
There is no “natural capital”

Theses about the Relationship of “Monsieur Le Capital” and “Madame la Nature”

by

Claudia von Werlhof

Abstract: 20 theses on patriarchal-capitalist religion. Instead of nature today one speaks of “ecosystem services”, a kind of mechanical order controlled by capital. The idea is to transform nature, which is alive, into her opposite, in the sense that it is “dead matter”. In this way, modern man appears as the creator of a new, better and superior nature in an attempt to do without Mother Nature and the human mother.

1. There is no “natural” capital, because capital is the opposite of nature.
2. All capital has violent origins as it has been struck out of nature.
3. Without nature there is no capital.
4. There is no way back from capital to nature: it is a oneway road, only.
As nature is limited, capital is, too: When everything has been turned into capital, there is no nature and thus no more capital, anymore.
5. Nature has become the enemy as well as the precondition of capital.
6. Historically, the idea to turn nature into her opposite stems from patriarchy which wants to replace nature by its own utopian creations.
The method used to try to turn nature into her opposite was called “alchemy” in antiquity. It consisted in dissolving living matter into the so called “materia prima” and merging it with other matter/s in order to create something new and allegedly “better”, the “opus magnum” – “gold and/or “life”.
7. Capitalism evolved on this basis, using the method of alchemy and inventing modern science as a modern form of alchemy.
Since capitalism the relationship with nature consists in pretending her being “dead matter” without any value, dissolving her and transforming her together with other matters into something seemingly valuable and “alive” – the opus magnum of capital.

8. By its own definition, capital as value and “life” is the opposite of nature as allegedly valueless and dead.

From the point of view of nature, however, it is the other way around, as capital is “coagulated, former life” (Marx), thus dead by being the result of a killing process, and nature by itself is alive, life as such.

In reality, living nature is being killed by dead capital instead of capital being alive by transforming dead nature.

This inversion when believed leads to fetishism. Capital is fetishized as being the better and higher nature, finally valuable and alive.

Only by this inversion can the paradoxical term “natural capital” be understood – as the lie it is.

9. This way modern man appears as the creator of a new nature that has a value and is alive, whereas in reality he is the murderer of nature and life.

10. *Monsieur Le Capital and Madame La Nature* – as Marx called them – have, this way, been at war all the time over, because Capital is trying to replace Nature – the old program and project of patriarchal civilization ever since.

Modern patriarchy is based on capitalism and modern alchemy which promise to realize the utopia of a man – instead of a woman and nature – made world.

The myth of capital as “natural” is based on the ancient patriarchal assumption, surviving until today, that nature has a secret, namely that she wants herself men to be the creators of life instead of women.

The transformation of nature into capital appears as her own will and as her improvement.

11. The resulting “2nd” nature is supposed to be the better and higher nature, – namely “natural capital” – so that the scandal of being past nature, killed nature or anti-nature can be hidden.

Capital as 2nd nature seems to be the best way to valorize, enhance, protect and preserve nature.

12. Instead of nature today one speaks of “ecosystems” – a sort of original mechanical order not far from capital.

The tautological fusion of concepts allows to define even the machine as natural.

Thus, Capitalism appears as an ecological undertaking, whereas the resulting “Death of Nature” (Carolyn Merchant) cannot be perceived anymore.

13. By valorizing all of nature, putting a price on it, the rest of original, wild nature is held as reserve, reservation, colony or enclosure in order to be able to transform her into different forms of capital at any moment when needed or wanted.

The valorization of always more nature means to widen the constant flow of primitive or original accumulation that this way is available to an always greater extent for capital accumulation as a whole.

14. The process of transforming ultimately all nature into capital is not going to stop by itself.

15. Life becomes rare as capital is not alive even if people believe in it.

16. The ultimate form of nature to be turned into capital is human life. The new, 4th, industrial revolution plans, therefore, to transform human beings as such into capital in the form of living machines or machine life, defined as trans- and posthumanism, the allegedly higher, better and more “evolutionized” form of human life.

In reality, this means the abolition of human life the same way it occurred with other forms of living nature being turned into capital.

17. The ultimate hybris of the “green” policies of “natural capitalists” consists in trying to replace the mother, both Mother Nature and the human mother, as well, by their new “ecology” or “creative” and smart new “natural world”.

18. Today, it is argued that there is no wild or 1st, original nature left anymore, anyway. So, the ongoing transformation of nature as natural capital is welcome, and apparently no destruction involved.

19. The whole argument turns out to be tautological. What is left is the “final assault” on all nature and life, until an Omnicide, the death of everything (Rosalie Bertell), may occur.

20. The belief in progress and development produces an illusion and “apocalypse-blindness” (Günther Anders) that do not allow people to see what they are doing or is done, natural capital as the “better life” being the main fetish of their patriarchal-capitalist religion.

Bibliography

Anders, Günther, 2018. *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen*, CH Beck, München.

Bertell, Rosalie 2020. *Planet Earth. The Last Weapon of War*. Enhanced Edition, Talma International, Dublin.

Merchant, Carolyn, 1982. *The Death of Nature. Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*, Harper and Row, New York.