

Technology, Ecology and Spirituality: neopaganism and hybrid ontologies in technoculture

Susan Gallacher

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I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

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Susan Gallacher

Abstract

This thesis considers three convergent issues pertinent to investigations of identity and agency in contemporary society: the proliferation of digital, network technologies, the rise of interest in secular — ‘new edge’ — spiritualities, and our growing awareness of impending ecological crises. I argue that these three issues necessitate a critical reconsideration of human agency, one that embodies a more sustainable and responsible ‘being-in-the-world’. With this goal in mind, I apply the insights of ecofeminism, feminist approaches to technology and science, and the philosophy of technology, to provide a critical analysis of the human-technology relation in the broader contexts of gender, ecology and spirituality. In particular, I highlight the strengths of ecofeminism, and then employ several alternative theories in order to attend to limitations I identify within ecofeminism; in particular, its uncompromising stance towards modern technology as wholly patriarchal and damaging to both nature and women. Against this position, I argue that technology is fully embedded in and central to our being-in-the-world, and thus must be accounted for in any consideration of contemporary agency. I then attend to both technophobic and technophilic approaches to technology and technoscience in feminism more generally, suggesting how these oppositional tensions are embodied in the figures of the ‘cyborg’ and the ‘goddess’. In search of more complex, hybridised ways to understand the human-technology relation, I then turn to three key theorists – Don Ihde, Donna Haraway and Bruno Latour. Synergising their approaches with the neopagan worldview, I propose a metaphorical and material identity which properly attends to and incorporates the treble issues of ecology, technology and spirituality into its worldview: the *technopagan*. At once nature-worshipper and digital dweller, the technopagan is a dynamic, multi-faceted and adaptable agent that can effectively challenge traditional humanist binaries between nature and technology, science and religion, and human and nonhuman.

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O sweet spontaneous

earth how often have
the
doting

 fingers of
prurient philosophers pinched
and
poked

thee
, has the naughty thumb
of science prodded
thy

 beauty . how
often have religions taken
thee upon their scraggy knees
squeezing and

buffeting thee that thou mightest conceive
gods

 (but
true

to the incomparable
couch of death thy
rhythmic
lover

 thou answerest

them only with

 spring)

by ee cummings (1969, 3)