

The Nuclear Unicorn

One Woman's Quest to Accidentally Destroy Us All

Go

- [Home](#)
- [About Me](#)
- [Contact Me](#)
- [The Political Cartoons](#)

[Posts](#) [Comments](#)

- [Uncategorized](#)
- [Feminist Theory and Criticism](#)
- [Life Story Stuff](#)
- [Gaming](#)
- [Management Stuff](#)

[← Going Public: The Silences in the Shadows of Privacy](#)
[ASOO! A Show of Our Own →](#)

Fatal Error

May 31, 2011 [5 Comments](#)



What human beings see when they behold something like this has remarkable

consequences for the other humans in their lives.

It is, by now, a cliché to suggest that transgender people of most any stripe are somehow acting contrarily to nature. This has numerous ideological expressions. On the political right we hear this from conservative Christians and “men’s rights activists,” from science we hear this from any number of would-be psychiatric colonists of our experiences, and from the left we hear this from any number of groups including a certain clique of radical feminists.

What I have found interesting is that these types of feminists– the Julie Bindel set, essentially– come from a school of feminist thought that placed a good deal of primacy on the sacred, natural body; hence their obsession with SRS and the like. I am always reminded of my father (Goddess knows *he* was no feminist in the slightest) angrily asking me if I was saying that God had made a mistake. Clearly I was challenging Him by saying I was “born wrong” (or something like that). The whole theoretical construct relies on a welter of cis projections and is not based on anything I’ve said, naturally^[1]. But the framing of this clique of feminists is much the same: substitute Nature for God. This simple gesture is at the heart of much leftist and science-based oppression, the generative nucleus of all that is right and good is simply shifted from an all powerful white male divine to an all powerful Natural Order/Balanced Ecosystem that we cannot challenge.

It is exactly the same ideological manoeuvre that feminists rightly opposed in sociobiology and evolutionary psychology. A move that allowed the scientists to pooh pooh the religious by telling them there was no God who ordained everything... while preserving the Ur textual explanation for the inexorability of white cis male supremacy in a new form, this time ‘scientific.’ For eco-feminists, there was less emphasis on science as they understood what was going on with the then-ascendant sociobiological explanation for gender. But they simply reinvested a kind of mysticism into Nature. And thus people like Sheila Jeffreys would ask me “So are you saying Nature was wrong?”

What is tacitly ignored in all of this is the fact that humans, by default, act contrarily to nature. Virtually nothing we have done as a species, as a civilisation, has been purely natural. It never fails to make me smirk when I hear arguments about the virtues of naturalism from someone wearing glasses. Such arguments almost invariably are arguments for the preservation, in part or in whole, of the status quo. The “balance of nature” or the “will of God” always just so happens to demand that our present arrangements of power and hegemony, on one particular subject or on all subjects, are pre-ordained and foolish to fight. The set of conservative transphobes on the political right require a vision of a male/female caste system that is ineluctable, easily maintained, and lifelong that can ground itself in the perfectly constructed male/female body. The transphobes of the left, many with roots in various ecological movements, assert that *nature* has created a perfect body that any changes to (changes that are not sanctioned by dominant ideology, at any rate) are unnatural, aberrant, deviant, and ‘mutilation.’

What is lurking behind all of this is the anthropomorphising of the generative nucleus in each system: God or Nature. The intelligent design movement of the Christian Right in the West provides us with the clearest expression of this notion: God is a designer, a divine watchmaker, whose intelligence is used to carry out His intent in the world and thus all of nature has a sentience-ordained purpose; acting contrarily to that purpose is objectively ‘wrong.’ Since God can be conceptualised as a person, this is easier to swallow if you give yourself over entirely to the religious fervour that enables belief in a literal divine figure, lounging on a cloud somewhere in the heavens. With Nature it is much more clearly a metaphor that has spun wildly out of control. Nature, many transphobic scientists and radical feminists say, has intent as well. We can discern this intent scientifically and politically, and then measure deviance from that standard as an objective metric of ‘wrongness.’ To act contrary to the intent of nature is thus empirically, scientifically, wrong. Politics is removed from the equation, and this analysis is presented to the masses as a neutral, ineluctable truth. One which just so happens to say that the current order of white cis male power is natural and inevitable.

It is interesting to think about why certain cis radical feminists have participated in this discourse, one constructed on a theoretical paradigm that has suggested that women are intrinsically inferior to men.

This is the discourse that radical feminist transphobes are accessing when they deny trans people any semblance of personhood based on how we supposedly challenge the natural order. It uses exactly the same logic, relies on the same Archimedean Point of an all powerful, unchanging divine nature that does not err, and can be easily manipulated to come to conclusions about women that are antithetical to feminism. The ‘perfect body’ of womanhood suggested by some cis radical feminists bears a strange resemblance to the alabaster angel who bears children for the fatherland. To define women solely on the basis of our fertility is not only a losing game, but one that reinforces a central ideological pillar of patriarchy: that we really can be bound by our supposedly universal ability and desire to give birth. Since this is “natural” there can be nothing wrong with it. It is objective, neutral, ahistorical, and apolitical.

Feminists, perhaps better than anyone else, know why that is bullshit and what that imports into our highly political culture. It is precisely my own radical feminism, very specifically, that has given me the strength to confront and push back against these oppressive ideas. It is my feminism which helps me feel, in good conscience, that I am right to oppose any notion that subsumes our shared humanity beneath the weight of an abstract ideal.

The reality that human beings must confront is simple: Nature has no intent. It is not conscious, it is not intelligent or otherwise self-aware. It does not think, it does not plan, it does not design. Nature, as such, is a constantly evolving, changing, messy, illogical riot of constant evolution and adaptation that has no discernable “intent” in the sense humans understand that word. As a woman, my inability to bear children does not define me; to phrase this differently, my inability to bear children has not spared me the ravages of patriarchy. Cis men treat me as a woman, with all the negativity that implies. My lack of a uterus does not insulate me from that. The meaning of “woman” in our society is not synonymous with the meaning of “womb.”

We’re making a very tragic mistake if we think so.

To talk of nature is to talk of something that changes, that evolves. We all know this on some level: not a single one of us looks or is shaped much like we were when we were born. Nature is not a static thing held in perpetual equilibrium. Like the human beings that arose from it, nature changes constantly. Nature *is* change. To say that what we were born with is intrinsically good, and any alterations thereto are intrinsically bad has nothing to do with nature. It is an ideology. It is, in a word, politics. The world is one that evolves and that blossoms: human life at its best, at its freest, is a life of blossoming, a life constantly in motion whose ultimate course is one of many winding roads and hairpin turns.

To whatever extent it can be determined that evolution has a ‘plan’ or some preconceived order (metaphorically speaking, of course) we as humans, by our very nature (real nature, in this case), are under no obligation or compulsion to *follow* that plan. One of the things that defines us as a species is our ability to discern evolution and think about it; that awareness is part of how we then step outside of evolution, at least in part, and decide with our own self-awareness what directions we may take.

Women are not ‘intended’ for anything, and certainly not by dint of birth. In my own case, as a woman, as a trans person, as a human being, did God make a mistake? Yes, absolutely. The God conjured by humans, by men in particular, did indeed make a mistake. Because the God is not in the sky, He is invested in every doctor, every clergyman, every teacher and parent, who ever tried to force me to be someone I did not wish to be. It would be more accurate to say that they *failed*.

But to put it another way, if one believes in Deity of some kind, or a Creator, the best way of imagining it is

this (and this applies very much to the Naturalists as well). No, God/Nature did not make any sort of mistake; but we ever fallible human beings have a lot of mistaken assumptions about what we have been given to work with.[\[2\]](#)

[\[1\]](#) I've never claimed to be "born wrong" and have long since abandoned any notion of being "born in the wrong body." The very idea that being trans is the correcting of a mistake is made necessary by a society that imposes definitions on us that are inherently limiting, binding, and always against our will. In a just society, my evolution as a gendered being would have been unremarkable and like any other.

[\[2\]](#) I can't take credit for this. A discussion with the ever brilliant little light yielded this idea from her and I thought it a brilliant, spiritual and social resolution to what I have always considered a deeply flawed question.

 Like Be the first to like this post.

Filed under [Feminist Theory and Criticism](#) Tagged with [Biological Essentialism](#), [Cissexism](#), [Feminism](#), [Naturalism](#), [Sexism](#), [Transphobia](#)

5 Responses to *Fatal Error*



1. [bonze Anne Rose Blayk](#) says:
[May 31, 2011 at 8:28 pm](#)

Another wonderful post, Quinnae!

"Nature has no intent. It is not conscious, it is not intelligent or otherwise self-aware. It does not think, it does not plan, it does not design."

AMEN

"I've never claimed to be 'born wrong'..." — indeed, I feel it's another banal invocation, one I associate with the Standard Narrative of TransHood; I believe we would do better to avoid resorting to it.

... and thanks again for your beautiful prose, Quinnae!

— bonzie anne

PS: For any QM (*ha*) followers out there with an interest in SF, I'd like to suggest Greg Bear's *Queen of Angels* and / (Slant). I get something fresh out of them every time I go back for another visit... (just this winter in a fit of fannishness I dubbed my white Volvo 940 Wagon... *Seefa Schnee*... in her own way, an inspiring character).

[Reply](#)



2. [Christianne](#) says:
[June 1, 2011 at 12:03 am](#)

Every time I see the argument from nature, I want to quote Alfred Kinsey: “The only unnatural act is the one that cannot be performed.” Sigh.

[Reply](#)

3. Pingback: [ASOO! A Show of Our Own « The Nuclear Unicorn](#)



4. *sugarbeet* says:

[June 7, 2011 at 2:30 pm](#)

I’m bookmarking this entry. It’s beautiful, and it really brightened my day.

“One of the things that defines us as a species is our ability to discern evolution and think about it; that awareness is part of how we then step outside of evolution, at least in part, and decide with our own self-awareness what directions we may take.”

I (unsuccessfully) tried to argue this to someone earlier today. You put it so much more eloquently than I did.

[Reply](#)



5. *Hypatia* says:

[June 18, 2011 at 9:49 pm](#)

“Yes, absolutely. The God conjured by humans, by men in particular, did indeed make a mistake. Because the God is not in the sky, He is invested in every doctor, every clergyman, every teacher and parent, who ever tried to force me to be someone I did not wish to be. It would be more accurate to say that they failed.”

This is a stunningly perfect conclusion.

[Reply](#)

Leave a Reply

Enter your comment here...

Quinnae Moongazer



Yes, I am the moon. The entire moon. Be very afraid of what I think or you can kiss your precious tidal cycle goodbye.

Well, actually I'm a unicorn. A nuclear one. Funny how life works out, eh?

If you're wondering how this mythical creature entered the atomic age you need look no further than my

first post (or the About Me section.) Everything else is a load of full frontal trans feminism and slugs. Lots of slugs.

May 2011

M T W T F S S

1

2 3 4 5 6 7 8

9 10 11 12 13 14 15

16 [17](#) 18 19 20 21 22

23 24 25 26 27 28 29

30 [31](#)

[« Apr](#) [Jun »](#)

Blogroll

- [Bird of Paradox](#)
- [Border House](#)
- [Genderbitch: Words of a Transgirl](#)
- [I Hate You All](#)
- [Jade Lioness](#)
- [Julian's Feminist Blog](#)
- [Natasha Curson's A Trans History](#)
- [Questioning Transphobia](#)
- [Sugar and Slugs](#)
- [Taking Steps: Little Light](#)
- [Taking Up Too Much Space](#)
- [The Curvature](#)
- [TransAdvocate](#)

News You Can't Lose (With)

- [BBC News](#)
- [CBC News](#)
- [Slate Magazine](#)

Other Stuff

- [Cis-Privilege Bingo!](#)
- [Daisy Owl](#)
- [Derailing for Dummies: Essential Reading](#)
- [TransProtect](#)
- [TS Roadmap](#)
- [Venus Envy](#)

Most Nuked Topics

[Andrea James](#) [Capitalism/Socialism](#) [Catholic Church](#) [Cissexism](#) [DSM](#) [Fashion](#) [Feminism](#) [Gay Rights](#) [Gender Identity Disorder](#)
[Healthcare](#) [Kate Bornstein](#) [Kyriarchy](#) [Language](#) [Lynn Conway](#) [Media](#) [Men's Rights](#) [Misogyny](#) [New York Times](#) [Nuclear](#)
[Unicorn](#) [Patriarchy](#) [Political Cartoons](#) [Political Correctness](#) [Politics](#) [Questioning Transphobia](#) [Racism](#) [Radical Feminism](#) [Rape](#)
[Rape Culture](#) [Reddit](#) [RPG Gaming](#) [Sexism](#) [Sexual Harassment](#) [Sluggies](#) [Sociology](#) [The Media](#) [Tiwonge Chimbalanga](#) [Transgender](#)
[Studies](#) [Transhumanism](#) [Trans Issues](#) [Transmisogyny](#) [Transphobia](#) [Video Gaming](#) [Women's St](#)
[Women's Studies](#) [World of Warcraft](#)

Find My Stuff For Me

Recent Launches

- [Immoral Women: Why We Need More of Them](#)
- [Sisterhood in Silence](#)
- [The Gentleman Doth Protest Too Much](#)
- [Once as Tragedy, Again as Farce](#)
- [Behind the Hills, Into Shadow](#)

Recent Comments



Floria on [Immoral Women: Why We Need Mor...](#)



Grant on [Aboot Me](#)



Hypatia on [Behind the Hills, Into Sh...](#)

[With extreme relucta...](#) on [An Open Letter to Kate Bo...](#)



Jane on [The Laboratory of Dreams: Theo...](#)

The Rectory

- [March 2012](#) (1)
- [December 2011](#) (2)
- [November 2011](#) (1)
- [September 2011](#) (3)
- [August 2011](#) (1)
- [June 2011](#) (4)
- [May 2011](#) (2)
- [April 2011](#) (1)

- [March 2011](#) (2)
- [February 2011](#) (1)
- [January 2011](#) (1)
- [December 2010](#) (3)
- [November 2010](#) (4)
- [October 2010](#) (7)
- [September 2010](#) (4)
- [August 2010](#) (5)
- [July 2010](#) (5)
- [May 2010](#) (2)
- [April 2010](#) (1)
- [March 2010](#) (1)
- [February 2010](#) (4)
- [January 2010](#) (9)
- [December 2009](#) (2)
- [September 2009](#) (1)
- [August 2009](#) (11)

Meta

- [Site Admin](#)
- [Log out](#)
- [Entries RSS](#)
- [Comments RSS](#)
- [WordPress.com](#)

Blog Stats

- 70,721 hits

Categories

[Blog at WordPress.com.](#)

Theme: [Enterprise](#) by [StudioPress](#).