

Elizabeth Dodson Gray, *Green Paradise Lost*
(Massachusetts: Roundtable Press), 1979
pp. 165

In *Green Paradise Lost*, Gray attempts to explain how it was possible for industrialized countries to exploit and oppress the natural world. Her work is an analysis of different paradigms of thought or different "pictures" about reality and the way in which such "pictures" determine our relationships with other people, animals and the environment. She concentrates on contrasting the pagan

animistic paradigm of reality with the Judeo-Christian world view. The truth or falsity of such views is not in question. Gray evaluates the ethical consequences of each belief system and argues that the pagan paradigm is morally superior.

The traditional reading of Genesis gives us an anthropocentric view of the world, a hierarchy of God, men, women, children, animals and plants

that confers a right on those "above" to exercise power over those below. The paradigm usually involves a moral judgment of superiority which is used as a justification for exploiting animals and the environment. Gray points out that Darwin's theory of evolution involves a hierarchical reality similar to that of Christianity. For Darwin, reality begins at the bottom with humans representing the most highly evolved species. Western science, like Western religion, assumes that the needs and desires of humans are infinitely more important than the needs and desires of other creatures. Consequently, other forms of life are mastered and exploited rather than respected.

Gray is critical of the view that human uniqueness means superiority. The fact that humans are superior to other animals in intelligence does not entail that humans are superior as a species. The problem lies in confusing "unique" as a species with "superior" as a species. She points out that humans usually choose arbitrary self-serving qualities as indicating superiority. Why, for example, choose a highly developed brain rather than a highly developed sense of smell or hearing or night vision? Even if intelligence is chosen as the attribute that entails superiority, dolphins and whales may be equal to human beings.

According to Gray we are so pre-occupied with difference and conflict and so distracted by surface phenom-

ena that we have not seen the connections in the natural world. In treating non-human life as "other" we lose our identity. We do not understand who we are. Self-interest, she points out, is an expression of the erroneous conviction that you can do something good for yourself even if you diminish another part of the ecosystem. Through a series of illustrations Gray shows that this attitude is counterproductive to human welfare. Given the Christian hierarchy we unthinkingly and uncaringly "do in" species without realizing our global need of them. She contends that we must break up the hierarchical paradigm and re-myth Genesis if we and other animals are to survive. The pagan paradigm of wholeness and connectedness, of seeing oneself as a small part of the whole, entails respect for all aspects of nature: "we will have an environmental ethic when self-interest becomes inclusive, when we sense that what hurts any part of my larger system will hurt me."

Gray's work contains beautiful descriptions of life in nature, poetry and an analysis of sexism and the psycho-sexual roots of our ecological crisis. Although there are more technical works on the subject, Gray's book is very successful in arousing awareness of the ethical issues involved in our constructions of reality.

Kathy Squadrito
Purdue University, Fort Wayne