument Christ would likely dismiss as patriarchal and modernist.

McFague makes a distinction between a theology of nature and a natural theology. She says:

A theology of nature stands in contrast to a natural theology, which also uses a cosmological perspective but does so in order to support the thesis that God can be known through the creation or, more generally, to find a consonance or harmony between scientific and theological knowledge. Natural theology tries to harmonize (or find points of contact between) belief and knowledge of the world; a theology of nature attempts to reconceive belief in terms of contemporary views of the natural world. A theology of nature does not solicit the help of science to provide a basis for or to confirm faith, but uses the contemporary picture of reality from the sciences of its day as a resource to reconstruct and express the faith.²⁴

A natural theology does what its name suggests: it attempts to use the science of its day to support a belief in God. In Newton's day, his natural philosophy, expressed in the Principia, was used as a basis to support his Christian faith in an intelligent, designer God. A Christian theology of nature does not argue from some facts to the existence of God, rather it reinterprets the Christian canon in the light of recent scientific theory to make the canon relevant to some recent moral issue. McFague seeks an alignment between the common creation story of evolu-

tionary cosmology and the Christian agapistic theology of the world. Classical Christian theology seeks proof of the existence of God, while a feminist theology of nature seeks support from contemporary science to realign the Christian message to make it relevant to today. The ecotheology of the Goddess proposed herein does not seek proof of the existence of God nor does it seek to reform the traditional Christian canon to make it relevant. Rather it seeks to find probabilistic support for a natural theology that in turn supports a relevant ecofeminist theology whose agapistic images address a moral issue.

Finally, McFague discusses a choice between two different models of the natural world. She says:

It is not only that scientific views of reality are metaphorical, as can clearly be seen in the mechanistic (machine model) [of Newton] and organismic (body model) [of Whitehead] views...

The feminist criticism accepts both the political and the empirical character of science; its criticism aims at a greater, not a lesser, objectivity for science by broadening the base of who participates in setting scientific agendas so that science might be emancipatory, liberating, beneficial for more people - and for the planet that supports us all.²⁵

Ignoring her remarks about the ideology of science, the mechanistic view of the universe sees it as a large machine following deterministic laws with some quantum play in the joints, while the organismic view sees the universe as a large, evolving organism. Both views are simply relative perspectives for McFague. The choice between them is a pragmatic one, for her: which view enhances people's lives in an egalitarian way and the planet as well. The view that does, she thinks, is the organismic one, and not the mechanistic one which followed on and replaced Christian monarchical theology for purposes of exploitation and oppression.

The preferable choice, for McFague, is clear, and so is the prag-

matic criterion for making the choice. While her pragmatic criterion is, in my view, a necessary one given the ideological character of the two models, there remains the issue of whether the choice can be made solely on the basis of a moral criticism. There is, in my view, the related issue of the intellectual status of the two views. The mechanistic world view, as the successor to the monarchical world view, is intellectually bankrupt as the history of twentieth century physics²⁶ shows. But the rival world view, the organismic, is still largely a philosophical alternative waiting in the margins for its scientific²⁷ formulation and acceptance despite claims to the contrary. This formulation would be neither acceptable to mathematical patriarchal physicists nor to feminist postmodernists. Like modernist physics it would accept objective truth as part of its world view, but it would stress the holistic and contingent character of things. Like feminist postmodernism it would accept that truth is pragmatic in character, but it would stress that objective truth supports pragmatic truth. As said, it seems that we cannot return to the "good old days" of the Goddess religion or a reenchanting middle ages, but that the reenchantment of the natural world would have to consist in an improved view of and value imparted to that world. The background world view could consist of an organismic view of the universe as the creative activity and creatures of the Goddess, herself immanent in sensible, relative time and space. The foreground view could consist of a value system based on the activity of the Goddess from whose nature the ecological value of the natural world would flow. The background world view would have to be expressed in the hardest of hard contemporary languages, that of mathematical physics (not the mechanistic world view), which is what patriarchal

chal natural philosophers understand and respect. It is not enough that the spirit of the ecological law be upheld, but the letter of the law as well. At least, as McFague says, while the effort to do so may be in vain, the effort should be made if only to look at oneself in the mirror in the morning.

CHAPTER FOUR - REFORMIST VERSUS RADICAL ECOFEMINIST THEOLOGIES

Sallie McFague's Reformist Theology

The fourth topic in McFague's ecofeminist theology for consideration is her reformist Christianity. She says that there is a residue within the Christian tradition that is opposed to patriarchal oppression, and which could serve as a source for the liberation of the natural world from that oppression. McFague thinks that Jesus's parables use metaphorical imagery to shock people into seeing things in a new way. In particular, she thinks that if nature is thought of as the new poor, then Jesus's concern for the poor could be extended metaphorically to nature.¹ She sees the root-metaphor of Christianity, the basic metaphor that is central to all others, as that of the kingdom of God. She says: "I would call 'the kingdom of God' the root-metaphor of Christianity which is supported and fed by many extended metaphors, the various parables."² The claim that the root-metaphor of Christianity is the kingdom of God may seem a strange one in the light of her rejection of the patriarchal image of God the ruler and king. The claim that God is a father may also lead to patriarchal imagery. An important claim she makes about the use of the father metaphor for God is that it does not contradict the correlative use of female imagery. She says:

Such literalism and naiveté [seeing God as an old man with a white beard] has also contributed to the refusal to accept complementary and varying models for God: if, for instance, God is father, then God cannot be mother. The metaphorical "is and is not" should be sufficient to negate such identification...³

McFague avoids attributing literal attributes to God as, for example, saying in a contradictory way that God is a father and a mother, but she does say that we can consistently relate to God as a father and as a mother. This relationship way of speaking creates a problem.

McFague summarizes her reformist Christian position in this way:

I am a white, middle-class, American Christian woman writing to first-world, privileged, mainstream Christians...

I found in my own journey as a Christian, a feminist, and an amateur ecologist that the body kept emerging in different ways as an often neglected but very important reality, seemingly a basic one.⁴

Her position as a Christian reformist feminist is that of someone who argues that she can help reform the ecologically harmful ideology of patriarchal Christianity using certain metaphors from the Christian tradition. In contrast, Christ, while sharing many views similar to those of McFague, appeals to the non-Christian tradition of the Goddess as a basis for helping liberate the planet from the harmful effects of patriarchal oppression.

Carol Christ's Radical Theology

It is the revolutionary aspect of the Christ's ecofeminist theology that differs most from McFague's reformist theology. Christ, referring to McFague on the difference, says:

However, McFague limits the iconoclastic power of the image of the earth as the body of God when she interprets it through the Christian doctrine of the incarnation and the image of the body of Christ. Not insisting that the earth is (also) the body of Goddess, she leaves us free to assume (as our culture has taught us to do) that the "body of God" is somehow superior to female bodies.⁵

Christ, like her fellow radical feminist Mary Daly, is convinced that the core symbolism of Christianity is sexist, that it is suffused with the ideology of patriarchal Christianity. That is, just introducing the

metaphor that the natural world is the body of God (and Jesus) carries with it all the oppressive baggage of patriarchy. Christ says:

Daly's conclusion that the essential core of Christianity is

irreformably patriarchal resulted from a shift in focus of her analysis from ontology to symbology..

She argues that, not only the gender, but also the character and attributes of the Christian God are patriarchal...

Judging from Christian history and the life of prayer and ritual in the church, it would seem more likely that Daly is right about what really is the core vision of the church.⁶

If the core symbolism of Christianity thus identified influences people to think and act oppressively towards the natural world, then, as Christ says, McFague has a problem in appealing to the body of God as an image for environmental protection. A resolution of the dispute will be suggested later in this chapter by coming down on Christ's side with some modifications of her postmodernist views.

Christ further describes the reformist/radical feminist difference, and offers some critical discussion of it. She says:

Feminist theologians may be divided into two groups, the reformists and the revolutionaries. The reformists, like their sixteenth century forbearers, claim allegiance to an "essential core" of Christian truth, expressed in such statements as "in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female."

The feminist revolutionaries, in contrast, believe that Christianity is not reformable. For them the essential core of Christianity is the system in which the divine power is personified as male, as Father, Son, Lord, and King.⁷

The quotation describes the foundational difference between the reformists, like McFague, and the revolutionaries, like Christ, as a difference over what the core symbolism of the Christian tradition is and influences people to do. By implication this symbolism determines the Christian ethos.

There is perhaps a need to clarify further what the basic difference is between McFague and Christ. Most of the points discussed in

the first three chapters are more similar than different between them. But there is a basic difference between them concerning the need to either reform or abandon Christianity in order to achieve an ecological sensibility. As they express the matter there are two elements in opposition, one patriarchal and oppressive, and one feminist and liberating. McFague believes that both elements are present in Christianity, but thinks that if the patriarchal element was eliminated the agapistic element that remains would still be Christian and emancipatory. Christ thinks that the oppressive and the agapistic elements in Christianity cannot be reconciled, and that with the oppressive patriarchal element eliminated that only a non-Christian, pagan religion could free the natural world from the oppression. For Christ, the core symbols of Christianity are sexist and need to be abandoned. For McFague, the core symbols are not sexist, and enough remains of agape in the residual elements to provide the basis for an environmental ethics.

There is perhaps, besides the historical and verbal issues, a moral issue. The historical issue is whether both patriarchal and agapistic elements have co-existed in tension throughout the history of Christianity. The verbal issue is whether the term "Christian" means "patriarchal and derived from Christ," "agapistic and derived from Christ," or both. I cannot decide the historical issue, which is not at stake here anyway. The issue, whatever its nature, concerns the future and not the past. The verbal issue is a matter of what we want to call Christian, and is not of interest. What is at issue is the moral issue of whether patriarchal or feminist ethics promote an ecological sensibility. If patriarchal ethics promotes the oppression of the environment, then this is sufficient to warrant its rejection. And this is not affected

by the historical or verbal issues. If feminist ethics promotes the life enhancing aspects of the environment, then this fact is sufficient to warrant its acceptance.

The significant issue, as I see it, is whether the examples McFague cites from Jesus and Paul serve the agapistic ethics that promotes an environmental sensibility. If they do, then they can add to Christ's image of the Goddess and to McFague's metaphor of God the mother. There are two courses to take at this point. One is the course described by Elizabeth Johnson which is to separate the issues of sex/gender and⁸ oppression/agape ethical issues. That is, to avoid linking the male as such to oppression, and the female as such to agape. The other course is to link sex/gender to distinct moral values. The approach assumed herein is the second. It is assumed that there is a significant link between biological sex traits, sexual psychologies, the freedom to choose gender roles, and resulting moral values. It is my assumption that the image of the Goddess promotes an agapistic ethics because it is the nature of the female, not the feminine, to both create and nurture, and that this is not in the character of the male. This course entails rejecting the liberal-existentialist assumption, which probably derives from the older Christian imago dei doctrine, that one is free to adopt whatever moral system one wants to. A further implication is that if the maleness of Jesus and Paul interferes with the affirmation of an agapistic ethics, then the examples appealed to by McFague must be rejected.

Discussion of Some Difficulties in their Reformist/Radical Theologies

Some Difficulties in McFague's Reformist Theology

Some difficulties exist in McFague's reformist Christian theology and its associated ecological sensibility, which may be avoided if some revision of Christ's religion of the Goddess is accepted. McFague says:

It is therefore a mistake to focus on God the father as a limited model for talk about God; rather it is patriarchalism - the expanded, intransigent model radical feminists take to be the root-metaphor of Christianity - that is at issue...

In the monarchical model, God is distant from the world, relates only to the human world, and controls the world through domination and benevolence...

One can, for instance, include many possibilities: we can envision relating to God as a father and mother, to a healer and a liberator, to the sun and to a mountain...⁹

In this quotation McFague distinguishes between the model of God the king and God the father. The first is the model of patriarchal Christianity, and the second is a model she prefers. It should be remembered, however, that McFague talks of God as he/she, and that for her as a pluralist many metaphors are necessary for talking about God. The model of God the king, for McFague, is idolatrous, irrelevant, and oppressive. She thinks that the model of God the father is liberating and sees God as just. It can disrupt the negative moral qualities of the king model. She admits that the model of God as father is a minor one within Christianity. She cites some examples in the Bible which exhibit the just side of God: Paul's talk of there being neither male nor female in the new body of Christians, the Genesis story of God's making men and women in El's image, and Jesus's table guests, parables, and life. She clearly prefers the fatherly model. Although the major model of God in the Bible is the monarchical one, she thinks that the historical model of God the father could serve as a source of new metaphors for a disruptive, liberating theology. As models they are metaphors for her.

While McFague is likely correct in her claim that there is a source of useful metaphors in this minor tradition, there is reason to believe, in my view, that she would be better off accepting the Goddess tradition as a source of ecological models. At least, while criticism would probably not persuade her to change her position from the Christian to the Goddess religion, the latter may be a better ecological theology than is McFague's reformist theology. She says that only history will decide the reformist vs. radical issue, and Christ agrees. Nevertheless, some difficulties exist in McFague's reformist theology. The model of God the king is the predominant one in patriarchal Christianity, and is in tension with the subordinate model of God the father. McFague could say here that there is no contradiction between these metaphors because as metaphors they are only claims about relating to God, and all metaphors having the "is" and "is not" character are in tension anyway. They are not concepts and, in her view, cannot be in contradiction. She says that metaphors express some aspect of our experience of relating to God (her critical realism), but surely metaphors expressing a relationship to God require some character of their relata. If we are his children in the relationship of his being our heavenly father, and our experiences of relating to him are as to a kingly and fatherly term of the relationship, then he must have some kingly and fatherly traits if he is related to us in a kingly and fatherly way. The point, if correct, would restore the tension and contradiction between the metaphors of God the king and God the father. McFague, it appears, cannot escape the conceptual problems in her theology by appealing to different experiences of relating to God.

A further way of indicating the seriousness of the problem in Mc-

Fague's reformist theology is to consider her view of the root-metaphor of Christianity. She says:

An example of the movement from parable toward conceptual thought can be illustrated briefly by the career of "the kingdom of God." I would call "the kingdom of God" the root-metaphor of Christianity which is supported and fed by many extended metaphors, the various parables. No one parable is adequate as a way of seeing the kingdom, and all the parables together undoubtedly are not either, but they are all that is provided.¹⁰

McFague says that the root-metaphor, the basic metaphor that defines the Christian tradition, is that of the kingdom of God. And she remains as a reformist within that tradition hoping that the tradition has the resources for its own renewal. The metaphor of the kingdom of God, whatever its intent, strongly suggests that God is the king and ruler over his earthly realm, and the metaphor carries with it all the patriarchal associations of hierarchical dualism which McFague rejects as a reformist feminist. The metaphor, if it is the root-metaphor of Christianity, thus strongly suggests that Christianity is basically monarchical and patriarchal in character, and that it cannot be reformed as McFague proposes. The problem could, if not solved, be sufficient to require her to abandon the project of reforming Christianity and eliminating its oppressive character.

Further, even the metaphor of God the father may be oppressive, carrying a male association as it does. Whatever positive associations the metaphor has it derives from that of the image of the mother, and hence is redundant.

A move that could clear her position of the difficulty would be to drop her reformist Christian theology and accept the Goddess religion of Christ. The metaphor of the Goddess could support an ecological ethics as it does in Christ's ecological theology, and it could capture

those traits of the father which McFague wants to stress in God. If this move were made, then the model of God the father, as said, would become superfluous. McFague's examples of Jesus, Paul, etc., then might be consistent with the model of the Goddess whose traits are those McFague stresses in God. At least, the moral traits of agape could be recovered, while the patriarchal traits could be ignored. Christ says:

However, McFague limits the iconoclastic power of the image of the earth as the body of God when she interprets it through the Christian doctrine of the incarnation and the image of the body of Christ. Not insisting that the earth is (also) the body of Goddess, she leaves us free to assume (as our culture has taught us to do) that the "body of God" is somehow superior to female bodies. When the earth is the body of Goddess, the radical implications of the image are more fully realized.¹¹

By not adopting the image of the earth as the body of the Goddess McFague, according to Christ, runs the risk of contributing to the oppression of the earth, and to the wider natural world which is regarded as being just material for our use.

Some Issues for Goddess Religion

Some issues exist for the Goddess religion option. First, there is the danger in the Goddess religion which is called crossing. This is the problem that if the male symbolism of the divine were replaced by female symbolism then this would substitute one oppressive ideology
¹²
 for another. Second, there is the issue of whether the Goddess religion
¹³
 is relevant to our times or is obsolescent.

The danger of crossing is described by various feminist theologians in the following way:

One of the tasks of feminist spirituality and theology is to claim the beauty, value, and power of female bodies and the experience which culture has designated as female. This direction has been pursued by feminist revolutionaries such as Collins, Washburn, and

myself, and by the women in the feminist spirituality movement. The revaluation of the female body and the so-called feminine qualities raises the specter of a reversion to dualistic thinking, which may be why Daly does not pursue it...

"Crossing" refers to a notable tendency among oppressed groups to attempt to change or adapt the ideological tools of the oppressor, so that they can be used against him for the oppressed...

A second path into ecofeminism is exposure to nature-based religion, usually that of the Goddess. In the mid-1970's many radical/cultural feminists experienced the exhilarating discovery, through historic and archeological sources, of a religion that honored the female and seemed to have as its "good book" nature itself. We were drawn to it like a magnet, but only, I feel, because both of those features were central. We would not have been interested in "Yahweh with a skirt," a distant, detached, domineering godhead who happened to be female.¹⁴

The danger these various feminist theologians refer to in the Goddess religion is that once the patriarchal ideology of dominance and oppression is replaced by the religion of the Goddess a similar dominance and oppressive rule will prevail in her name.

One response to the danger, by Daly, is that there once was a time during which the Goddess ruled and there was as a consequence an egalitarian society in which patriarchal oppression did not exist. Daly says:

As women who are outside the Christian church inform ourselves of evidence supporting the existence of ancient matriarchy and of evidence indicating that the Gods of patriarchy are indeed contrived, pale derivatives and reversals of the Great Goddess of an earlier period, the fear of mere "crossing" appears less appropriate and perhaps even absurd. There is also less credibility allowable to the notion that "Goddess" would function like "God" in reverse, that is, to legitimate an oppressive "female-dominated" society, if one is inclined to look seriously at evidence that matriarchal society was not structured like patriarchy, that it was non-hierarchical. Would "Goddess" be likely to function oppressively, like "God"? Given the present situation of women, the danger is not imminent. "Would it function that way in the future?" My inclination is to think not, but it is not my intention to "prove" this point at this time.¹⁵

Daly's response to the danger of crossing is the claim that in the ancient matriarchy of Europe uncovered by Gimbutas and others there was

an egalitarian society within which male centered oppression was non-existent. The trouble with the reply is not that it rests on archeological claims, but that these claims are extremely controversial. It was observed by Naomi Goldenberg that when Gimbutas spoke at a largely male meeting of archeologists she received scant credibility, while a male speaker making less interesting and controversial claims¹⁶ was well received. The claims of Gimbutas concerning the existence and character of the ancient European matriarchy are so politicized that there seems to be no way in which evidence for or against its existence could prevail over the opposing party lines of feminism and patriarchalism. A cynical remark that describes the issue is: "...not an ontology of truth but a politics of truth is what is demanded today."¹⁷

A second response to the problem of crossing for the Goddess religion is to say that the issue between the reformist and the radical feminist theologians will be settled in time.¹⁸ While this response is probably correct, is there anything positive that can be said about the problem of crossing for the Goddess religion? The reply that will be made rests on certain assumptions which will be admitted but not defended. The response is to make a distinction between what are called¹⁹ female and feminine traits. Female traits are those biologically associated with the mother, while feminine traits are those associated stereotypically with the female by society. If the biological traits, the female traits, associated with the Goddess really characterize the female, then they would tend to remove the crossing problem. The problem arises from assuming that if the female, the Goddess in this case, is the model for ethical behavior, then somehow the oppression associated with patriarchal rule will result. This assumption is valid only

if it is also assumed that the Goddess religion would include a return to the patriarchal values of rape, genocide, and war identified by
²⁰
 Daly. But given the traits associated with the female, the Goddess, these traits and the values they entrain would not result. Rather different values such as those of power, justice, and love would result,
²¹
 according to Daly. These values in turn would produce not oppression but equality. The Goddess would thus act as the validation of an ecological ethics, which assumes that she exists as immanent in nature and that she has the positive traits identified by Daly.

An objection to the foregoing is this. An appeal to female traits is an expression of what are only stereotypes, and there is no basis in fact for such a defense of an ecological ethics.

The objection could be met in this way. There is a need to avoid a hierarchical dualism carried over from patriarchy. This is the dualism of freedom and determinism. On the one hand, men are held to be free because they are created by God in his image, and according to the imago dei doctrine men like God have infinite freedom of will. On the other hand, there is biological determinism. Women are more susceptible to this side of the doctrine because it is denied that they are created in the image of God. The distinction between female traits and feminine stereotypes tends to such an extreme dualism of male freedom and female determinism. It is my claim that given some biological determinism there is possibly some causal influence on female ways of thinking, feeling and behavior, that is, that there is a distinctive female psychology. The claim allows that there is a similar causal influence of male biological traits on male thinking, feeling and behavior, i.e., that there is a distinctive male psychology. The causal influence view

is not a full blown determinism, which is one extreme of patriarchal dualism. Gender roles, accordingly, would not just be freely chosen nor would they be determined solely by one's sexual biology. Given a definitive female nature, then it is reasonable to attribute to the sex the values which Daly does attribute to women. Further, if this is so, and if certain traits are desirable and others are not, then the traits stressed by Daly are reasonably linked to the Goddess and to her existence in the natural world.

It is maintained herein that there is a definite link between biological sex traits and gender roles that people act out in society. What must be done is to steer a middle course between the two patriarchal extremes of imago dei freedom and determinism. The relation between sexual traits and female/male psychologies, as they influence our gender roles could be researched. The strategy, accordingly, pursued herein is to issue a promissory note concerning these issues. Until relevant data are available, all questions are open. In the meantime, the assumption will be made that sexual psychology does influence the choices we make in acting out certain gender roles. A middle course is thus taken between the extreme sides of the patriarchal dualism.

A further problem for the Goddess religion is raised by Larry Shinn. The problem concerns the simple one-to-one causal correspondence between the image of the Goddess and the resultant behavior of her believers. Shinn does not question the claim that there is a causal relation between our models and our behavior, but he rather questions the particular causal relation assumed by Christ to hold between the image of the Goddess and the behavior of her believers. Shinn says:

For both Christ and Gross, the Goddess provides value and meaning for women because she is female. Whatever the qualifications offered (Christ's symbolic diversity and Gross's bisexual context for the Goddess), it is clear that the logic of divine symbol/human status correspondence according to gender assumed by Christ and Gross in their Goddess solution just as Daly, Christ, and other revolutionaries make this link in their statement of the theological problem. A brief portrayal of the most famous Goddesses in India can assist us in evaluating the gender-correspondence assumption that underlies revolutionary feminist theologians' statements of both the male-symbol problem and the Goddess solution. More importantly, Kali can teach us much about the religious dimensions of symbols.²²

Shinn's objection is directed against Christ's assumption of a simple one-to-one causal correspondence between the image of the Goddess and the behavior of her believers. Shinn's criticism of the assumption is the counter-example of the Indian Goddess Kali. Shinn cites various traits of the Goddess including: dangerous, impetuous, sexy, vengeful,²³ and violent - all arising from her dark side. The answer to the counter-example is partly supplied by Shinn himself who remarks: "...the character of Kali we see in myth and image may be understood overall as²⁴ benign." If the good traits of Kali outweigh the bad overall, then perhaps there is a reliable causal relationship between the image of the Goddess and the example she sets and the behavior of her believers. A further response to the counter-example is to deny that the Goddess is evil at all, and to say that these evil traits are projected onto Kali by the male psyche. If this move is resisted, then Shinn's counter-example raises the problem of evil: if God/Goddess is good, then whence comes evil? To answer this question would require a theodicy, a theology which explains the ways of God/Goddess to people. This task clearly cannot be undertaken here. It suffices, perhaps, to say that if the Goddess as the Great Mother is both creatrix and nurturer, then it is unlikely that she is oppressive in her ways, or that her example

would sanction oppressive behavior.

Hinsdale has a criticism of what she calls radical feminism, which applies to Christ's Goddess religion. Hinsdale says:

Radical feminism embraces the view that the biologically based ideology of women being closer to nature is the root cause of domination of woman by men...

Such feminists celebrate the life experience of the female ghetto and emphasize "women's ways of knowing" which involves intuition, caring, feelings, spiritual or mystical experiences, and the integration of these experiences into feminist theory and epistemology...

Radical feminism tends to ignore race and class issues and fails to see the extent to which women's oppression is grounded in concrete diverse social structures. It also perpetuates dualistic, hierarchical thinking, since it comes down in favor of one side of the nature/culture dualism.²⁵

In these remarks Hinsdale includes two criticisms of a radical ecofeminism such as Christ's. The first criticism is that the radical feminist who says that women are close to nature and that their specific experience should serve as a basis for a feminist epistemology and world view unwittingly allows for the oppression of women. Christ does appeal to women's experiences and does stress the analogy of the earth and women. This, Hinsdale says, is because the radical feminist like Christ accepts an essentialist account of women as a hangover from patriarchy. This is the view that women are closer to nature than men. Hinsdale says that the view that women have a specific essence makes the radical feminist insensitive to the diversity of different women's groups and races, and so enhances their oppression by imposing on them some particular image of what the essence of women is: that of white, middle class, North American women. It is true that Christ does emphasize the closeness of women to the natural world and speaks of empathetic scholarship which is feminism's method as opposed to the ethos of objectivity of patriarchy. But it is not necessarily the case that the

radical ecofeminist approach to these issues will lead to the oppression of non-white women. What Christ and other radical feminists see is that the oppression of women and the natural world are linked and that the liberation of one by challenging the ideology of patriarchy is linked to the liberation of the other. Christ, for her part, has chosen to write about the liberation of the natural world, but is hardly unaware of the link between it and that of women in general. It may be true that there is a danger in concentrating too much on the subject of nature's liberation and neglecting that of other oppressed groups. But this is not necessarily the case, and could be readily corrected, while remembering that the various forms of oppression and liberation are linked.

The second criticism is an odd one. It is that by concentrating on the women-nature link the radical feminist is driven to promote the oppression of women because of nature/culture dualism. Logically, if one did accept that culture is superior to nature, then it would follow that women were inferior and must be controlled by men as the bearers of culture. But Christ would hardly accept the nature/culture dualism and its value aspect. She clearly sees that the oppression of nature and women are linked, and would not accept the above characterization of radical feminism. She rejects the men/women value dualism, and although she accepts that women are closer to nature than men, she is not committed, as Hinsdale, alleges, to the subjugation of women.

26

McFague makes a further criticism of the Goddess religion that applies to Christ's theology. McFague says:

One of the basic difficulties with contemporary Goddess religion is that it is anachronistic: as Reuther and James among others point out, Goddess religion is agrarian religion, thriving in cultures

prior to the time when human beings were fully cognizant of the role played by the male in generation.²⁷

The criticism is that Goddess religion is a throwback to a past time, that it is not possible to restore this golden age, and that it is not relevant to our times. Apart from an appeal to the patriarchal myth of progress, the criticism has been answered previously. The answer was given in relation to the need to reenchant the natural world, or in other words, the need to speak the language of the Goddess religion in the language of the discursive thought of today. The criticism clearly presupposes that poetry, prose, etc., are not relevant today, which is a positivist, patriarchal view. Further, in the form of the Goddess religion sketched herein it was said that the Goddess religion must be expressed at least partly in the language of a discursive theology. And this discursive language requires an objective view of truth, support from a viable natural philosophy (physics), and compatibility with an objective philosophy. Finally, it can be added that the myth of the golden age of the Goddess, whether true or not, could function to supply examples, icons, as models of people's behavior in an enlightened, liberated society of the future. The rhetorical use by Christ of the symbols of the Goddess as creative and as mother is what feminists support, and what surely must be included in any acceptable theology of God/Goddess. At least, feminists know what they want, and a philosophically stronger case would help them to attain it.

CONCLUSIONS - The overall conclusion is that the ecological crisis, which is driven in part by an oppressive Christian ideology, could be relieved in part by adopting an ecofeminist theology of nature. This theology of nature is exemplified in McFague's and Christ's ecofeminist theologies of nature. But at least four modifications would have to be made: 1) the problem of moral relativism could be solved if it were assumed that the value of the natural world derives from the presence in it of an immanent Goddess, 2) the immanence of the Goddess would have to be seen not as embodiment, but as the temporal passage of time showing forth the mystery, creativity, and telos of the Goddess as the Great Mother, 3) the postmodernist antirealism in their theologies would have to be replaced by a combination of a Goddess realism and a metaphorical agapistic ethics, and 4) the radical ecofeminist approach of Christ is preferable to the reformist one of McFague.

REFERENCES

Introduction

1. L. White Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," Science, 10 March 1967, v.155, no. 3767, 1205.
Also, J.A. Livingston, One Cosmic Instant, (Toronto: McClland and Stewart, 1973), chapters 10 and 11.
2. Genesis, 1:26, and 28.
Psalms, 8:6.
3. J. Passmore, Man's Responsibility for Nature, (London: Duckworth, 1974).
4. G. Renou, An Essay on a New Philosophy of Nature, (Hicksville: Exposition Press, 1975), chapter 1.
F.A. Schaeffer, Pollution and the Death of Man: The Christian View of Ecology, (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1970).
S. McFague, Models of God, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), chapter 4, and The Body of God, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), chapter 6.
E. Johnson, She Who Is, (New York: Crossroad, 1992).
5. M. Daly, "Feminist PostChristian Introduction," to The Church and the Second Sex, (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1975), and Beyond God the Father, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1974).
C. Christ, "The New Feminist Theology: A Review of the Literature," Religious Studies Review, v.3, n.4, Oct.1977, 203-212.
N. Goldenberg, Changing of the Gods: Feminism and the End of Traditional Religions, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979).
6. Christ, "The New Feminist Theology: A Review of the Literature."
Daly, "Feminist PostChristian Introduction."

Chapter One

1. S. McFague, Models of God, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 68-69.
2. I. Barbour, Myths, Models and Paradigms: A Comparative Study in Science and Religion, New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 156. Quoted in McFague, Models of God, 63.
3. McFague, Models of God, IX.
4. McFague, The Body of God, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 132-133. Models of God, 95.
5. McFague, Models of God, 33. Metaphorical Theology, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 42.

6. McFague, "Models of God for an Ecological Era: God as Mother of the Universe," in Physics, Philosophy, and Theology: A Common Quest for Understanding, ed. by R.J. Russell et al., (Vatican City State: Vatican Observatory, 1988), 252.
7. McFague, The Body of God, 22-23.
8. C.P. Christ, Rebirth of the Goddess, (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1997), 160.
9. Christ, Rebirth of the Goddess, 99.
10. R. Hall, "Ecofeminist Theology: Feminism, Ecology, and the Divine as Female," M.A. Thesis, Carleton University, 1993, chapter one, especially 9-16.

V. Plumwood, Feminism and the Mastery of Nature, (London: Routledge, 1993), chapter 2.
11. Christ, Rebirth of the Goddess, XV and 158.
12. Christ, Laughter of Aphrodite, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 225.
13. A.M. Jaggar, "Feminist Ethics: Projects, Problems, Prospects," in Feminist Ethics, ed. by C. Card, (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1991), 93-94, and 94.
14. K.M. Sands, "Uses of the Thea(o)logian," Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion, 8/1, Spring 1997, 24-25.
15. Sands, "Uses of the Thea(o)logian," 25, and 26.
16. J.B. Callicott, "Intrinsic Value, Quantum Theory, and Environmental Ethics," in In Defense of the Land Ethic, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 157.
17. Callicott, "Intrinsic Value, Quantum Theory, and Environmental Ethics," in In Defense of the Land Ethic, 161-162.
18. Callicott, "Hume's Is/Ought Dichotomy and the Relation of Ecology to Leopold's Land Ethic," in In Defense of the Land Ethic, 126.
19. Callicott, "Intrinsic Value, Quantum Theory, and Environmental Ethics," In Defense of the Land Ethic, 158.
20. P. Gunn-Allen, The Sacred Hoop, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), 13-14.
21. McFague, Body of God, 247, n.28.
22. McFague, Body of God, 121.

23. D.J. Bromell, "Sallie McFague's "Metaphorical Theology,"" Journal of the American Academy of Religion, LXI/3, 488.
24. Bromell, "Sallie McFague's "Metaphorical Theology,"" 488, In A. Wilder quotation.

Chapter Two

1. McFague, The Body of God, 144, 20, and 152.
2. McFague, The Body of God, 149-150.
3. McFague, Metaphorical Theology, 124-125.
4. McFague, Models of God, 83, and The Body of God, 135.
5. Christ, Rebirth of the Goddess, 30, 106, and 91.
6. Christ, Rebirth of the Goddess, 91, and XV.
7. I. Barbour, Religion in an Age of Science, (San Francisco: Harper, 1990), 258, and 259. Barbour discusses Jantzens' position.
8. Barbour, Religion in an Age of Science, 258.
9. G. Jantzen, God's World, God's Body, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), chapters 4 and 5.
10. I. Newton, Newton's Philosophy of Nature: Selections from his Writings, ed. H.S. Thayer, (New York: Hafner, 1974), 17, and 43. See also, J.E. McGuire, "Predicates of Pure Existence: Newton on God's Space and Time," in Philosophical Perspectives on Newtonian Science, ed. by P.Bricker et al, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 93.
11. McFague, The Body of God, 133-134.
12. G. Ryle, The Concept of Mind, (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1949). J.J.C. Smart, Philosophy and Scientific Realism, (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), 92-105. H. Putnam, Reason, Truth and History, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1981, chapter 4.
13. McFague, The Body of God, 143.
14. S. Alexander, Space, Time and Deity, (New York: Dover, 1966), v.II, 38.
15. McFague, Models of God, 97-123.
16. McFague, The Body of God, 142.
17. McFague, The Body of God, 143.

Chapter Three

1. McFague, "Imaging a Theology of Nature: the World as God's Body," in Liberating Life, ed. by C. Birch et al, ((New York: Orbis Books, 1990), 208, and The Body of God, 88 and 93.
2. T. Reynolds, "Two McFagues: Meaning, Truth, and Justification in Models of God," Modern Theology, v.11, n.3, July 1995, 304.
3. McFague, Metaphorical Theology, 132.
4. C. Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," in Reader in Comparative Religion, ed. by W. Lessa et al, (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 81.
5. Christ, Rebirth of the Goddess, XV.
6. Christ, Rebirth of the Goddess, 33-34, and 35-36.
7. Christ, Rebirth of the Goddess, 37, and 37-38.
8. Christ, "Embodied Thinking, Reflections on Feminist Theological Method," Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion, 5/1, Spring 1989, 13, 14, and 15.
9. S.G. Davaney, "Problems with Feminist Theory: Historicity and the Search for Sure Foundations," in Embodied Love, ed. by P. Cooley, (San Francisco: Harper, 1977), 95, n.9.
10. Davaney, "Problems with Feminist Theory: Historicity and the Search for Sure Foundations," 79-80.
11. Reynolds, "Two McFagues: Meaning, Truth, and Justification in Models of God," 295.
12. Reynolds, "Two McFagues: Meaning, Truth, and Justification in Models of God," 292, and 293.
13. Barbour, Religion in an Age of Science, 79.
14. D. Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature, 2nd edition, ed by L.A. Selby-Bigge and P.H. Nidditch, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 66-67.
15. W. Paley, Natural Theology, in B.L. Clarke, "The Argument from Design," American Journal of Theology and Philosophy, v.1, Summer 1980, 101.
16. McFague, The Body of God, 74.
17. McFague, The Body of God, 75, and 236 n.28.
18. Newton, Newton's Philosophy of Nature: Selections from His Writings, 46.

19. Newton, Newton's Philosophy of Nature: Selections from his Writings, 42, 43 and 44.
J. Brooke, "The God of Isaac Newton," in Let Newton Be, ed. J. Fauvel, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 172.
20. Newton, Newton's Philosophy of Nature: Selections from his Writings, 17.
21. M. Planck, in W. Yourgrau and S. Mandelstam, Variational Principles in Dynamics and Quantum Theory, (Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders, 1968), 164, 166, and 165.
22. Planck, in Variational Principles in Dynamics and Quantum Theory, 165.
23. Christ, Rebirth of the Goddess, XV.
24. McFague, The Body of God, 65-66.
25. McFague, The Body of God, 94, and 95.
26. J. Horgan, The End of Science, (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1996), chapters 3 and 4.
R. Morris, The Nature of Reality, (New York: Noonday Press, 1987).
P. Davies and J. Gribbin, The Matter Myth, (New York, Simon & Schuster, 1992).
27. Barbour, Religion in an Age of Science, 220.
28. McFague, The Body of God, 208.

Chapter Four

1. McFague, The Body of God, 164-165.
2. McFague, Metaphorical Theology, 26-27.
3. McFague, Metaphorical Theology, 97.
4. McFague, The Body of God, VIII, and 84.
5. Christ, Rebirth of the Goddess, 90.
6. Christ, "The New Feminist Theology: A Review of the Literature," Religious Studies Review, v.3., n.4, Oct.1977, 205.
7. Christ, "The New Feminist Theology: A Review of the Literature," 203, and 204.
8. E. Johnson, She Who Is, (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 49-56.

9. McFague, Metaphorical Theology, 147-148.
 _____, "Imaging a Theology of Nature: The World as God's Body," 209.
 _____, "Models of God for an Ecological, Evolutionary Era: God as Mother of the Universe," in Physics, Philosophy, and Theology: A Common Quest for Understanding, ed. R.J. Russell et al, (Vatican City: Vatican Observatory, 1988), 252.
10. McFague, Metaphorical Theology, 26-27.
11. Christ, Rebirth of the Goddess, 90-91.
12. Christ, "The New Feminist Theology: A Review of the Literature," 206.
13. Christ, "The New Feminist Theology: A Review of the Literature," 206.
14. Christ, "The New Feminist Theology: A Review of the Literature," 206.
 M. Daly, "The Qualitative Leap Beyond Patriarchal Religion," Quest, v.1, n.4, Spring 1975, 32.
 C. Spretnak, "Ecofeminism: Our Roots and Our Flowering," in Re-weaving the World, ed. by I Diamond et al, (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1990), 5.
15. Daly, "The Qualitative Leap Beyond Patriarchal Religion," 34-35.
16. N. Goldenberg, "Memories of Marija Gimbutas and the King's Archaeologist," Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion, v.12, n.2, Fall 1996, 67-72.
17. Davaney, "Problems with Feminist Theory: Historicity and the Search for Sure Foundations," 84.
18. Christ, "The New Feminist Theology: A Review of the Literature," 212.
19. Christ, Rebirth of the Goddess, 91-93.
 Hinsdale, "Ecology, Feminism, and Theology," 160 - especially the radical vs. liberal feminism distinction.
20. Daly, Beyond God the Father, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), 122.
21. Daly, Beyond God the Father, 127.
22. L.D. Shinn, "The Goddess: Theological Sign or Religious Symbol?", Numen, v.31, 1984, 185.
23. Shinn, "The Goddess: Theological Sign or Religious Symbol?", 187.
24. Shinn, "The Goddess: Theological Sign or Religious Symbol?", 190.

25. M.A. Hinsdale, "Ecology, Feminism, and Theology," Word & World, v.XI, n.2, Spring 1991, 160, and 161.
26. Christ, Rebirth of the Goddess, 99.
27. McFague, Metaphorical Theology, 159.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alexander, Samuel

Space, Time and Deity, (New York: Dover, 1966).

Barbour, Ian

Myths, Models and Paradigms: A Comparative Study in Science and Religion, (New York: Harper & Row, 1974).

Religion in an Age of Science, (San Francisco: Harper, 1991).

Bromell, David, J.

"Sallie McFague's "Metaphorical Theology", Journal of the American Academy of Religion, LXI/3.

Callicott, J. Baird

"Hume's Is/Ought Dichotomy and the Relation of Ecology to Leopold's Land Ethic," in In Defense of the Land Ethic, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989).

"Intrinsic Value, Quantum Theory, and Environmental Ethics," in In Defense of the Land Ethic, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989).

Christ, Carol, P.

"Embodied Thinking: Reflections on Feminist Theological Thinking," Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion, 5/1, Spring 1989.

Laughter of Aphrodite, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987).

Rebirth of the Goddess, (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1997).

"The New Feminist Theology: A Review of the Literature," Religious Studies Review, v.3., n.4, Oct.1977.

Daly, Mary

Beyond God the Father, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973).

"Feminist PostChristian Introduction," to The Church and the Second Sex, (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1975).

"The Qualitative Leap Beyond Patriarchal Religion," Quest, v.1, n.4, Spring 1975.

Davaney, Shiela

"Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age," Religious Studies Review, v.16, n.1, Jan.1990.

"Problems with Feminist Theory: Historicity and the Search for Sure Foundations," in Embodied Love, ed. by P. Cooley, (San Francisco: Harper, 1977).

Davies, Paul and Gribbon, John

The Matter Myth, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992).

Geertz, Clifford

"Religion as a Cultural System," in Reader in Comparative Religion, ed. by W. Lessa et al, (New York: Harper & Row, 1979).

Goldenberg, Naomi

Changing of the Gods: Feminism and the End of Traditional Religions, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979).

Griffin, Susan

Woman and Nature, (New York: Harper & Row, 1978).

Gunn Allen, Paula

The Sacred Hoop, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986).

Hall, Rudelle

"Ecofeminist Theology: Feminism, Ecology, and the Divine as Female," M.A. Thesis, Carleton University, 1992.

Hinsdale, Mary

"Ecology, Feminism, and Theology," Word & World, v.XI, n.2, Spring 1991.

Horgan, John

The End of Science, (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1996).

Hume, David

A Treatise of Human Nature, 2nd. edition, ed. by L.A. Selby-Bigge and P.H. Nidditch, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

Jaggar, Alison

"Feminist Ethics: Projects, Problems, Prospects," in Feminist Ethics, ed. Claudia Card, (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1991).

Jantzen, Grace

God's World, God's Body, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984).

Johnson, Elizabeth

She Who Is, (New York: Crossroad, 1992).

Livingston, John. A.

One Cosmic Instant, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973).

McFague, Sallie

"Imaging a Theology of Nature: the World as God's Body," in Liberating Life, ed. by C. Birch et al, (New York: Orbis Books, 1990).

Metaphorical Theology, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982).

Models of God, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987).

"Models of God for an Ecological, Evolutionary Era: God as Mother of the Universe," in Physics, Philosophy, and Theology: A Common Quest for Understanding, ed. R.J. Russell et al, (Vatican City: Vatican Observatory, 1988).

The Body of God, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

McGuire, J.E.

"Predicates of Pure Existence: Newton on God's Space and Time," in Philosophical Perspectives on Newtonian Science, ed. by P. Bricker, et al, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990).

Morris, Richard

The Nature of Reality, (New York: Noonday Press, 1987).

Paley, William

Natural Theology, in B.L. Clarke, "The Argument from Design," American Journal of Theology and Philosophy, v.1, Summer 1980.

Passmore, John

Man's Responsibility for Nature, (London: Duckworth, 1974).

Preston, James

"Goddess Worship: Theoretical Perspectives," in The Encyclopedia of Religion, ed. M. Eliade, v.6, (New York: MacMillan, 1988).

Plumwood, Val

Feminism and the Mastery of Nature, (London: Routledge, 1993).

Putnam, Hilary

Reason, Truth and History, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

Renou, Gaston

An Essay on a New Philosophy of Nature, (Hicksville: Exposition Press, 1975).

Reynolds, Terrence

"Two McFagues: Meaning, Truth, and Justification in Models of God," Modern Theology, v.11, n.3, July 1995.

- Ryle, Gilbert
The Concept of Mind, (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1949).
- Schaeffer, Francis, A
Pollution and the Death of Man: The Christian View of Ecology, (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1970).
- Shinn, Larry
 "The Goddess: Theological Sign or Religious Symbol?", Numen, v.31, 1984.
- Spretnak, Charlene
 "Ecofeminism: Our Roots and Our Flowering," in Reweaving the World, ed. by I. Diamond et al, (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1990).
- Smart, John, J.C.
Philosophy and Scientific Realism, (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963).
- Swinburne, Richard
 "The Argument from Design," Philosophy, v.XLIII, n.164, July 1968.
- Thayer, H.S.
Newton's Philosophy of Nature: Selections from his Writings, ed. by H.S. Thayer, (New York: Hafner, 1974)
- White, Lynn Jr
 "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," Science, March 10, 1967, v.155, n.3767.
- Yourgrau, Wolfgang and Mandelstam, Stanley
Variational Principles in Dynamics and Quantum Theory, 3rd. edition, (Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders & Co., 1968).
- Zimmerman, Michael
 "Quantum Theory, Intrinsic Value, and Panentheism," Environmental Ethics, v.10, Spring 1988.

APPENDIX - ~~Some~~ Ex Post Facto Objections

Some ex post facto objections must be considered briefly. First, it has been objected that the exact manner of Goddess causality and immanence has not been described. Second, it has been objected that the version of the Goddess hypothesis defended in the thesis is a form of "Yahweh with a skirt" feminism. Third, it has been objected that Calli-cott's environmental ethics has been mistakenly assimilated to the projectionist environmental ethics of McFague and Christ. Fourth, it has been objected that the anima mundi view would be a suitable statement of the Goddess hypothesis.

The most that can be said about the exact manner of Goddess causality and immanence is that her immanence is expressed as a creative causality in the ontological passage of time and as her mysterious existence as the source of the existence of creatures. She as creatrix is the intelligent source of the order and change in the natural world. She is also on the Goddess hypothesis adopted herein the source of the immanent divinity that commands our respect for the natural world. The sketchy character of the statement of her causality is thereby admitted. The character of the Goddess's causality is related to two other unsolved problems: the interpretation of quantum mechanics and the nature of mind-body interaction. The solution of anyone of them is also the solution to the others. No one has done this.

The second objection is that the literalist version of the Goddess hypothesis is just another version of the "Yahweh with a skirt" form of feminist theology. This is briefly discussed in various places in the thesis, and will only be briefly addressed. There are ontological dif-

ferences between theism and the Goddess hypothesis. God is in eternity, and the Goddess is immanent in time in some way. He stands for the changeless and atomistic, and she stands for change and interconnectedness. He is known via either a deductive or inductive argument from his effects in the natural world, and she is known via an abductive inference from her effects in the natural world. The rationalist epistemology of patriarchal theology and science leads to total skepticism, but an empiricist epistemology based on abductive inferences makes human knowledge in religion and science possible. Finally, theism supports an oppressive and life denying ethics for the natural world, but the Goddess religion supports a life enhancing ethics. There are some similarities between theism and the literalist form of the Goddess hypothesis, but there are the significant differences listed above.

The third objection concerns the interpretation of Callicott's environmental ethics. It may appear that his ethics is another version of the projectionist ethics of McFague and Christ, and equally unable to deal with the problem of moral relativism raised by Callicott. Wendy Donner explains how Callicott distinguishes himself from the projectionist ethics of McFague and Christ by making a distinction between a strong and weak sense of inherent or intrinsic value. She says:

There are at least two possible senses of inherent or intrinsic value. In the strong sense, which critic Tom Reagen insists upon, if something has inherent value, it must have this value "independently of any valuing consciousness." This reading is reminiscent of the thought experiments used by G.E. Moore in which conscious beings try to imagine extravagantly beautiful worlds entirely without consciousness and ask themselves whether it would be better that such worlds exist even if no conscious being ever had the opportunity to appreciate or value them. This kind of example has led many to think that it is wildly implausible to say that there can be inherent or intrinsic value independent of any appreciative or valuing consciousness. And yet it is the only

way to make the value completely intrinsic to the nonconscious object. Callicott concedes this point and proposes in the place of strong inherent value a second version, which can be called weak inherent value. In this weak sense, an appreciative consciousness is necessary to project value onto a nonconscious object, but the object of appreciation is valued for itself, for properties of its own.¹

It is conceded that the strong sense of inherent or intrinsic value cannot block moral relativism, which is the problem of chapter one. The question is whether the non-projectionist, weak sense of intrinsic value can address the problem. According to this sense, the valuing consciousness is necessary to project value onto an object, but it is valued for itself. There is a relationship between the valuing consciousness and the object which is valued for properties of its own. It is agreed that a valuing consciousness is an essential part of an ethical situation, and this is where a projected value enters. But the crucial question from the standpoint of chapter one is whether the weak sense of inherent value can avoid moral relativism. The answer would seem to depend on the nature of the properties that an object has as its own. If these properties are consciousness, sentience, being alive, or life-like, then it can always be sensibly asked whether given these properties they are objects of moral standing, or why we ought to respect them. Callicott on this interpretation of him does not give this crucial question an answer, let alone a convincing one. The absence of an answer, i.e., by not specifying what the property is the object has, must be taken to mean that intrinsic value even in the weak sense does not block moral relativism.

Accordingly, though Callicott's ethics of the natural world is non-projectionist, it cannot solve the problem of moral relativism for the natural world. The proposal of chapter one is that the property re-

quired to make the natural world an object of moral standing that we ought to respect is that it participates in the divinity of the immanent Goddess, in accord with the logical argument at the end of chapter one. If the natural world shares in the divinity of an inherent Goddess, then the natural world ought to be respected and made an object of moral standing. If the design argument of chapter three is plausible, then there are moral grounds for respecting nature.

The fourth objection is that the anima mundi hypothesis would be a suitable statement of the Goddess hypothesis and preferable to the vague statement that is given in the thesis. It is admitted that the literalist statement of the Goddess hypothesis is vague and sketchy, but in the future that may be remedied. The outstanding objection to a literalist statement of the Goddess hypothesis as the anima mundi view is that the natural world does not seem to be like an organism, either animal or vegetable. If some way around this objection were available, then perhaps the anima mundi version of the Goddess hypothesis would be suitable to the purposes of chapter one. It has been suggested by McDaniel that a rock, which is inanimate to everyday observation, is still in some sense life-like. Following Whitehead, McDaniel says that at the microlevel rocks are composed of microevents that show qualities of being life-like. McDaniel says:

I am assuming that an object is inert (1) if it lacks any capacity for creativity, that is, for actualizing its own possibilities for behavior, and (2) lacks any capacity for sentience, that is, for subjective appropriation of external influences. Conversely an object is life-like if it possesses capacities for creativity and sentience. I shall argue that all physical matter, if not "living" in the sense of being constitutive of biological life, is nevertheless life-like albeit in an unconscious and primitive way, in its submicroscopic depths."²

The key here is the claim that matter is life-like in its submicro-

scopic depths. At the level of macromatter of ordinary experience, rocks, for example, are inert in McDaniel's sense. But the hypothesis he advances is that a submicroscopic level a rock is composed of micro-events that are life-like. This hypothesis has the advantage that it avoids the major objection to the anima mundi view of the Goddess hypothesis. That is, at the macrolevel of everyday experience rocks are inert, but at the submicroscopic level they are postulated to be life-like. In this manner, perhaps the main objection to the anima mundi view of the Goddess hypothesis, that matter is inert, could be met.

References

1. W. Donner, "Inherent Value and Moral Standing in Environmental Change," paper included in Donner's environmental ethics seminar, 62-63.
2. J. McDaniel, "Physical Matter as Creative and Sentient," Environmental Ethics, v.5, Winter 1983, 292.

IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)

APPLIED IMAGE, Inc
1653 East Main Street
Rochester, NY 14609 USA
Phone: 716/482-0300
Fax: 716/288-5989

© 1993, Applied Image, Inc., All Rights Reserved