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From Plato to Policy: The Religious History of Environmental Thought and its Role in the Deepwater Horizon Disaster

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Introduction

I am eleven years old, home sick with a cold and watching cartoons on the couch. Tom and Jerry go to commercial and I am greeted with a tragic shot of a penguin covered in a viscous black liquid, struggling to stand on a pair of orange gloved hands. A hopeful song, Wash Away by Joe Purdy plays in the background as more scenes of wildlife slick with oil flash across the screen. A yellow duckling's feathers have turned black and a tiny sea otter pokes its head nervously over a heroic volunteer's fingers. Interspersed through these shots are close ups of bright blue bottles of dish soap and the message: Thousands of animals caught in oil spills have been saved using Dawn. Now, your purchase can help. 1 bottle=\$1 to save wildlife (Rainbow14211, 2009). I run to my kitchen and pull open the cupboard under the sink. Thank God mom buys Dawn. The animals are saved!

On April 20, 2010, two days before Earth Day, 4.9 million barrels of oil, about one third of the United States' daily consumption, burst from the Macondo well and spilled into the rich and diverse ecosystem of the Gulf of Mexico. Countless species were affected by the millions of gallons of oil now permeating their habitats. Dead wildlife washed ashore, critical wetlands collapsed under the dense weight of the oil, and even deepwater corals were choked out by the poisoned water (Council, 2014). The outcry was heard across the country as environmental activist groups organized to respond to the injustice done to the ecosystem. After the Exxon Valdez oil spill polluted 1,300 miles of Alaskan shoreline in 1989, many had hoped that industry and government had learned their lesson, but the systems at play here can be traced back to the ancient world and the philosophies that arose during the fourth century B.C.E.. Ancient philosophers, such as Plato and the Stoics, believed that the natural world was a gift from the gods given to man for exploitation, an idea that has remained prevalent throughout Western

history to the modern era. This religious ideology contributes to the capitalist logic that organizes the management of deepwater drilling in the Gulf of Mexico and the resulting Macondo Well blowout.

I will begin by setting the scene of *Deepwater Horizon* and the events leading up to and following the blowout, providing critical context to understanding why this disaster happened. I will then give a brief summary of the history of deepwater drilling in the Gulf of Mexico in order to provide some of the historical context not apparent in the actual event itself. Next I will dive into the rich history of Greek and Roman environmental philosophy, describing crucial theories from Plato's *Republic* as well as thoughts from his student Aristotle, Pythagoras, and the Stoics. These concepts are the philosophical through line that we can trace throughout the history of environmental thought, and I will follow them through the rise of Christianity and into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as modern religion, influenced by ancient, becomes inextricably entwined with the rise of industry and capitalism. With this knowledge, I will then look once again at *Deepwater Horizon* and the Macondo Well blowout, analyzing the policy decisions and capitalist culture that caused the largest offshore oil spill in United States history.

The Well From Hell

Tuesday, April 20, 2010 was a relatively pleasant morning on the *Deepwater Horizon*, an impressive deepwater offshore drilling rig owned by Transocean and operated by British Petroleum (BP). The Gulf of Mexico stretched out for miles promising boons of oil and gas just waiting to be drilled and extracted. The Macondo well was one such gift bound to make the industries that had claimed it millions in profit. The crew was feeling good that morning, despite the constant headaches that the aptly nicknamed 'Well From Hell' had caused them. The project

had fallen six weeks behind schedule and had gone over budget by more than \$58 million, but at 5:45 in the morning, Halliburton cementing company finished its cementing job and everyone was happy with the result. Since the cement job went smoothly, BP told the three man crew from Schlumberger that they would not have to conduct their bottom cement seal test and so the team was sent home, saving BP both time and \$128,000 in fees.

The rest of the day would be devoted to a series of positive and negative pressure tests to prepare for the process of “temporary abandonment,” which was supposed to show how the pressure and cementing job would hold up when the rig disconnected from the well. The pressure tests were supposed to assess the integrity of the cement and ensure that no fluids leaked into the well. The positive pressure tests were all successful, but as company VIPs joined the crew in the drill shack at 5 pm for their management visibility tour, the negative pressure tests were showing concerning results. Some of the head men on the rig, Offshore Installation Manager Jimmy Harrell, Chief Engineer Steve Bertone, and Senior Toolpusher Randy Ezell, were leading the VIP tour. The four VIPs, two from Transocean and two from BP, could sense there was a problem, but Jason Anderson, a toolpusher, insisted to Ezell that it would be fine so the tour continued on.

The rest of the evening passed with relative ease. The VIPs had meetings and played with the dynamic-positioning video simulator with the officers on the bridge and the crew continued to conduct negative pressure tests. Finally, they had managed to get the pressure down to zero on the kill line, but the drill pipe was still showing high pressure readings. Anderson explained this away, claiming he had seen this happen before and it was a fluke so Don Vidrine, the evening shift company man, declared the test a success. By 9 pm, they moved on to the temporary abandonment process and prepared to set a cement plug 3,000 feet below the top of the well by

discharging the well spacer overboard. (The preceding paragraphs relied on National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling, 2011)

The first sign that the negative pressure test was not a fluke was noticed around 9:30 pm. Mud had begun blowing up through the well. There was little time to react as the first explosion occurred mere minutes after the blowout. Ezell had been in his office when he was called to help, but as he opened his door he felt what he described later as “a tremendous explosion... blew me probably 20 feet against a bulkhead, against the wall in that office. And I remember then that the lights went out, power went out. I could hear everything deathly calm.” (National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling, 2011, p. 26). The mud had been blowing so strong that it had shot all the way up to the derrick and the hissing sound of escaping gas was so loud crew members could hear it from across the rig. Once the mud stopped the fire started. All power was out, the engines were down, the dynamic-positioning was non-functional.

Then the second explosion struck. Many crew members were trapped and injured. Mike Williams, chief electronic technician, found Douglas Brown, chief mechanic, trapped in the floor with the ceiling collapsed onto him. Williams himself was sporting a severe head wound. Randy Ezell dragged himself out from under piles of debris into a hall full of methane where he found Wyman Wheeler barely conscious on the ground, Jimmy Harrell with no shoes and debris in his eyes, and Transocean manager, Buddy Trahan, also badly injured. The panicked crew fled to the lifeboats while Bertone, Harrell, Vidrine, and Williams joined Captain Curt Kuchta and others on the bridge where they could see the scorching fire blazing straight into the sky. (National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling, 2011)

The evacuation was out of control. Crew members were jumping overboard, others were scrambling into lifeboats, screaming for the boat to be dropped even though it had yet to be

filled. Daun Winslow, operations manager for Transocean and one of the VIPs, tried his best to organize the evacuation. When a man tried to dive overboard in fear, Winslow stopped him and said “Hey, where are you going? There’s a perfectly good boat here. Do you trust me?” (National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling, 2011, p. 30). The deck was an inferno of mud and seawater as explosions rocked the fifty-two and a half thousand ton rig. Thousands of pounds of equipment and machinery began falling from the flaming derrick. It was time for the boats to depart.

In the meantime, on the bridge, the officers and managers were struggling to respond to the situation due to the complexity of their protocols. After a long series of debating responsibility, subsea engineer Christopher Pleasant was given the green light to flip the emergency disconnect switch (EDS) to the blowout preventer. Bertone and Williams then slogged their way through a thick substance Bertone described as ‘snot’ on the deck to try to manually restart the engine, believing that the rig had been successfully unlatched from the well, but the EDS had not worked. It was time to abandon ship.

The *Bankston*, a nearby supply vessel, had been the evacuation point as it was the largest nearby ship. They had sent a fast rescue craft to pull those that had jumped overboard from the water while the lifeboats made their way to safety. Bertone’s raft had no paddles so he and a few others jumped into the water to pull the raft behind them. As he swam, Bertone looked back at the blazing rig and saw Mike Williams climb to the top of the helipad and jump into the water, missing the burning debris surrounding him. By 11:45 pm, all lifeboats had successfully made it to the *Bankston*. The *Bankston* crew began setting up a temporary med bay and found dry clothes for the traumatized survivors as they waited for the Coast Guard to come to evacuate the injured. During this time a final muster had been taken. Eleven men were missing. Jason Anderson, Dale

Burkeen, Donald Clark, Stephen Curtis, Roy Kemp, Gordon Jones, Karl Dale Kleppinger, Blair Manuel, Dewey Revette, Shane Roshto, and Adam Weise. Their bodies have never been found.

Later, Ezell explained “To stay on location and watch the rig burn. Those guys that were on there were our family. It would be like seeing your children or your brothers or sisters perish in that manner. And that— that put some mental scarring in a lot of people’s heads that will never go away. I wish that we could, to the bare minimum, have moved away from the location or something where we didn’t just have to sit there and review that many hours. That was extremely painful.” (National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling, 2011, p. 37).

It was not until 1:27 am on Thursday, April 22, about twenty-six hours later, did the *Bankston* finally berth at Port Fourchon, but the battered and exhausted crew was still unable to go home. When they disembarked they were greeted by a long line of uniformed officials and company managers standing in front of portable toilets. They were passing out paper cups for drug tests: the start of the official investigation (This section relied on the National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling, 2011).

Deepwater Drilling: Minimum Regulation, Maximum Cooperation

Deepwater drilling has had a rocky history in the United States. Revived using wartime technology in the 1940s and 1950s, offshore drilling became an important federal revenue source, but drilling was costly. By the sixties, one of the biggest oil conglomerates, Shell, began sharing resources and technology with other companies. This move convinced the Bureau of Land Management to open up the Gulf of Mexico to drilling. The culture of the time hinted at the future disasters and subsequent onslaught of regulation. The work was hard and dangerous

with little sympathy or resources for those who were injured or killed on the job. The industry's motto at the time was "Minimum regulation, maximum cooperation," (National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling, 2011, p. 46), which was quite indicative of the close relationship between industry and government at the time.

This all fell apart in the 1970s with the rise of environmental policies in the wake of the OPEC oil embargo. The National Environmental Policy Act was enacted in 1969 and is considered the "Magna Carta" of environmental laws. It was in part influenced by the 1969 Union Oil blowout in the Santa Barbara Channel that shed light on the little accountability within the industry. Despite the oil embargo giving oil companies excuses to spend more in domestic drilling, deepwater exploration waned as environmental awareness and activism increased. This lasted through the eighties and into the nineties. In 1982, Secretary of the Interior, James Watt, founded the Minerals Management Service (MMS) to oversee both the regulatory aspects as well as the revenue and leasing services of the business. In 1989, the Exxon Valdez spilled 11 million gallons of oil into Prince William Sound, Alaska. (National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling, 2011)

To offset some of the costs of deepwater projects, Shell began making alliances with other companies and outsourcing their research and development, which saved them in monetary costs but cost them in internal expertise. Shell partnered with BP and they quickly became the powerhouses of the Gulf, bringing back interest to deepwater drilling all managed by the MMS. James Watt intended for the MMS to encourage domestic drilling and energy, but by giving the agency authority over both safety regulation *and* revenue collection that led straight to the U.S. Treasury, he ensured that revenue collection would always take precedence over safety. On top of that, revenue increases the further offshore one drills, but the safety risks increase as well, so as

companies pushed into deeper and deeper waters the agency's ability to juggle its two responsibilities deteriorated. Their agents lacked the training and technical expertise required to oversee any kind of offshore drilling regulation as all the resources were funneled into the leasing, permitting, and revenue offices. As the Deep Water Commission to the President (2011) states, "For a regulatory agency to fall so short of its essential safety mission is inexcusable," (p. 74).

This culture did not come out of nowhere

In order to deduce where these decisions came from and the philosophies behind them, we must consider the roots of Western thought with some of the earliest influences tracing back to the fourth century B.C.E.

Environmental Thought in Antiquity

Plato's *Republic* has been a staple in Western education, inspiring many thinkers, such as Sir Thomas More and Francis Bacon, with Socrates' utopian city of Callipolis. Although many do not think about the existence of environmentalism in antiquity, the ancient philosophers did have a plethora of opinions on the natural world and man's role within it, opinions that have persisted into the modern era of environmental politics and policy. The most well known ancient environmentalists are Pythagoras and his followers who participated in a specific form of vegetarianism. They did not eat any organism that had a soul, including some plants such as beans which resemble a human fetus (Hughes, 1996, p. 54). Plato also had plenty to say about the natural world in *Timaeus*, describing the world holistically as a single organism made up of individual parts. While the latter and his teacher did not focus their efforts specifically on the

environment, many of their social and political philosophies have seeped into policy making from the eighteenth century and onward, even into the contentious world of deepwater drilling.

Plato is most known for his dialogues often featuring Socrates and a host of other fourth century thinkers. His explicitly environmental views can be seen in his conversations about the degradation of the Athenian natural environment and his concept of early environmental state controls in the form of forest wardens (Thommen, 2012, pp. 40-41), but what Plato is most well known for are his political theories discussed in the *Republic*. The dialogue covers Socrates' definition of justice, exemplified through his theoretical utopia, Callipolis. Justice, according to Plato (and later Aristotle), is an essential part of *eudaimonia*: a concept that can best be translated as well-being (Westra & Robinson, 1997, p. 52). Made up of the Greek *eu*, meaning good, and *daimon*, another word for a god or divine being, *eudaimonia* is the kind of good and virtuous living worthy of the gods. It is not exactly happiness, per se, since one can still possess *eudaimonia* despite suffering from misfortunes, but more of the kind of healthiness of the soul that one can possess when living a just life of virtue.

The Platonic soul is made up of three parts: reason, spirit, and appetite, bringing us to the crux of Platonic ideals that permeates Western thought, which is the concept of *logos*, or Reason. Reason is what connects man to the gods and elevates humanity above the natural, irrational world. In terms of Plato's tripartite soul, reason is the ruling virtue that keeps the other two in check. Spirit is what fuels war and action while appetite is characterized by greed and unnatural desires. In Callipolis, Plato (through his characterization of Socrates) explains how the ideal city reflects the soul. The city is ruled by reason in the form of a philosopher-king, the head of the elite Guardian class. The Auxiliary class is made up of warriors and protectors who are ruled by spirit and kept in check by reason so that they do not go needlessly to war. The lowest class is the

Producers who are ruled by appetite and cannot be trusted to govern themselves since they are plagued by greed and desire. Individuals are expected to serve the state in their designated role, educated only for what their class requires of them with no opportunity for movement between classes. When the tripartite city/soul is in balance, then *eudaemonia* is achieved and the city/soul is a just city/soul.

Thinkers in antiquity argued that since humanity possessed *logos*, making us rational creatures, we were thus given dominion over animals who were irrational. The Stoics were one such group of thinkers who argued that humans had the right to do with nature what they pleased because of their *logos* (Thommen, 2012, p. 47), as explained in Cicero's *De Natura Deorum*. Aristotle too believed in a natural hierarchy: plants were made for animals, animals were made for man, inferior men were made for superior men so therefore superior men had the natural right to govern nature (Hughes, 1996, p. 59). This concept is reinforced many centuries later when Christianity became the dominant religion in Europe with God's decree that man be a steward over nature.

The natural world, and man's place within, can be exemplified using Plato's tripartite structure as well. Man, the Guardian of nature, governs over the lesser men that do not possess the philosopher-king qualities it takes to rule. These men are the Auxiliary class. Animals, irrational as they are, make up the Producers and live to serve the Philosopher-King. The Guardians are called to protect and rule the lower classes, just like conservationists wish to protect natural resources, the ultimate goal is for those resources to serve man, to serve the Guardians, to serve the state. This type of conservation mentality that so characterizes eighteenth and nineteenth century environmentalism can be seen directly in Plato, Aristotle, and Pythagoras' philosophy on nature and into the Roman era. Plato believed in preserving the

forests around Athens, but mostly because deforestation had degraded much of the countryside and, despite believing that natural resources were inexhaustible, he still argued that those forests must be protected in order to continue benefiting the great state of Athens (Thommen, 2012). Aristotle, like his teacher before him, also believed in moderation of natural resource use, but for the benefit of man, not nature. Pythagoras, perhaps one of the earliest Western ecocentrists, subscribed to the general belief that nature, while needing respect and protection, was still a resource for humanity (Thommen, 2012, p. 48).

The Romans had two contrasting views on *natura* (nature), characterized by pessimism and optimism (Thommen, 2012, p. 76). The pessimistic view was that nature was a destructive force that would one day be destroyed, and the optimistic view was that humanity had subjugated nature and therefore had the right to do what they pleased with it. Cicero and his contemporaries believed in a natural balance of the universe that set man as the ruling force, exemplifying the optimistic viewpoint (Thommen, 2012, p. 77). Seneca and his contemporaries argued for the pessimist view that the chaotic, destructive force of nature would only bring about hardship for humanity if they tried to oppose nature's rules so humans must try to live in harmony (Thommen, 2012, p. 78).

In somewhat of a contrast to the general viewpoint of nature as commodity, nature is also the realm of the gods. Zeus rules the sky and is represented by an eagle. His brother, Poseidon, rules the seas and is the creator of horses. Artemis is the goddess of the hunt as well as protector of the wilds. Persephone, goddess of spring, and her mother, Demeter the goddess of agriculture, are two of the oldest goddesses. Their cult, the Eleusinian Mysteries (named for the location of their festival), celebrate the natural cycle of life and death that the goddesses represent (Hughes, 1996, p. 54). The Romans were no different. Carefully curated gardens were created as places of

worship and shrines to nymphs and gods (Thommen, 2012, pp. 42-44). This sacredness of nature did not seem to put the ancient philosophers off from making use of nature and natural resources. In their eyes, nature was a gift from the gods and therefore their divine right to use as they please. Thus a dichotomy is created that is solidified with the rise of Christianity: Nature as Eden and Nature as Capital.

Religion to Capitalism Pipeline

As Christianity grew to become the dominant religion in Europe, so did white European colonialism. With the westward movement of Europeans came their philosophies about the natural world. John Locke wrote in the seventeenth century that if a man is able to “improve” the land by working it, then that land is rightfully his, thus creating the basis for our modern theories about property ownership. In the advent of Manifest Destiny, settler colonialism ravaged the indigenous peoples of North America as Europeans attempted to shape the land into their own version of Eden. In Lynn White’s 1967 essay, “The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis,” he critiques the systems of religion that play into the colonial view of the natural world, writing, “Human ecology is deeply conditioned by beliefs about our nature and destiny— that is, by religion,” (p. 196). He cites Genesis when Adam names each of the animals, thus asserting his dominance over them. Man is the only one of God’s creatures made in the Lord’s image, and therefore has a God given right to rule over the land. This mindset is what White believes is the main contributing factor to the ecological crisis, but this mindset is deeply rooted in western culture.

An early philosopher and trend setter in the following environmental movement is Gilbert White. Gilbert White was an eighteenth century parson and naturalist located in Selbourne,

United Kingdom. He spent much of his days walking through the idyllic countryside of his village taking note of the plants and animals he passed. His faith was integral to his ecology and he taught his parishioners to see God in the rolling hills and singing birds as much as within the church. White's Arcadian vision, named after the Greek region of Arcadia known as a pastoral haven, became an escape for those seeking refuge from the stress and anxiety of industrialization. White was writing during a time of great change. The west was quickly industrializing and moving away from small communities and subsistence lifestyles. Science too was separating from the church more and more and for naturalists like Gilbert White, that posed a moral problem. White and his following sought to 'spiritualize' science and return to the pastoral living that God had intended for them. (Worster, 1977).

It was no secret that White read pagan literature, despite his position in the church. He valued the insights of Plato and Aristotle and much of their philosophies can be seen in his own. From White's teaching came the concept of vitalism, a notion that the natural rules that govern nature are dictated by some higher being and all act as one divine entity (Worster, 1977, p. 17). Vitalism bears a significant resemblance to Plato's holism in which all of nature works and acts as a single organism made up of many parts. Nature becomes a doorway to Eden (Worster, 1977, p. 15), then, but not all of nature. White's Arcadia explicitly excludes those organisms that are deemed to be pests or unnecessary. The Arcadian dream was a carefully curated place that possessed only the aspects of the natural world that served humankind, whether as a resource or for aesthetic values only (Worster, 1977, p. 9-11). This also excludes much of the lower class of individuals that do not fit into the Arcadian vision. Man ought to dominate and exterminate all those that do not belong in order to turn the land back into Eden.

White's Arcadian philosophy was not the only prevailing school of thought. There also existed a kind of anti-Arcadian philosophy heralded by Francis Bacon in the seventeenth century, long before Gilbert White began to write. Lynn White critiques Bacon specifically and his focus on eradicating pagan animism. Before Christianity, many European cultures believed in the spiritual existence of the natural world and all of its different parts, but this animism did not work well with the Christian belief that man was the only being with a soul. By erasing animism, mankind had an "...effective monopoly on spirit..." (White, 1967, p. 197) and therefore had the right to rule and exploit the natural world. The Baconian philosophy became known as Imperial Nature (Worster, 1977, p. 29). Science became objective, not spiritual, and man's right to rule was due to the natural hierarchy of humanity over nature.

Much of Bacon's ideas closely reflect that of Plato's. Imperial Nature is marked by a similar utopia to Callipolis. Bacon designed a man made utopia with rules and objectivity inspired by the creation of the world by a rational and objective God. So too should man's rule over nature be like that of God, the true philosopher-king, and all of nature should follow these rational rules in order to serve humankind. Eden was created to serve man, providing him all the comforts and necessities he could ever need. Bacon's philosophy echoed that of the Stoics as well. The world is made for man.

The bridging philosophy between Arcadian and Imperial Nature would be that of the eighteenth century botanist, Carl von Linné, more simply referred to as Linnaeus. Linnaeus expanded upon the concept of oecology. Oecology is derived from the Aristotlian *oikos*, meaning house or household, and encompasses the rules and traditions of household management. We get both economy (management of the state household) and ecology (management of the natural household) from this concept, thanks to Linnaeus and those who

shared his philosophy. For Linnaeus, oeconomy represented the divine management of nature with God as the ‘Supreme Economist’ (Worster, 1977, p. 37). Gilbert White shared similar sentiments to this, arguing for nature as a great economist, able to manage its own resources perfectly (Worster, 1977, p. 8). Like Bacon and his followers, Linnaeus saw the potential of the management of nature for output, building up to the argument of Nature as Machine.

Nature is not just a creation made by a rational being for the benefit of man, it is a machine powered by God pumping out product for humankind. As the rise of factories dominated the economy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the idea that the natural world works just the same is a compelling thought. Nature can be curated to contain only the desirable parts as White wanted, and can be managed by man for profitable output like Bacon envisioned, with all the parts working as one whole to serve the Supreme Economist, the Supreme Engineer, the Wise Superintendent, the Philosopher-King, God. The comparison was perfect to the way the factory functioned. The workers were all part of the one machine, producing for the benefit of the factory owner who ruled over his company rationally and objectively. The factory became a divine metaphor. You worshiped by working and showed faith through productivity. Religion became Capitalism and that has fundamentally never changed.

Two to three hundred years later, North America is reeling over the largest offshore oil spill in American history, demanding answers and assigning blame. When we look at the structure of government and industry through the Linnean lens we can see exactly how these values of religion and capitalism come into play. If we return to the 1960’s philosophy of ‘minimum regulation, maximum cooperation,’ we can see parallels between the deepwater drilling and Plato’s Callipolis. The employees are the Producer class working tirelessly to serve the state, which includes both industry *and* government. The culture of Capitalism is founded in

the idea that work is worship and in the Gulf of Mexico communities, where the majority of folks are Christian, being able to work and contribute to the economy is a gift from God. The Gulf of Mexico is their Eden and it is therefore their right to exploit it how they will.

The fact that the Minerals Management Service was in charge of both revenue collection *and* environmental and safety regulation was a major failing at the federal level, but it makes sense considering the history I have discussed so far. The Imperial Nature model leads policymakers to value the output more than the source of the input: the natural environment and the humans working it. Every step of the way BP chose to sacrifice safety to cut costs from letting the Schlumberger team go home early before checking the quality of the cement job to explaining away the bad negative pressure tests that were evidence of a blowout waiting to happen. Perhaps there would have been more knowledgeable inspectors on site or stricter safety regulations that were actually enforced if the MMS was not so focused on production or if industry and government were not so inextricably linked. But just like the Gulf of Mexico is run like a factory, so is the government, and the most important part of a business is profit.

In addition, the fact that economy and ecology are derived from the same idea of management shows how humanity's relationship with nature is linked to our relationship with making profit. The environmental movement is not free from this either. When searching for the original Dawn dish soap commercial that I saw as a child, I discovered a caveat in the fine print that the donation would only activate if the consumer visited Dawn's website and logged their purchase. And even then, the donation was only good up to \$500,000. I am certain my mother, like many other consumers, never even noticed that detail because it is written in the smallest font in an easy to miss location on the bottle. Dawn likely just put aside \$500,000 to donate, receiving tax breaks in return, and then profited off of the increase in sales due to the consumer

belief that they were doing some good. This is an age old story in Green Capitalism. When exploiting Eden directly is no longer profitable, industries will simply move on to the next profitable source which, in times of great environmental distress, is the human need to protect Eden.

Conclusion

Moving forward towards a future free from lethal disasters that destroy both the human environment and the natural environment will require a significant amount of change starting with the fundamentals of Western political and economic philosophy. The first step needs to be moving away from settler colonial, heteronormative, and patriarchal ideologies and instead implement Indigenous, queer, and feminist praxis into not only our policies, but also our general culture. Laura Pulido et al (2016) argues that relying on the state to fix Environmental Justice (EJ) problems will lead nowhere because of the importance of racial capitalism that communities of color provide. Racial capitalism is the understanding that race is a structural component capable of exploitation by capital. This is yet another example of Plato's Callipolis at work where communities of color are the Producer class. Pulido explains that as long as communities of color benefit capitalism in this way, the state will continue to choose profit over people. What the EJ movement must do then is forgo the fruitless attempts to work within the system and instead work outside of it to create any sort of meaningful change. The same can be said about the activism against the oil industry. If we are to make sure that a disaster like the Macondo Well blowout never happens again, we must stop trying to work within the systems that are inherently designed to fail.

Environmental activism must also shed the influences of Imperial Nature. Environmental activists so often get caught up in the fight between Ecocentrism and Anthropocentrism, preservation or conservation, that we forget that humans and nature are not two separate things. Indigenous environmental philosophy teaches us that humans are just as much a part of nature as the plants and animals and that caring for humans *is* caring for nature. This concept is explained by Cuomo and Whyte (2016) through Indigenous and feminist care ethics and is characterized by the inherent value of communities caring for their environment, including the humans within. When I first heard about the *Deepwater Horizon* disaster I had no idea that any people were killed. It simply was not talked about in my community as much as the impact to the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem. It wasn't until many years later that I learned that eleven men were killed, their bodies were never found, and their families never truly received justice. The blatant disregard for human life on both sides of the picket line stood out to me more than anything, which is why ethics of caring are crucial to my call to action. In order to ensure a disaster like the Macondo Well blowout never happens again, we must dare to escape the iron grip Imperial Nature has on the state and move forward towards a future marked by community and care in the face of settler colonialism and racial capitalism.

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