

The Feminine and Nature: Women's Ecological Prospects and the Fall of Androcentrism

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ABSTRACT

Ecofeminism, a term coined by French feminist Françoise d'Eaubonne in 1974, attempts to construct a viable environmental ethics, considering possible links between the oppression of women and that of nature. Since its inception, ecofeminism postulates a logical association between the perception, representation, and treatment of women and the natural sphere by patriarchy and proffers a clear understanding of one by, perforce, acquiring knowledge about the other. This movement, in fact, has gained momentum in recent decades in the form of reactionary theorizations and praxes against androcentrism (male-centrism) and anthropocentrism (human-centrism), the two driving forces behind the current environmental crisis. The ecofeminist stance, a posteriori, gives a philosophical account that questions male-based ideology and relates it to historical sexism, gender constructs, and the ecocidal attitude toward the ecosphere. Joining women with ecology proposes a full-fledged ground for comprehending and dismantling androcentrism and, concurrently, a mediation for the current environmental quandary. Ecofeminism is, in fact, the only discipline that views patriarchy as the higher power behind all sorts of suppression, deeming it an obstacle to social and political transformation. The movement, ergo, seeks to put an end to patriarchal forms of domination, change our conceptualization of women in modern culture, and assert the interconnectedness of the entire ecosphere.

Keywords- Androcentrism, anthropocentrism, ecofeminism, environmental crisis, interconnectedness.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Context of the Research

Ludwig Wittgenstein (1972) states that "Whether a proposition can turn out false after all depends on what I make count as determinants for that proposition" (§5). Wittgenstein bases his philosophy on a simple truism: doubt itself necessitates certainty. Propositions indeed have a significant role in the system of our logical reasoning. Nature, woman, and man are all part of a larger plenum of not only living and ever-changing structures that shape life on Earth but also propositions that are part of our individual and collective rationalization.

In the Torahic story of creation, Yahweh portentously reacts to the serpent's deception of Eve and general human disobedience; He expels both Adam and

Eve from heaven and curses all their generations to come. Here, God addresses Eve, who was seduced and willingly ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil: "To the woman he said, 'I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you'" (Genesis 3:16, New International Version). Eve, the passage points out, is not only punished with childbearing pain but also with her subservience to her husband.

Women's subordination to men has become a common research ground for many academic fields, most of which stand against the conventional, essentialist view of women as naturally inferior to men and assert that ideology shapes the conception and treatment of women at large.

The past fifty years have been characterized by a salient interest in linking women with the environmental

movement. Many feminists have over the years claimed that the aspirations of the two movements are common and reciprocal; ultimately, they aim for the advancement of worldviews and practices that dispense with male-based forms of domination. Rosemary Ruether (1975) explains that:

Women must see that there can be no liberation for them and no solution to the ecological crisis within a society whose fundamental model of relationships continues to be one of dominance. They must unite the demands of the women's movement with those of the ecological movement to envision a radical reshaping of the basic socioeconomic relations and the underlying values of this society. (p. 204)

Since the 1970s, many feminists have endorsed Ruether's basic point: the environment is a feminist issue. Linking ecological degradation with women's oppression is inevitable for many, especially as ecofeminism appears to be offering a full-fledged theoretical ground as well as a practical panacea. Val Plumwood (1993) reveals a crucial understanding of ecological feminism; it all revolves around the phrase "it's all interconnected." Ecofeminism focuses on the conceptual and physical connections to the natural sphere. The field makes urgent moral claims about those connections and sees present ecological and social relations to be far more morally controversial than many traditional theorizations tend to postulate. Among many, Val Plumwood's work has been notably influential in the development of ecofeminism, namely in its philosophical sphere. Arguing that modern Western civilization is reared on an oppositional view of the world, she propounds an anti-dualist postulate that's less hierarchical, more democratic, and more inclusive.

Greta Gaard (1993) argues that ecofeminism's central argument is that patriarchy, the driving force behind the oppression of women, the black community, and other inferior groups, is the same force behind the oppression and exploitation of the natural world and its habitats. Whether it is cultural, political, or psychological, the construction of patriarchy and the effect of its hierarchical systems are put under scrutiny, and by dismantling anthropocentrism, androcentrism seems to characterize hitherto much of human inclination to dominate and submit life on our planet.

Ecofeminism attempts to construct an environmental ethics of connection by taking into account possible links between the domination of women and that of nature. According to the ecofeminist viewpoint, an environmental philosophy that fails to reveal or instill the possible connection between the subjugation of women and that of nature is inadequate and incomplete.

2. Problem Statement

The penchant to subjugate and exploit the natural world has historically characterized human life on Earth. Human civilization has always perceived nature as a permanent resource of sustenance and livelihood, and therefore it exists ultimately to serve anthropocentric

needs. In the current Anthropocene era, we are experiencing what Bill McKibben (1990) calls *the end of nature*—an age defined by the pervasiveness of capitalist and neoliberalist modes of production, the depletion of natural resources, and global warming. The dominant economic and ideological framework contributes to the environmental crisis, signaling urgent alternative modes of coexistence with nature.

3. Purpose and Scope of the Research

This study aims to explore the profoundest dimensions of the ecofeminist conception of liberation in tandem with the current environmental and social nodi—the conceptualization of women in dominant Western culture and its strong connection to the ideologization and treatment of the material world and its inhabitants. With its development, ecofeminism offers new insights into women's liberation, environmental stability, and social egalitarianism.

4. Research Questions and Hypotheses

Ecofeminism distinguishes between *patriarchy*, the male-dominated system of social relations and cultural values, and *hierarchy*, the relations of power and command dictated by patriarchal infrastructure and superstructure. As the field dispenses with the essentialist view of both nature and women, gender, ecofeminists assert, is shaped by culture; it is a historical variant. The way we experience nature is, too, culturally constructed. In this way, the following two research questions direct this study: (1) What moral obligations do feminists, in particular, have apropos the natural environment? (2) Does humanity have environmental obligations for the sake of human beings living in the world today, or for the sake of protecting biodiversity and ecosystems, for human posterity living in the future, or for the sake of the environment itself, devoid of human-centeredness?

H1: Women have no *inherent* ecological relatedness to nature, nor do men have an *inherent* ecocidal inclination. It is most likely, according to the evolutionary account, that both men and women seek a common goal of a comfortable material life, which may, paradoxically, contribute to the development of the capitalistic mode of living.

H2: Men refuse to recognize their dependence on women and the nonhuman world, retaining their supremacy in terms of alienation and logical systemization. The concept of the human is constructed and employed as exclusionist, resting on an androcentric view of the world.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

1. Review of Feminist Thought

"She is just a womb," I have thought so many times in the past and assumed that this definition is adequate for a woman. She has a clitoris, a hymen, a uterus, and ovaries. When excited, her labia majora enlarge, transudates flow, and spasms shake her *temple*.

She is permanently subject to her hormonal vicissitudes. Man, thinking thus, seems to overlook the fact that he is also subject to hormonal changes. He perceives his body in all its supremacy while condemning woman's natural formation. "Humanity is male, and man defines woman, not in herself but in relation to himself; she is not considered an autonomous being" (de Beauvoir, 2010, p. 26). Throughout an existentialist morality approach, Simone de Beauvoir conjectures that woman is dominated—transcended—by a superior male consciousness. This opposition results, de Beauvoir (2010) believes, from biological distinctions that she duly traces in the following:

On average, she is smaller than men, lighter; her skeleton is thinner; the pelvis is wider, adapted to gestation and birth; her connective tissue retains fats; and her forms are rounder than men's. The overall look—morphology, skin, hair system, and so on—is clearly different in the two sexes. Woman has much less muscular force: about two-thirds that of man; she has less respiratory capacity: lungs, trachea, and larynx are smaller in woman; the difference in the larynx brings about that of the voice. Women's specific blood weight is less than men's; there is less hemoglobin retention; women are less robust and more apt to be anemic. Their pulse rate is quicker, their vascular system is less stable, and they blush easily. Instability is a striking characteristic of their bodies in general; for example, man's calcium metabolism is stable; women both retain less calcium salt and eliminate it during menstruation and pregnancy; the ovaries seem to have a catabolic action concerning calcium; this instability leads to disorders in the ovaries and in the thyroid, which is more developed in a woman than in a man; and the irregularity of endocrine secretions acts on the peripheral nervous system; muscles and nerves are not perfectly controlled. More instability and less control make them more emotional, which is directly linked to vascular variations: palpitations, redness, and so on; and they are thus subject to convulsive attacks: tears, nervous laughter, and hysterics. (pp. 65–66)

De Beauvoir (2010) further expounds on the physical differences between the two sexes:

Woman is weaker than man; she has less muscular strength, fewer red blood cells, and a lesser respiratory capacity; she runs less quickly and lifts less heavy weights—there is practically no sport in which she can compete with him; she cannot enter into a fight with the male. Added to that are the instability, lack of control, and fragility that have been discussed; these are facts. Her grasp of the world is thus more limited; she has less firmness and perseverance in projects that she is also less able to carry out.

This means that her individual life is not as rich as a man's. (pp. 68–69)

These facts, she underlines, are attributed to woman's subordination to the species. She is the most resistant among female mammals. Conundrums of puberty, gestation, menopause, recurrent postpartum illnesses, etc., constitute why the human female is so particularized. Only when she attempts to overcome her biological hindrances does she become an individual. On the other hand, man is more privileged—his biological life does not impact or hamper his personalized existence. His life, compared to hers, goes on seamlessly.

De Beauvoir (2010) believes in the principle of alterity as the fundamental *modus operandi* of human reasoning (p. 26), regarding women as the Other at the core of a system wherein the two sexes are predestined for each other. In her mind, women must be compared to men only in the context of historical variability, in their shared and destined becoming. Considered broadly, biology consists of political, sociological, and psychosexual levers. Only when we begin to define the human body on existentialist grounds does biology turn into abstraction. The female body must, consequently, have signification only as experienced by consciousness and within a specified context. The issue-at-question turns out to be not of biological *origin* but of arbitrariness, of what humanity has made of the human female. "Nature does not define woman; it is she who defines herself by reclaiming nature for herself in her affectivity" (de Beauvoir, 2010, p. 73). Human society is, ergo, a historical variant; it is able to convert it.

Mary Wollstonecraft (1792/2008) gives an account of the problematic nature of reason. "In what does man's preeminence over the brute creation consist? The answer is as clear as that a half is less than the whole; in reason" (p. 21). Castigating weak, artificial, corrupt, pitiful, helpless, and amusing women (particularly those of the upper class), she corroborates that the degree of knowledge and virtue a woman can achieve determines her overall exercise of reason. A society becomes more progressive when women become the *friends* of men and when humanity's collective consciousness rests in reason—the bedrock construct of modern society. Every task of humanity, in which there exists hierarchical subordination, hampers social equality and moral accountability.

Denying women their civil rights by means of ideologization is a preconception. What women require is a mode of education capable of soldering the female experience, of giving it strength, knowledge, and rationality. Women succumb to manners before morals, to the inherited before the intellectual, becoming subject to common sense—to prejudices.

The Biblical story of creation, Wollstonecraft (1792/2008) remarks, vindicates that woman was made for the greater good of man, that she was made for his sake, a frummer servant to either love or lust. Either way, her subordination holds out a supersession, a substitution

for subjection. In a notable passage, she differentiates between manners and morals. A woman becomes a victim of prejudice, and thinking that her opinions are taken for granted, she blindly subscribes to authority. By empowering her body and *esprit*, women become the friends of men, distinguished and independent of them. She explains as follows:

Besides, the woman who strengthens her body and exercises her mind will, by managing her family and practicing various virtues, become the friend and not the humble dependent of her husband, and if she deserves his regard by possessing such substantial qualities, she will not find it necessary to conceal her affection or to pretend to an unnatural coldness of constitution to excite her husband's passions. In fact, if we revert to history, we shall find that the women who have distinguished themselves have neither been the most beautiful nor the most gentle of their sex. (p. 39)

Feminists, following Wollstonecraft and de Beauvoir, locate their critique of domination in assuming that androcentrism and its hierarchical forces are the root cause of women's oppression. Feminists trace back to the way women have been conceptualized and treated throughout Western history. Culture, they inform us, has degraded everything associated with women and femininity, whereas it has enshrined every aspect of men and masculinity.

Patriarchy, being the dominant ideology in Western culture, "represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (Althusser, 2001, p. 109). Patriarchy plays a major role in creating contexts and identities, determining the conditions of living for both men and women. In this sense, the feminist movement surfaces as a reaction to the male-based socio-economic circumstances of Western civilization—a history that has repressed both sexes but in particular degraded most aspects of femininity. "As I understand feminism, it is a movement committed to the elimination of male-gender power and privilege, or sexism. Despite differences among women, all feminists agree that sexism exists, is wrong, and ought to be changed" (Warren, 1997, p. 3). Recognizing sex equality and understanding how gender operates are of utmost importance in feminist thought.

Humanity does not strive to merely survive as an evolving historical species, yet it seeks to surpass and transcend itself. Through this transcendence, humanity demystifies, and unity debouches. "Here we hold the key to the whole mystery. On a biological level, a species maintains itself only by recreating itself, but this creation is nothing but a repetition of the same life in different forms. By transcending life through existence, man guarantees the repetition of life; by this surpassing, he creates values that deny any value to pure repetition" (de Beauvoir, 2010, p. 99). Man has not only degraded

woman but also succeeded in degrading life, even crossing its frontiers. Because the creation of civilization still remains assigned to the sex that produces and not to the one that reproduces, woman calls for full inclusion into modern society. By denying her recognition, by synonymizing her with desire, mystery, and reverie, he could only see himself as her oppressor. In affirming the continuity of his patrilineage, man turns woman into nothing more than a servant. He has taken possession of that which he already had. There was neither conflict nor surrender.

2. *Feminism is Feminisms*

In feminism, there are continuities as well as serious divergences among the different theorizations. Feminism has incorporated ideas from different perspectives, and many feminists have altered their views over the years.

Feminists have notably developed complex views about gender, sex, and sexuality. Gender, for instance, is understood as a social fact, a personal identity, and an interpersonal network of relations characterizing men and women. Sex, on the other hand, is no longer seen as a one-way expression of the body or a means for human reproduction, but rather as an ever-changing web of genes and hormones, subject to evolutionary and psychosexual determinants. To conclude, sexuality is perceived to be socially constructed, physiologically based, and emotionally expressed.

Feminists concur that gender inequality is deeply ingrained in the structure of modern society. Inequality is related to the organization of marriage and families, industry and the economy, politics, organized religions, the arts, and the very language we use. Making women and men equal, therefore, demands social and not only individual efforts.

I have classified feminist perspectives into four basic categories. These are liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, socialist feminism, and radical feminism.

2.1 *Liberal Feminism*

Liberal feminism sees institutional failure as the main cause hindering the achievement of full equality for women. Rationality, liberal feminists believe, is the basis of moral decision-making. Rationality, respect for autonomy, and self-dependence are quintessential. The oppression of women, in this sense, springs from depriving women of education and equal social opportunities. Liberal feminists, I must pinpoint, do not provide any profound critique of particular social institutions but instead suggest that the problem of women's oppression boils down to exclusion. Real freedom will be achieved when women are provided with equal access to education, politics, and *real* positions of power.

The liberal feminist view of emancipation does not tackle the underlying structure of patriarchy. It, in fact, operates under its aegis. Indeed, an overall theory of liberation must include this.

2.2 Marxist Feminism

Marxist feminism, as the epithet suggests, offers an analysis of patriarchy from a politically economic stance. Following Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, the oppression of women is part of a larger problem—the oppression of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie. Once private property is eliminated and divided labor is superseded, once human beings have equal access to the means of production, they will be truly free. For Marxist feminists, the liberation of women is related to the process of engaging women in production and, most importantly, to their circumstances in history.

Human existence, Marxist feminists affirm, is not determined by consciousness but by life conditions. Consciousness—our historical situatedness—therefore, has a material basis. Our collective consciousness of history is simple: Capitalism alienates humans from their real conditions of existence and means of production. The state, a manifestation of capitalist hegemony and class contradiction, will be overthrown only through a communal (communist) revolution. “It is not consciousness that determines life, but life that determines consciousness” (Marx & Engels, 1976, p. 42), which is preceded by the domination of productive forces, private property, the division of labor, and, of course, the exploitation of women. Under communism, Marxist feminists infer that individuals are subject to natural, communal conditions, while under capitalism, they are pruned to instruments of production. Under communism, the proletariat will finally quell hegemony and claim back its *necessary* role in history. Communism, thus, must take action and establish itself as global.

2.3 Socialist Feminism

Socialist feminism propounds a much more inclusive theory than the Marxist one. While maintaining a strong Marxist emphasis on historical and material accounts, socialist feminists conflate a gender analysis with a class examination of modern institutionalized society. As the term *socialism* suggests, its feminist adherents call for a radical transformation of the most vital social elements: the family, organized religion, education, enforced heterosexuality, government, and economy.

For the most part, however, socialist feminists have yet to address the systematic oppression of women and its relation to class struggle in general.

2.4 Radical Feminism

Radical feminism studies the connection between woman, animals, and nature. These feminists celebrate this connection and attempt to empower it by negating the value of its opposite. In other words, radical feminists see women as closer to nature and men as closer to culture and hence reject the cultural in favor of the natural. They embrace what they consider to be women’s traditional values, such as caring, nurturing, and interdependence, while rejecting the individualist, rationalist values typically associated with men.

The oppression and exploitation of women are the responsibility of men. Radical feminism draws a futurity in which the oppressor and the oppressed do not performe disappear; they simply change positions.

In short, feminism is a constellation of theories that seek to rethink and redefine relations between men and women. Its main premise and objective rest in its defense of equal political, economic, and social rights, as well as equal opportunities for women.

3. The Ecofeminist Stance

Feminism and environmentalism are two fields that seek a common, theoretical, and practical dialogue. Feminism seeks to free all women from patriarchal politics and societal structures; regarding the environment, feminists study the intersection of sexism with the dominance and exploitation of the natural world. Ecofeminism, therefore, is the theory and practice that aim to empower the dialogue between feminism and ecology. It examines how the same binary oppositions—sex/gender and male/female—are predominantly present in the way we conceptualize and treat the sentient world and its inhabitants. “Ecofeminism represents the union of the radical ecology movement, or what has been called ‘deep ecology,’ and feminism” (Ruether, 1993, p. 35). Ecofeminism is, in fact, the only discipline that views patriarchy as the higher power behind *all* sorts of suppression, deeming it an obstacle to social and political transformation.

Ecofeminism rejects every aspect of women’s liberation that either endorses or fails to challenge the dualistic definition of women and nature. Here we understand that “the real task of liberation is not just participation but subversion, resistance, and replacement” (Ruether, 1993, p. 30). To quell anthropocentrism, speciesism, sexism, and other forms of oppression, liberating women alone will not be sufficient. Women will free themselves only if patriarchal systems of oppression are disassembled and intersectionality is affirmed. Ecofeminism establishes this analytical framework by believing that the association of the female with nature goes hand in hand with nature/culture, male/female, and sex/gender dichotomies—the mainstay of modern Western culture.

4. Nature as a Feminist Issue

Ecofeminism is a definite discipline because it propounds “that nonhuman nature and naturism (i.e., the unjustified domination of nature) are feminist issues. Ecofeminist philosophy extends familiar feminist critiques of social isms of dominion (e.g., sexism, racism, classism, heterosexism, ageism, and anti-Semitism) to nature (i.e., naturism)” (Warren, 1997, p. 4). The field tackles the woman-nature association, postulates links between environmental obliteration and the subjugation of women and other nondominant groups, and engenders solutions to these problems accordingly. “According to ecofeminists, trees, water, animals, toxics, and nature language are feminist issues because understanding them helps one understand the status and plight of women

cross-culturally” (p. 4). Ecofeminist thought is predicated on a simple principle: the relationship between human beings and the natural environment is not reliant upon an ideology of ethical commitment; instead, “We as a race turn out to be stronger than we suspected—much stronger. In a sense, we turn out to be God’s equal—or at least, his rival—able to destroy creation” (McKibben, 1990, p. 78).

The androcentric ideologization, being part of capitalism, nationalism, consumerism, instrumentalism, and militarism, determines most of our perceptions and attitudes toward the natural environment.

These aspects make up a conglomeration of what constitutes *manstream theory*, the conceptualization of man as a supreme hierarchical authority, experimenting in the material world, rationalizing morals, and dictating rules. This liberal approach justifies man’s pursuit of individual interests—a justification for capitalistic domination *per se*. Since power relations are preconditioned, political and social structures are legitimized by patriarchy on par with the establishment of masculine values as the essence of human morality.

Ecofeminists view that values associated with Western dominant masculinity are the ones used to determine what is morally and culturally *human*. Reason, materialism, production, and the domination of nature define what it means to be fully human, as opposed to feminine characteristics such as emotionality, nurturing, and interconnectedness. “The concept of the human is itself very heavily normative” (Plumwood, 1993, p. 23). The concept of being human is contingent on the existence of a constant excluded and inferiorized Other, defined through male-dominated lenses.

Feminist anthropologists Sherry Ortner (1974) and Kate Soper (2000) support de Beauvoir’s argument that the female is “more enslaved to the species than the male; her animality is more manifest” (de Beauvoir, 2010, p. 239). Because of corporeal peculiarities, they believe, the female corpus is aligned with the natural material realm. The female body is located in the passive, tame aspect of *his story*, inapt therefore for cultural examination.

Sherry Ortner (1974) upholds this view by arguing that the connection of femaleness to nature stems from the animal-like nature of children and the conception of domestic groups as incompatible with patriarchal cultural structures. Nevertheless, she sees that culinary undertakings and the contribution to babies’ cultural refinement depict the woman as an adherent of both orders. “She is seen as situated between the two” (p. 80). While considering the universality of female subordination to males, the writer relies on cultural evaluation to assess how a certain society perceives women as inferior. All women in all cultures are placed within a category of a degraded otherization, and the only thing that corresponds to such positioning is nature, by which patriarchy controls them for the fulfillment of its own power agendas. Every culture, she extrapolates, by far makes this distinction—the male cultural superiority

to nature. Women’s inferiority, *pan-cultural second-class status*, can be reduced to its minimal analytical point, the feminine material and symbolic association with nature. In Ortner’s view, the woman is closer to nature for the following reasons:

- (1) Woman’s body and its functions, more involved more of the time with “species life,” seem to place her closer to nature, in contrast to man’s physiology, which frees him more completely to take up the projects of culture;
- (2) Woman’s body and its functions place her in social roles that in turn are considered to be at a lower order of the cultural process than man’s; and
- (3) Woman’s traditional social roles, imposed because of her body and its functions, in turn give her a different psychic *structure*, which, like her physiological nature and her social roles, is seen as being closer to nature. (Ortner, 1974, pp. 73–74).

Differently put, the body minimalizes the female role to mere reproduction of life. The male, lacking her natural constitution, maintains his creativity outwardly (artificially) through means of scientific and technological progress. Looking for eternity, he therefore transcends the natural, the mortal, demeaning women for creating weak, deteriorating beings. This psychoanalytic explanation shows why male activities, let us say the acclaimed destruction of the environment, are given more importance than the female’s ability to generate life.

Janis Birkeland (1993), disassembling the male-dominant culture, sees male psychological fears as interpreting most of his needs to control. She notes that “Ecofeminism [...] explains man’s ecocidal behavior in terms of real emotions and life experience, such as sexual identity, the fear of death, the link between personal worth and power, the repressed need to belong, and other expressions of personal insecurity” (p. 19). Since women are associated with the domestic sphere of social order, they are so located at the bottom of the cultural paradigm; since men are associated with the public sphere, they are so located at the top of social relations and political regulations, being the historical *natural* pioneers of religion, literature, art, law, and technology, etc., in most societies.

In a similar way, Kate Soper (2000) draws her critique of male-centrism on the reproduction/production binary between men and women. This dichotomy, she believes, offers a falsified understanding, wherein “It invites us to suppose that ‘production’ proceeds without reliance on nature, when in fact any form of human creativity involves the utilization and transformation of natural resources, and secondly, because it presents ‘reproduction’ as if it were unaffected by cultural mediation and inured against the impact of socio-economic conditions” (p. 140). Production is indeed dependent on biological material transformations, as reproduction can no longer be viewed as outside of cultural order. Unequivocally, Soper does not deny

differences between the reproduction of human beings as species and the production of commercialized commodities, yet she postulates that feminism should be concerned with the way any economic or cultural system perceives economic production as more important, as more functional. Soper envisions that all social and cultural polarizations have followed from this preliminary positioning of women. Due to their naturalization, they are deprived of their cultural merits. In almost the same manner, nature is feminized; it is viewed and treated as an incarnation of the female body. Androcentric claims of the natural world have historically rationalized ecocidal behavior toward the nonhuman world.

For Soper (2000), nature is identified as female in two basic ways:

'She' is identified with the body of laws, principles, and processes that is the object of scientific scrutiny and experimentation. But 'she' is also nature conceived of as spatial territory, as the land or earth that is tamed and tilled in agriculture, and with this, we may associate a tendency to feminize nature viewed simply as landscape: trees, woodland, hills, rivers, streams, etc., are frequently personified as females or figures in similes comparing them to parts of the female body. (p. 141)

In this framing, nature is either perceived as a loving maternal source, the root of all human flowering, or a dangerous female force, a site of sexual allure and temptation. Soper explains that nature is both the source of knowledge and the spouse of science, in either way to be discovered, controlled, and most likely coerced to intercourse (exploited), i.e., a *place* for sexual pleasure, a provocation to her male master. "Nature is both a nurturant force—a replenished bosom or womb of renewal—and a 'virgin' terrain ripe for penetration" (Soper, 2000, p. 142). The subjugation of nature is similar to forcing a virgin to submit to her rapist, an incestuous crime against nature wherein the son directs his sexual drive toward his birthing mother. The *mother-virgin-lover* imagery insinuates an understanding of nature as both mother and maid, showing a fluctuating urge between domination and the need for nurture.

The tendency to feminize nature shows a contradictory behavior, a conflict between a *fetal* and a *phallic* disposition. Nature is seen as a place of rebirth, but only under settlement and control, a tampering attempt by the phallic to subdue the nurturing womb. Nature's reaction to forced *husbandry*, to forceful exploitation, can be interpreted as due to maternal punishment; recognizing her powerful resistance implies a strong human sense of guilt and a nostalgia for a mother-child unification. Feminizing nature does not stand only for the need to subjugate nature, but also for the remorse, the regret shown in the process per se, the ignominy admitted for what is lost or destroyed, and the masculine fear emanating from nature's potent resistance to seduction and exploitation.

It is deduced that culture, through means of ideology and scientific implementation, transcends natural givens in which women and nature are mediators within patriarchal symbolism. "Feminine symbolism, far more often than masculine symbolism, manifests this propensity toward polarized ambiguity—sometimes utterly exalted, sometimes utterly debased, rarely within the normal range of human possibility" (Ortner, 1974, p. 86). We can deduce that under patriarchy, culture must keep control over its mechanisms to assure women's and nature's role in the conversion of nature into culture, and "ultimately, it must be stressed again that the whole scheme is a contrast of culture rather than a fact of nature" (p. 87).

III. METHODS

The research questions in this study are examined using a qualitative research methodology. An in-depth valuation of the literature is shown, touching on vital facets of the literature of ecofeminist philosophy, environmental commitment, and social egalitarianism. Through the review offered, this study seeks to find a common conceptualization tantamount to the ecofeminist theorization of sex, gender, and the natural material world.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this analysis, it is found that the androcentric mindset operates under, as well as empowers, hierarchical systemization. In ascertaining similarities between the oppression of women and nature, this research upholds the following: "Ecofeminism's theoretical base is a sense of self most expressed by women and various other nondominant groups—a self that is interconnected with all life" (Gaard, 1993, p. 1). The interconnectedness of the web of life and the ethical responsibility humans, as rational beings, hold toward one another and toward the natural world must indicate elements of complexity, coexistence, and reciprocity. The ecofeminist stance postulates a non-anthropocentric and non-androcentric view that attempts to put an end to all forms of oppression and to assert, most importantly, that both men and women are part of both nature and culture.

V. CONCLUSION

Ecofeminism is not gynocentric. The theory unfolds the contradictions and irresponsibility of androcentrism. Our perception and treatment of one another and of the natural world must include principles of interdependence and interconnectedness. We are born and nurtured by a woman. We are part of nature. We are dependent on it. We seem to doubt these simple facts. We seem to doubt assertoric propositions.

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