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**Whose whale is that?
Diverting the Commodity Path**

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Whose whale is that? Diverting the Commodity Path

During the days of industrial whaling whales as commodities—which loosely can be defined as goods and services of exchange value—were thought of in terms of meat and oil, both important products in the past. After World War II whale meat amounted to 47 percent of the animal protein intake of the Japanese—a fact which has led the Japanese to believe that the whales saved them from a major famine—and whale products laid the foundation for large Norwegian shipping enterprises.

The moratorium on commercial whaling imposed by the International Whaling Commission (IWC) from 1987 onwards, has not put an end to whales as a commodity, however.¹ What we have seen during the last two decades is, to use a phrase coined by Appadurai (1986), merely a diversion of a commodity path, e.g. the route a commodity travels from its production through its consumption. We have witnessed an explosion in commodification of whales in the form of so-called “non-” or “low-consumptive” utilization, which means exploiting whales without killing them.

This paper will seek to explore this diversion of the path by focusing on how a new whale commodity is produced and offered for sale and on how this commodity is consumed. I will end the paper by a discussion on how the raw material for the product, wild whales, are being appropriated by various commercial groups. But before we can enter this discourse, something must be said about the producers of the new commodity and why they take so much interest in whales.

Whales and the Protectionists

Around 1980, at a conference on marine mammals held in Bergen, some people got together and tried to estimate the “low-consumptive value” of

¹ The IWC operates with two categories of whaling. All *commercial* whaling is prohibited, while *aboriginal* whaling for subsistence has been authorized.

cetaceans. They arrived at an estimate of about US\$ 100 million, which was about the same value as for commercial whaling (Scheffer 1991:17-18). Since then commercial whaling has ceased, at least temporarily, while the low-consumptive value must have increased manifold.

Today, whale protectionists, e.g. environmental and animal right groups,² have emerged as the main beneficiaries of the interest for cetaceans. Other animals have their support groups, but few—if any—animals have attracted so many of the main environmental and animal rights groups as whales. Many people believe that the whales are on the brink of extinction, a belief which is given nourishment by these organizations. The fact is that only a few species are endangered and these have been protected for decades. Gulland (1988:45), who is an advisor to the IWC, thus has pointed out that “[t]here may no longer be urgent reasons of conservation for continued pressure to strengthen the control of whaling, but there are sound financial reasons for groups that depend on public subscription to be seen to be active in ‘saving the whale’”, adding that whales “make excellent fund raisers”. Whales, together with seals, have turned out to be most important source of income for many of these organizations. It is difficult to tell how much these organizations earn on the whaling issue, but Corrigan (1991) lists 74 whale conservation and “research” organizations in the USA and Canada alone. Some organizations—like American Cetacean Society, Cetacean Society International, Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society, and Whale Fund are aimed specifically to conservation of cetaceans, while others—Greenpeace and the World Wide Fund for Nature (alias the World Wildlife Fund, WWF), for example—are more general in their scope but nevertheless earn substantial parts of their incomes from sea

² An “environmental group” is here meant a group of persons concerned with the environments as *systems* and therefore works to secure habitats and species diversity. A species survival is, of course, an ecological issue, but not the well-being of individual animals (Lyngé 1990:47). The latter is the concern of animal rights groups which are against killing of animals *per se*. There is no sharp line between these two types of groups (Wenzel 1991:36). Animal rights groups become increasingly concerned about ecological systems in order to protect the habitats of animals, and environmental groups, which have recently engaged themselves in the protection of non-endangered species for, as we will presently show, other than ecological reasons.

mammal campaigns. It seems that many of these organizations have been attracted to anti-whaling and anti-sealing campaigns precisely because it is easy to earn money on these campaigns.

The German Greenpeace, for example, jumped on the anti-sealing bandwagon because, according to Wolfgang Fischer, who was then responsible for the German section of Greenpeace's anti-sealing campaign (Bayrischer Rundfunk's TV program "Live aus dem Schlachthof", 15 January 1990):

"It was surely important to Greenpeace at that time to get bigger. Greenpeace was very small. At that time I found it completely legitimate to use a cute animal with large eyes... That I found OK. That was no issue."³

("Es war sicher wichtig damals gross zu werden für Greenpeace. Greenpeace was winzig, und da fand ich es auch legitim, dass man also ein liebes Tier mit grossen Augen benutzt hat... Das fand ich in Ordnung. Kein Thema").

Many environmental groups are interested in the whaling issue and there are at least two reasons for this. First, these organizations seek easy victories. Secondly, whales can easily be ascribed symbolic value. Both tend to open people's purses.

Seeking easy Victories

Successes attract people to the cause, and the odds of winning are important considerations when selecting issues and making strategies—not only because the money this gives the organizations, but also because a large number of members and supporters makes them more able to function as strong pressure groups. An appearance of efficiency is a key

³ Today, Greenpeace has grown to one of the largest groups with an annual turnover of about US\$ 142 million, with DM 57 million being collected in Germany (Schwarz 1991:88-89). This is only surpassed by the US division which has 2.3 million members and a budget of US\$ 50 million (Gifford 1990:73).

in attracting members, and Greenpeace therefore gives priority to efficiency—measured in terms of “victories”—rather than to democracy (Eyerman and Jamison 1989:104).⁴ Before a campaign is launched the chances of winning must be considered good, the issue must be “in” and the campaign activities must be able to reach a wide audience through mass media (Eyerman and Jamison 1989).

Sidney Holt, a marine biologist and a fierce whale protectionists, has once written that (1985:192-193):

“On the face of it, saving whales should be easy. They are extremely attractive forms of wildlife; some of them sing, and many people have become familiar with their underwater performances on film and video. In many cultures whales and dolphins have an ancient and revered place as intelligent and benign companions of humans... Whale meat is now of negligible importance in the human diet, even in Japan. Whaling is of marginal economic significance as an element in the sea fisheries, and only a few thousand people are employed world-wide in the industry.”

That there are few nations engaged in whaling, makes the whalers ideal scapegoats for environmental disasters and human cruelty to animals. The general poor reputation of the industrial pelagic whaling in the past—an image which certain groups by all means try to keep alive by applying it to contemporary small type whaling—makes the task of turning whalers into scapegoats even easier. So Sidney Holt is, perhaps unwittingly, pointing out one of the characteristics of many of the popular environmental issues. Environmental and animal rights groups tend to seek issues that seem to be easy to win.

Greenpeace’s interest in whales and seals follow such

⁴ The organization is one of the most centrally controlled and least democratic of the lot. Of the 700,000 German members only 30 are entitled to elect the seven board members (Schwarz 1991:88-89), while in Sweden only 11 of the 150,000 paying members have the right to vote (Eyerman and Jamison 1989:106). The Danish newspaper *Politiken* (4 Dec. 1991) attributes the falling membership in Denmark to this “Leninist” leadership structure. It will be interesting to see whether some very critical coverage recently in the press (Fox 1991; Schwarz 1991; Spencer, Bollwerk and Morais 1991) will have a further negative impact on Greenpeace.

considerations. "We are strategic opportunists" ("Wir sind strategische Opportunisten"), says leader of Greenpeace-Germany, a view fully supported by campaign leader Harald Zindler who adds that "when people do not support it, we have nothing to seek on that market" ("wenn die Leute es nicht unterstützen, haben wir nicht zu suchen auf dem Markt" (Schwarz 1991:105). Greenpeace pays opinion-research institutes to uncover popular issues among supporters (op.cit.:99), but also readily join issues proven popular by other organizations. Several German environmental groups complain that Greenpeace takes over issues for which other organizations have laid the groundwork (ibid.). The whaling and sealing campaigns are cases in point. Both issues were developed by others and were well on their way before Greenpeace entered the scene. Others had opened the fields, but Greenpeace stole the show.

One reason for Greenpeace's success is its skillful use of mass media, and among the most spectacular media events are the much publicized actions against whalers and sealers. The campaigns are usually carefully staged and the mass media play a crucial role in transmitting a rather theatrical performance across the world. Although a nuisance to whalers and sealers, these actions are not meant to bring forth an immediate termination of these hunting activities. What these rituals do is to tell the world that the activists are concerned about the environment, that the issue is urgent and cannot wait, and that they fight against great odds. The activists are always depicted as underdogs: it is the small zodiac against the big catching boat, or swimming greenpeacers in front of a Japanese factory ship. It is David fighting Goliath. It arises enormous sympathy to their cause. But the picture is false. Environmentalism is a multi-billion-dollar industry, and as long as the issues are whales and seals there is a firm official backing from the Anglo-Saxon world. It is rather the whalers and the sealers who are the weak party.

The Symbolic Value of Whales

Another factor which turns whale protection into an excellent cause and money earner is the fact that cetaceans are animals which easily can

be ascribed symbolic significance. In the way in which we categorise the world around us, mammals usually have four legs and walk on land. But whales—and seals—live in the sea and not on land, and they have fins and not legs. Unlike fish, their tails are horizontal, rather than vertical, and they have no scales but are, like human beings, covered by very thin body hair. Whales form an anomalous category of animals (Kalland and Moeran 1990:5) since they do not fit into our simple categories of mammals and fish. Whales are “betwixt and between”, and it is, according to Mary Douglas (1966), exactly those animals which are difficult to fit into our cognitive maps that become the object of myths and taboos.⁵ Not surprisingly, myth about whales and dolphins are found in ancient Greek religion, as well as in the Bible and in the creation myth of the Japanese Tenrikyō religion established in 1838, for example.

Moreover, whales—and seals—move in salt water. We know very little about what is going on in the oceans, which turns the sea into a good “issue” on which to focus (Kalland and Moeran 1990:7). Information on the unknown is easily open to manipulation and myth creation. Moreover, both salt and water are important purifying agents and are used in religious rites throughout the world. The ocean, consisting largely of these two purifying agents, becomes *the* symbol of purity—of untouched nature—and thus stands in sharp contrast to the polluted soil on which we land mammals tread. It is we, who move on land, who pollute the pure sea. Pollution of the oceans seems to draw much more attention than land and air pollution. No wonder that when the Danish chemical company Brøste wanted to improve its green image and “bought” a sperm whale from the WWF, the whale was called “Brøste’s pioneer whale loves pure salt water” (*Brøstes pionerhval elsker rent saltvand*).

But there are other qualities with salt water, of course. We all started our lives in the uterus submerged in this kind of water, and salty water is thus indispensable for our own existence. It has been suggested that people’s attitudes to whales and seals are reflections of an unconscious

⁵ That seals also fall into the “betwixt and between” category is ably shown by Einarsson (1990:37).

memory of, and yearning for, life in the mother's womb (Grof 1985:142; Lyng 1990:60). But despite having lived our first months in water, we are unable to swim like a whale. Without technological aids such as diving gear and submarines we are confined to life on land. Human beings may harbour a feeling of envy toward whales, as there might be a feeling of envy toward birds for being able to move freely in the skies.⁶ Various environmental and animal rights groups have skillfully played on our susceptibility towards whales because it is precisely our predisposition towards these animals which forms the basis for these groups' success in commoditising whales on their premises.

Creating the Commodity: the *Super-Whale*

Environmentalists and animals rightists tend to talk about *the* whale in the singular, thereby creating an image of a "super-whale" which brings together traits found in a number of the 75 odd species of cetaceans (Kalland 1991). We are told that the whale is the largest animal on earth (this applies to the blue whale); that the whale has the largest brain on earth (sperm whale); that the whale has a large brain-to-body-weight ratio (bottlenose dolphin); that the whale sings nicely and varied (humpback); that the whale has nurseries (some dolphins); that the whale is friendly (grey whale); that the whale is endangered (bowhead and blue whale);

⁶ It is in order here to direct the attention of the readers to the mythical "flying humpback", able to bridge sea and air. The real humpback is able to jump out of water, waving its long flippers like wings. Greenpeace's inflatable humpback has been flown in anti-whaling demonstrations around the world, while countless humpback whales fly through the air in Japanese advertisements, often carrying children on their backs. The flying whale is also a topic in Heathcote Williams' poems, and in one he links the lives of whales, birds, and humans in the womb, thus giving credence to the claim that we yearn for life in the mother's womb (1988:12):

"Whales play, in an amniotic paradise.
Their light minds shaped by buoyancy, unrestricted by gravity.
Somersaulting,
Like angels, or birds:
Like our own lives, in the womb."

and so on. By talking about *the* whale, an image of a single whale possessing *all* these traits—which validity often is questionable, at best—emerges. Such a creature does not exist, and it is precisely because it is a mythic creation that this image of a super-whale has proven to be so easy to sell, and that has turned whales into a metaphysical creature being the object of cults. It has become “the humans of the sea”.

Our Cousins in the Sea

As many of the protectionists never fail to point out, the cetacean brain developed, to use the words of Lyall Watson who is a member of Seychelle’s delegation to the IWC and an ardent New Age philosopher (1985:48): “when men were insignificant nocturnal insectivores”.

With this long time perspective in mind, Lilly wants “to find out if [the dolphins] have sagas, teaching stories, histories” (Linehan 1979:539). Although it will, according to Lilly, “take a lot of work ... before we get to the point where they can tell us stories we can understand”, such trouble might well be justified if it is true—as Lilly wants us to believe—that dolphins administer knowledge which has been accumulated through an oral tradition of more than 25 million years. Such communication must be particularly rewarding for geologists, paleoethologists, and historians who here might have a large potential store of knowledge.

With this capacity for story-telling, it is no surprise to find that dolphins are supposed to have a rich and ancient culture, and that they “represent the closest approach to civilization, not as defined in terms of machine or technology, but as realized among all intelligent beings, cetacean or human, where communication and social bonds transcended the mere exigencies of life” (Abbey 1990:80). Composing and playing music are also cultural activities, and Willy Johannsen claims that “the humpbacks have *certainly composed* for millenia, before the first stone age man even got the idea of beating two bones in rhythm” (1990:xx, italics added). It follows from this that cetaceans are human-like since the very definition of culture “relates to the specific differences between men

and animals” (Levi-Strauss 1963:356).

One may wonder why it is so important to stress that whales have lived on this planet for millions of years. Although Margaret Klinowska (1988), who is a special adviser to the IUCN, has pointed out that cetacean brains have hardly developed since the animals left shore for a life in the oceans—and she is by no means the only scientist who has questioned the high intelligence of cetaceans—many whale protectionists seem to argue that cetaceans have had longer time to evolve into intelligent beings than man. The more ancient whales can be made, the better. While some authors are satisfied by claiming a 25-30 million year history for whales, others write 50 or even 70 years. The antiquity of cetaceans seems to place whales above humans. They are more advanced than us, they are our teachers:⁷

“We, as relative newcomers, may be asking too much of ourselves to communicate meaningfully with minds as ancient as those of whales and dolphins . . . the whales and dolphins may have more to teach us than we have to teach them” (Lilly 1961, quoted in Williams 1988:113).

The long history of whales also seems to give them some unique rights to the oceans. Robert Barstow (1989:12) writes that human beings have *intruded* on to the territory of whales. The whales thus emerge as the “aborigines” of the sea, leading ultimately to their closing the oceans for many human activities in the same way as aboriginal land in Australia has been closed to white people.

While whales have lived in peaceful co-existence with their

⁷ Frequently claims for the high intelligence of whales are wrapped in a mystical language rendering the meaning almost uncomprehensible and bordering to complete nonsense. An example of this is John Lilly, quoted and taken as a proof of the whale’s unique intelligence by D’Amato & Chopra (1991:21-22):

“If a sperm whale, for example, wants to see-hear-feel any past experience, his huge computer [brain] can reprogram it and run it off again. His huge computer gives him a reliving, as if with a three-dimensional sound-color-taste-emotion re-experiencing motion picture”.

surroundings for 25 million years or more—or so whale protectionists will have us believe—human beings have played havoc on the earth and have lost their Paradise after only a fraction of that time. Rapid urbanization has been seen as leading to alienation and loss of purpose in life, to collapse of social networks, to soaring crime and divorce rates, and to the young increasingly turning to drugs. Our social skills have been undermined. In much of the arguments about the peculiarities of whales we are presented precisely with the qualities that urban men and women seem to have lost. Or perhaps we never had these skills in the first place because, according to Lyall Watson (1985:48):

“our best-developed areas are those which deal with the elaboration of motor skills made possible by our hands, while cetaceans seem to concentrate on areas of social perception. Dolphins show marked development of those parts of the brains responsible for orientation, social skill, emotional self-control and perhaps even humour”.

Closely related to this is the question of caring for each other. While commercialization has penetrated most human relations, whales are depicted as the guardians of old values. The whales allegedly care for the sick and dying, while people in the urbanized western world pay hospitals and old people's homes to take care of ageing relatives, thus removing the sick and dying from sight. Moreover, the super-whales take care of each other's calves. They baby-sit and run nurseries, without charging anything for these services. Not only do they care for their own kind, time and time again, cases of whales rescuing humans are told. It is also claimed that swimming with dolphins is a therapy for handicapped children and for people suffering from depression (Hatt 1990; Dobbs 1990).

Men and women might also have behaved nobly, but that was in the past. Today money rules, and urbanites carry with them a nagging bad consciousness for not taking care of aging parents and for not giving the children the attention they need.

Whether we have lost our social skills through rapid social change, or whether we have never been very clever in handling social

relations—as implied by Watson—the message is the same; we are in these respects inferior to whales. Whales are endowed with all the qualities we would like to see in our fellow men; kindness, caring, playfulness. We have something to learn, and whales are therefore used for didactic purposes, just as “good” birds have been used to educate the children in bourgeois values (Löfgren 1985). The whales, and “nice” birds, have become models for us to emulate and people do not eat their teachers and models. Nor do we like that others do so. Whale meat has to be tabooed, and eating it becomes a barbarous act close to cannibalism. *Daily Star*, for example, carried on its frontpage a headline announcing: “Sickest dinner ever served: Japs feast on whale”, and over two inside pages the readers were told that “Greedy Japs gorge on a mountain of whale meat at sick feast” in a “banquet of blood” (11 May, 1991). By turning eating of whale meat into a sensational events, these newspapers underscore an already existing dichotomization of mankind into “good guys”—e.g. protectionists—and “bad guys”—e.g. whalers and their friends. Some of the animal rights groups, like the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), play skillfully on this theme: Their message is that if you want to be counted as a good person with a feeling heart, you better save the whales! Who doesn’t want to be reckoned as such a person?

In a recent article in *American Journal of International Law* Anthony D’Amato and Sudhir K. Chopra (1991:27) go to the extreme and claim that “the mind set that exults in the killing of whales and the ‘sport’ hunting of endangered wildlife species overlap with the mind set that accepts genocide of ‘inferior’ human beings”, while World Society for the Protection of Animals claims in a circular (No.881406) that children exposed to hunting activities are more likely later to show violent criminal behaviour towards people.⁸ Caring for whales thus becomes a metaphor for being good people, and cult-like seances like whale watching trips become opportunities to meet like-minded people and

⁸ If these claims are true one might wonder why the crime rates in hunting societies in general are low compared to those in U.S. cities—at least until their cultures were destroyed by colonialists from outside.

receive recognition as “good”.

Exaggerating the Ecological Crisis

One line of “sale promotion”, particularly pursued by the animal rights groups and New Age believers, thus aims at exploiting the myth of the super-whale even further and turning the whale into a totem (Kalland 1991). Most environmental groups hesitate to take this metaphysical attitude toward whales, however. At least they do not openly admit it. But being dependent on donations from individuals and private enterprises—as financial support from public sources and income from fixed assets are in most cases, although there are important exceptions, relatively unimportant—has forced these organizations to give nourishment to another whale myth, namely that cetaceans are endangered.

Many people believe that whales are endangered, which is true for a few species like blue and right whales. But these species became protected by the IWC when this organization still was a “whalers’ club” and before organizations like Greenpeace and the WWF were founded. It is largely concealed that most of the more than 75 species are not endangered. That the minke whale—which Greenland, Iceland, Japan, and Norway want to harvest—is not endangered and might with estimated stocks at 750.000 animals in the Antarctic be more abundant than ever (Gulland 1988:44), is not mentioned. On the contrary, Greenpeace-Sweden gives their supporters the impression that the animal is on the brink of extinction outside the Norwegian coast. In a series of three articles in the Swedish *Greenpeace Magasinet* Jacob Lagercrantz, who is the spokesman for Greenpeace’s whale campaign in Sweden, has painted a bleak picture of the situation. First he reduced the stocks of minke whales outside Norway to 20-30 per cent of the original (1986, no.2), then to 10-30 per cent (no.3) and finally to less than 10 per cent (no.4). “If Lagercrantz should follow through, minke whales would be totally extinct by Greenpeace Magazine no.5, 1986” observes Georg Blichfeldt (1991a:12), secretary of the organization Survival in the High North, and

adds: "Luckily, it only came out four times that year". The best estimate for the present stock is, according to the Scientific Committee of the IWC, about 70,000 which is down from an original stock of perhaps 100,000 but still above the level from which the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) can be harvested (Walløe 1991, personal communication).

Furthermore, there are—according to American estimates (Aron 1988:104)—about 2 million sperm whales, but this has not caused the removal of this whale from the list of "endangered species". That a few species, such as the blue and bowhead whales, are endangered does not justify a total moratorium on all killing of all whales. After all, the fact that the white-tailed eagle seems to be endangered does not mean that we should protect all birds, chicken included.

Several protectionists have admitted that most whales are not endangered. This has led Barstow, the president of Cetacean Society International, to write that "now is the appropriate time to face and discuss the moral and ethical issues involved in the commercial harvesting of whales" (1989:10). It seems to be easier for the animal rights groups than for the environmental groups to accept the new estimates of whale populations since the argument of the former is not based on ecological considerations but on the ethics of killing animals in general. Their arguments are thus not "endangered" by higher whale population figures. To groups concerned with ecological issues, however, the logical consequence of higher estimates ought to be a feeling of great relief accompanied by a switch to more urgent matters. But this has by and large not been the case. Rather, these groups have changed their arguments from ecology to ethics, as did the U.S. commissioner to the IWC, John Krauss, who in an interview with Nautilus Press Inc. (*Marine Mammal News*, 17(5), May 1991, p.4):

"said that he would continue to defend the U.S. position against commercial whaling on ethical grounds -- but that he could not do so on a scientific basis. in the face of the scientific evidence that the stocks have come back to the point where a carefully monitored hunting effort could be mounted by the whaling nations and conducted safely under proper protective measures."

Some Greenpeace leaders have started to argue that commercial whaling is bad *per se* because commercialism is in nature bad and such whaling will—by a law of nature, it seems—lead to over-exploitation and extinction, and they take the history of pelagic, industrial whaling as evidence.⁹ They also tend to question the validity of the new estimates or simply ignore them. When the WWF, for example, continued its “SOS Save the Whale” campaign—like the Danish section did by stating in a rather emotional appeal for money that “if you agree that a world without whales will be a poorer one for us and our children, then support us economically” (Dybbro 1990) —its leaders must be fully aware that the organization deceived large groups of people in an effort to increase its income. Many of these organizations live by exaggerating crises. They typically urge sympathizers to donate more money before the annual IWC meetings by giving the impression that the present moratorium is in danger of being lifted. Nor do they tell their supporters that with the present constitution of member states in the IWC the required three-quarter majority for resumed whaling is highly unlikely. Of course, “environmentalists” have learned that whales and seals open people’s purses, and they skillfully play up to this tendency.

To summarize, the commodity offered for sale is a “super-whale” which combines traits from a number of cetacean species. The “super-whale” is large *and* smart *and* fond of music *and* friendly *and* caring and so on *ad infinitum*, all at the same time. The fact that each of these claims might be true for one or a few species at best and untrue for the great majority of the species does not seem to reduce the sale potential significantly. The image sells well as the super-whale appeals to human emotions and there are few competitors who lay claims to whales. Last, but not least, *the* whale is claimed to be a scarce resource.

⁹ To liken contemporary small type whaling with the old industrial whaling distorts the issue, however. The situation has changed completely because (1) there is no longer a market for whale oil, which was the most important market in the past; (2) the most important product today is meat, for which there is only a limited market; (3) the boats today are mostly small and family based and operated under a different economic rationality than the large pelagic expeditions; and (4) there is today scientific data available to guide the industry (see also Freeman, n.d.).

Consuming the Whale

One of the first “low-consumptive” utilizations of cetaceans appeared in the dolphinariums which have mushroomed around the world. These are still extremely popular among people and have probably done more than anything else to foster a feeling of emotion toward cetaceans. The Flipper shows further turned dolphins into a unique class of animals.

But the dolphinariums are not completely “non-consumptive”. The mortality rate is quite high for dolphins kept in captivity and some might die during transport. Moreover, to view dolphins in captivity was not any longer regarded as authentic, it was not the real thing. Animal rightists turned against dolphinariums.

Whale Tourism

The “real thing” is, of course, to watch the whales in the wild, and many of the environmental and animal rights groups today organize whale safaris. Tours are offered in Scotland, Norway, Azores, Japan and in many other countries around the world. Patricia Corrigan, who has written a guide book for whale watching tours, has been able to trace more than 200 commercial whale watch tour operators offering more than 250 different tours in North-America alone (1991). The tours range in durations from an hour to a fortnight, and prices vary from \$7 to \$3,000 (Corrigan 1991:7). They all offer special excitements. Many companies stress the qualities of their staff, who are depicted as friendly and offering personalized service, and one company claims to have the “patron saint of whale watching” as owner and captain. Other companies tempt tourists by the voyage itself. Several companies advertise their products by stressing that they use small kayaks in order to be less separated from the water environment and to avoid prop noise to interfere with their hydrophones, while others seek other kinds of tourists by using large boats carrying up to 700 passengers and featuring deluxe catering and bars. One operator offers educational lectures with graphs; another

features videotapes of whale behaviour shown on colour TV sets aboard; a third serves homemade Portuguese specialties and offers folk music; while a company in Newfoundland announces that “the captain will sing for you and dance with you as part of the entire cultural experience” (Corrigan 1991:255). Some operators tempt potential tourists with other cultural attractions such as Indian and Inuit villages *en route*. Nature is, of course, an attraction stressed by several of these operators. One operator invites us “to reach out and touch nature” while we “travel in safety aboard a comfortable cruise vessel, in harmony with nature and at nature’s own pace” (ibid., 182), and some operators are able to guarantee sighting success or a new trip.¹⁰ Among the more bizzar attractions is one offered in Newfoundland, where the human/cetacean encounter has been turned upside-down by guiding “people into our spectacular marine environment so that the whales can watch them!” (ibid., 250). The same company, which owns eight boats, makes “contact with whales by means of a computer-driven acoustic signal”. One operator in Vancouver boasts that he was chosen by the WWF to run a whale-watching trip for His Royal Highness Prince Philip (ibid., 210).

In short, there is something for everyone. To bring that message home, many operators offer tailor-made trips which “exactly suit the desires of the client”. And indeed, there seems to be a lot of people going whale-watching these days. At Andenes in North-Norway about 4,500 tourists were taken out to watch sperm whales during the 1991 summer season, a spectacular growth from a modest start in 1988. And in the U.S., whale-watching has become a multi-million dollar industry (Barstow 1989:11).

These whale watching trips often develop into cult-like seances. Anybody who has witnessed the unison *Aaaaaaaahhhhh* and *ooooohhhhhh* from deck when a whale “waves” its tail in “goodbye” will be struck by the strong sense of community aboard the vessel. On tour operator at Hawaii announces that those who learn a whale song is

¹⁰ It is interesting to note that so many of the operators claim that they operate in an “area where whales abound” and can guarantee sightings. Otherwise, the same organizations try to impress upon people that whales are on the brink of extinction.

“treated to an unofficial initiation as honorary crew members” (ibid., 173),¹¹ while Jim Nollman describes one encounter with gray whales. Before the final sermon in a funeral rite for a six years old boy, “all of us human howl in unison. There is a good healthy excitement here. Whales sure know how to make us human happy. And then, as if it witnessed our collective exhilaration, an enormous whale body picks itself out of the water.” This was the signal to join hands and spread the ashes on the ocean among whales (Nollman 1990:86).

Swim with a Whale

Not everybody is satisfied by watching cetaceans from deck, however. Wondering whether whales like Bob Marley’s *reggae* music, the swimming Nollman could not resist howling “like a wolf” for ten minutes or more while beating *waaaaaaaaawoooooopity-thud-thud* on his water drum, all in order to attract whales for the boy’s funeral rite (Nollman 1990:84-86).

There are four licenced dolphinariums in the United States with “swim-with-dolphins-programmes” (Hatt 1990:247), and these institutions claim that their programmes are of therapeutic value for handicapped and distressed people. Others, who dislike that dolphins are kept in captivity, have taken these programs into the wild. The relatively few friendly dolphins—which are single animals obviously ostracised from their pods for one reason or another—become famous and attract large crowds of people, some of whom are seeking therapy. To the initiate, dolphins like

¹¹ The song goes (Corrigan 1991:173):

Yo ho, yo ho, a sailor’s life for me!
 Yo ho, yo ho, a sailor’s life for me!
 We sail this ship upon the sea
 in search of humpback whales.
 We see them breach,
 We see them splash,
 We see them wave their tails!
 Oh ... ooooh, yo ho, yo ho, a sailor’s life for me!

Jojo, Fungie, Donald, Opo, Percy, Simo, Horace, Dorah, and Jean Louis have become intimate friends and cult objects, and it matters apparently little in which corner of the globe the freindly dolphin appears. Many of the “dolphin lovers” seem to belong to the jet set.

One of the most celebrated “dolphin therapists” is Horace Dobbs who holds a Ph.D. in psychiatry. In a series of books and films he describes encounters with dolphins and the reaction among his depressed patients. Not being a psychiatrist, I will not deny that dolphins might have a positive effect on depressed persons. On the contrary, there are much evidence that many animals have such an effect on human beings, but the reason for this is not necessarily the intrinsic quality—or some magical power—of the animal *per se*. Several of Dobbs’ patients testified that they felt relaxed among dolphins. Being with the animal released them from the anxiety of having to perform; to live up to other people’s expectations. Together with the dolphin one can behave “naturally”, as the following testimonial clearly shows (from Dobbs [1990:82-83]):

“The dolphin moved quite slowly at first, then gradually built up speed until we were flying through the water like Concorde ... I felt like a Princess being taken away to another land by her Prince ... My Prince was taking me into his world beyond the realms of fantasy .. We were together as one ... I was him and he was me. Complete harmony and love.

He then lay beside me, content as I stroked him with my finger tips not wishing to break the spell ... No sounds invaded the magic bubble we were in. I did not speak, we communicated with our hearts. I was totally and completely in love ... Simo and I were two lovers in the depths of the sea. This beautiful dolphin loved me for what I was in my heart. It didn’t matter whether I was old, young, fat or thin. I didn’t have to impress him with a string of degrees. I was loved and accepted for myself, for the person I was. Simo was far suprior to me in every way in the water. I did not have to compete, all the stresses of human values and life no longer existed.”

Testimonials, through which individuals can share experiences and receive emotional support from a small group of likeminded people, is

also a common feature in many New Age sects. We encountered this phenomenon when discussing whale watching trips, and it seems to be an even more powerful force in the “swim-with-a-whale” programs. Those who share the experiences are typically described as good and sensible people. The only person mentioned in Dobbs’ book *Dance to a Dolphin Song* and who did not have a spiritual experience with the dolphin is described as “the very fat, rich, American lady” who got only fleeting attention from the dolphin (Dobbs 1990:97). To be rejected by a dolphin can thus imply rejection by the support group, but when good people meet in the water marvellous things can happen (Dobbs 1990:95):

“[The delightful local girl,] nine-year old Jo-Jo was nervous of being in the water with Simo and so joined hands with Tricia and Carola. Quite spontaneously, the three began to chant ... The wailing sound they made was loud and appeared to cause the surrounding rocks to resonate. The air became charged with a feeling of excitement and expectancy, inducing a tension similar to that generated by ululating African tribal women gathered for a ritual. As I watched and listened I felt a prickling sensation on the back of my neck. Simo circled as if bewitched. Afterwards Carola said she had felt a brief period of profound spiritual communion with the dolphin.”

On another occasion Jean Sayre-Adams who was a healer from California, had a spritual experience with the dolphin, and when meeting Tricia afterwards, Tricia “took hold of her hands and the two of them were locked together by the bond of common experience, Jean was still quivering from her meeting with Simo. Tricia did not attempt to suppress the joy she shared with Jean and tears ran down their cheeks” (Dobbs 1990:96-97).

Whales in Literature and Arts

Whale-watching guide books have started to appear to cater for whale tourists, and books about friendly dolphins help to satisfy the “crystals”.

Such books might well be the latest genres of whale literature appearing on the market. But it is by no means the only genres. Melville's *Moby Dick* was probably the first best seller having a whale as one of the main characters. Other novels have followed. Lloyd Abbey's recent book *The Last Whales* (1990) takes the genre in a new direction in that all the characters are whales. The main characters are the last blue whale from the northern hemisphere and the last blue from the southern hemisphere who meet at Equator. Happily, they are of opposite sex. But before their rendezvous, the female whale in her solitude had played sexual games with a female fin whale and with a group of minke whales, and she had been entertained by playful dolphins. In Abbey's novel interspecies communication is common, and the oceans would have been a paradise had it not been for human beings and killer whales.

Whales figure also in other genres of literature. A steady flow of beautiful nature-books are being published, and Heathcote William's odyssey to whales—which combines exiting photographs and emotional poems—has already become a sort of a classic to whale lovers (Williams 1988). He has followed up his success by a book of poems to celebrate dolphins (Williams 1990). Some writers of science fiction are also intrigued by cetaceans. In *Startide Rising* written by David Brin (1983), for example, the space craft *Streaker* is crewed by humans and *neo-dolphins*, the latter being a result of genetic engineering. Interestingly, considering the Japanese positive attitude to whaling, the neo-dolphins communicate in Japanese *haiku*.¹²

“Writers of science fiction have often speculated about what it would be like to discover, on a planet in outer space, a much higher form of intelligence”, write D’Amato and Chopra (1991:21), and continue: “Stranger than fiction is the fact that there already exists a species of animal life on earth that scientists speculate has higher than human intelligence”. This is *the whale*.

Quoting Dr. John Lilly as proof, and ignoring all scientists of a different opinion, D’Amato and Chopra seem to have taken the step from

¹² The poems are written by Yosa Buson and taken from *Anthology of Japanese Literature*.

science to New Age. They are not alone in so doing. A number of books can best be described as examples of dolphin cults. Titles like *Dolphin Dreamtime - The Art and Science of Interspecies Communication*; *Behind the Dolphin Smile*; *Dance to a Dolphin's Song*; *Pictures in the Dolphin Mind*, and *The Magic of Dolphins* are all telling. At the same time, "cetacean artists" have appeared on the stage painting and drawing pictures of whales and dolphins to large groups of believers, and cassettes and CDs with "singing" humpback and killer whales are stocked in many "alternative" book stores. Books, videos, "whale music", "art objects", stickers, bags, T-shirts, buttons, and so on provide nourishment and visualize people's commitment to the cause and thus help build a community of believers.

Selling Green Images

Environmental and animal rights groups are not only getting money from private persons but also from private enterprises. The WWF, for example, has on several occasions been willing to sell "green images" to companies in need. In Denmark, WWF allowed the Norwegian State oil company to use the WWF logo in an advertisement campaign which aimed at getting more Danes to fill their tanks with Statoil products. Statoil paid one million Danish *kroner* (close to £90,000) to WWF for this privilege so that WWF could help save 24 endangered species of animals, two of which are whale species. To a question whether it was the policy to assist oil companies to increase their sales of polluting oil products, a spokesman told me that he did not believe that the Statoil campaign increased the overall sales, but only had an effect on market shares. Another WWF spokesman said that WWF does not consider whether their sponsors are polluting the environments or not, as long as they use recycled paper (Blichfeldt 1991b).

Many companies are in need of green images, and organizations actively approach companies with offers to potential buyers of such images. In a letter to business leaders in Denmark, the WWF writes:

“Dear manager!

The giants of the seas, the whales, have for 70 million years moved peacefully through the world oceans. And in less than a century unrestricted commercial whaling has caused several species to be endangered.

The situation is so serious that a moratorium on commercial whaling has been imposed for five years. This has been circumvented by the large whaling nations capturing whales on a large scale for “research purposes”. And when the IWC completes its meeting on 6 July [1990] many nations will vote to lift the moratorium.

If this happens, several of the known whale species today might be eradicated. For all future!

Therefore I send you this SOS for assistance in WWF’s fight for an extension of the moratorium. Here your company can give a cash contribution by sponsoring a whale for 50,000 kroner. The sponsorship will in a positive way connect your activities with WWF, which for almost 30 years have been fighting for a global environment. The money for this has often been obtained through successful collaboration with business circles.

Through a sponsorship your company has the opportunity to show your associates that it takes the environment and “the green wave” seriously.

....

I am sure that you will see the opportunities which a whale sponsorship will imply to your business.” (Author’s translation from Danish.)

The letter brings to light several of the points already made. It exaggerates the crisis by not telling that only a few species are endangered, and give the false impression that the IWC is about to lift the moratorium. Moreover, the requests for catch quotas apply to minke whale which is not endangered, and the letter ignores the fact that new management procedures ensures that future catches will be strictly controlled. It is false in that the sponsorship is for sperm whales which are not endangered and not on the IWC agenda, and it exaggerates the long history of whales. But the letter worked.

One of the organizations that decided to sponsor a whale was the Danish chemical company, Brøste. In order to celebrate its own 75 years anniversary the company placed an advertisement in the *Børsen*, the Danish equivalent to Wall Street Journal telling that: "We bought a giant sperm whale from WWF, World Wide Fund for Nature, as a birthday present to ourselves ... We know from the seller that he has more whales, in many sizes, which can be delivered freely swimming".¹³

WWF has taken the lead in developing whale adoption as a fund raising measure. WWF-Denmark has alone earned more than £200,000 from persons and companies that have adopted, or "bought" as it is frequently termed, sperm and killer whales outside the coast of North-Norway during the second half of 1990. The price is about £4,500 for a sperm and £450 for a killer whale. If this is too much, people are welcome to co-sponsor whales. Other organizations have similar programs. Mingan Island Cetacean Study in Quebec, for example, offers 210 blue whales, each costing \$100 per person, \$1,000 for a corporate adoption (Corrigan 1991:311). Allied Whale announces that "about 35 individual finback whales are available for \$30; a mother and calf cost \$50" (ibid.). The Save the Whales International in Hawaii invites interested people to "welcome a Hawaiian humpback whale into their extended family" (op.cit., 312). Through these programs people can adopt whales in distant waters, in the same way as many people in rich countries "adopt" children in the Third World. And, as with the adoption of a child, the whale's "adopted parents" are provided with a picture of "their child" and annual "progress reports".

The adoption program, as well as other programs selling green images, raises two important questions: Firstly, it might from the environmental point of view be counterproductive to sell green images cheaply to polluters in transactions that smack of blackmailing and extortion. The second question relates to whose whale it is in the first place.

¹³ The advertisement continued by appealing to congratulators to donate money to WWF rather than to send flowers. Their contributions would be displayed at the "birthday" reception.

Whose Whale?

Appadurai (1986) talks about commodities' paths, e.g. the "route" through which something travels from its production to its consumption. From a whaler's perspective *he* is a part of that path; he is a step in a long chain of interconnected parts. His task is to hunt and capture whales and bring the carcasses to processors or merchants. Meat goes one way in the chain of exchange and money usually goes the other, although a lot of whale meat is also bartered or gifted. The money thus earned, the whalers spend, among other things, on equipment and provisions.

The whaler possesses only a fraction of the total body of knowledge which is required in order to bring a whale from the sea to the dinner table. But his knowledge is crucial, and includes how to find whales, how to identify the species, how to chase them, how to manoeuvre the boat so that the gunner can aim and hit a moving target from an unsteady boat, how to secure the animal once shot, how to winch it aboard and flens it, how to handle the meat so that it does not spoil, and so on. But knowledge regarding whaling also includes rules of the game. In this context the most important rules are regulations pertaining to rights in whales.

In fisheries that are based on free access to marine resources, ownership rights to fish are usually obtained through capture. Fish trapped on hooks or in nets are not any longer nobody's property but belongs to somebody, usually the owner of the gear. But rights in fish can also be acquired by spotting, as has been reported from Japan in cases of schools of sardine. In whaling both principles are at work.

Striking a whale implies in most cases *de facto* ownership, even should the whale subsequently be lost. Old Norse laws, for example, have detailed regulations about ownership of whales found drifting with marked arrows, spears or harpoons in their bodies (International Study Group on Norwegian Small Type Whaling 1991:19). Today, a whale is rarely lost and hitting a whale implies ownership. But what about sightings?

Usually sighting in itself is not enough to appropriate a whale. A

chase has to be initiated. Only when a whale has been sighted *and* a chase has been started will the other boats recognize the claim to ownership. But the claim is void if the whale escapes.

If only one whale can be chased at the time, it is not possible to lay claim on a school of whales. This has far-reaching consequences for communication between boats. In Japan, where boats operate near land and are obliged in most cases to land the carcass to a destined shore station before nightfall, a boat can seldom take more than a whale or two on any one trip. It might be optimal in such a situation to inform other boats about a school. In Norway, however, boats often operate far from shore and they may stay at sea for three or four weeks at the time. They winch the whales aboard, where they are flensed while the crew can pursue a second whale. The meat is laid on deck to cool, which takes at least 24 hours. The limiting factor here is deck space and the stability of the boat. Most boats may be able to keep 20 metric tons or more on deck, e.g. they can take ten whales before the boat is "shot full" at which time the crew is forced to take a rest. Only then might they inform others. Until then the crew might be tempted to keep silent in order to harvest the school alone, or together with a partner. Consequently, silence on the radio is often an indication that whales have been sighted.

Management information might be different in Japan and Norway as a result of different technologies and regulations, but in both countries whalers possess knowledge on how and when whales are appropriated. Ownership does not imply, however, that the whaler is free to dispose of the whale as he sees fit. In many societies there exist complicated rules as to how the animal shall be distributed. In the Faroe Islands the pilot whales belong to the community and the distribution of the meat follows set rules (Joensen 1990), as did minke whales captured in bays outside Bergen in Norway until the beginning of this century (Østberg 1929). In Inuit culture, sharing the prey with others is fundamental to the successful continuation of relations between Inuit and whales and serves to legitimize hunting (Wenzel 1991). In Japan co-villagers and others obtain rights in whales by giving gifts of *sake* (rice wine) to the owners and crews before the commencement of the whaling season (Akimichi et al. 1988; Kalland and Moeran 1990). Such rules are also among the pool of

knowledge required for a successful appropriation of natural resources.¹⁴

But what about environmental and animal rights groups? One strategy has been to claim that whales are not a free good owned by nobody until spotted, chased and captured. On the contrary, it is claimed that whales are everybody's property. From being considered as "res nullius" whales have become "res communis" (Hoel 1985:28), which means that nations without previous interests in whales—like Switzerland, for example—share property rights and management responsibilities with the rest. This means in principle that *nobody* can appropriate, or lay claims to whales, without everybody's consent or at least a majority vote.

This interpretation of whale ownership might well contradict the principles of the New Ocean Regime as well as the Convention for the Regulation of Whales, but I leave it to people more competent in international law to discuss that matter. But when WWF singlehandedly appropriates whales in order to "sell" them or give them away in "adoption" (against a price, of course), WWF contradicts its own ideology that wildlife is everybody's property.

There is another problem as well. When has a whale become appropriated by WWF? Obviously, there is no catching of the whale which could define property rights, and there is hardly any chase. What about sightings? The problem is that nobody can keep an eye on the whale continuously. Once lost from sight, how does one manages to continue one's claims?

This problem has seemingly been solved by shooting photographs of whales. A few species—like sperm and killer whales—can be identified by their flukes and colour patterns, respectively. It is precisely these two species which are appropriated by WWF inside Norwegian territorial waters.

The importance of photos for claiming ownership to individual whales surfaced in a recent dispute between WWF-Denmark and the

¹⁴ That the loss of such knowledge can cause conflicts was clearly expressed when a minke whale was killed in a bay outside Bergen in 1960. Not having caught any whale for decades, the ways of distributing the meat had been lost, resulting in a controversy between the farms around the bay (Frøiland, Bergen Fishing Museum, personnel communication).

Center for the Study of Whales and Dolphins (CSWD) in Sweden over the ownership of whales outside northern Norway. The CSWD has since 1988 been the driving force behind whale watching tours in northern Norway, and many of the guides and “researchers” are associated with the Center. The “research” is aimed at photographing whales in order to identify and name individual animals. WWF has been involved through its financial contributions to the CSWD. Both the WWF and the CSWD are against whaling and see whale watching as a way to influence people to turn against whaling (Ris 1991). The tours are termed educational, but what kind of knowledge that is transmitted is carefully guarded to the great frustration of the crew of previous whalers.

WWF-Denmark has seen its whale-adoption program in connection with whale watching. Sponsors of whales can win free trips to northern Norway and the safari, and the WWF has sent photos taken by the CSWD researchers to the adopted parents of whales. These photos became the crux of the recent conflict. The CSWD researchers regarded the whales as theirs because the photos were taken by them. An agreement was finally reached and the WWF-Denmark agreed to pay the center 600,000 *kroner*—or about £ 55,000—for the right to use the picture.

At first sight one should believe that whale watching and whaling could co-exist, particularly in northern Norway where the tourists and whalers seek different species. The “swim-with-a-whale” programs as well as the use of cetacean in literature and arts should be even more able to co-exist peacefully with whaling. But this is not the case. Unlike non-western people, who usually do not impose on other peoples their totems or sacred animals, western urbanites tend to impose their views of animals on others. It is this blending of totemization of whales and cultural imperialism which has turned the whale issue into a stalemate. With powerful environmental and animal rights groups behind them, anti-whalers have gained political and moral recognition. WWF with its many members and royal protection has gained a position from where it can appropriate nature and farm it out to those who will pay for a good consciousness or a green image. Greenpeace with its millions of members has also gained power and international recognition sufficient to lay claim

on being a steward of nature. But in doing so these groups have redefined the whale as a commodity and managed to interrupt the path. Appadurai calls this phenomenon as "diversion of commodities from preordained path". One kind of diversion is theft, and many whalers see the sales and adoptions of whales—and here they include sales of whale images which have contributed so importantly to the finances of environmental and animal rights groups— as theft: not only of the whales, which they feel belong to them through several generations' involvement in whaling, but theft of their livelihood, pride, and of their culture.

Conclusion

The demand for whale symbols in the industrial society is closely linked to at least two ideological processes: the environmental awakening and the emergence of the New Age movement. These two are, on the one hand, both alternatives to the mainstream ideology stressing the blessings of material growth, and are, on the other hand, in most cases alternatives to each other, although they seem to merge somewhat in the "deep ecology" movement.

The environmental awareness creates demands at several levels. First, concerned individuals want to do something, or at least they want to believe to do something in order to have a "clean consciousness". Companies and nations are also in need of green images and are willing to pay in order to appear "green" in the eyes of one's associates or voters. The spritual seekers are also looking for powerful symbols, and the totemic "super-whale" has found a market here. Dolphins, in particular, have entered the minds of "crystal people" (Hatt 1990). They are able to communicate with them through telepathy, they try to decode the dolphin language—"dolphinsese"—and they use the cetaceans in healing rituals.

Environmental and animal rights groups can satisfy demands created both by the green wave and the New Age movement. Whales figure prominently in the product line of these groups. Not because there are urgent ecological reasons to single out whales for special

considerations, but because cetaceans can easily be ascribed symbolic significance, and because the traditional exploiters of whales—the whalers—are few and make ideal scapegoats. The costs involved in appropriating nature, e.g. to produce the commodity, are small and the consumers many and the market large.

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