



# **Vol. 15, Issue 1**

# **November 2023**

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**Issue Editor:**  
Matthew R. Sparks

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## ABOUT GREEN THEORY AND PRAXIS JOURNAL

The *Green Theory and Praxis Journal* (*GTPJ*; ISSN: 1941-0948), founded in 2005, arose out of two projects: the “Revolutionary Environmentalism: A Dialogue Between Activists and Academics” Conference on February 13-14, 2003, at Fresno State University and *Igniting a Revolution: Voices in Defense of the Earth* (Best & Nocella, 2006). *GTPJ* is a carefully peer reviewed, intersectional social justice publication focused on the global ecological community. This scholar-activist journal is dedicated to expanding and challenging classic scholarship on environmental issues, as the field has long been dominated by white, able-bodied, Christian, Western-colonial perspectives on ecology, wilderness, nature, and the environment, with a deficit of criticism against corporate greenwashing and capitalism.

A multi-movement publication, *GTPJ* is a critical theory journal seeking scholarship in the areas of environmental justice, indigenous people, first nations, aboriginal communities, eco-ability, eco-feminism, eco-transgender studies, global justice, food justice, revolutionary environmentalism, critical race theory, critical environmental education, ecopedagogy, Earth liberation, etc. Further, the journal promotes deconstruction of oppressive binaries (culture/nature, wild/civilized, human/animal), real world application of critical theory, and a jargon-free rhetorical foundation supporting the abolition of all systems of domination. *GTPJ* is not a reformist publication. Rather, our mission argues for mass global transformation through the critique of systems, *not* individuals, that promote oppression and/or domination. We believe change emerges from building alliances, as opposed to fueling conflicts. Ultimately, *GTPJ* a theory-to-action journal open to scholarship that fosters a holistic journey for total liberation and justice.

– *Green Theory and Praxis Journal*, (December 19, 2014)

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1. The *Green Theory and Praxis Journal* publishes rigorously peer-reviewed academic work of the highest quality.
2. The *Green Theory and Praxis Journal* is a free-to-access electronic journal.
3. The *Green Theory and Praxis Journal* charges no fees for publication.
4. The *Green Theory and Praxis Journal* supports and encourages submissions that are excluded from mainstream journals, including the use of photographic, video and new media work.
5. The *Green Theory and Praxis Journal*, while an academic journal, provides space and place for activist contributions.

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1. research articles and essays – 2,000 to 10,000 words
2. student final papers – no more than 10,000 words
3. course/class summaries – no more than 2,000 words
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5. commentary – no more than 2,000 words
6. tactic and strategy analysis – no more than 10,000 words
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8. lecture summaries – no more than 2,000 words
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### Review Process and Policy

1. All submissions must be grounded in the fields of environmental justice, Earth liberation, revolutionary environmentalism and intersectional total liberation social justice and locate their arguments in existing GTPJ essays/reviews/conversations when possible. All submissions need to be jargon-free and promote activism.

2. Every effort will be made to inform authors of the Issue editors' decision within 60 days of receipt of a manuscript.
3. Authors whose manuscripts are accepted for publication will be asked to submit a 50- to 80-word biography that includes their institutional or organizational affiliations if applicable, professional title, e-mail, country, and one to six keywords.
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We are pleased to accept your submissions at any time and will move quickly through the review process to ensure timeliness.

**For general submission, please submit to:**

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## **Towards a More Unified Vision for Critical and Alternative Social Movements**

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Keywords: social movements, transition, alternative living, community organizing

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### **Abstract**

The failure of existing systems to deal effectively with the range of global problems now threatening human survival has generated increasing interest in critical alternative perspectives and movements. However these have tended to be concerned with specific and isolated issues, such as climate, refugees, or saving particular species. They tend not to be seen as components of and contributors to a unified overarching perspective on the global predicament and its solution. The following argument is that these diverse movements could be integrated to form a more powerful general critique and alternative vision by locating their concerns within the basic Simpler Way perspective.

After sketching that perspective several movements are discussed in order to indicate how they might be located within it. In most cases this seems to be only a matter of placing existing goals within a wider framework. However it will be argued that in others it would involve significant revision in assumptions and campaigns, especially regarding those which proceed as if reforms to

and within existing systems would suffice. But major challenges for the Socialist perspective on transition are argued.

### **The Simpler Way Perspective**

There are two basic interlinked causes of the global sustainability and justice predicament. The fundamental fault in current society is that there is far too much producing and consuming going on. We have seriously overshoot the limits to growth. Resource use and the associated environmental damage are now well beyond levels that could be sustained for long or spread to all the world's people. Secondly, this situation has been due in large part to the nature of the economic system, notably the fact that it is driven by growth, profit and market forces. If these two claims are correct then there can be no solution to the predicament unless there is dramatic degrowth to much more materially simple lifestyles and systems.

The crucial beginning point for the discussion of sustainability should be the magnitude of the unsustainability, that is the extent to which the limits to growth have been exceeded. The commonly cited "Ecological Footprint" index shows that to provide the average Australian with food, settlement area, water and energy takes about 7 ha of productive land (World Wildlife Fund, 2018). If by 2050 the expected 9.8 billion people were to have risen to the present "living standards" in Australia, and the planet's amount of productive land remains the same as it is today, then the amount for humans to use per capita would be about 0.8 ha. In other words Australians today are using about ten times the amount per capita that would be possible for all to use. Other approaches and indices yield even worse multiples. (See e.g. Wiedmann et al., 2015. The analysis in terms of "planetary boundaries" by Rockström et al., 2009, provides a similar analysis regarding limits.)

Even maintaining preset rates of resource extraction will become increasingly difficult in future years as stocks, grades and conditions are deteriorating, including for mineral ores, fish, fertile land areas, soil quality, environmental toxicity, climate stability forests, biodiversity and many other ecological factors. Thus a factor 10 difference probably significantly underestimates the difficulties ahead.

However the situation becomes far worse when we add the commitment to ceaseless economic growth. The impossible implications are easily demonstrated. If 9.8 billion people were to rise to the GDP per capita estimated for Australians in 2050, given 3% p.a. economic growth, then the total world economic output would be approaching *18 times* the present amount. Yet the present amount is so unsustainable that the WWF estimates 1.7 planet Earths would be needed to meet today's resource demand sustainably. That means that by 2050 total world use of productive land would have to be around *30 times* the amount which the World Wildlife Fund estimates is available. (For the detailed case see Trainer, 2021a, 2021c; Rockström et al., 2009.)

This exceeding of the bio-physical limits of the planet is the main cause of most if not all of the major global problems now threatening our existence, especially resource depletion, resource wars, ecological damage, and the deprivation of the Third World of a just share of global resources. It is also the direct cause of the declining quality of life in even the richest countries due to making economic growth the overriding goal, as distinct from the improvement of welfare.

The main underlying causal factors are firstly a deeply entrenched cultural commitment to ever-increasing affluence and secondly an economic system driven by profit, market forces and economic growth. This system ensures that those with greater wealth in the first place become increasingly wealthy over time, simply because market forces allocate goods mostly to those with most purchasing power, and they generate “development” that is in the interests of the rich, especially the rich countries. It follows that the ultimate goals must be a sustainable and just world order.

Unfortunately, too few understand and focus on the magnitude of the overshoot and its implications for sustainability. It is the fundamental premise in The Simpler Way perspective, first put forward in *Abandon Affluence* (Trainer, 1985). It means that the major global problems now threatening our existence cannot be resolved unless there is large-scale Degrowth to some kind of Simpler Way. The general vision is detailed in Trainer (2021c). Its key elements are:

- Most people would live in small highly self-sufficient communities within local economies.
- These communities would be largely autonomous and self-governing via thoroughly participatory processes involving town assemblies, committees and working bees.
- There would have to be a high level of cooperation, collectivism and mutual support. It would be understood that individual welfare depends primarily on how well the community is functioning.
- The economy must be needs-driven not profit-driven. It could involve many mostly small private firms and farms and there could be a (minor) role for markets. Communities would control their economy via committees and assemblies to maximise the welfare of all, for instance by eliminating unemployment and ensuring that all have a respected livelihood.
- There could be no economic growth.
- The focus of national governments and economies would be primarily to serve the towns and suburbs, including by coordinating railways, communications, universities etc., and enabling all towns to export some few items into the national economy to enable importing from it.
- Above all there would have to be a huge cultural shift from preoccupation with individualistic, competitive acquisitiveness to finding life satisfaction in non-material pursuits such as gardening, arts and crafts, community activities and self-development.

The essential Simpler Way claim is that only arrangements of this kind can bring the resource and ecological impacts right down. This is shown by a study of egg supply which found that compared with the normal supermarket supply path, such systems can cut dollar and energy costs by more

than 98% (Trainer et al., 2019). This is largely due to the proximity of functions which smallness of scale enables, and to overlapping functions. Poultry manures can be taken by bucket to nearby methane digesters or to gardens thus eliminating the need for fertilizer production. Kitchen and garden “wastes” and free ranging can provide most of the poultry feed needed. Poultry can clean up garden pests. The need for agribusiness feed production, transport, liquid fuels, packaging, chemical inputs, marketing, waste removal, offices, computers and expensive personnel etc. can be eliminated.

Lockyer’s study (2017) of Dancing Rabbit Eco-village in Missouri found similar reductions, accompanied by higher than national average ratings for quality of life. These simpler systems and lifestyles need not involve hardship or deprivation nor need they jeopardise the availability of professionals or progress in science, modern medicine or socially useful technology etc. There can still be (small) cities and (very little) international trade in necessities.

This argument that transition to a simpler way is essential can only be refuted if technical advances could reduce resource and environmental impacts to sustainable levels while GDP continues to increase. However many studies have now provided a vast amount of unambiguous evidence contradicting this “decoupling” faith, in some cases reviewing hundreds of papers (Hickel & Kallis, 2019; Parrique et al., 2019). They find that despite constant effort to cut resource use absolute decoupling has not been achieved and it is not likely to be. Producing takes resources and if GDP increases so does resource use and environmental impact.

To summarise, only in settlements of the kind sketched above can present per capita resource and environmental costs be reduced by the large amounts required. This sets the context and the overriding concerns for thinking about the possibility of linking various social movements to form a more unified and effective force for the transition to a sustainable and just world.

### **Implications for social movements**

The following discussion cannot embrace all relevant movements but focuses on several of the best-known instances and indicates themes which others are urged to consider.

The main implication will be apparent, that is, the need to frame mission statements in terms of the foregoing perspective on our situation and how to resolve it. In most cases this would seem to be easily done although in some others present campaign assumptions and goals would need to be significantly revised.

The required transition is above all a cultural problem; its prospects depend primarily on the extent to which specific ideas and values spread and gather political force. Therefore movements concerned with the planetary situation should take every opportunity to point out how assumptions, values, dispositions and ways dominant in present society need to be replaced by those sketched above. There would seem to be no cost or difficulty for most agencies and movements in making clear the connection between their focal concerns and the bigger picture. For instance a group working to save a specific threatened species needs only add to its messaging that its activities are contributing to the wider goal of transition to a society with much simpler lifestyles and systems and therefore far fewer impacts which threaten species. If this is not done the impression will be

left that radical system change in the above-mentioned directions is not necessary and that reforms to and within this society will suffice.

Following are thoughts on the implications of the foregoing discussion for social movements of various kinds.

### **Conventional/Mainstream Green Groups, Movements, Parties and Agencies**

Most people in environmental movements, generally defined, apparently either do not understand or do not accept the fundamental nature and magnitude of the problem as outlined above. For instance rhetoric and activism commonly fail to show that a growth economy has to be abandoned or that far simpler lifestyles and systems must be adopted. This is clearly evident in the positions taken by the many groups associated with the US “Green New Deal” and the widespread enthusiasm for “Green Growth” (Trainer, 2022). It is also evident in the position statements, literature, campaigns and actions of organisations and large agencies such as Friends of the Earth Australia (n.d.), Greenpeace (n.d.), the World Wildlife Fund (2018), the Nature Conservation Council of New South Wales (2022), the Australian Conservation Foundation (n.d.), the Sierra Club (2023), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (2011), the World Bank (2012), the United Nations Environment Programme (2011), and of political parties such as the Australian Greens (n.d.).

The typical assumption underlying these initiatives has been that better technology, more recycling, tighter legislation, more national parks and wildlife protection etc. can reduce the resource and environmental impacts sufficiently while rich world “living standards” remain more or less as affluent as they are now, and the present economy driven by market forces, free enterprise, profits and growth can continue. This conventional and dominant world view is invalidated by the above critical literature on “decoupling.”

Closely related is the need for mainstream green and other movements to also target the market system. If the quest to maximise profit within the market is allowed to drive the economy then scarce resources will inevitably flow to the rich, because the rich can pay more for them. These outcomes can only be avoided if there is a great deal of regulation and action contrary to market forces and thus if there is the prevention of a great deal of profitable business. Scarce resources would have to be deliberately allocated to socially desirable production.

Many participants in movements such as Downshifting, Voluntary Simplicity, local currencies, Degrowth and Permaculture draw attention to themes that are necessary elements within the above alternative vision, yet in general these agencies and movements remain unduly narrow or limited. Some implicitly assume that the environment can be saved by individual lifestyle change, such as resolving to consume less or recycle or not eat meat. Such actions are commendable but are not going to bring about the major system changes required. This does not mean these groups should abandon their current concerns. It points to the need to enlarge their perspective so as to locate their concerns within the wider context being argued here.

From The Simpler Way perspective these common conventional orientations are based on two mistaken assumptions, firstly that the basic problem can be solved by reforms to the consumer-

capitalist system, and that existing institutions can and/or will make these reforms. The argument detailed by Trainer (2020a) is that the problems will not be and cannot be solved by deliberate, rational action by the official decision-making process of present consumer-capitalist society. The problems are now too big, urgent and difficult for governments to deal with, especially when it is so late in the day and the fundamental nature of the predicament is not understood by mainstream publics or officialdom. The trajectory is basically set by powerful, deep-seated cultural factors, including concepts of progress, development, and the good life, and to entrenched interest groups, especially the capital-owning class and the upper middle classes, and to institutions such as the free market growth economy. These considerations support the conclusion that the possibility of establishing sustainable ways will depend on the outcome of the self-destruction of the existing system that is now underway. Many see an accelerating descent into a possibly terminal time of great troubles. This could produce insurmountable difficulties but it is also generating recognition of the need to shift to radically localized and self-sufficient, collective ways and the outcome will depend on whether or not this shift gains sufficient strength.

### **The Eco-Village Movement**

It can be argued that to this point in time the Eco-villagers have made the most important contributions to the transition to the kinds of ways argued for above. This is because they have been demonstrating how sustainable and satisfactory life can be if Eco-village principles and practices are followed. These settlements are small in scale, integrated, cooperative and more or less collectivist, self-governing, inclusive and supportive, ecologically sensitive and concerned with values that are not focused on material wealth and acquisitiveness. They have a relatively low ecological footprint. Their greatest virtue is the priority they put on community. Lockyer's study of Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage (2017) is an impressive illustration of Eco-village ways, documenting per capita resource use rates around 5-10% of US averages, along with a high quality of life.

The Global Ecovillage Network website (GEN.org) documents many sites and activities, especially in Third World locations. The critical literature on conventional "development" argues that this is the right model for poorer regions (Leahy, 2009, 2018; Trainer, 2021b). The government of Senegal intends to enable 14,000 villages to develop as Ecovillages (St-Onge, 2015).

However, from The Simpler Way perspective the role and contribution of the Eco-village movement in the required global transition is not primarily to establish more and more intentional communities on green-field sites until present systems have been converted or replaced. They are costly and difficult to initiate and require significant commitment from unusual people able to afford the time and expense. The movement's role is to provide impressive illustrations of the form and ways existing towns and suburbs must move towards. That is, they illustrate the kind of communities the Transition Towns movement (see below) must work to transform existing settlements into. Their contribution is educational, especially in pointing to lighthouse examples of the new ways and their quality of life benefits that can be established in existing towns and suburbs.

Unfortunately, current GEN materials and activities are not performing this role well. They are pitched in terms of encouraging people to join or form Ecovillages for their ecological and quality

of life benefits, rather than in terms of illustrating essential principles and goals for a sustainable and just world. That connection is at times evident but in general condemnation of current rich world ways is not prominent. (However, various Third World Ecovillage initiatives are about establishing radically alternative village economies; see Leahy, 2009, 2018.)

A major concern is the lack of attention given to the simplicity theme. Rich world Ecovillages have relatively low ecological impacts but in general appear to be well beyond sustainable per capita rates of resource consumption. The literature and examples do not make clear or emphasise the magnitude of the consumption reductions required.

In addition little or no attention is given to arrangements beyond the village. A just and sustainable society must also include radically new regional and national arrangements. How for instance must the national economy be organized, how might it articulate with town economies, can this be done without transcending capitalism, and if not how might the movement contribute to its eventual replacement? Answers to these kinds of macro issues are offered in Simpler Way literature (e.g. Trainer, 2019a, 2019b).

Unfortunately, it is difficult to find accounts which throw much light on what it is like to live in an ecovillage, explaining for instance typical economic and governing procedures, everyday experience, community support systems, and “spiritual” benefits, etc. (Superficial reference to these themes is common but detailed and persuasive accounts of the kind given in Trainer, 2019a, do not seem to be available.)

Again it would seem that it would not be difficult to reframe the movement as making a major contribution within the foregoing wider Simper Way vision.

### **The Transition Towns movement**

The argument above was that the global predicament cannot be resolved satisfactorily other than through a transition towns movement of some kind. But it is questionable whether the present kind is satisfactory.

The alternative communities argued for above can only come to be through the gradual transformation of existing towns and suburbs towards, among other things, Eco-village forms and practices. Over the last twenty or so years a Transition Towns movement with the potential to do this has emerged and grown remarkably. This movement is of great importance, but following are some serious concerns, which have previously been detailed in Trainer (2009) and Trainer (2018).

The main problem is that the movement has been essentially *theory-less*, and deliberately so. Its literature is valuable in reporting on projects but is celebratory and self-congratulatory. There is little if any discussion about how the activities being undertaken are going to lead to a world order that is sustainable and just. By what mechanisms or chain of causes is developing more community gardens for example expected to culminate someday in a society that is not run by and for the rich few, not driven by market forces and not geared to perpetual growth? Why is it a mistake to believe, as many especially on the left do, that starting more community gardens etc. will only lead to a society that contains many community gardens but remains grossly unsustainable and unjust?

How can such activities become anything more than admirable but non-threatening reforms within the capitalist system, defusing discontent? The red-left sees the movement as laughably and inexcusably wrong, and incapable of getting rid of capitalism, primarily because it does not confront and seek to get rid of capitalism (Phillips, 2015; Sharzer, 2012; Bastini, 2019). Disagreement with this left critique has been voiced (Trainer, 2018), but the movement shows no interest in discussing let alone explaining why it is mistaken.

That there is no need to bother about these questions is made clear in the Transition Towns literature. It tells us to...just do something, *anything* (Hopkins, 2016). This is the explicit message in one of the movement's gospels, Rob Hopkins' *The Power of Just Doing Stuff: How Local Action Can Change the World*. The newsletters and other literature do not discuss how the activities enthused about at length are supposed to do what centuries of strategic thinking and hard work and fighting at barricades have not been able to do.

In addition the goals of the movement remain extremely vague. Here is all that is said on the topic in the 63-page document entitled *The Essential Guide to Doing Transition*:

It is about communities stepping up to address the big challenges they face by starting local. By coming together, they are able to create solutions together. They seek to nurture a caring culture, one focused on connection with self, others and nature. They are reclaiming the economy, sparking entrepreneurship, reimagining work, reskilling themselves and weaving webs of connection and support. Courageous conversations are being had; extraordinary change is unfolding. (Transition Network, 2016, p. 8)

The rest of that document is the same as virtually all of the movement's other advisory literature in only detailing *procedures for setting up and running groups and activities*. For instance there is advice on "Awareness raising" and we are told to "Form sub-groups" and "Build a bridge to local government" but no light is thrown on what the groups are then supposed to do or why. Presumably the answer is... just do something/anything.

Nor does this literature provide groups with any assistance or suggestions derived from experience regarding which projects have been found to be the best to undertake and how best to go about them, which ones are too difficult, what seems best for spreading public awareness, etc.

A major concern is that there is also almost no reference to frugality and simple lifestyles and systems as primary goals. The stated point of the movement is to build town *resilience*, but that is not the same as building the kind of town that would be sustainable and possible for all the world's people to live in. The resilience focus originated in concern about how towns might cope with "peak oil." Resilience could be pursued by hoarding scarce resources, forming militias or adopting "survivalist" practices. The kind of town argued for in Simper Way literature would indeed be quite resilient but that would be a consequence of achieving the main goals, which are to do with institutions, procedures and values enabling all the world's people to live in the ways that must be adopted if sustainability and justice is to be achieved.

These criticisms do not doubt that the actions taking place in the Transition Towns and Eco-village movements are of the utmost importance. They are the kinds of crucial first steps that must be taken in the required revolution, but if they are to be significant contributors to the transition they



must be informed and guided by sound transition theory and strategy, that is, by a vision of how to get from here to there that will actually get us there. At this point in time no one knows what the correct theory is but it must explicitly centre on limits and simplicity and it is not likely to be found without a great deal of critical thought. The call here is for the Transition Towns movement to become more concerned with this, which means addressing connections with the general Simpler Way vision.

### **The Steady State Economy Movement**

This movement is of considerable value in seeking to increase acceptance of the case Herman Daly has been arguing for decades, that is, the need to abandon the quest for economic growth (Center for the Advancement of the Steady State Economy, 2023). But as has been explained above, working for a sustainable and just society must involve far more than this. Firstly SSE indicates little if any recognition that before arriving at a steady state economy there must be dramatic reduction in the size of the economy, i.e., degrowth. Consequently there is no recognition that a satisfactory economy must be about far simpler ways and high levels of localism, collectivism and town self-sufficiency and control. Daly is especially open to the criticism that he fails or refuses to accept that a steady state economy cannot be a capitalist economy (Smith, 2010, puts the case well; see also Trainer, 2020c). The goals Daly holds are certainly unconventional but can be seen as more or less reformist; they do not involve radical system change. This is especially evident in his belief that in a satisfactory economy the capitalist market mechanism would be the best way for determining distribution, on the grounds that "... properly functioning markets allocate resources efficiently" (2007, p. 18). The unacceptability of this claim is central in Simpler Way analysis, which stresses that market forces inevitably allocate scarce things mostly to the rich and produce development that is in their interests. Daly is also content with productive resources being privately owned and driven by the profit motive.

These significant criticisms of SSE might be taken on board without great difficulty.

### **The Degrowth Movement**

Given the foregoing argument regarding the centrality of limits in the global situation, the recent emergence of a degrowth movement marks a very important and long overdue step. Over many years Meadows et al. (1972), Ehrlich & Ehrlich (1970), Trainer (1985) and others have offered detailed arguments for de-growth but without spawning a movement. A robust movement now exists but its literature and activities are mostly concerned with elaborating the reasons for opposing a growth economy, without making much progress on the nature of the alternative or how to move to it. Above all there is insufficient attention to what has been argued here should be the main concerns, viz., those to do with simplicity.

Degrowth proposals regarding alternatives typically take the form of a "shopping list" of unconnected macroscopic or state/global level policy goals, such as the ten points given by Kallis (2015). These usually include goals such as limiting inequality, implementing cap and trade systems and ecological tax reform. These proposals are usually highly desirable but the approach is unsatisfactory and misleading, mainly because the lists fail to derive from a sufficiently wide initial frame, i.e., one recognizing the magnitude of the limits predicament, and its radical

implications for alternatives. The typical Degrowth list of goals does not reflect recognition of this magnitude nor of the fact that it logically leads directly to the need for transition to radically new economic, political and cultural systems of the kind outlined above. Nor does stating a list of ultimate goals make clear that these could only be achieved after a long revolution achieving enormous cultural change. It fails to deal with the question of how that change might come about, thereby implying that the goals can be achieved by *calling for* existing political institutions to reform existing systems. (Simpler Way transition theory contradicts this belief. These points are elaborated in Trainer, 2020a.)

A consequence of attending primarily to lists of ultimate goals is that they are typically taken to indicate *causal processes* that can be put in motion, actions that can and should be taken by governments here and now to fix the global predicament. But from The Simpler Way perspective it is a mistake to direct energy into achieving such goals here and now because they cannot be achieved unless and until that long and complex preliminary process of cultural change succeeds. In other words, the Degrowth literature has not moved on from drawing attention to the need for degrowth to deriving the form of society required to make it possible, and thinking from that point about the strategies that might achieve it.

Further, as noted, typical goal lists reveal the assumption that the required changes can be made by the state. Thinking about action is therefore directed at this level, that is, at persuading or forcing governments to implement the goals. However from the Simpler Way perspective taking this approach here and now cannot succeed. While ever consumer-capitalist society remains in place the official decision making agencies, including governments and supra-national institutions such as the UN, will not and indeed cannot implement policies necessary to solve the problems. (Again, the reasoning is detailed in Trainer, 2020a.) Thus from this perspective what is to be done here and now is not to call for implementation of the shopping lists but to take up the cultural change task of spreading the alternative vision.

To summarise, beginning with a sound theory of the limits situation does not lead to the drawing up the common Degrowth shopping list of demands. It leads to implications for goals and action which are quite different to those the usual lists suggest or assume. Again this can be seen as an argument for elaborating and adjusting rather than for radical alteration.

## Localisation

Over the last few decades there has been a surge in a diversity of concerns to (re)establish local systems (Keady et al., 2008). Some of these have focused on the preservation and regeneration of commons and of community (Bollier, 2011). A major purpose of the localisers has been to do with “resilience,” the defining element in the Transition Towns initiative, and of the Post Carbon Institute (n.d.) which established the *Resilience* bulletin. Other impressive practical alternative ventures include the Rojavan revolution (Shilton, 2019), the Catalan Integral Cooperative (Trainer, 2020b), many Third World “post-development” movements such as Zapatista, Ubuntu, Swaraj and Campesino, and those identifying as “Municipalist.”

All these initiatives share basic Anarchist principles, sometimes implicitly, especially the notion of “Pre-figuring” alternative ways here and now. Some are more explicitly anti-capitalist and anti-

state than others. Some, such as among Permaculture, local currency advocates and commoners are reformers, not explicitly out to replace consumer-capitalism, and most do not connect directly to limits and simplicity themes. The core however is the sound assumption that solutions have to be local and participatory, not centralised or top-down let alone authoritarian.

From a Simpler Way perspective the recent surge in these developments is extremely important and encouraging as they focus on some of the core Simpler Way themes. Localism has become a central concern in the discussion of global issues and solutions, and this was not the case two decades ago. This can be seen as a response to the failure of established centralised systems to provide for people or solve social or ecological problems.

The need here is firstly for some of these initiatives to locate their concerns more centrally and explicitly within the general goal of ultimately replacing the consumer-capitalist system, and secondly to focus more on simplicity themes. Most give insufficient attention to the unacceptability of normal “high living standards,” or to the higher quality of life that can be associated with “frugal abundance.” And most do not explain how their projects are going to lead to radical system change, thereby inviting the Marxist camp to judge them as futile.

### **Eco-socialism**

The general Marxist critique of capitalism and its contradictions, dynamics and fate are of indisputable importance, but it will be argued that this school’s treatment of the post-capitalist alternative society and strategy for transition to it are seriously mistaken.

Possibly the most important of Marx’s insights was that built into capitalism are contradictions that will in time lead it to self-destruct. In addition to growth, the most critical of these would seem to be that capitalism inevitably generates greater inequality. A few people now possess most of the world’s wealth and the declining purchasing power of the masses would seem to be a major cause of the recent decades-long deterioration in GDP growth rates, the profit rate and debt levels. The resulting “immiseration” would now seem to be generating dangerous levels of discontent and loss of legitimacy which some expect to lead to fascism.

Eco-socialists are important in arguing that this economy inevitably generates major problems, cannot solve them and needs to be replaced, but when it comes to alternative goals and the means to achieving them socialist transition theory is open to a radical critique.

Firstly, consider the core socialist goal. Socialists have a long and unblemished record of striving to free the forces of production from the contradictions of the capitalist mode of production so that all workers can become affluent. In addition Marxism has a long tradition of “productivism” and disdain for the peasant. But the above argument has been that emancipation must now involve large scale Degrowth and thus movements away from affluence. Merely getting rid of capitalism will not save the planet if it is replaced by a Socialism that remains committed to affluent lifestyles and economic growth. The above account of limits implies the need to adopt and prioritise goals of a kind almost all eco-socialists do not imagine, that is, lifestyles and systems which enable a high quality of life on per capita resource use rates that are a small fraction of present rich world rates.

As the above study of egg supply shows, the only way dramatic resource consumption reductions can be achieved is if most people live in small scale, self-governing, cooperative local economies, using mostly relatively simple production technologies, and above all being content with non-affluent ways. Thus the focus cannot be on globalization, centralization and state control, urbanization, international trade or capital-intensive industrialization. That the Socialist vision of the good post-capitalist society does not endorse Simpler Way goals is evident in the position statements of organisations such as the Ökologische Linke (n.d.), New Socialist Group (2017), La Gauche (2009), and Green Left (n.d.).

Even more important is the need for enormous cultural change, which Marx and his followers have generally failed to grasp (see Avineri, 1968, and Trainer, 2020c). Gramsci drew attention to the area with his discussion of hegemony but did not seem to offer much in the way of guidance that assists in the current situation. The small communities discussed above cannot work satisfactorily unless their citizens manifest high levels of vision, commitment and enthusiasm, pride in their admirable town and its capacity run itself well, and happy acceptance of frugality. These are prerequisites for revolution; they must come before the required structural change becomes possible, but Marx thought value change could be attended to after revolution, during the slow transition from socialism to communism (Avineri, 1968).

Traditional left thinking regarding means or action strategies are also mistaken. Historically this has centred on the overthrow of the ruling class by a determined vanguard party prepared to use force. But the “social-democratic” version also focuses action on taking state power, through electoral means, in order to then bring about the necessary changes. In most if not all previous revolutionary movements this state-centred action strategy has probably been appropriate, but the goal in those cases was basically to take control over the productive apparatus and then to run it more enthusiastically and justly.

That can no longer be the goal. This revolution is unlike any before; it is not about taking control of the productive apparatus in order to boost its efficiency and distribute its output justly. The goal now has to be to reduce output and “living standards” and that goal cannot be driven by the state. Transition is not primarily about getting rid of the system’s rulers, it has to involve largely dismantling the existing industrial, trade, agricultural, financial etc. systems and replacing them with smaller and radically different systems. The state cannot give or enforce the world view, values or dispositions without which such structural changes cannot be made. No amount of subsidies or information or secret police can make villagers cooperate enthusiastically to plan and develop and run thriving local economies.

At this point the eco-socialist would surely insist, “If we had state power we could facilitate that change in consciousness, help people to see the need for localism etc.” There is a huge logical confusion in this response. No government with the required policy platform, that is, one focused on transition to simpler systems and lifestyles and dramatically reducing the GDP, could get elected—*unless people in general had long before adopted the associated new and extremely radical world view*. Yes, it is important to work for the election of such a government but that would have to focus on getting local economic and social initiatives going as a means to grass-roots consciousness change, and if that project succeeded to the point where the right kind of party

got elected, the *revolution would have already been won!* Again, the essence of this revolution is in the cultural change, and if that is achieved then the taking of state power and the changes thereby enabled will best be seen as *consequences of* the revolution.

This highlights what seems to have been Marx's biggest mistake, that is, overlooking the significance of culture. He analysed primarily in terms of economics, politics and power and gave little attention to the significance of culture for the nature of the good society or the means to achieving it. All that was required of the working class for revolutionary purposes was that they become "a class for itself," meaning little more than being for the overthrow of the system and, in Lenin's terms, ready to follow the vanguard party. As Avineri (1968) points out, in the immediate post take-over period of the revolution Marx expected there to be only a "crude communism" in which there would still be the old unsatisfactory attitudes and ideas regarding property, work, income, competition and acquisitiveness. Workers would still be in the habit of working for a boss and for wages, would still accept division of labour, put up with alienation, and, most importantly here, would still be focused on the acquisition of property and material wealth. He thought that only in the later stage of transition to communism would these dispositions be overcome, via a transformation of mentality or culture.

Above all this perspective assumes that the revolutionary initiative lies with the centre, with the new rulers of the state. That might have been the appropriate orientation in all previous revolutions, but it isn't now. Conditions have disqualified it. The limits to growth as have determined firstly that the state cannot run sustainable settlements and secondly that it cannot establish them in the first place. They can only form and work if they emerge at the grassroots level. They cannot emerge or exist unless they are driven by radically new ideas, values and dispositions focused on localism, community autonomy, cooperation, solidarity, citizen self-government and non-material sources of life satisfaction. Governments cannot create or enforce these cultural conditions.

Thus the limits to growth predicament makes this revolution unlike any before because it determines that cultural change is the fundamental prerequisite. The shift in consciousness will have to gather momentum long before capitalism is swept aside. This aligns with the anarchism of Kropotkin and Tolstoy who prioritized the development of the appropriate vision, not the development of a vanguard party or the taking of state power (Marshall, 1992, p. 372). Marx it seems must now be stood on his head. He is said to have stood Hegel on his head when he criticized Hegel for claiming that ideas determined all, and argued that the economic substructure was the supreme determinant. But in this post-limits revolution ideas and values must lead the way.

It follows that several other core elements within traditional left thinking about action strategies are mistaken, including the need for a vanguard party, the readiness to use force, the working class as the agent of revolution, the assumption that the masses do not need a utopian vision, and the need for a "long march through capitalism" until it matures. These considerations indicate that at this stage it is unwise to fight against capitalism and better to turn away and "ignore it to death." (A detailed case for these heresies is given in Trainer, 2020a.)

To summarise, eco-socialist theoreticians, activists and organisations are clear and correct about the need to transcend capitalism but they urgently need to reframe their goals and strategies in terms of the limits to growth, accepting that a good post-capitalist society cannot involve affluent

lifestyles or economic growth, and therefore acknowledging that “productivist” and Ecomodernist tech-fix faiths (e.g., as enthusiastically promoted by the left’s Bastini, 2019, Phillips, 2015, and Sharzer, 2012) are to be avoided. It means they need to attend to more than power and economics, and to prioritise the cultural issue. Above all they need to recognize that the goal has to be conceived in terms of far more than getting rid of capitalism; it must be about establishing lifestyles and systems that are to do with simplicity, frugality, localism and participatory self-government. Finally Eco-socialist organisations and action are about working to take state power, and from the Simpler Way perspective that is a seriously mistaken focus at this point in time.

In the longer term future the (small remnant) state could of course contribute greatly to the functioning of a Simpler Way, by being primarily concerned with ensuring that local communities are provided with the inputs, arrangements and systems that will enable them to flourish. This role would include coordinating the (remnant) national economy in its supply to local economies of those items they cannot provide for themselves. There will be functions requiring central planning and coordination, such as communications, railways and legal services, although as has been explained these can and should be carried out without central power. Thus the view argued above does not rule out an important role for a significantly modified State.

## **Anarchism**

It should be apparent that the basic goals and means argued above as characteristic of The Simpler Way are Anarchist. There seems to be a resurgence in interest in Anarchism in the discussion of solutions to global problems (Gelderloos, 2022; Vansintjan et al., 2022). The term is highly ambiguous and is often used to refer to positions that are not being endorsed here. The following elements make clear the version that is being argued for.

- Communities which are thoroughly participatory, avoiding as far as possible relations involving power and domination.
- Communities which are self-governing via town assemblies, referenda, committees and citizen engagement, within national laws and guidelines.
- A minimal role for centralization. A “state” which has no independent power but which maintains wider systems than towns. A minimal role for paid bureaucracy, professionals or politicians. Mostly maintenance, monitoring and carrying out of policy undertaken by voluntary citizen committees.
- Smallness of scale enabling face to face relations, discussion of issues, consensus, mutual assistance and strong community bonds.
- Wider issues dealt with via delegations to conferences from which proposals are brought back for community endorsement or revision.
- Spontaneity, responsibility, conscientious citizenship whereby people mostly attend to issues voluntarily and informally.

In addition to these goals it will also be evident that also with respect to strategy for transition to these goals the foregoing analysis shows that Anarchism provides the appropriate approach. The most effective action strategy for achieving the crucial cultural change goal is the Anarchist principle of “Prefiguring,” that is, attempting to establish some of the desired new ways here and now. The assumption here is not that adding new ways will in time displace the old ways, it is that establishing what we can here and now is probably the best way to bring the new world view to the attention of people. That is, prefiguring is best seen as an educational strategy.

Prefiguring is at variance with Socialist change strategy, primarily in recognizing that cultural change must precede structural change, that it is a mistake to focus on taking state power at this early stage of the revolution, and that this (unique) revolution cannot be initiated or led from the centre.

However the perspective being advocated leads to some important criticisms of current Anarchist thinking. Firstly the importance of limits and simplicity in social theorizing is not currently recognized adequately, if at all. Anarchists have focused mainly on power and domination and their goals have mainly been to do with alternative political arrangements. However there has been little if any recognition that when analysis begins with an understanding of the seriousness of the sustainability issue the logic leads to social goals centred on radically simpler lifestyles and systems.

A number of other implications can be seen. The first of these is to do with the immense significance of Anarchism for ecological sustainability, a link that does not seem to have been made at all. The argument above has been that the environmental problem cannot be solved unless Anarchist ways are adopted. It showed that only the kind of social form outlined above can solve problems of resource depletion and ecological destruction.

It is also the basic solution to the problem of Third World deprivation and poverty, which cannot be solved by conventional capitalist growth and trickle down development (Trainer, 2021b). “Appropriate” or needs-driven as distinct from profit-driven development focuses on maximizing local community self-sufficiency and self-government and gearing development to quality of life goals, not to GDP growth. Among other implications, the “Prefiguring” approach minimizes confrontation and is therefore less likely to provoke attack by ruling elites.

With respect to feminism, the Anarchist’s determination to avoid hierarchy and domination coupled with the need for all citizens to cooperate and contribute in the running of the new communities weighs against the probability that females will be seen as second class citizens. The Anarchist practices of the Rojavan Kurds provide an impressive example of female participation and indeed leadership in political social and military activities (Trainer, 2020a).

Extremely important is the fact that a peaceful world cannot possibly be achieved unless global justice is achieved, and in a context of severely limited resources this means it is not going to be achieved until the norm becomes lifestyles and systems generating very low per capita resource demands that can be generalized to all people. Thus transition to some kind of Simpler Way is essential if resource struggles and wars are to be defused (Trainer, 2019b). This connection between Anarchism and the issue of global peace has not been recognized.

And the Simpler Way is not possible unless a culture obsessed with competitive individualistic acquisitiveness is replaced by a very different culture, in which Anarchist principles are central. One consequence would be a dramatic reduction in stress and depression, now major health problems in the richest countries.

These have been connections and additions which would greatly increase the relevance of Anarchist theory if it was located within the general Simpler Way perspective.

## Conclusions

The argument has been that The Simpler Way is not merely a preferred option among many others. Given the magnitude of the unsustainability shown above, the inadequacy of the decoupling claim, and the trajectory of capitalism, it follows logically that this way has to be the general form of society to be adopted.

All of the movements and organisations discussed above involve important themes and are engaged in actions relevant to achieving sustainability goals. Mostly the foregoing argument has not been that some movements are correct and some should be abandoned. The concern has been to draw attention to an over-arching perspective in terms of which it is desirable that they frame their particular world views and campaigns. This would contribute to the development of a more unified critical sustainability movement.

If this wider frame is accepted significant implications for action follow. To repeat crucial for transition to simpler lifestyles and systems will be profound cultural change, towards understandings and values that contradict those dominant in consumer-capitalist society. Given that the driving force must come via spontaneous grass-roots movements and cannot be initiated or imposed or even led from the centre it is evident that the cultural change must be achieved long before major structural changes or policies at the level of formal government can be achieved. This means that the main work to be done needs to be focused on awareness raising, education, challenging the dominant ideology and pointing to alternative ideas, values and ways. The basic activist strategy indicated therefore is Prefiguring aspects of The Simpler Way here and now, as educational devices.

If specific movements could coalesce around limits and simplicity themes this could lead to the formation of a much more unified and powerful general sustainability movement.

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**Undead Zoos: Wildlife Ownership, Lively Commodification, and Animal Agency in American Roadside Zoos**

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**Abstract**

As global biodiversity plummets, innumerable species of wildlife disappear from their native ecosystems en masse. The live global wildlife trade and exotic pet phenomenon are major components in this process. Animals torn asunder from their native habitats are relocated across vast geographical distances to be owned as living commodities - valued for both their *life* and their *liveliness*. These 'exotic pets' are rare, endangered, and undomesticated wildlife kept in substandard living conditions alongside their human owners. Within the American live wildlife trade, roadside zoos stand as particularly exploitative institutions of spectacle due in part to their conscription of animal labor to generate profit. As exotic pet animals are kept as commodities by roadside zoo owners, they are utilized as a means of production through the employment of constant human labor. This does not mean, however, that these animals are passive objects in the production process. Animal subjectivities and species capabilities are crucial in either lubricating or resisting the production of spectacle. This article, then, examines the material and discursive entanglements between humans and exotic pet animals within American roadside zoos. It does so

as a means of drawing critical attention toward these exploitative institutions while simultaneously advocating for their dismantlement. In bringing posthumanist notions of nonhuman agency into dialogue with Marxist conceptions of commodity production and species-essence, this article attempts to provide an analytical framework for identifying how nonhuman subjects are exploited in their owners' pursuit of capital accumulation while acknowledging their potentialities as crucial actors in the production process.

## **Introduction**

In July 2021, an African serval named 'Sparta' was filmed walking alongside a North Carolina highway, casually trotting toward a nearby residential home. As the video gained considerable attention on social media, the owner of It's a Zoo Life petting zoo was informed that her wildcat was on the loose. Grabbing a piece of raw meat and a kennel, she quickly made her way to the cat's reported location and waved the meat around while calling its name. As she anticipated, the serval scrambled to the meal and obediently entered its container – where it was promptly transported back to the petting zoo and placed in its small holding pen. In an interview with a local news network, the owner reported that her potbellied pig rooted a tunnel large enough for the serval to escape from, before assuring the reporters that her wildcat was well-trained and posed little threat to anyone (Brogle, 2021). North Carolina is one of 15 states in the US that does not prohibit the private ownership of large and wild cats. Georgia, on the other hand, does strictly prohibit the private ownership of such animals. This did not stop another African serval named 'Nala' from breaking into an Atlanta woman's home and entering her bed as she slept (Associated Press, 2021). Both Sparta and Nala were kept as exotic pets – undomesticated, rare, and potentially dangerous animals that are privately owned by individuals as living commodities.

Sparta is a main attraction at the aforementioned It's a Zoo Life petting zoo, a "family run zoo that specializes in exotic animal exhibits and much, much more" (It's a Zoo Life, n.d.). It's a Zoo Life holds no accreditation with any zoological regulatory bodies nor does it have any affiliations with conservation entities in the way an established American zoo would. It is a roadside zoo – an entrepreneurial venture that uses exotic pet animals to accumulate wealth for their owners. Being an African wildcat housed thousands of miles away from its native habitat, Sparta's strange living arrangement is an all-too-common one in the United States. Although the exact number is impossible to estimate, roadside zoos like It's a Zoo Life permeate the American landscape across all 50 states. Utilizing their collections of rare animals, these institutions offer 'rare human-wildlife encounters' for clientele built off the not-so-concealed exploitation of captive animal subjects. This article, in turn, theoretically grapples with American roadside zoos as emergent institutions in order to argue for their swift dismantlement. To do so, I will synthesize Marxist ideas of labor exploitation, alienation, and special essence with posthumanist concepts of agency and lively commodification. Such a synthesis aims to build upon an existing, yet minuscule body of analytical work around the American exotic pet phenomenon and direct wider, critical attention toward it.

## **Background**

Before continuing, it is important that I briefly define my terminologies. The term 'exotic pet' is a loose definition that encapsulates a vast myriad of undomesticated animal species owned as personal and private property by individuals. The exact connotation behind the term is often

difficult to pin down as *spectacular* exotic pets (elephants, monitor lizards, and hornbills) exist in a seemingly different classificatory strata than *mundane* ones (hedgehogs, bearded dragons, and parakeets). For the sake of clarity, this article's analysis will focus entirely on rare and endangered species of wildlife that are poached, smuggled, and bred for private ownership on illicit markets - spectacular exotic pets.

The ownership of rare wildlife has been a hotly contested issue for some time in American public discourse due to its negative environmental impact and moral ambiguity (Hall, 2019; Davies, 2005; Garrod, 2016; Slater, 2014). Hinging on the extraction of wild animals from their native ecosystems, the American exotic pet industry has a profound impact on environmental degradation (Shukhova & MacMillan, 2020; Young et al., 2016). This is done primarily through a combination of poaching (van Uhm, 2018) and habitat destruction (Kalof, 2007). The very process of creating an exotic pet from a wild animal is one of immense violence to both the individual animals being trafficked and to the larger ecological networks they originate from (Davies, 2005; Eskew et al., 2020; Grant et al., 2017; Kalof, 2007; van Uhm, 2018). The commodification of undomesticated animal bodies is both a symptom of and a driving force in the ongoing anthropogenic sixth mass extinction event (Davies, 2005; Kalof, 2007; Shukhova & MacMillan, 2020; Young et al., 2016).

Further, the legality of this process is suspect. Many countries (or regions within countries) place strict regulations on the ownership of specific species. This does not stop thousands of exotic pets from being illegally trafficked into countries like the United States, China, or Russia each year (Bush et al., 2014; Carrete & Tella, 2008; Harrington, 2015; Lockwood et al., 2019; Ramsay et al., 2007; Shukhova & MacMillan, 2020; van Uhm, 2018; Warwick, 2015). Oftentimes, these 'pets' end up in the homes of individual buyers, where they are inadequately cared for as though they were domesticated animals. Countless others share a trajectory similar to Sparta, the African Serval - trapped in the display pens of roadside zoos. Whether they are situated within the homes of individuals or the collections of roadside zoos, these animals are ultimately forced to live in confined, foreign spaces alongside humans. The fates of these animals and the relationships they form with their owners are contingent on a multitude of factors including the species of animal, an animal's life history, the utilization of space in a given area, the owner's accessibility to material goods, and their ideological viewpoint on pet ownership (Grant et al., 2017).

Operating under the guise of conservatory and educational institutions, roadside zoos are especially contentious spaces. Although they are broadly referred to as 'zoos' by advocates and critics alike, roadside zoos are significantly different than conceptually 'traditional' American zoos. Generally speaking, most American zoos are established conservation centers tasked with upholding a certain standard of life-quality for the animals they steward (Bostok, 1993). Whereas many American zoos holding institutional legitimacy go through processes of accreditation by demonstrating competent animal welfare standards and practices to the nonprofit Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), roadside zoos notoriously forgo such accreditation processes and are, in turn, considered illegitimate operations by many (Abrell, 2021; Bush et al., 2014; Davies, 2005; Schuttler, 2020). Critically, they are often viewed as little more than opportunistic and exploitative businesses merging the established structures of American zoos with corporate animal theme parks - a line of argumentation this article furthers.

As the entrepreneurial ventures of the petite bourgeoisie, many roadside zoos operate with limited access to resources - which greatly affects their abilities to both maximize capital accumulation and adequately care for the animals they own. Little forethought for innate biological requirements is put into the construction of the artificial environments these animals live in. Further, many roadside zoos inflict severe physical and psychic damage to their animals through unusual labor practices in the forms of excessive human exposure and trained performances (Jacquet, 2016; Schuttler, 2020). The utilization of conscripted animal labor drives the roadside zoo business model of providing ‘spectacular experiences with exotic wildlife’; a point I will return to throughout this article.

### **Nonhuman Agency**

Roadside zoos are businesses selling commodified life itself. For paying consumers to truly encounter spectacular wildlife in the flesh, captive animals must be both *alive* and *lively*. Bored, lethargic, and unamusing exotic pets capture little attention and diminish customer return rates. To circumvent this, roadside zoos work tirelessly to incentivize animals to be as active, fierce, and friendly as they need to be for any given audience. In this way, the lives of the animals and their owners are intrinsically bound and entangled. The animals must exert themselves to earn their living (in terms of food, shelter, care, and so on), while the owners of these animals must devote immense amounts of time and resources into training and caring for the animals so they can exert themselves proper. If animals cannot adapt to the conditions they are placed within, a negative cascade occurs and the business may fail to attract consumers - which in turn, can lead to diminishing provisions for animals. Failing roadside zoos heavily rely on cheap food, shoddy building materials, and sparse veterinary visits to minimize expenditures. Some animals may even be sent away or put down if they cannot be spectacular enough to justify necessary resource commitments. For these businesses and animals to survive, they must work in tandem to create a series of entertaining experiences on end. Nonhuman agency, then, is crucial to this article’s line of analysis as it allows us to better understand how animals exist not as passive objects that are owned and acted upon, but as living, subjective actors that are able to carve spaces for themselves in human lives through their actions, intentions, and potentials.

Within posthumanist discourse, there is an increasing consensus that agency is the effect of material entanglements between interacting entities (Saha, 2017). Through this relational model, agency is not the innate ability of selectively recognized actors to affect their surrounding environments through deliberate acts. Rather, it is the material and ideological effect of encounters between different actors as they act in accordance to their own capacities and behaviors (Büscher, 2021; Callon & Law, 1997; Haraway, 2007, 2016; Latour, 1991, 2014; O’Laughlin, 2016; Saha, 2017). While this article does follow such a consensus, it also breaks with any semblance of hopefulness that may accompany it. Whereas many posthumanist analyses of human-nonhuman entanglements take on an optimistic tone of transcendent multispecies solidarity in their deliverances, I refuse to present the entanglements between human and animal actors throughout this article as anything other than damaging. Analyses steeped in ontological entanglements between humans and nonhumans may excel in demonstrating complexities within a given spacetime but they often struggle to define what should *not* be entangled in favor of a more neutral analysis of intricate actor networks (Büscher, 2021; Giraud, 2019; Hornborg, 2017; Strathern,

1996). Exotic pet ownership offers a unique analytical perspective through which we are able to see what is entangled, how it became entangled, and, I argue, what should not be entangled.

To comprehensively analyze the vast myriad of moving components that constitute the American exotic pet and roadside zoo phenomena, this article will be broken down into three overarching sections. The scope of which begins broadly - with an examination of the global wildlife trade's operations over international lines. In investigating the decentralized networks of niche labor positions that constitute the wildlife trade's flows across geographic boundaries, I argue that exotic pets are not hastily created by syndicated hunting and smuggling groups. Rather, they are formed along long processes of alienation and displacement that are initiated by precarious peoples facing economic destitution under capitalism.

Narrowing the analytical scope, I then detail how smuggled wildlife are transformed into commodities from which life is the primary source of value; how these 'lively commodities' (Haraway, 2007; Collard, 2014) are utilized by American roadside zoo management as a means of production; and how roadside zoos attempt to obfuscate the exploitative conditions from which surplus value is extracted from exotic pets. To do this, I directly engage with Donna Haraway's theoretical notions of 'lively commodities and capital' as they are presented in her works and expanded upon by Collard (2014) and Saha (2017). I then bring these notions into dialogue with Marx's early conceptual understandings of alienation and species-essence. In bringing posthumanist and Marxist theory together, I aim to show how the pursuit of capital accumulation drives environmental alienation and furthers the immiseration of nonhuman subjects - while still giving credence to the agential capacities of nonhuman actors within commodification and production processes.

Finally, I present a series of incidents involving roadside zoo-bound animals subverting the intentionality of their owners and, in turn, their own commodity statuses. Drawing from these examples, I assert that exotic pets themselves are able to defy their own commodification through their species-specific capacities and individual subjectivities. Such subversions then undermine the intended ordering of spatial relations between species and can result in devastating damages to both peoples and places. Philo and Wilbert's (2000) theoretical contributions on animal placements in relation to modern societies are crucial here as they provide a theoretical foundation for explaining the underlying tensions behind these moments of extreme danger and chaos.

Weaving these narratives together into a single cohesive analysis, the goal of this article is threefold. First: to detail the magnitude of the American exotic pet industry through the focal point of roadside zoos as burgeoning institutions under current capitalist conditions. Second: to insist that further recognition and examination of nonhuman roles in capitalist modes of production is necessary for more holistic theorycrafting in anticapitalist movements. Third: to rally against an exotic pet industrial complex that opportunistically depletes ecological warrens and cruelly subjugates wildlife while espousing the language of conservatory struggle.

With few exceptions (Abrell, 2021; Collard, 2014; Collard & Dempsey, 2014), the American exotic pet phenomenon has been scantily examined (let alone critiqued) by the social sciences. Further, the fragmented and entrepreneurial networks of commodity making and maintenance that permeate animal-driven industries (such as those constituting the live wildlife trade) are often



overlooked in anticapitalist, anthrozoological literature in favor of critiquing large-scale, bureaucratized institutions of animal exploitation (e.g., factory farms; Baur, 2019; Nibert, 2017; Singer, 1975). This article is an attempt to push these topics to the fore of discussion and generate critical attention that can be later refined into political praxis. As I argue throughout this article, ending the exotic pet industrial complex and its disastrous consequences must quickly become a priority for those who wish to emancipate human and nonhuman peoples from domination under global capitalism.

## **I. Making Exotic Pets Through Precarious Extractivism**

If we are to recognize exotic pet actors as living and agential commodities, it is crucial to understand the commodification processes they emerge from. Although domestic breeding operations for exotic pet markets do exist within the US, a majority of these animals begin their lives as wildlife and are made into pets along legal and illicit, decentralized networks of international transit (Bush et al., 2014; Collard, 2014; Davies, 2005; Warwick, 2015). Journalist Ben Davies (2005) has provided a dauntingly thorough examination of the Asian endangered wildlife trade in which he finely guides readers through the processes of wildlife extraction, displacement, and commodification. As Davies shows us, the wildlife trade is both driven and expediated by economic necessity under global capitalism and postcolonial relations. Poachers are not syndicated professional hunters, they are most often farmers, housewives, and day laborers driven by the market's "whip of hunger" (Polanyi, 2001). Some purposefully embark on hunting expeditions or form poaching groups to chase high-reward bounties on charismatic fauna, while many others are simply opportunists who happen to be at the right place at the right time (Davies, 2005).

In their attempts to earn living wages, the precariat workers of resource-rich countries are incentivized to empty out the ecological systems they depend on. Biodiversity is increasingly fleeting in formerly rich ecological spaces and, as a result, potential bounties to be collected on certain high-reward species lower each year (Davies, 2005). Mature mammals that fetch high prices on black markets – such as large cats, bears, or primates are butchered for pelts, medicines, and meats. Their offspring are then caged and smuggled both domestically and internationally for wealthy consumers as pets (Davies, 2005). Birds and reptiles tend to fetch lower price tags per unit, but often require less labor output to capture and are easier to conspicuously transport, making them the bulk resource of wildlife smuggling operations (Davies, 2005; Scheffers et al., 2019).

As the material conditions of the global precariat worsen, exotic wildlife poaching and smuggling will become increasingly tempting as an economic security net to fall back on (Davies, 2005; Ledger, 2021). For example, *The Independent* recently published an article (Ledger, 2021) in which Mexican conservationists and wildlife protection agencies point to the economic fallout of the Covid-19 pandemic as the catalyst for a 660 percent rise in animals seized from wildlife smuggling operation busts within the country. The article states:

In November a multi-agency raid of two properties in Mexico City's district of Iztapalapa led to the seizure of more than 15,000 animals, two thirds of which held protected status. They included turtles, crocodiles, toucans, parrots and Gila monsters, all housed in overcrowded conditions as they awaited unknown onward journeys. (Ledger, 2021)

In 2019, the Mexican government's environmental protection agency *PROFEPA* (The Federal Office for Environmental Protection) confiscated roughly 5,000 protected species; in 2020, the number was nearly 33,000 (Ledger, 2021). As the pandemic erodes the financial stability of peoples and communities across Central and South America, more are turning to exotic animal poaching and smuggling to survive.

While those subjugated to abject poverty and precarity continue to pick ecosystems apart, the animals removed from them find new homes in hegemonic consumer capitals (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2020). This process is riddled with informal labor networks, middlemen, and brokers who compartmentalize the wildlife trade into a series of fragmented, subcontracted, and entrepreneurial niche-labor positions across a vast geographical dispersion. Which, in turn, gives the trade a social, cultural, and economic diversity that is indicative to capitalism's current form: globalized commodities flowing without a single, homogenous superstructure (Fassbinder, 2008; Tsing, 2009, 2015).

The displacement of animals from their respective ecological systems is both a physically and psychologically violent process – one that kills an untold number of to-be-exotic pets before they ever reach their destinations as they are placed in abysmal living conditions and sent across vast distances (Collard, 2014; Davies, 2005; Eskew et al., 2020; Grant et al., 2017; Kalof, 2007; Nuwer, 2021; van Uhm, 2018). Reports of reptiles and amphibians packed in plastic containers with only a humidifier sponge and holes jabbed into the container's lid are commonplace as the animals are found hidden in suitcases at security checkpoints; rare and endangered birds are tethered to persons or posts in cages as they are moved; and a plethora of mammals are jammed into cramped wooden crates or cages and stowed on cargo containers, delivery trucks, or airline jets for prolonged periods of time (Davies, 2005; Nuwer, 2021; *U.S. v. Bronx Reptiles*, 2000). Severing animals from their ecological and biological support systems without killing them is crucial during transportation processes. Dead animals may have a placement in the larger global wildlife trade, but within the exotic pet trade specifically, they have no value (Collard, 2014). In other words, the life of an animal is essential to its commodity life – making life itself a principal source of value (Baura, 2017; Collard & Dempsey, 2014; Haraway, 2007; Shukin, 2009).

## II. Lively Commodification and Alienation

Through capitalist accumulation and alienation processes, an exotic pet is effectively unmade as a wild being and made into a commodity by displacing it within a circulation of other commodified bodies and rigorously honing desirable traits. It is de-and-recontextualized across networks until its animal-ness is foundationally altered. This process does not remove the 'liveliness' from the subject. Instead, the animal is transformed into a 'lively commodity' which is owned and managed in accordance to its agential behaviors and capacities (Collard, 2014; Haraway, 2007). 'Lively commodities' are beings that remain alive throughout their time as commodities and whose value is derived from their behavioral and agential capacities as living beings. Like other commodities, they transgress dichotomies since they are "neither 'local' nor 'global' but both; neither 'economic' nor 'cultural' but the two together; neither here nor there but everywhere" (Castree, 2004, p. 22). Unlike other commodities, however, they transgress one of the most immutable dichotomies of all: that of subject-object. "Lively commodities are thinking and feeling; they can

suffer and die. In a sense they have a double life: a social, geographical commodity life and a wild life comprised of their various ecological, social, and familial networks” (Collard, 2014, p. 155). The double lives of exotic pets are not constructed along smooth pathways, they are formed through violent species subjugation and laborious interspecific relationship building.

Forming captive ties after transportation is critical to assembling lively commodities. The exotic pet trade operates on the commodification of living, animate, encounterable, and *controllable* wildlife. Apes that wear diapers and give hugs or songbirds that sit atop shoulders to sing are the most desirable kinds of exotic pets because they offer uniquely intimate and memorable experiences for paying customers – one in which the cartesian divide between humanity and Nature is superficially bridged. These desirable traits are molded through intimate ties formed between owner and animal alongside disciplinary coercion. For exotic pets that have been disentangled from their original networks and re-entangled in networks of human-provided support, survival depends on adaptability and recoding behavior for radically new modes of living (Collard, 2014). These animals no longer have traditional kinship ties, their movement is grossly inhibited, they no longer search for food, they cannot mate on their own accord. Additionally, their bodies are altered to ensure ‘wildness’ is controllable. Clipped wings, defanged mouths, and trimmed or removed claws are common physical alterations through which biological capacities are curbed and commodified behavior based on captive dependency is necessitated (Collard, 2014). Marx’s notions of special essence, alienation, and dead labor are useful tools to think with here, as they help demonstrate how displaced and disciplined exotic pets are utilized by roadside zoo management to accumulate capital.

Writing on alienation in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (1964), Marx describes the separation of peoples from specific aspects of their own ‘human nature’ as a consequence of class divisions within society. Specifically, Marx focused on the cleavage between humans and their *Gattungswesen* – the species-essence and potentiality of a person which is determined by social and historical formations alongside biological capacities. Under capitalist modes of production, the worker is estranged from the products of her labor and separated from the natural environment, these estrangements restrict the potential of the worker to express her own *Gattungswesen* as she is coerced to live within specific spatial confinements and sell her labor to survive (Santilli, 1973). Once the worker’s ability to express *Gattungswesen* is inhibited, her goals can be directed toward activities that are dictated by the bourgeoisie and mediated by the alien products of her labor, now objectified and sold as commodities. Utilizing Marx’s notion of alienation in this analysis, we can expand the concept of *Gattungswesen* and apply it to nonhuman subjects whose species-essence and potentiality is both limited and utilized by capitalists in order to produce surplus value (Saha, 2017).

Expanding upon Collard’s and Haraway’s theoretical work, I add that certain exotic pets not only exist as ‘lively commodities’, but also ‘undead’ forms of capital (Saha, 2017). Particularly within institutions like roadside zoos, where an animal’s intelligence, ferocity, aesthetic and behavioral uniqueness, or docility is what gives it value. These traits must be honed and drawn out by the labor of employed handlers and owners. In this way, exotic pets are capital deployed as a means of production. For Marx (1977), the means of production, or ‘constant capital’, is considered ‘dead labor’. By this, he meant that constant capital consists of commodities which cannot produce surplus value on their own but are still part of the production process. Having been produced

through human labor, they need to be operated, maintained, and repaired. In other words, they demand human labor to produce value. Without perpetual human labor, constant capital wears down and loses its exchange value at a faster rate (Marx, 1977). Following Jonathan Saha's (2017) historical analysis of elephant agency in the tweak industry under British colonial rule, I assert that by bringing Marx's notion of constant capital as dead into dialogue with posthuman ideas of lively commodities and capital (Collard & Dempsey, 2014; Haraway, 2007; Shukin, 2009), animals in roadside zoos can be considered both living (valued for agential capacities) and dead (demanding the labor of humans to produce value): undead capital.

Animal trainers and handlers, then, become important figures in roadside zoo spaces, as they are employed to coax value from animal subjects. This interspecific dynamic of labor extraction and value production is itself a product of immeasurable amounts of time spent breaking an animal down through disciplinary action and rebuilding it through positive reinforcement. For these animals to maximize profit yields for their owners as a means of production, the agential capacities of the animals must be utilized through both human and nonhuman labor (Barua, 2017; Davis, 1997; Saha, 2017).

In his essay *Why Look at Animals*, John Berger (1980) argues that the ownership of pets serves as a distinguishing feature of consumer societies, one that tells us a great deal about our own species' existence under capitalism:

The pet is either sterilized or sexually isolated, extremely limited in its exercise, deprived of almost all other animal contact, and fed with artificial foods. This is the material process which lies behind the truism that pets come to resemble their masters or mistresses. They are creatures of their owner's way of life. (pp. 24-25)

Nowhere is this more apparent than in watching exotic pet owners upload videos of themselves and their animals to popular social media platforms like YouTube, where animals are filmed sucking from baby bottles, swimming in plastic pools, wearing clothes, giving 'hugs and kisses', and other human-like activities (Myrtle Beach Safari, 2020; Tiger Productions, 2018). These animals are extensively and intensively trained to replicate human-like behavior in order to create moments of bonding that seemingly embrace affective multispecies encounters. Such performances are obviously not naturally occurring. Most often, animals in captivity are bored, lethargic, and limited in their activities (Bradshaw, 2009; Meagher & Mason, 2012). It then falls upon roadside zoo laborers (most often handlers and trainers) and management to continuously incentivize lively activity for both in-person and online audiences.

Through the use of social media platforms, exotic pet advocates – ranging from enthusiastic individuals to roadside zoos – operate under the guise of promoting 'conservation through educational exposure' (Bending, 2020; Myrtle Beach Safari, n.d.). In actuality, videos such as these encourage further exotic pet ownership and wildlife trade demand through algorithmic, attention-based economics (Bending, 2020; Marino, 2019; Moloney et al., 2021). Viral footage of captive animals performing extraordinary or eccentric feats serves as great promotional material for roadside zoos. This oftentimes makes the production of viral footage a crucial component in operations and building corporate presence. Advertising through photos and videos allows zoos the opportunity to both display their collections and to showcase the unique services they provide through close encounters with captured wildlife.

In addition to providing viewing opportunities of rare animals, these institutions offer exclusive ‘encounters’ in which paying customers can pet, hold, or feed the animals to receive their own moments of personal interspecific connectivity. This ‘bringing nature to people’ business model requires a plethora of moving components to be harnessed and organized in such a way that capital accumulation occurs along paths of least resistance (Davis, 1997). Spatial organization cannot be overlooked here, as it is the foundational prerequisite for operations.

### **Roadside Zoo Orientations and Operations**

Due to their spatial demands, roadside zoos are often found at the periphery of urban areas – where they are not too far for urbanites to visit, but not too close either. This, in turn, makes visiting them a day’s event for most customers. Accounting for day trips and multi-hour visitations, roadside zoos aim to have enough animals and activities that can keep customers interested while also providing utilities that keep them there – such as bathrooms, food courts, and so on. In her ethnographic work on the Seaworld corporation of Orlando, Florida, Susan Davis (1997) showed us that the spatial topography of animal-centric theme parks is a central component in the acquisition of optimized revenue flows. For institutions like roadside zoos, it is not merely enough to own a large space filled with various spectacular exotic animals in compartmentalized holding areas. Navigability is crucial for success. Structures, signages, and pathways within these spaces must be orientated in such a way that customers are guided toward main attractions and concessions. The spatial allocation and placement of each animal is calculated in such a way that the most charismatic species (which draw most visitors to begin with) are hard to miss. Of course, unlike Seaworld and other corporate mega-parks, most roadside zoos do not follow an established corporate guideline for spatial organization or internal rulesets for operations; because of this, high levels of variability between sites are prevalent (DiBenedetto, 2020). However, successful businesses in the exotic pet industry do tend to at least mimic well-recognized corporate structures in hopes of achieving similar financial gains (Big Cat Habitat, n.d.; Myrtle Beach Safari, n.d.; Yellowstone Bear World, n.d.).

To retain audience engagement and establish a reliable consumer base, encounterability (Haraway, 2007) is of utmost importance for zoo-like settings. The encounter value (Barua, 2017; Haraway, 2007) of an animal is derived from its living commodity status and requires at least some form of engagement by consumers. Within roadside zoos, this is usually done through two means: visual engagement and physical contact. Unlike other lively commodified animals observed through capitalist ventures (like wildlife tourism; Barua, 2017), observation of animals in confinement must be maximized to avoid consumer disappointment. Holding pens are organized to keep animals viewable at all times – meaning they are often small and barren. If animals appear overly anxious or bored – as they usually are in captivity (Bradshaw, 2009; Meagher & Mason, 2012) – employees may attempt to liven them up by inciting desirable behavior, with varying degrees of success depending on the animal’s motivations. Additionally, within roadside zoos, direct contact or live feeding activities may take place as part of ‘educational seminars’ or additional ‘packaged services’ available for those willing to pay extra (Big Cat Habitat, n.d.; Jacquet, 2016; Myrtle Beach Safari, n.d.; ThePartyAnimals, n.d.; Yellowstone Bear World, n.d.). In this way, roadside zoos are institutions truly indicative of contemporary capitalism’s spectacle. They are spaces designed for consumers to escape the mundanity of modern life by encountering

a series of spectacular commodities conveniently spaced just far enough apart to eat away at a day's time. The more consumers pay into the experience, the more spectacular it becomes with exclusive benefits and opportunities. Debord's (2004) astute observation on commodity packages best identifies roadside zoos as exactly what they are: parodies of impoverished realities.

In the expanding economy of "services" and leisure activities, the payment for these blocks of time is equally unified: "everything's included," whether it is a matter of spectacular living environments, touristic pseudo-travel, subscriptions to cultural consumption, or even the sale of sociability itself in the form of "exciting conversations" and "meetings with celebrities." Spectacular commodities of this type, which would obviously never sell were it not for the increasing impoverishment of the realities they parody ... (p. 88)

### **Obfuscating Exploitation: A Tale of Two Zoos**

As is often the case with entrepreneurial ventures, not all roadside zoos operate on equal footing as material and capital investments are both demanding and continuous. Animals must be housed, fed, and cared for according to their biological requirements. Cutting corners on any of these facets will deteriorate the quality of animal livelihood, draw the ire of critics, and displease consumers. Although many roadside zoos espouse near-identical mission statements of providing 'conservation and education', resource allocation greatly influences the imposed façade of conservatory operations. The following examples show how cheaply run zoos are hard-pressed to hide their exploitative conditions – especially when compared to resource abundant zoos.

Cricket Hollow Animal Park was a roadside zoo in Manchester, Iowa. Marketed as a "family-owned, non-profit, educational corporation" (Cricket Hollow Animal Park, 2017), the zoo was home to over 400 various animals: some of them domesticated, many others exotic. After a long series of legal battles regarding the poor living conditions provided for the animals, the business was effectively shut down by the Iowa Supreme Court in November 2019. Rescue services sent to retrieve the animals the following month were able to obtain hundreds of poorly housed animals. Many others had gone missing by that time (Joens, 2020; Neighbor, 2019). Although the zoo has been closed and its premises abandoned, a plethora of digital archival evidence has survived long enough to show, in-detail, the Cricket Hollow Animal Park experience. Within its parameters, a multitude of imported exotic animals from unknown origins were confined to cramped and filthy living-conditions; fed cheap, artificial foodstuff; and forced to be touched by numerous strangers daily (Animal Legal Defense Fund, 2014; Cricket Hollow Animal Park, n.d.). In videos documenting site visitations, baboons and other exotic species are seen congregating alongside their respective enclosure fences to have children hurl food in their direction (The Ortiz Family, 2019). Photos and reviews posted online paint harrowing experiences as visitors were accompanied by the zoo's owner on guided tours while she provided personal stories and species-specific facts about animals as they wandered about, bored and restless in cramped pens (Animal Legal Defense Fund, 2014; Trust Reviewers, n.d.). Visitors were allowed to regularly hold and feed animals for 'educational purposes', as evidenced by photographs taken from the park's social media pages. Various customer reviews claimed that dead animals could be seen rotting in pens and that flies permeated around the entirety of the zoo's grounds (Trust Reviewers, n.d.). These allegations were later corroborated by rescue service workers who searched the premise (Neighbor, 2019).

Running contrary to Cricket Hollow, Myrtle Beach Safari is a large-scale and immensely successful roadside zoo in Socastee, South Carolina. Unlike the defunct Iowan zoo, Myrtle Beach is both spatially large and professionally clean. Access to high-grade materials for infrastructure and quality feed is apparent. Animals found within are all charismatic exotic species of dubious origins (“Hearing set Thursday,” 2020) and are marketed as ‘species ambassadors’ for ‘worldwide conservation work’ (Myrtle Beach Safari, n.d.). The primary attraction of Myrtle Beach is the opportunity to have ‘private and personal, all-expenses-paid experiences’ with a wide-range of endangered species, including: chimpanzees, elephants, and tiger cubs. Such experiences are, again, typically composed of petting, photoshoots, and feeding. The proposed purpose of the zoo is to raise awareness of the critical conditions these animals face in their natural habitats (Myrtle Beach Safari, n.d.). In actuality, the zoo serves as little more than a business venture to exploit nonhuman labor for private profits, as wildlife biologist Stephanie Schuttler (2020) has argued. Tiger cub pool parties, elephant performances, and similar events are commonplace within Myrtle Beach’s park grounds (Myrtle Beach Safari, n.d.). These spectacular services and experiences provided by Myrtle Beach and their animals are the products of innumerable hours of animal handling and intensive training. Myrtle Beach’s animals have deeply intimate relations with their handlers – as documented by their social media update videos, which show animal training regimens (Myrtle Beach Safari, 2020).

The conservatory sales pitch that is nauseatingly echoed by roadside zoo management is both illusory and hypocritical. As this article has sought to show thus far, these institutions actively perpetuate the eradication and exploitation of wildlife while claiming to be advocating for their preservation and wellbeing. In capitalizing on exotic pet ownership under the guise of conservation efforts, the disappearance of wildlife is monumentalized by their entrapment – as their livelinesses in roadside zoos are used to mourn their own disappearances (Berger, 1980; Lippit, 2000; Shukin, 2009). Petite bourgeoisie entrepreneurs then sell the opportunity to lament a dying planet back to consumers by showing them animals that are perpetually in a state of *disappearing* but never entirely gone (Lippit, 2000). The exploitative conditions that enable these bio-economics assort lively commodities into a ‘unified commodity package’ through the utilization of undead labor.

### III. Animal Agency and Commodity Resistance

The rendering of exotic pets as lively commodities and undead capital does not necessarily mean that roadside zoos are areas in which humans totally reign supreme. Roadside zoos are unique geographic spaces where the more-than-human entanglements of life produce moments of explosive subversion to given power dynamics. Geographers Philo and Wilbert (2000) have argued that humans have a long history of attempting to confine animals to physical and conceptual spaces like zoos, farms, and ‘the wilderness’. They also point out that the agential behaviors of animals confound such confinements and, in turn, produce ‘*beastly places*’ where the intended anthropocentric ordering of life in relation to space is upheaved. The exotic pets within roadside zoos may appear to be entirely captive and submissive – due in part to their spatial allocations and dependance on human provisions. However, their exertion of agency greatly shifts interspecific power dynamics and undermines the intended spatial orientations in which human-animal encounters play out.

The following incidents occurred in three separate states in the US and were reported on by large-scale news outlets. Although they have no direct ties with one another, the thematically consistent happenings between them tell us much about the potentiality underlying more-than-human encounters across roadside zoo settings:

May, 2021: researchers at Florida Atlantic University (FAU) claimed to have successfully traced the origins of a colony of African *sabaeus* monkeys that have resided for some 70 years next to a Southern Florida airport terminal. According to the FAU researchers, the colony's origin began at the Dania Chimpanzee Farm – a roadside zoo. Records show that in 1948, a group of imported African *sabaeus* monkeys had escaped the farm and travelled into a nearby mangrove swamp. Most of the primates were captured and returned to the zoo, but some successfully eluded capturers long enough to carve out a niche for themselves in the swamplands of Florida. Today, the monkeys are adored by local residents who ardently defend the primates' right to exist and freely roam the area. (Associated Press, 2021)

November, 2008: Safari's Exotic Wildlife Sanctuary in Oklahoma was temporarily closed for business after a volunteer was mauled to death by a 1,000lb liger (tiger-lion hybrid) in its pen. When questioned about the incident, the park's owner claimed that "For some reason, the gate door was opened, which never happens... We don't really know what exactly happened. It was just a routine feeding" (Sargent, 2008). The liger in question was allowed to remain in custody of Safari's ownership after federal investigations on the attack. This ruling came despite a litany of animal cruelty concerns and safety violations plaguing the site and its management ("Broken Arrow may close," 2012). Following the park's reopening, staff used the incident to teach visitors and volunteers about the dangers these large cats pose to humans.

February, 2005: four chimpanzees escaped their enclosure at the Animal Haven Ranch in California and attacked a local couple visiting another chimpanzee at a different enclosure. The man was severely maimed and nearly killed. He lost all of his fingers from both hands, an eye, part of his nose, cheek and lips, and part of his buttocks. The chimpanzees bit off the woman's thumb. Two of the apes were shot and killed by a park employee trying to stop the attack. The other two chimps remained loose in the park for several hours before being captured. According to investigators, the two male and two female chimpanzees were in an open cinder-block bunkhouse where they slept and watched TV. The steel door that leads to the bunkhouse was locked, but was quickly undone by one of the chimp's dexterous fingers. When asked about the incident, Director of the Chimp and Human Communication Institute at Central Washington University, Deborah Fouts, said: "They have nothing but time on their hands. They probably know every inch of [the enclosure]. Those of us who have worked with captive chimpanzees know that they're ingenious and that they figure ways to get out, especially if they're bored and have nothing else to do" (Covarrubias & Becerra, 2005).

Despite extensive efforts taken to curb unfavorable behaviors in captive settings, exotic pets are repeatedly documented rebelling against coercive power through the exertion of their *Gattungswesen*. Such rebellious actions, I assert, stem from the antagonistic frictions between a living subject's drive to act in accordance to their specific requirements and their commodification. As the three examples provided above demonstrate, moments of suspension that arise from such



frictions may lead to a myriad of outcomes that can drastically change the balance of power in a given entanglement – even if only for a moment. Within these suspensions, the potentiality of animals in agential networks becomes all too apparent and non-dismissible for human actors. A pet bear is no longer recognized as a commodified pet once it lunges at its handler, it becomes a dangerous predator that acts in accordance to its own drives and motivations. The appeal of these animals for many viewers and owners is that they are *wild*, even if only at a conceptual level. At the same time, encounterability requires varying degrees of docility and a willingness on the part of the animals to embrace human contact. The abovementioned Safari's Exotic Wildlife Sanctuary incident serves as an excellent example of the double bind these lively commodities exist within: the liger was recognized as dangerous, handled in a hesitant manner, and used by Safari's employees to demonstrate the volatility of close contact with large cats after a lethal attack (Bewley, 2008). Yet, photos of various large cats licking the faces of employees, napping in human beds, and playing with children's toys permeate the zoo's social media pages (Safari's Exotic Wildlife Sanctuary, n.d.-a; Safari's Exotic Wildlife Sanctuary, n.d.-b). This discrepancy in representational imagery is not merely symbolic, as exotic pet beings are themselves inconsistent beings within these spaces. *Cuddly killers* are the paradoxical products of lively commodity making and multispecies entanglements.

### **Beastly Places**

As I have highlighted, keeping undomesticated animals as living commodities demands the input of perpetual human labor to keep lively subjects in a desirable state of being. Alterations to animal bodies and minds render exotic pets as semi-dominated subjects to human rule within roadside zoos. However, so long as these animals can still act in accordance to their innate species-essence and biological capacities, they cannot be entirely subjugated to human domination or market dictations (Barua, 2017; Saha, 2017; Tsing, 2015). As Stephen Bostok (1993) has claimed in his examination of animal rights and zoos, undomesticated animals in captivity can be considered self-contradicting as they are simultaneously 'partially-domesticated' (because of their reliance on human care) and 'partially-wild' (due to their biological drives). Unpredictability stemming from contradictions, then, becomes a defining aspect of the US exotic pet industry (Lucca, 2013; Shepherd et al., 2014).

Through their agential defiance of spatial allotment in relation to humans, animals are able to forge their own 'other spaces' and 'beastly places' reflective of their 'beastly' ways, ends, makings, sufferings, and pleasures (Philo & Wilbert, 2000). In such places, human-designed landscapes find new utilities as nonhumans engage with them – sometimes even using them as tools of resistance against human intentionality. The chimpanzee escapees of Animal Haven offer crucial insights as to how nonhuman animals can capitalize on moments of suspension to render spaces as 'beastly places'. When they unlocked and escaped their confinements, the four chimpanzees effectively undermined the separating boundaries between human and simian subjects. The dynamics of power and relationality then drastically pivoted from observed and observer, to potential predator and prey. Two chimpanzees quickly moved to attack human visitors, prompting staff to lethally retaliate. Meanwhile, the two remaining escapees utilized the park's landscape to evade capture and presented the possibility of another attack. In these moments of suspension, the commodity forms of exotic pet animals are temporarily unmade by the animals themselves – creating a junction point through which they can either be coerced and repositioned back into desirable

commodity forms, lethally disposed of as ‘unruly beings’, or successfully break free from their entanglements as de-commodified subjects and escape into new landscapes.

Ties between the exotic pet trade and the establishment of invasive species in US ecosystems have become overtly self-evident (Essl et al., 2011; Lockwood et al., 2019; Tobin, 2018). As the exotic pet trade increases in both popularity and scope within the country, more state and federally funded resources are devoted to combating animals like the Burmese Python, which was introduced to the Florida everglades as an escaped exotic pet in the 1980s and has since become a dominating force in leveling local biodiversity (Campbell et al., 2019). The aforementioned African green monkeys from Dania Chimpanzee Farm are yet another (albeit less destructive) example of formerly exotic pets successfully establishing themselves in new territories after self-decommodification. In such cases, we witness, yet again, processes of disentanglement and re-entanglement; this time in seemingly reverse order as exotic pets manage to unmake and rewild themselves through the exertion of their *Gattungswesen* – without the driving force of human intentionality. These new entanglements across ecosystems have shown to be considerably damaging for local biodiversity as native species tend to be unable to either flourish or compete against larger, more aggressive invaders (Reed & Walters, 2015; Tobin, 2018). Escape as a form of resistance against commodification, then, has a uniquely transformative property beyond the lives of humans and their pets – one that brings about unforeseen consequences to broader networks of entanglements. Of course, the viability of escape is dependent upon a number of circumstances. Notably, the species of animal plays a decisive factor in its ability to survive outside of captivity; elephants are less likely to elude captors than, say, small reptiles. Regional climate creates a baseline necessity that species must meet in order to survive exposure. An individual animal’s own mental processing, desires, and physical attributes after commodification also play major roles in its capacity to exist without human-provided constraints.

Exotic pet resistances to the commodity form highlight the more-than-human complexities that take place in roadside zoo spaces and demonstrate the dynamic intricacies that comprise multispecies entanglements across actor networks. The attacks and escapes I have detailed above are not strictly the results of momentary lapses in human judgement or poor management techniques, they are (at least equally in part) the agential exertions of nonhuman subjects against the conditions they have been placed into. I will not go so far as to argue these resistances are unilaterally conscious efforts by exotic pets to undermine the commodity form as such. Instead, I will follow Philo and Wilbert’s (2000) assertion that animal struggles against confinement and controlled behavioral patterns do constitute a mode of resistance against human will and intention – which in turn, coincide with commodification efforts. Expanding notions of agency and resistance allows us to produce more holistic descriptions of human-animal relationships by providing theoretical explanations to seemingly chaotic incidents like those described above.

## Conclusion

In this article, I have attempted to grapple with the theoretically underdiscussed exotic pet trade phenomenon, specifically from within the confines of the American roadside zoo as an emergent site for multispecies entanglements, commodity accumulation, and labor extraction. Animals kept in roadside zoos are vital actors for the American exotic pet trade. Here, the word ‘vital’ takes on a double meaning as animals’ liveliness and sentience are essential to their roles as commodities

and as constant capital. At the same time, zoos themselves cannot exist without a steady supply of animal bodies to fill designated spaces. Since the liveliness of commodities is the utmost essential aspect for the industry to function, the accumulation of exotic pets requires processes of commodity making that explicitly enact violence against animals without killing them (Collard, 2014). These processes of making are often difficult to trace as the commodity chain for trafficked wildlife operates across a vast, decentralized, informal, and oftentimes illicit network of actors (Bush, 2014; Davies, 2005; Eskew et al., 2020; Harrington, 2015; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2020). In this way, the global wildlife trade becomes an apt example of contemporary capitalism's dynamic forms and flows.

Limiting an analysis to the ways in which these animals are affected by market forces alone would be insufficient. Exotic pets themselves shape roadside zoos through their agential exertion of actions in relation to multispecies entanglements, spatial confinements, and physical attributes. Bringing Marxist and posthumanist approaches into dialogue allows us to better understand how living animals become constant capital and how interspecific relations lubricate labor extraction processes. Without the labor of humans, these animals do very little to produce surplus value through 'spectacular experiences' in captivity. Animal handlers, then, must build real and intimate relationships with captive animals in order to reliably coax desirable behaviors from them.

As animals are rendered into lively commodities, inherent tensions begin to mount from the contradictions of their existences as such. Since the exotic pet subject is expected to possess both its innate animality which makes it a desirable commodity (Barua, 2017) and the ability to passively be domesticated by its owner (Collard, 2014), it is suspended in a state of being both wild and tame, while simultaneously being neither (Bostok, 1993). The self-cancelling nature of these contradictions, then, leave the animal as a paradoxical being. The frictions caused by these expectations and interspecific relationships ignite moments in which an animal's exertion of its *Gattungswesen* can undermine its own commodity status – potentially leading to damaging outcomes in the forms of animal attacks and long-term ecological degradations.

In moving my presentation of human-nonhuman relations away from the established and familiarized connections that entail mutually beneficial connections between species, this article takes a cynical tone in its discussion of contemporary multispecies entanglements as they occur within hegemonic, consumer societies. Here, animals are the victims of violent and cruel processes that sever them from their natal networks, force them to adapt to unusual conditions, and use them as tools of production. Through a critical lens, I have sought to demonstrate how humans and exotic pet animals in roadside zoos are materially and discursively entangled while also avoiding a celebratory portrayal of such entanglements.

I would like to make clear that through this analysis, I am not endorsing a colonially idealized notion of 'wilderness' in which undomesticated animals live out their 'bestly' lives in 'true Nature' (Braun, 2002; Johnsen, 2006; Philo & Wilbert, 2000). Following Collard (2014), I am highly critical of the Nature-culture and human-animal binaries that have permeated post-enlightenment thinking. At the same time, I am wary of posthumanist scholarship that flatly revels in the co-becomings of interspecific meetings as a critique of wilderness without taking more seriously the asynchronous hierarchies they are entrenched within (Büscher, 2021; Govindrajan, 2018; Hornborg, 2017).

Given the accelerated rate at which animals are displaced and transported through the global wildlife trade (Grant et al., 2017; Lockwood et al., 2019), entrepreneurial ‘conservation efforts’ through the employment of undead labor may prove to be a lucrative and effective method of superficially staving off the extinction of wildlife moving forward. As such, I fear that exotic pet ownership in roadside zoo settings could become an even more influential and demanding economic force in consumer capitols. The façade of wildlife preservation these institutions desperately cling to obfuscates the reality in which they endanger the very animals they claim to be saving. Deconstructing this conservatory narrative at a theoretical level reveals the material motivations and ideological justifications that allow roadside zoos to exist: that nonhuman animals can be exploited because they are merely another (albeit finite) resource to be extracted and consumed as part of capitalism's perpetual growth. Rigorously investigating and directly opposing this burgeoning industry should then be a high priority for the social sciences to further mitigate the disappearance and domination of wildlife under violently exploitative conditions.

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### **When We Buy our Grandmothers at a Rock and Crystal Shop**

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Keywords: anthropocene, late capitalism, poetic inquiry criminology, poetry

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petroglyphs slabs of red meat  
forearm quartzite in many addicted jabs scroll  
partially cremated runes  
unknown filling data,  
from this mana is where they pull skulls of cousin fossils  
and ancient brothers shark incisors,  
where they fetishize and make us buy the bodies of grandfather  
millions of decades away at a rock shop.  
20 dollars for grandmother arthropods in plastic tray,  
five for a dozen trilobite sisters,  
and 10 for ammonite uncle.



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**Phalanstery Poem Found Nailed to a Telephone Pole on Vine and Second Street a Couple Years Ago After the Big Fall**

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*We are not in the least afraid of ruins*

-Durrati

and before babies have never heard of pine  
and cloaked in coke volcano spires  
and rainbows sooted frowns  
and dirt doesn't wear snow, and creek beds lay desiccated  
and worries and prophets of yesterday were ignored for the now  
and zooms monitor became obsolete  
and screens wrinkled granulated deaths  
and gas masks were our faces learning to smile in doses respiration  
and so dour to let covid win

and box elders were canary friends  
and only poets stapled scratches on telephone poles  
for some poets held on to their own voices, didn't go with lemming crowds

and i chipped this this message with axe and with fire to decipher barbarian thoughts of despair  
and slept with curling paper from the typewriter  
and pocketed leather and sinew sumac and dried bark tobacco  
and drew a briar pipe to wake from bivouacked in trees unspilled  
and wear the healthy star-sun bouffanting our hair  
and we move with pack, poncho, story-totems in focused gridless eras  
and freedom wore inside our ceremony  
and boulevards blossomed in kitchen gardens  
and radishes bloom in gas stations  
freeways moistened to anti-concrete arbor-elm statues  
and sunflowers geared clocked time in their heads  
and since the abacus was broken, we analogged our time together  
and sauteed maple trees for our food-stuffs  
and rivers percolate not as mouthwash, but for earth's arteries  
for us to bathe nude baptismal  
off the industrial rust and rinse in rains enamel  
un-cauterized aquifer delicious

and we noticed the ping-pings from blue jays and sparrows  
were sipped crism that phone announcements  
we slept sandwiched between thermosphere and meaty ground  
and stunned by gravity-less lazing sun  
and we grew fires for sage dance circles  
and mural'd in reclaimed real estate offices  
who's purpose was to finally museum  
to whom i submitted were only weighed in words  
and art sewn on ex-police stations  
and saunas of red rouge pine we breathe coming out protected in steam-soaked anti-bodies  
and gave rations to crows and some ravens  
and palms read amongst the ruins  
after lived so long through quantities of data and manna for advertisements and constantly  
updates  
and our ragged patched pleb flag mates highly with the sun  
to notarize with a harbinger future  
and living this way to secure our aeration  
to discuss what to be do,  
what to be done with the abandoned jails.



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### **Waiting On a Siren**

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how joyous crow,  
atmosphere full of wind, ravens feed me your concerns  
blessed intractable,  
your dusk fires making midnight  
i continue to belong to dead years  
in the oasis of non-age, missing coincidence  
before coming abandoning myself  
and refugee in my own body.  
i don't own my death, for no shortage of deaths consumed.

i wait incarcerated between siren guarding Cerberus and what is behind the wind,  
to guide our next volition from specter of bubbles rupture, raw smoke,  
and lava poured on my back.  
i glow in apprehension and stirred in trauma,  
inundated by menacing nazi niceness,  
under metronome will,

one, day, smile.  
we measure time by gas station gas prices.

we dig out of our asylum beds when another morning survived the night,  
to sway quarantining curtains to saw snows charred wintery concretian  
gardens ice sewn.  
from under the nameless sun-that goldfish mouth stuck to above aquarium,  
tastes the dirge song of Martyred Town,  
or Sacrificial City,  
or Neo-Golgotha  
huffing for your quest for violence.

that sun fixed by a king bolt,  
arrived at that broken day when sound could stretch rightly,  
we exhausted all bad omens, that lavender morning  
already poisoned by recalcitrant grief and apologies  
or immersive in our surrogate selves.  
Day wrote upon no poem of their own  
nor to call in their pronouns over, solarized horn.  
we await under nude skies with reams of corneas catching scenes.

with leaves playing hopscotch,  
what looks like dawn, is swirling sapphire reaching horizon  
in synchrocyclotron veins to pulsating ruddy, tentacles of exhaust ascent to velodrome,  
where sky's lips meets death.  
a melange of fluttering alkaloids.  
my body renounced me, left to let my sparkless catatonic orbs to sentinel  
the danger starting to dial,  
the slow burning, fire cure emulsion.  
the silica breezes, the menu of ravaging piston hammerbreaking rips,  
the blooming capitallary searing cerise,  
fire hands, fire hands  
prying open the tin vats and freeing for birth grabbing steams  
a natural referendum decision making us moribund  
to liberate oospores to blitz all contained night-terroring oriflames.

when town's warning finally spikes, popping out its throat and  
snapps corroded out of a buried cough  
to alarm out of the mouth of moansa lonely hornets heart strum solo cello  
an off ear tinge smiling-raspy  
let loosing the zones of wars,  
came skirting over tachocline,  
in one soprano thirsty breath,  
pristine, fightered cremation scream  
in chromatic beaks of tabbys.  
they started fire.

they started fire.  
i am afraid the rainbow whine won't make it across to canary before the  
danger colorless hue sweeps us all off.

we vacated our lives, we started crowd.  
we started crowd.  
our pupils draining eclipse by the pitched echoes to city eruption guffaw,  
snow beams whipping under mirror film smudge  
gone to fog of finger prints rubbed contributes to instant autumn.  
my frightened epidermis, my twin hands palindrome  
rolls in grooves below  
frozen oculars watching all paternal, everyone  
being exiled to being servile  
from bloodshot catastrophe  
to balsamic swamp,  
halitosis burning lacquer varnish flood,  
cineration licking of old halls, schools, McDonalds  
souls dragged out when came before fire came born.  
unbarked aspen displaced their detritus comets.  
flicked on fire.  
from a ball of aneurysm.  
this is the worlds commitment to suicide,  
hades will be satisfied with this many converts  
once the air siren stops trilling,.  
in a car seat, my ambivalent contortion shivering in overcoat,  
my cigar thrown rearview mirror is a spike of sputtering fire,  
i will see you on the other side of red,  
since i am no longer lazy 40 year old levanter  
in bleached eyes in disaster face.  
out on a freeway long sword pointing to a day met in poison.



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**Review: Restoring the Kinship Worldview: Indigenous Voices Introduce 28 Precepts for Rebalancing Life on Planet Earth (2022), Wahinkpe Topa (Four Arrows) & Darcia Narvaez, North Atlantic Books, Berkeley, California, USA.**

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This book by Four Arrows (aka: Don Trent Jacobs) and Darcia Narvaez is a collection of 28 quotes from Indigenous orators that represent Indigenous kinship worldview precepts. Each one is followed by a dynamic conversation about the importance and meaning of the precepts by the authors.

The book stresses the wisdom that guided us for most of human history, before our actions caused such things as the destruction of Nature, pandemics and large-scale wars. It reminds us that the foundation of our global ecological problems rests with the loss of Indigenous wisdom (Hilhorst et al., 2015). The authors rightfully convey that worldview reflection between dominant and Indigenous is extremely crucial in maintaining the integrity of Earth, as well the well-being of all the creatures living on it (Suagee, 1999).

The book shows us the vital importance of seeing all life on earth as extended family. Such a holistic, non-reductionist perception (Hart, 2010) is why the 2019 UN Biodiversity Report shows



extinction rates that are high around the world are low where Indigenous worldview still controls territories (UN, 2019).

The first chapter opens with a quote from Mourning Dove that emphasizes the importance of a spiritual connection with animals, plants and place. It tells about how young children were sent into the forest to find their own spiritual guides. Narvaez, a specialist in child and early infant development, speaks to the importance of such child rearing.

This same format, beginning with eloquent Indigenous quotes, followed by engaging dialogue, continues with 27 more worldview precepts, such as a belief in nonhierarchical society; fearless trust in the universe; embracing death and dying; high respect for the sacred feminine; viewing all life as sentient; generosity as a way of life; understanding circularity; emphasizing responsibility over rights, and seeing conflict resolution as a return to community.

The natural flow of the dialogue between Narvaez and Four Arrows is often as poetic and easy to follow as are the opening quotes. For example, in chapter 8, following Rebecca Adamson's quote about gift economics, Narvaez writes:

I invite the reader to imagine not spending most of the time thinking about things—earning money to get stuff, shopping, organizing, arranging, using, cleaning, guarding, replacing stuff—what most people in consumerist cultures are encouraged to spend their time doing. Notice the dozens of messages a day that tell you that ‘everyone is doing’ it. There is little sense of how much harm such a lifestyle is doing. You are encouraged to admire the ‘rich and famous’ as role models, fostering a hunger in you. You may notice that the more you focus on the things you have, the less rich are your relationships with others. (p. 81)

In my view, *Restoring our Kinship Worldview* offers a solution for rebalancing life systems on our planet. It allows us to realize the misguided worldview most of us accept even when we know it is not how the world truly operates. It awakens us to the consequence of our anthropocentric separation from other-than-human beings. More importantly, the dialogue gives us practical ways for seeking complementarity between the dominant and kinship perspective and for transformations when we understand the harm done with our current dominant worldview.

Narvaez, as a developmental psychologist, and Four Arrows, as an Indigenous-based educator, encourages metacognitive understandings that explain why our worldview is responsible for what we have done to life systems on Earth and how the kinship worldview can lead to re-balancing. They are careful to make a distinction between Indigenous worldview, which belongs to all of humanity, and place-based Indigenous knowledge, which is only held by Indigenous People who still know their original language, ceremonies and handed-down wisdom about local flora and fauna. They strongly encourage that we do everything we can to support such communities and their pursuit for sovereignty while we re-Indigenize ourselves to places where Indigenous place-based knowledge has been lost.

To me, this book is a guideline for peace and sustainability activists and academics. We must not only support Indigenous cultures and stop our continuing genocide and culturicide, but we must also rethink the harm we are doing to ourselves with our uncritical worldview that has led to the coloniality that has us at the edge of extinction. It is my hope that the authors will do a sequel to this book, whereby they address the 12 worldview precepts in their list of 40:

COMMON DOMINANT WORLDVIEWS	COMMON INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEWS
Rigid hierarchy	Non-hierarchical
Fear-based thoughts and behaviors	Courage and fearless trust in the universe
Living without strong social purpose	Socially purposeful life
Focus on self and personal gain	Emphasis on community welfare
Rigid and discriminatory gender stereotypes	Respect for various gender roles and fluidity
Materialistic	Non-materialistic
Earth as an an unloving "it"	Earth and all systems as living and loving
More head than heart	Emphasis on heart over head
Competition to feel superior	Competition to develop positive potential
Lacking empathy	Empathetic
Anthropocentric	Animistic and bio-centric
Words used to deceive self or others	Words as sacred, truthfulness as essential
Truth claims as absolute	Truth seen as multifaceted, accepting mysterious
Rigid boundaries and fragmented systems	Flexible boundaries and interconnected systems
Unfamiliarity with alternative consciousness	Regular use of alternative consciousness
Disbelief in spiritual energies	Recognition of spiritual energies
Disregard for holistic interconnectedness	Emphasis on holistic interconnectedness
Minimal contact with others	High interpersonal engagement, touching
Emphasis on theory and rhetoric	Inseparability of knowledge and action

contd..

Acceptance of authoritarianism	Resistance to authoritarianism
Time as linear	Time as cyclical
Dualistic thinking	Seeking complementary duality
Acceptance of injustice	Intolerance of injustice
Emphasis on rights	Emphasis on responsibility
Aggression as highest expression of courage	Generosity as highest expression of courage
Ceremony as rote formality	Ceremony as life-sustaining
Learning as didactic	Learning as experiential and collaborative
Trance as dangerous or stemming from evil	Trance-based learning as helpful and natural
Human nature as corrupt or evil	Human nature as good but malleable
Humor used infrequently for coping	Humor as essential tool for coping
Conflict resolution with revenge, punishment	Conflict resolution as return to community
Learning is fragmented and theoretical	Learning is holistic and place based
Minimal emphasis on personal vitality	Personal vitality is essential
Social laws of society are primary	Laws of Nature are primary
Self-knowledge not highest priority	Holistic Self-knowledge is most important
Autonomy sought on behalf of self	Autonomy sought to better serve others
Nature as dangerous or utilitarian only	Nature as benevolent and relational
Other-than-human beings are not sentient	All lifeforms are sentient
Low respect for women	High respect for women
Ignorance of importance of diversity	Aware of vital importance of diversity

**Table 1: The table by Four Arrows (Four Arrows, 2021) comparing the two worldviews.**

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