Most hunters ignore the question of the animal's subjective experience, defending their actions by reference to the purity of their own motives and desires, and, in particular, by presenting their desire to hunt as a need. Hunters have used several strategies to justify hunting, which I have categorized by means of a tripartite typology that distinguishes hunters according to the particular need they argue hunting fulfills: The "happy hunter" hunts for the purpose of enjoyment and pleasure, as well as character development (psychological need); the "holist hunter' hunts for the purpose of maintaining the balance of nature (ecological need); and the "holy hunter" hunts in order to attain a spiritual state (religious need)...

...Hunters claim that in the course of stalking their prey, they imaginatively enter into the life of the animal. But whereas hunters claim that this exercise in imagination helps them develop feelings of empathy for the animal, it is their inability to understand the experience of nonhuman animals that is a prerequisite of their hunt. As we have seen, hunters also emphasize the keen sense of alertness and attention that characterizes their state of mind. It is apparent, however, that if hunters were truly attending to nature, instead of to their own amorphous feelings of "love" and "connection," they would feel the terror and fright of the animal they seek to kill...

...The pursuit of the animal expresses the hunter's yearning to repossess his lost female and animal nature. The death of the animal ensures that this oneness with nature is not genuinely attained. Violence becomes the only way in which the hunter can experience this sense of oneness while asserting his masculine self-identity as an autonomous human being. By killing the animal, the hunter ritually enacts the death of his longing for a return to a primordial female/ animal world.

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2025

The Killing Game: An Ecofeminist Critique of Hunting

Marti Kheel

Hunting is an act of violence. And for some, it is a sport. Increasingly, these two facts present hunters with a major public relations problem.

While at the turn of the century hunting was considered a praiseworthy activity, today 63% of the American public disapproves of hunting for recreation or sport (24). As one hunter laments, "We have to accept the fact that hunting has an image problem—a big problem" (18: p. 117).

Hunters have responded to the new public climate by taking refuge in a discourse designed to present what they do as morally laudable. Using a confused amalgam of arguments, they have represented hunting simultaneously as a cultural and spiritual asset, a biological drive, a management tool, and a return to the natural world. In this article, I have analyzed these claims for their conceptual consistency and moral integrity. In the first section, I examine the extent to which hunting may accurately be defined as sport or play. In the next section, I evaluate the strategies hunters use to legitimize their desire to hunt, and in particular, their attempt to portray hunting as a natural and necessary activity, as opposed to a culturally constructed desire. In the final section, I examine the links between hunting and masculine self-identity, contrasting hunting with nonviolent forms of play.

A note about terminology is in order. A growing number of hunters eschew the word "sport hunting," claiming that they hunt for "ecological" or "spiritual" reasons, not merely for "sport." Although I make distinctions among types of hunters based on their self-professed motives for hunting, I hope to demonstrate that these differences are not as pronounced as many hunters would have us believe. Because, in addition, I challenge the validity of the very notion of hunting as a "sport," generally I use the term hunting without the qualifying word sport. My use of the word hunter, however, does not encompass subsistence hunters. Although I do not rule out the possibility that subsistence hunters share some of the characteristics of the hunters in this study, the more complicated nature of their motives places subsistence hunters beyond the scope of this article.' This study examines those who hunt out of desire.

Is Hunting a Sport?

Before addressing the moral claims of modern hunters, I will examine whether modern hunting conforms to the definition of sport. Because many theorists have noted the similarity between sport and play, I will begin by considering hunting as a form of play. The notion of hunting as a form of play finds some corroboration in the literature on hunting. According to Clarke, "Hunting is a form of play, and [e]ven when [hunting] was still necessary [it] became a game to be played according to rules, and a man would sooner fail in his hunt than succeed by breaking the magic circle" (11: p. 424). As he elaborates, "The

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Russian word for hunt, okhotit sya, which means something done willingly, goes to the root of the matter . . . that hunting gives satisfaction is inherent in the play definition" (p. 425). According to Young, "hunting does not arise from the seriousness of need but, like dance, from play" (54: p. 131).

The distinction between sport and play is generally thought to reside in the greater complexity of sport. According to Thomas, "Sport has elements of play but goes beyond the characteristics of play in its rule structure, organization, and criteria for the evaluation of success" (49: p. 18). In addition, although sport is thought to have its basis in play, according to Thomas it has a second distinguishing feature, that is, its agonistic quality. Play, by contrast, is viewed as an inherently "cooperative interaction that has no explicit goal, no end point, and no winners" (29: p. 481).

Caillois (8: pp. 3-10) developed a framework listing six features common to play: (a) Its outcome is uncertain; (b) it is an activity that is freely engaged in; (c) it is unproductive; (d) it is regulated; (e) it takes place in a separate area; and (f) it is make-believe. Although these features are not universally agreed upon, they provide a helpful starting point for evaluating whether hunting conforms to common conceptions of play and sport.

The first of Caillois's features, the notion that play must not have a predetermined outcome, is inherent in the very nature of hunting as an activity. According to Cartmill, hunting is, by definition, "the deliberate, violent killing of unrestrained, wild animals" (9: p. 30). If someone strangles a chicken or drowns a cat, it is not considered a hunt. The choice to pursue a wild animal is designed to create a sense of contest in which the outcome is not guaranteed.

The notion of competing with an animal, however, raises a moral problem.

Because the animal has not consented to the competition, the game lacks symmetry of structure. The goal of the animal is not to kill the hunter, but only to flee. In fact, most of the animals hunted today are noncarnivorous, so there is not even a possibility of reciprocal attack.

The only real danger faced by most hunters lies in being accidentally killed by another hunter. As Schmitz points out, hunting is more like a contest in which there is only one contestant (i.e., the hunter) (45: p. 30). The morality of a sport in which there is only one participant, however, is highly problematic. The animal's experience is obliterated, subsumed under the rules of a game that require the animal's death.

This relates to the second feature of play (i.e., that it is freely engaged in). Sport hunting is, by definition, an activity that is freely engaged in by hunters. The sport hunter typically is contrasted with the subsistence hunter, who hunts out of

need, not out of “desire.” Interestingly, up until World War II, the sport hunter was seen as morally superior to the vulgar “‘pot hunter.” According to the well-known ecologist Aldo Leopold, “Hunting for sport is an improvement over hunting for food, in that there has been added to the test of skill an ethical code, which the hunter formulates for himself’ (27: p. 395).

Yet, there is a major logical flaw in the notion of sport hunting as a voluntary activity, in that only one of the “participants” has chosen to compete. The hunter selects a “wild” animal as his target in order to create the illusion of freedom, but the animal does not consent to play, or be, his “game.” The experience of the animal is rendered nonexistent or morally irrelevant.

The notion of hunting as a voluntary activity is also closely allied with the third of Caillois’s features, that is, the notion of play as unproductive. Sport hunting, like play or sport in general, is an activity that is thought to be its own reward. Unlike work, it is not undertaken for any external reason. In fact, the contrast value between hunting and work is a recurring theme throughout the literature on hunting. As Leopold states, “Recreation is valuable in proportion to the intensity of its experiences, and to the degree to which it differs from and contrasts with workaday life” (28: p. 272).

The lack of productiveness or the noninstrumental nature of hunting is reflected in the often noted claim of hunters that it is not the killing of the animal that is the primary purpose of the hunt; it is the experience of hunting. Ortega y Gassett captures this notion in a famous quote: “One does not hunt in order to kill; on the contrary, one kills in order to have hunted” (38: p. 97). According to this notion, the narrative structure of the hunt requires the intention to kill. If someone goes hunting and does not kill an animal, it is still called a hunt. But, if someone goes into the woods without the intent to kill, the term hunt cannot be applied.

The emphasis on the experience and intention of the hunter is consistent with a common theme in the philosophy of sport, namely, the Grantland Rice adage, “It isn’t that you win or lose but how you play the game.” Although this notion may accurately portray the attitude of many hunters (i.e., they may hunt more for the experience of pursuing the animal than for the moment of the kill), there is a moral problem entailed in the idea of pursuing the death of another living being for the opportunity it affords one to engage in an enjoyable experience.

Hunters frequently invoke the fourth of Caillois’s features of play (i.e., that hunting has rules, to defend their “sport” from the charge of cruelty). Hunters, it is said, do not hunt indiscriminately; they conform to rules of good conduct (i.e., limitations on the number of animals killed, the season, and the weapons used).

Such rules are said to give the animal a “fair chance.” In contrast to the earlier

The root of the word sport is “to leap joyously.” Perhaps, through playful leaps of imagination such as these, we can learn to engage in a play/sport that affirms with love and compassion a genuine connection to all of life.

Notes

‘Research on native cultures indicates that the distinction between “sport hunters” and subsistence hunters may not be as pronounced as is usually believed. According to anthropologist Richard Nelson, for the Inupiaq and Koyukon people “pleasure is the deepest and most vital reward of hunting” (36: p. 29). In addition, studies have shown that men in some tribal cultures choose to hunt, even when other forms of subsistence are easier and more reliable, suggesting that men hunt for both the enjoyment and the social rewards associated with hunting more than for simple food procurement (see Diamond [15]). In addition, many tribal cultures share with sport hunters the association between hunting and masculinity.

**For a more detailed treatment of this typology, see Kheel (25).*

>On the concept of manliness as a major factor in the growth of modern sport generally, see Adelman (1).

“Leopold is a bridge figure between happy and holist hunters. As a holist, he helped develop the first wildlife management programs, based upon scientific principles of business management. Although he became critical of the overzealous hunting of predators in his later years, he remained an unabashed happy hunter throughout his life.

For a critical exposé of modern hunting myths, see Baker (4).

°On the role of hunting in the formation of male bonding, see Clifton (12).

7According to a national survey published by the U.S. Department of the Interior (50), in 1991 only one percent of females in the U.S. population of those 16 years and older “enjoyed hunting.” On the cross-cultural preponderance of men as hunters, see Gilmore (20: pp. 113-117).

**According to The Hite Report on Male Sexuality, which surveyed 7,000 men in the U.S., most men “felt that male orgasm is the point of sex and intercourse” (22: p. 468).*

°On the theme of hunters’ waning interest in the actual kill, see Brandt (5). See also Thoreau, who conceived of a progression of waning interest in hunting and killing as a mark of moral maturity (cited in 2: pp. 352, 355).
On the theme of hunting as a symbolic mastery over nature, see Cartmill (9), Dahles (14), King (26), and Collard (13) Also see Fiddes (19) for the notion that meat-eating represents a similar symbolic conquest of nature.

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her" (43: p. 121). By contrast, "attention lets difference emerge without searching for comforting commonalities, dwells upon the other and lets otherness be (43: p. 122).

The ability to achieve this form of attention entails a kind of playful leap of imagination into another's world. Maria Lugones develops this idea in her notion of an imaginative, playful world travelling, in which we can learn to "travel" into different worlds and realities, identifying with others so that "we can understand what it is to be them and what it is to be ourselves in their eyes" (30: p. 17). Sara Ebenreck has suggested that "awareness of imaginative activity may be especially important for envivironmental ethics, in which the guidelines for action have to do with response to others who are not human, for whom respectful attention may require of us the probing work of imaginative perception" (17: p. 5).

According to Burke, play is "an activity which is free, complete in itself, and artificial or unrealistic" (7: p. 38). As he elaborates, play's "true significance" lies in the fact that it develops our "creative, imaginative ability," enabling us to "live not only in the 'real' world but also in countless symbolic worlds of [our] own making" (7: p. 42).

A problem arises, however, when living beings are forcibly conscripted into an artificial world to play the role of symbols themselves. All too often, women and animals have been relegated to the status of symbols, objects, or props for the construction of masculine self-identity. It is one thing to transcend the reality of the mundane world, and quite another to transcend the experience of other living beings.

Modern Western culture has achieved an unprecedented alienation from nature. For many, the urge to reconnect with nature is, in fact, experienced as a deep spiritual or psychological need. Killing is not the best way, however, to fulfill this need, and certainly not the most compassionate. The cooperative play of young girls would appear to provide a more mature and compassionate model for attaining intimacy with nature than hunting. The Council of All Beings workshops developed by John Seed and Joanna Macy (44) provide an example of a playful and imaginative connection with animals that conforms to the cooperative nature of girls' play. In these councils, participants are asked to imaginatively enter into the world of another species and to then bring their experience back to the group.

People express profound feelings of empathy, grief, and rage when they realize the impact of deforestation, factory farming, and hunting on nonhuman animals.

Through the expression and sharing of such feelings, people become motivated for a larger context of action.

American frontiersmen who hunted indiscriminately, today's hunters pride themselves on exercising self-restraint. A good "sportsman," it is thought, will even conform to additional rules, beyond what the law requires. Thus, according to Leopold, the ethical value of hunting resides in the fact that hunters are bound not only to the laws about hunting but to their conscience as well (28: p. 212).

The fifth feature of play, that it takes place in a separate area, clearly applies to sport hunting. Although the areas that are designated for hunting are regulated by law and by private posting, there is also a common-sense lore about what areas are suitable for hunting. One cannot hunt in a barnyard or inside a house; hunting must occur outside and, traditionally, in an area that is considered "wild." The boundary between what is considered wild and what is considered tame, however, is rapidly being blurred. Today, hunters travel to ranches and shoot animals that have been trained to eat at designated times and places. Many hunters feel that such "canned hunts" give their sport a bad name, preferring the model of hunting that accords the animal some chance of escape. Again, as with sport in general, if the outcome is predetermined, it is not considered a sport.

The last feature of Caillois's framework, the make-believe aspect of play, interestingly applies to hunting. For many hunters, sport hunting imaginatively recaptures a time when it is believed that men had to hunt for reasons of survival.

In their attempt to lure their prey, hunters often describe an imaginary experience in which they feel as though they have become the animal they intend to kill. As Dudley Young explains this "anticipatory merging," "in order to make [the quarry] come we think about him, and as our thoughts turn to him we may feel ourself turning into him somewhat, imitating his walk, his call, or his manner of tracking spoor" (54: p. 132).

The moral problem with the make-believe aspect of hunting is glaring, for the goal of the hunter's "game" is deadly serious. While hunters may play a "game" in which they imaginatively seek to understand another animal, this game has irrevocable consequences that extend beyond the world of make believe. The hunter does not pretend to kill the animal; the death of the animal is quite real. Whereas the competitive, goal-oriented nature of hunting fits the notion of a sport, the nonvoluntary conscription of the animal into this "game" casts doubt on the validity of this idea. Both the willingness to "play" and the amusement derived from the activity are one sided.

Although hunters may experience the activity of hunting as a sport, the skewed symmetry of the "game" renders this notion unintelligible. Hunters thus face a conceptual problem. On the one hand, hunting can exist as a sport only by conferring subjective identity on the animal. On the other hand, hunters can only pursue the death of an animal as playful activity by denying the animal's

subjective experience and focusing exclusively on their own experience.

Most hunters ignore the question of the animal's subjective experience, defending their actions by reference to the purity of their own motives and desires, and, in particular, by presenting their desire to hunt as a need. Hunters have used several strategies to justify hunting, which I have categorized by means of a tripartite typology that distinguishes hunters according to the particular need they argue hunting fulfills: The "happy hunter" hunts for the purpose of enjoyment and pleasure, as well as character development (psychological need); the "holist hunter' hunts for the purpose of maintaining the balance of nature (ecological need); and the "holy hunter" hunts in order to attain a spiritual state (religious need)."

Whereas the happy hunter once gained status by calling hunting a sport, today's holist and holy hunters seek to distance themselves from the notion of sport. What unites the three types of hunters is their claim that hunting provides some redeeming social, moral, or personal value that is not just desirable but necessary.

The Happy Hunter: Psychological Need

The happy hunter is an unabashed sport hunter who freely admits to the pleasure that he derives from this "sport." Significantly, the animal is literally called "game." As one hunter proclaimed, "I hunt because it is something I like to do" (cited in 35: p. 20). Or, as another states, "The adrenalin flows. It's a good feeling" (cited in 35: p. 34). And, in Ernest Hemingway's inimitable words, "I think they (birds) were made to be shot and some of us were made to shoot them and if that is not so well, never say we did not tell you that we like it" (21: p. 152).

In the United States, the conception of hunting as a pleasurable, recreational activity emerged in the middle of the nineteenth century in response to increased urbanization and leisure time. Like other forms of recreation, sport hunting was also thought to confer particular moral and social benefits. This notion of hunting as a beneficial activity stood in stark contrast to the ideas of the colonial period in New England, where hunting was considered a frivolous pastime of irresponsible young men, permissible only insofar as it was necessary for livelihood. As Huth points out, the term sportsman had a "shady connotation, implying enjoyment of gambling, rather than the pleasures of outdoor life" (23: pp. 54-55). With the introduction in the 1830s of the English aristocratic tradition of fair play and gentlemanly behavior in outdoor sports, "the hunter came to be looked upon as a skilled woodsman, truly representative of his country" (23: p. 56).

In the late 1800s, happy hunters helped to institutionalize "rules of fair play" in

learn to take the role of the other and to come to see themselves through another's eyes.

Interesting differences appear at a young age between the play of boys and girls, which may shed light on men's propensity to hunt. Building on Piaget's studies on rules of the game, Lever found that boys tended to play far more competitively than girls and were more likely to play at structured games, which accorded importance to being proclaimed the winner (29: p. 479). By contrast, girls tended to "keep their play loosely structured [and played] until they [were] bored" (p. 479). Lever's study also found that girls' games were "mostly spontaneous, imaginative, and free of structure or rules. Turn-taking activities like jump rope may be played without setting explicit goals" (p. 481). In addition, "disputes are not likely to occur" and when they do, the game tends to be stopped (p. 479). Playing in smaller, more intimate groups, Lever found that girls play tended to foster the development of empathy and sensitivity necessary for taking the role of "the particular other," and pointed toward knowing the other as different from the self.

Hunters claim that in the course of stalking their prey, they imaginatively enter into the life of the animal. But whereas hunters claim that this exercise in imagination helps them develop feelings of empathy for the animal, it is their inability to understand the experience of nonhuman animals that is a prerequisite of their hunt. As we have seen, hunters also emphasize the keen sense of alertness and attention that characterizes their state of mind. It is apparent, however, that if hunters were truly attending to nature, instead of to their own amorphous feelings of "love" and "connection," they would feel the terror and fright of the animal they seek to kill.

Ecofeminist philosophers have called for an ethic that affirms our interconnection with all of the natural world. Whereas this philosophy may bear a superficial resemblance to the ideas of holist and holy hunters, it is dramatically different.

Ecofeminist philosophy recognizes a crucial distinction that hunters overlook: It is one thing to accept the reality and necessity of death, and quite another to deliberately kill a living being.

The notion of "attentive love," first used by Simone Weil (53), has been employed by a number of feminist philosophers as a central idea in the development of caring interactions toward others. For Weil, attentive love was a certain form of pure, receptive perceiving, as contrasted to egoistic perception, whereby one asks of the other, "What are you going through?" As Ruddick develops this idea, even the notion of empathy is not devoid of egoistic perception. As she explains, "The idea of empathy, as it is popularly understood, underestimates the importance of knowing another without finding yourself in

through a violent act?
Feminist psychoanalytic theory has sought to explain men's greater propensity for violence. According to object relations theorists, the development of identity in boy children is established through a process of negative identification.

Unlike girls, who are able to continue the initial, primary identification with the mother figure, boys must not only disidentify with the mother figure, but they must deny all that is female within themselves, as well as their involvement with the female world (10: p. 167). As a consequence, according to Chodorow, "girls emerge from this period with a basis for 'empathy' built into their primary definition of self in a way that boys do not" (p. 167).

Dorothy Dinnerstein extends this analysis to all of nature. As she argues, boys not only establish their identity in opposition to women, but to all of the natural world (16). Having established a second and alienated nature, it appears that men then face a lifelong urge to return to the original state of oneness that they left behind. The return to an original undifferentiated state, however, is precisely what must be avoided because such a return would constitute an annihilation of the masculine self.

The conflict between these two drives may shed light on the hunter's urge to achieve intimacy in death. The pursuit of the animal expresses the hunter's yearning to repossess his lost female and animal nature. The death of the animal ensures that this oneness with nature is not genuinely attained. Violence becomes the only way in which the hunter can experience this sense of oneness while asserting his masculine self-identity as an autonomous human being. By killing the animal, the hunter ritually enacts the death of his longing for a return to a primordial female/ animal world.

Beyond the Killing Game: Toward a Life-giving Play/Sport

Psychologists and philosophers note that one of the functions of play is to facilitate the maturation process and the development of self-identity. Significantly, hunters claim this is characteristic of hunting. They argue that hunting helps humans (mostly men) to attain full status as human beings. Like play in general, hunting is thought to be particularly useful for young (male) children, aiding them to attain skills that will help them as adults. According to Shepard, the "play" activity of hunting prepares the young boy for future religious experience (46: p. 200).

Another function of children's games often discussed in the literature is their role in developing feelings of empathy for others. According to George Herbert Mead (32) and Jean Piaget (39), games provide children a means by which to

the form of laws designed to stop the decimation of wildlife by commercial and sport hunters. These laws, which included limitations on time, place, and type of weaponry, were seen as necessary not to preserve the animals in and of themselves, but rather to preserve their "sport."

The early conservationist hunters saw hunting as useful in building character, that is, male character.' They argued that hunting was a necessary corrective for men who had become overly feminized by the encroaches of civilization.

Theodore Roosevelt represents this view:

> In a perfectly peaceful and commercial civilization such as ours, there is always a danger of laying too little stress upon the more virile virtues—upon the virtues which go to make up a race of statemen and soldiers, of pioneers and explorers. .. . These are the very qualities which are fostered by vigorous, manly out-of-door sports, such as mountaineering, big-game hunting, riding, shooting, rowing, football and kindred games. (42: p. 1236)

Messner explains this turn to competitive sports: "With no frontier to conquer, with physical strength becoming less relevant in work, and with urban boys being raised and taught by women, it was feared that males were becoming 'soft,' that society itself was becoming 'feminized'" (33: p. 14). Thus, sport hunting came to be seen as a necessary release for "man's" instinctual and aggressive drives. The point, however, was not for men to be reduced to the level of the animal world. By complying with the rules of "fair play," sport hunters felt they were able to express their "animal instincts," while also demonstrating their superiority to the animal world.

The notion that hunting is a psychologically beneficial release for man's aggression has persisted into this century. Aldo Leopold claimed that hunting is an instinctual urge, in contrast to golf:

> The instinct that finds delight in the sight and pursuit of game is bred into the very fiber of the race. Golf is sophisticated exercise, but the love of hunting is almost a physiological characteristic. A man may not care for gold and still be human, but the man who does not like to see, hunt, photograph, or otherwise outwit birds or animals is hardly normal. He is supercivilized, and I for one do not know how to deal with him. (28: p. 227)

The value of hunting, for Leopold, resides in the exercise of this aggressive impulse as well as in its control.* Leopold's concern is not the preservation of individual animals, but, rather, the "inalienable right" to hunt and kill them (p. 227). Leopold derives this right from a "fact" of nature, which modern hunting

is intended to preserve, namely, the Darwinian notion of conflict or survival of the fittest. As Leopold states, “Physical combat between men and beasts was [once] an economic fact, now preserved as hunting and fishing for sport” (28: p. 269).

According to Leopold, “An individual’s instincts prompt him to compete for his place in the community, but his ethics prompt him also to cooperate (perhaps in order that there may be a place to compete for)? [emphasis added] (28: p. 239).

It is not only civilization that men seek to escape in hunting, however; it is women as well. In the words of one writer, “Our women can’t hold us. Business cannot hinder us. Unseen spirits are tugging, driving us away from the gray realities ... we answer a call out of [that] past, and we are off into the fields and the woods” (51: p. 11). Moreover, according to Vale, women have no reason to complain about men’s hunting trips, because they caused the instinct to arise in the first place. In his words, “The mate of the caveman drove him to the chase so that she and her young ones might have meat to sustain life and skins to protect them from the cold. When modern man goes off to hunt, he cannot pretend that he is providing food and warmth for his own, but the instinct to hunt is somehow related organically to this sturdy impulse of his ancestors. Let not our wives forget this” (51: pp. 11-12).

Happy hunters claim hunting provides a variety of additional psychological benefits. According to Leopold, it stimulates an awareness of history. That is, the hunter is “reenacting the romance of the fur trade.” And it promotes a sense of “our dependency on the soil-plant-animal-man food chain, and of the fundamental organization of the biota” (28: p. 212). Another sportsman claims that hunting “‘renews the traditional kinship between men, wild things, and the land” (31: p. 71).

All of these purported benefits have in common the claim that sport hunting helps men to become morally mature.

The Holist Hunter: Ecological Need

Whereas the happy hunter is unabashedly anthropocentric, extolling hunting for its psychological benefits for human beings (and in particular for men), the holist hunter claims more altruistic motives. Although hunting journals still openly extol the pleasures of the hunt, increasing numbers of hunters feel compelled to cite less self-serving reasons for hunting. Holist hunters claim that without their services, the animals they kill would die from starvation. Hence, they are performing a laudable ecological role.

Relinquishing the realm of recreation and pleasure, holist hunters have en- tered

(p. 211). According to Paul Shepard, men’s erotic attraction to women provides the energy for the hunt. In his words, “The human hunter in the field is not merely a predator, because of hundreds of centuries of experience in treating the woman-prey with love, which he turns back into the hunt proper” (46: p. 173). As he elaborated, “The spear’s interpenetration of the body and the flesh as the source of all new life are the iconography of venery—at once the pursuit of love and game” (p. 169).

The ingestion of the flesh of the conquered animal is also described by a number of writers as an erotic act. According to Shepard, whereas the “ecstatic consummation of love is killing,” the “formal consummation is eating” (p. 173).

Similarly, Nelson states that “I get a great deal of pleasure from knowing that my body is made in no small measure from deer. I am passionately in love with deer but I also kill them. I appreciate the fact that I am made out of the animal I love”
(37: p. 92).

By associating hunting with a biological act, hunters maintain the illusion that hunting is an activity that is beyond their control. But if hunters are acting on natural instincts, the voluntary nature of their activity—whether as sport or as tran-scendent experience—is drawn into question. Moreover, if their actions are conceived as nonvoluntary, the ability to evaluate their actions morally becomes problematic. If the urge to kill is an “instinctive,” “animal” drive, their only moral obligation is in how this urge is discharged. By claiming, moreover, that their biological urge is fully consistent with ecology, they further elide responsibility.

The analogy with sex is instructive, however. Sex is both a biological urge and a socially constructed activity. A man who rapes a woman cannot credibly defend his actions by saying he was simply following his “animal instincts.” Nor can he claim that the rape provided a much needed outlet for his sexual energy, nor that it builds (male) character, nor that the rape was performed according to rules of good conduct. Rape is wrong because it is a violation of another living being.

Significantly, the literature on rape argues that rapists are not motivated by the urge to fulfill a sexual drive, nor are they out of control. On the contrary, rape is designed to establish men’s dominance and control (6). Similarly, hunting may be seen as a Symbolic attempt to assert mastery and control over the natural world."

We have seen that many sport hunters claim to hunt to achieve intimacy with nature. But just as the rapist does not achieve genuine intimacy through rape, so too, hunters do not achieve genuine intimacy with the animal that they kill. The question that emerges is, Why do sport hunters choose to achieve intimacy

and kill an animal as a symbolic rite of passage into manhood. Significantly, the young boy is frequently sequestered from the world of women as well.° Although hunting is not an exclusively male activity, the vast majority of hunting has been performed by men.' As Cartmill points out, "Throughout history, hunting has been widely regarded as a sort of war game, the first step in a young man's combat training" (9: p. 30). Thus, in Ancient Greece, Xenothon argued that "the pleasure that young men take in hunting . . . makes them self-restrained and just, through education in true principle; and our ancestors recognized that to these they owed their success, especially in war" (cited in 3: p. 18).

The connection between hunting and masculinity is also commonly expressed in the notion that hunting provides an outlet for men's sexual energy. Thus, according to the holy hunter proponent Dudley Young, there is "an almost erotic connection between hunter and hunted," with the emotion-filled kill being analagous to "sexual ecstasy" (54: pp. 138, 134). And, for the holist environmental writer Holmes Rolston, hunting is viewed as a safety valve for sexual energy. In his words, "the sport hunt sublimates the drive for conquest, a drive without which humans could not have survived, without which we cannot be civilized." He concludes that "perhaps the hunting drive, like the sexual urge, is dangerous to suppress and must be reckoned with" (40: p. 91). For these writers, hunting is not simply a desire, but a biological need.

Hunting is also frequently conceptualized as having a narrative structure that resembles a sexual encounter. There is the initial build up of tension in the course of the chase, leading ultimately to the climax of the kill. Hunters can no more eliminate the kill from the narrative structure of the hunt than it would seem that many men can eliminate orgasm as the goal of sex." Interestingly, like the sexual drive, the urge to hunt (and particularly, the urge to return with a kill) seems to wane with age.' As hunters mature, they often portray the kill as less important or as an "anti-climax" (14: p. 180). A sense of anti-climax is particularly likely to occur if the hunter has not been sufficiently excited in the course of the chase. The "rules" of good conduct thus serve the hunters' purposes, because part of the hunters' enjoyment derives from the sense of struggle, and the opportunity it provides them to prove their prowess. If the animal is at too great a disadvantage, hunting loses its erotic allure.

Hunters, however, do not typically depict their sport as the crass expression of a sexual drive. More frequently, hunting is portrayed as an urge to achieve intimacy with nature and as the quintessential act of connection. The priest Theodore Vitali argues that "hunting is a direct participation in nature and has the potential of deepening the spiritual and moral bonds between human and subhuman communities" (52: p. 210). Vitali contrasts hunting with activities such as nature photography and hiking, which he considers "virtually voyeuristic" in that they "lack the intimacy with nature that hunting achieves"

the world of business management and science. Using terms such as "population density," "sustainable yield," and the necessity of "culling" or "harvesting" the "excess" animals that would otherwise starve, holist hunters claim the title of "managers" for the biotic community. Their management partners in this undertaking are the federal and state fish and wildlife agencies, which manage both the animals and the hunters themselves. While hunters claim to be responding to nature's unfortunate excesses, the game management journals reveal another story. For example, according to an article in the Journal of Wildlife Management, "The primary management plan has been the one directed at increasing the productivity of the whitetail deer through habitat manipulation and harvest regulation . . .to produce optimum sustained deer yields . . . and hunter satisfaction" (34: p. 92). In short, holist hunters are intent on "managing" animals so that sufficient numbers will remain for them to kill.

For holist hunters, it is not the hunter who is the agent of death, but rather nature or ecology. The hunter is merely carrying out nature's inexorable directives, a participant in a "drama" not of his own making. The violence that hunting inflicts merely expresses the reality of violence in the natural world and thus is beyond ethical reproach. The holist hunter believes that not only should hunting not be shunned, but that it should be embraced.

Holist hunters, however, overlook the vast differences between human predation and natural predation. Whereas natural predators prey on the old, the weak, and the sick, human hunters typically select the biggest and healthiest animals to kill. As a consequence, hunters promote what Teale has called a kind of "evolution in reverse" (48: p. 161). Moreover, sport hunters overlook the extent to which their own actions have produced the problems that they claim to resolve. Sport hunters have pursued a deliberate policy of eliminating natural predators in numerous areas throughout the country, precisely so that they can claim the status of predators for themselves.

The alliance between hunting and the science of ecology has been a fortuitous partnership for modern hunters. Responding to a modern public that rejects the conjunction of pleasure and violence, happy hunters have found in the world of science and business a convenient refuge from attack. Armed with the claim that their mental state has been purified of the taint of pleasure, holist hunters contend that their motives are beyond rebuke. Although their official trade journals continue to enumerate the multiple pleasures to be found in the hunt, increasing numbers of happy hunters assume the camouflage of the holist hunt.

The Holy Hunter: Spiritual Need

For the holy hunter, hunting is not a means of recreation, nor is it a form of work. For the holy hunter, hunting is a religious or spiritual experience. As

James Swan has stated, for many it is their religion (47: p. 35). Holy hunters contrast their spiritual attitude of reverence and respect with the crass and superficial mentality of the typical sportsman or happy hunter. Although they too emphasize the notion of emotional self-restraint, they see it as a by-product of a transformed world view.

Hunting is akin to a religious rite. In the words of Holmes Rolston, "Hunting is not sport, it is a sacrament of the fundamental, mandatory seeking and taking possession of value that characterizes an ecosystem and from which no culture ever escapes" (40: p. 91).

The spiritual nature of the hunt is thought to derive from a particular type of awareness, often described as a meditative state. As Richard Nelson states, "Hunting for me can be almost hypnotic. It's like a walking meditation" (37: p. 89). And for Ortega y Gassett, "The hunter is the alert man" who achieves a "universal attention, which does not inscribe itself on any point and tries to be on all points" (38: p. 130). Part of this meditative awareness entails a "merging" with their prey.

As James Swan explains, just as the martial artist must learn a "sense of oneness" not only with himself but with his opponent, so too, in hunting, a "good hunter must learn to link personal thoughts, actions, and moods with the larger forces of nature to increase his chances for success . . . he must develop an acute sympathy with the animal he hunts" (47: pp. 32-33). And according to Ortega y Gassett, hunting entails a "mystical union with the animal" (38: p. 124).

Holy hunters describe the experiences of "hands shaking" and "adrenaline. . . Surging through your body" as a "peak experience" (47: p. 33). They claim this is a transcendent experience in which the animal serves "as a conduit to a realm of existence that transcends the temporal" (47: p. 35). Ultimately, the transcendent aspect of hunting is thought to reside in the awareness of human unity with nature, and, in particular, in the realization of human participation in the violent cycles of nature. Like the holist hunters, holy hunters draw on the science of ecology not for a management policy, but for the spiritual lessons that it is thought to inspire. As Young explains, "What is religious about hunting is that it leads us to remember and accept the violent nature of our condition, that every animal that eats will in turn one day be eaten" (54: p. 139). Holy hunters claim a humble and submissive attitude, seeking not to conquer nature, but rather to "submit to ecology" (40: p. 92).

Once again, desire and necessity are elided. Hunting is seen not as manifestly the desire to kill, but rather as an ecological necessity.

Holy hunters frequently draw on the spiritual traditions of native cultures to bolster the notion of the holy hunt. James Swan cites the "wisdom of native peoples" that claims that "under the right conditions, the success of the hunter is not just a reflection of skill but the choice of the animal" (47: p. 21). Similarly, Richard Nelson draws on the example of the Koyukon to emphasize that the spiritually oriented hunter does not attribute the death of the animal to his own prowess, but rather to "luck" or to having the proper spiritual frame of mind (36: p. 25). The association of hunting with spirituality does, in fact, have a long history among subsistence hunters in native cultures. Some, but by no means all, of these cultures promoted the notion of saying a prayer before killing an animal, as well as the idea that the animal "gives" her or his life as a gift to the hunter. However, there are a number of ethical problems with invoking the traditions of native cultures.

First, the spiritual teachings of diverse native cultures cannot accurately be treated as a monolithic model from which to draw on for our own interactions with animals. Second, it is ethically questionable to extirpate a narrative from one cultural context and to graft it onto another. To the extent that native cultures hunted for subsistence reasons, their experience cannot be applied to a culture where this is no longer the case.

Although generalizations are only made at great risk, it seems that many subsistence hunters experienced deep feelings of ambivalence about hunting, and that the prayers said before killing an animal, as well as the belief that animals "gave" their lives as a gift to hunters, were designed to appease these feelings of guilt. Feelings of guilt and contriteness, however, are disingenuous in a culture that hunts out of desire rather than need. As Romtvedt pointed out, "Early hunting peoples did not seek a spiritual relationship with the world and so go hunting. They did what was necessary. When necessity is deleted from hunting, the hunt becomes sport and, in killing, there can be no sport" (41: p. 20).

In place of the notion of an inherently aggressive drive that must be contained through adherence to a code of conduct, the holy hunter claims to restrain his aggression to the point of nonexistence at least within the holy hunter's mind. Holy hunters do not "kill" animals according to this world view; rather, animals "give" their lives. Nor do holy hunters perpetrate violence; instead they are passive participants in nature's cycles.

The Hunt for Psychosexual Identity

It is time to ask if there are common underlying themes in all three categories of hunters. The association between hunting and masculine self-identity has been a recurring theme throughout history. Many cultures require a young boy to hunt