

A Critique of Eco-Feminism: An Attempt Towards Environmental Solution

Peter O.O. Ottuh^{1*}

¹ Delta State University, Abraka - Nigeria

E-Mail: pottuh@delsu.edu.ng

Received 10.10.2020; Accepted 15.12.2020

Abstract: The scriptures and the early Church all pronounced upon women in almost exclusively masculine voice. Aristotelian philosophy deemed a woman to be 'inferior man' and this was corroborated by the interpretation of the creation of Eve as 'posterior et inferior' (last and lesser). Even in Medieval Europe there was a debate in which male writers attacked and defended women; the humanist writers of the Renaissance also showed the same trend. Ecofeminism is a twin concept encompassing both ecology and feminism. It is justified by saying that ecology or environment is closely associated with the female. The primary belief of ecofeminism is that the supremacy over women parallels the suppression of nature and that this mutual domination has led to environmental destruction by the controlling patriarchal society. This philosophy is based on the principle that there is a vital connection between the oppression of nature and women. Hence understanding these connections is necessary to understanding the two veins of oppression. Feminist theory must include an ecological perspective, and ecological problems must include a feminist perspective. Eco-feminists further argue that an environmental philosophy that fails to attend to these important links will be theoretically and practically deficient. The objective of the research is to explicate and examine with critically the objective of Ecofeminism. Ecofeminism is a twin concept of both ecology and feminine and as such being a forceful approach in environmental deserves considerable attention to modern environmentalists.

Keywords: Value dualism, Logic of domination, Ecofeminism, Environmental Ethics

INTRODUCTION

According to ecological feminists, a historical look at the ways in which women and other oppressed groups have been associated with the natural and the ways in which nature has been associated with the 'womanly' or with the 'feminine' in western contexts reveal important connections ^[1]. In this regard, a lot of literature can be found in both Griffin and Merchant. In fact, Merchant illustrates how the emergence of modern science in Europe in the 15th to 17th centuries resulted in a rewriting of the world view. She contends that this shift in the world-view from the organic to the mechanistic was a major vehicle for the devaluation of both women and nature ^[1]. Here, Merchant observes a paradigmatic shift- a shift from the earth centered to the sun-centered world view was a significant factor. According to the characteristic of Renaissance and pre-Renaissance thought, earth was associated with the two aspects of womanliness, namely, nurturing mother and uncontrollable female who could be violent and chaotic ^[2]. This shifting from earth centered to sun-centered actually meant replacing a women centered universe with a male centered one. This is so because the sun was associated with maleness. The Aristotelian association of activity equally reflected a shift from earth to the sun. This was shown in the 16th century by Copernicus, 'the earth conceives by the sun and becomes pregnant with annual offspring' ^[1]. Merchant further contends that such change could occur not only on earth but everywhere. This sun-centered view actually broke the natural order. As a result of that the part of womanliness that became the dominant conception of nature was the wild, violent side. The other association of nature as a nurturing mother that was part of the organic approach became less prevalent. Here Merchant quotes Machiavelli, "Fortune is a woman and it is necessary if you wish to master her, to conquer her by force; and it can be seen that she lets herself be overcome by the bold rather than by those who proceed coldly, and therefore like a woman, she is always a friend to the young because they are less cautious, fiercer, and master her with greater audacity" ^[2].

This is one web through which womanliness has been disrupted. There are other disruptions in the social order, including the breakdown of the federal system, brought fear of chaos. Merchant reveals that women's increased visibility in social life, such as, in the Protestant movement in northern Europe, and the long reign of Elizabeth I, was threatening to the social order. At any rate, fear of women by the

* Corresponding E-mail: pottuh@delsu.edu.ng

men in control reached a peak in the European enchantress pursuits. We witness the same web in Francis Bacon. It is often discussed by ecological feminists how the association of women and nature has been dangerous for both. Bacon's justification of the scientific method involves likening nature to a woman being tried for witchcraft. His mentor, James I of England was a strong supporter of witch trials. In this regard, Bacon added, "For you have but to follow and bound nature and as it were bound nature in her wanderings, and you will be able when you like to lead and drive her afterword to the same place again.

Neither ought a man to make a scruple of entering and penetrating those holes and corners, when the inquisition of truth is his whole object as your majesty has shown in his own example" [3]. The eco-feminist, namely, Merchant has shown how the twin dominations of woman and nature have been intertwined historically and conceptually.

The word eco-feminism itself shows the combination of words that is, Eco and Feminism. The word "Eco-feminism" is clear enough to understand what is there in the base. Eco-feminism is a combination of women's liberation movement and the ecological protection movement. Both movements strongly opposed the anthropocentric worldview and behaviour. Eco-feminism is purely ecology oriented feminism. Spiritual ecofeminism is purely related to the ancient matriarchal culture of archaeology. According to Spiritual ecofeminism, God and its religion are the patriarchal religion. Spiritual ecofeminists think that it is necessary to revive the ancient religions as well as they advocate the worship of goddess; deem women and nature as a holy religious beliefs. Spiritual Ecofeminist also believed in replacing politics with religions. spiritual Ecofeminist grab Christianity as patriarchal religion. Therefore they harshly criticize patriarchal religions as well as emphasize on the worship of Goddess and the Mother Earth. This view of spiritual ecofeminist illuminates the sacred relationship between women and nature. But social ecofeminists have a different outlook towards the relationship between nature and women. According to them, the relationship between nature and women has been socially constructed and strengthened by ideology. In this theory binary opposition or two opposite pole in the hierarchy is discussed. As one can find opposition between culture and nature, men and women, rational and emotional, mental and physical, and subject and object. Here one is oppressor and other is oppressed (object). In this way, nature become the victim of oppression and male become the oppressor (subject). Same condition one can find in the case of women, where the male become subject and women and their bodies become the object of domination. Though spiritual ecofeminist suggest a lot, their suggestions and views were highly criticized by Social Ecofeminism. According to Social Ecofeminist this is the way to escape from burning social and ecological problems.

VALUE DUALISMS AND THE LOGIC OF DOMINATION

I think that value dualism is the main reason of the theory of ecofeminism [4]. In environmental ethics two different values are recognized, such as, instrumental value and non-instrumental value [5]. Non-instrumental or intrinsic value are superior to instrumental or use value. It is then said that nature has only instrumental value. Now, if nature is at par with woman, as ecofeminism suggests, then woman has instrumental value as well. In this regard it can be said that women are inferior to men. Thus, the logic of domination comes from value dualism. Analysts of value dualism have played a major role in ecological feminist critiques of western patriarchal cultures. In this regard, Val Plumwood offers one of the most comprehensive discussions of dualisms and dualistic thinking. According to Plumwood, a value dualism is a disjunctive pair in which the disjuncts are seen as oppositional and exclusive, where one component of the disjunct ascribed a higher value than the other [6]. Many ecological feminists argue that value dualism is actually linked with reason/nature dualism deeply rooted in the conceptual framework of western patriarchal cultures. This dualism has far sighted implication as well. It is thought to form the basis for a series of related dualisms in which whatever is associated with reason is viewed as fundamentally different and superior to whatever is associated with nature. Examples of such dualized pair involve not only reason/nature and masculine/feminine, but also mental vs. physical, civilized vs. primitive, and human vs. nature. These pairs function to legitimise a number of oppressions, including, sex, race, class oppression, which can all be seen in terms of the central dualism underlying the system that of reason vs. nature. Having said this, it should be kept in mind that not all differences are dualistic in nature and more importantly, deconstructing value dualisms does not mean denying all differences between dualized pairs. In our sense, the problem with value dualisms lies in the construction of dualized pairs as absolutely different in morally relevant ways which eventually leads to the construction and justification of mortal hierarchies.

FEATURES OF DUALISM

The construction of dualized identities involves five features, according to Plumwood.

These are:

- (i) Backgrounding, the oppressors' creation of a dependency on the oppressed while simultaneously denying that dependency.
- (ii) Radical exclusion, constructing supposed differences between the oppression and the oppressed in terms of radical difference in order to justify subordination of the oppressed.
- (iii) Incorporation, the construction of the devalued side of a dialyzed pair as lacking morally relevant features associated with the other side.
- (iv) Instrumentalism, the construction of groups seen as morally inferior, lacking any morally important independent interests.
- (v) Homogenization, the denial of differences between those on the underside of dialyzed pairs (seeing all women or all slaves as the same) 6

All these features cited above reflect the non-humanistic attitude towards women and nature. Karren J. Warren, a prominent feminist, explores major conceptual connections between the domination of women by men and the domination of nature by humans. She argues that both depend on the 'logic of domination' [6]. The logic of domination speaks about the differences between entities and thereby asserts that such differences constitute the moral superiority of one group over the other. The members of the superior entities dominate over the member of inferior entities or groups.

We cannot assert that just on the basis of distinctive property a natural community should be treated as morally superior to others. Ecofeminism is the twin concept of both 'ecology' and 'feminism'. Its main contention is that they are entwined with each other and exploitation and subjugation of one is at par with exploitation and subjugation of other. Accordingly, the logic of argument can further be extended like the following [6]:

(B1) Women are identified with nature and the realm of the physical; men are identified with the human and the realm of the mental.

(B2) Whatever is identified with nature and the realm of the physical is inferior to (below) whatever is identified with the "human" and the realm of the mental.

(B3) Thus, women are inferior to men.

(B4) For any X and Y, if X is superior to Y, then X is justified in subordinating Y.

(B5) Men are justified in subordinating women.

The above argument is structurally the same as the earlier one. This sort of argument based on the logic of domination is prevails everywhere in the anthropocentric environment. It has been observed that the domination of nature by humans and the sexual domination of women by men rely on the same general framework. Accordingly, it can be assumed that the devaluation of women depends upon the prior devaluation of nature. Thus, in a sense, the exploitation of women on the basis of sexism and the exploitation of nature are conceptually linked. According to Warren, this insight tells us that environmentalists and feminists should be allies and makes explicit what it is we must work against. It in fact represents a very important ecofeminist contribution to both movements. If one accepts conceptual links between the domination of nature and the domination of women, it follows that a movement that is not feminist will yield at best a superficial understanding of the domination of nature.

Thus, to save or to protect the natural environmental would be the priority of us, we must be working together to over through patriarchy and value dualism arising out of distinctive quality or capacity. We think that at conceptual level these fights are one and the same. According to Warren, the logic of domination motivates not only sexism and naturalism, but racism and other 'isms' as well. All of these 'isms', we reckon, are conceptually linked with each other and extremely harmful to mankind in general. Thus, eco-philosophy is vocal in resisting any sort of dualism that would incur ups and downs, inferior and superior complex in the true sense of the term.

ECO-FEMINIST DISCUSSION OF ANIMALS

The debate has been further extended to include animals as well. Feminist theory addresses links between the domination of animals and the domination of people of color and white women. In "Am I Blue?", Alice Walker presents a moving analysis of the similarities between racism and the mistreatment of animals [7]. Here, Alice Walker compares the way in which children are encouraged to forget that humans can have deep and meaningful communication with animals to the ways that white children

raised by ‘mammies’ were encouraged to forget that their first all accepting love come from black women. She also compares the use of animals for breeding without regard for their feelings to the way slaves were used for breeding purposes ^[7]. It should be noted that even though animals are not a cause of concern to eco-feminists, but still it may be claimed that there has been a clear commitment to animals evident in ecofeminist literature. In addition we can say that vegetarianism can be seen as an important component of eco-feminist praxis. Even Adams argues that concern for animals is part of the ecological feminist project not only because acknowledging their value is part of dismantling the logic of domination, but also because the domination of the earth more generally is part of animal agriculture ^[8]. For Adams, the domination of animals is very similar to the domination of black women and that is why Adams makes a link between these two. Adams says, “Both women workers and the chickens themselves are the means to the end of consumption, but because consumption has been disembodied, their oppressions as worker and consumable body are invisible” ^[8].

Thus, the main objective and strategy of looking for connections between various types of oppression, domination, and exploitation is clear and vivid in other ecofeminist discussions of animals ^[9]. Adams further uses the ecological feminist critique of dualistic thinking to argue against the current split between maintenance and production. This split in turn allows people to maintain diets based on animal flesh without thinking about the ethically problematic aspect of meat production ^[9]. An ethic that linked maintenance with production would identify not only the exploitation of animals and workers as part of the costs of mean production, but would count the loss of topsoil, water, and the demands of fossil fuels that meat production requires ^[10]. For Adams, all meat eating is morally problematic while other environmentalists adhere to the view that in certain contexts meat-eating may be acceptable, while in others it is not ^[9].

ECOFEMINISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM

The web of ecofeminism is further extended to environmental racism. The strategy of looking for connections between oppressions is also evident in eco-feminist discussions of environmental racism. Two-thirds of all Blacks and Latinos in the United States actually reside in areas with one or more unregulated toxic-waste site and race is the most significant factor which differentiates between communities with such sites and communities without them ^[10]. According to Cuomo, ecological feminist analysis is helpful in raising questions, such as, how ethical, economic, and aesthetic discourses justify racist, toxic politics, how disempowerment and alienation make it particularly difficult for communities to fight back, how racist conceptions of people and cities as unclean and hopeless justify mistreatment, and how is male dominated contexts women may be disproportionately affected by toxins ^[11]. Further ecological feminism reminds us that toxic dumping is not only a problem concerning human well-being, but it hugely affects non-humans as well.

Ecofeminism is extremely vocal against industrial development or rapid scientific development which makes adverse impact both nature and women at large. There is no question of doubt that development goes against natural diversity. It distorts and disturbs the natural balance in manifold of ways. The negative impact equally degrades women. In rural village, women at large maintain household matters. They bring wood from forest for cooking and collect drinking water from the local resources. Now if industrial development is taking place in rural areas, then it will not only impact the balance of the natural environment, it will increase the hardship of the women as well. Thus, ecological feminist clearly demonstrated how first-world development of third-world countries imports problematic and troublesome patriarchal ideas causing innumerable social problems for women in the countries that are being ‘developed’. In this regard, we can mention the name of Vandana Shiva. Vandana Shiva in her book *Staying Alive* asserts how the so-called development she termed as ‘male development’ has been highly problematic for those who have been developed ^[12]. According to Shiva, both sexes are affected by development, but it is very often the large number of women who have the most to lose. Shiva’s book appears as a theoretical analysis of the development process with special reference to India. According to Shiva, western development was supposed to be a postcolonial project giving underdeveloped countries the chance to accept the western model of progress. But this proposal was offered without having to undergo the subjugation and exploitation involved in being colonized. It assumed that western-style progress was possible and desirable for all. However Shiva thinks the other way round. According to her, western-style progress and the economic model that it involves, creates poverty as it creates wealth and this is endemic to western model of progress ^[11].

Thus, Shiva, being an eco-feminist, finds problem with western model of development. She thinks that this kind of development actually destroys sustainable lifestyles and thereby creates material poverty for those who are developed ^[12]. This may be said as the proposal of development with the proviso of developmental colonialism. According to Shiva, resources needed for the purpose of sustenance are diverted for use in the production of cash crops and other commodities to be sold on the market. This in turn robs those who suffer development of the resources they had been using to survive. In this context, Shiva distinguishes between two types of poverty, such as, culturally perceived poverty and real material poverty ^[12]. According to the western model, people living in sustenance economics are seen as poor because they do not produce surplus to be bought and sold on the global market. They might indeed have their survival needs met and the quality of their lives can even be better than those living according to the western model of progress. However, by the standards of western development, these people are poor by definition. One of Shiva's central points is that attempt to remove culturally perceived poverty after create real material poverty, the absence of things needed for survival. The quality of life of those who are 'developed' is often higher before 'male development' occurs ^[13]. Shiva refers to the western model as western patriarchy. Following Merchant and others, Shiva argues that the devaluation of women and nature typical in western-style patriarchy is imported in development projects. While men and women are negatively affected by development projects, the patriarchal nature of the values which are part of the western model means development is often worse for women than it is for men. Women's knowledge is discredited as unscientific, useless, and perhaps even dangerous and real knowledge, mainly controlled by men is said to be the only true knowledge. As a result of that in the ages of new scientific methods, women as the primary products of food, water, and fuel, are displaced and their practices are undermined. As new methods paid little or no attention to nature's cycles, and to the ways that natural processes are interconnected, the results are often unsustainable.

A large number of ecological feminists argue that in order solve the 'ecological crisis' we need to celebrate values which have been devalued in western patriarchal contexts ^[14]. Hence, there have been calls to celebrate such things as 'femininity' and 'feminine values' within the literature. According to Ariel Kay Salleh, we do not need abstract ethical constructs to create a consciousness of our connection with the rest of nature ^[14]. We need to recognize the value of women's experience, something which patriarchal societies fail to do. According to Brian Swimme, there is some truth to the idea that the earth is a birthing process, but this truth can only be seen effortlessly intuited by woman. If women's lived experiences were recognized as meaningful and were given legitimation in our culture, it would provide an immediate 'living' social basis for an alternative consciousness which the deep ecologist is trying to formulate and introduce as an abstract ethical construct ^[15]. Women already flow with the system of nature. Development may have made women's situation worse. Development within patriarchy environment is damaging to women because it devalued women's value from the outset.

A pertinent question is whether ecological feminists tend to refer to 'woman' and 'nature' as having essential qualities. Thus, one of the most common criticisms of ecological feminism arises from the charge of essentialism. The basic criticism is that ecological feminists tend to refer to woman and nature as having essential qualities which are supposed to be metaphysically real. It is assumed that individual women of different racial, class and cultural identities fit into the category un-problematically, and therefore, they share some essential attribute. The category 'nature' is also dealt with as if it is static, real, metaphysically given and unproblematic. Thus, it seems clear that many ecological feminist positions seem to use essentialist notions of 'woman' and 'nature' Some critics, such as, Janet Biehl, dismiss ecological feminism altogether because of such charges. However, many would say that this is unfortunate for several reasons ^[15]. First, it simply is not the case that all ecological feminist positions are guilty of essentialism and secondly, even if there is some basis to the charges of essentialism, still we can learn more by examining in greater depth what is wrong with such positions rather than refusing to engage with them altogether.

According to Warren, ecological feminists agree that women are identified with nature and that whatever is identified with nature is seen as inferior to whatever is identified with the human in western patriarchal contexts ^[16]. However, Warren correctly points out that ecological feminists differ with respect to the truth of the identification of women and nature. Many ecological feminists are anxious to deny any historical identification of women with nature. They deny the claim that women are identified with nature as anything more than a historical claim about assumptions within patriarchal culture. Moreover, by claiming that women are closer to nature, this establishes women's immutable essence. It

is more often a claim about their socialization within patriarchy. Some anti-essentialist critics seem to think merely referring to the categories of 'woman' and 'nature' is problematic because for them nothing fits into these categories un-problematically. If this were to be the case, then surely ecological feminism would indeed be a dead end. In such a case one cannot examine links between oppressions of women and nature if one cannot even refer to these categories. However, Cuomo argues that simply ceasing to refer to the categories of 'woman' and 'nature' is not the correct remedy for false generalization and essentialism ^[16].

ECOFEMINISM VS. MAINSTREAM APPROACHES

Ecofeminism would certainly stand against mainstream approaches. Mainstream approaches to environmental philosophy can be divided into two basic categories, those that argue for environmental protection based on the instrumental value of the environment and those that seek to extend intrinsic moral value to at least some nonhuman entities ^[17]. Some environmentalists are arguing for environmental protection based on its instrumental value to human beings. For them instrumental value is needed for human flourishing. However, ecological feminists criticize these approaches. An example of an influential mainstream approach attempting to extend moral consideration to non-human animals is offered by Peter Singer. Singer argues that certain non-human animals should be accorded moral value using a utilitarian approach ^[18]. The theory developed by Singer is characterized as extensionist, attempting to extend traditional ethical theories to non-human beings. Ecological feminists equally criticize extensionist type theories on the grounds that these theories fail to question liberal conceptions of the human self as fundamentally an atomistic individual whose personal experiences and freedom are the key ethical considerations. Liberal conceptions of the self starts with the idea that atomistic human individuals are the paradigm example of beings with moral value and then argue that at least some animals possess the qualities which account for individual human moral value. While ecological feminists argue for the extension of moral value to include nonhumans, ecological feminists insist that an adequate environmental ethic must include a recognition of what it means to be a human being, and a definition of what criteria are necessary for the recognition of moral value to begin ^[18].

ECOFEMINISM AND THE VALUE OF NATURE

So far we have observed that ecofeminism is an environmental issue where domination and exploitation of women can be equated at par with the domination and exploitation of nature. Ecofeminism not only finds out the parity of domination between women and nature, it also explores various ways and means through which such types of domination can be regarded as morally unjust and unendurable. The objective of ecofeminism is to restore the dignity of nature in a moral context ^[19]. Thus, in a sense, there is nothing wrong in assuming that ecofeminism is largely about ethics. Environmental ethics gives moral judgment regarding the technological actions which are directly or indirectly directed towards the extinction of natural species. Mainstream ethics encourages the advance of technology which is fallacious and dangerous in the eyes of environmental ethics. Environmental ethics seeks to restore equal moral status to all biotic as well as abiotic communities. It speaks in favor of the annihilation of value dualism. It does not think that only humans have intrinsic value and other than humans do not have intrinsic value. The leading proponents of environmental philosophy proposed a liberal notion of progress by incorporating all biotic communities within the realm of environmental ethics ^[20].

Environmental ethics advocates for a non-instrumentalist conception of nature ^[21]. Ecofeminists point out the unjustifiability of typical human centered judgment and values including most notably those based on traditional ethics developed by Kant, Mill, Aristotle etc. Traditional or classical ethics is human centered and it always tries to usurp our ideas about nature. Just by attributing the value of nature, ecofeminism thereby denies speciesism. Speciesism adheres to the view that one species is superior to other from a moral point of view. Only humans have moral value. But ecofeminists include all forms of nature in the universe as equal from a moral perspective. Ecofeminism at any point does not consider nature as something out there because it ignores a crucial question at the heart of ecological feminism. Ecofeminism therefore acknowledges models for clarifying ethics and ethical matters. Ecofeminism equally challenges the anthropocentric value known as instrumental value. Instrumental value is revealed 'as a means to an end' but ecofeminism recognized that nature has intrinsic value and such value is recognized as an end in itself. William Cronon, a noted historian, recently remarked, "Nature is

not merely so natural as it seems. Instead, it is profoundly human construction. This is not to say that the nonhuman world is somehow unreal or a mere figment of our imagination far from it. But the way we describe and understand that world is so entangled with our own values and assumptions that the two can never be fully separated. What we mean when we use the word nature says as much about ourselves as about the things we level with world”^[22]. The point is that ecofeminism strongly argues for restoring the dignity and value of nature not by introducing anthropocentrism but by employing non-anthropocentrism in which any ethical form of dualism among biotic community is ruled out.

Many would say that the proper criterion to define moral value is to try to evoke a feeling, to draw attention to what we take to be valuable. What then is the locus of moral value? Those who adhere to the view that moral value must begin with human value would lead to the extrinsic nature of value and those who propose that the locus of moral value actually hinges on restoring and respecting women and nature would lead us to intrinsic nature of value. In the case of extrinsic value, the locus of value depends on human values expressed in terms of right and wrong, good and bad. Here we need valuers. Some moral agent must value it as a member of the ethical realm. It is a kind of value that humans can appreciate and respect and it must be capable of having interests or doing well. The intrinsic sense of value is the value of nature. Although values primarily come from humans but there is no point in saying that humans are the creators of values. Values need not be human creations. Intrinsic value, we claim, is nonanthropocentric in nature because it can be comprehended without the valuers^[23]. Although the issue is highly debatable as many philosophers have expressed reservation about the possibility of intrinsic values without the valuers. Having said this, there are a few environmentalists who adhere to the view that intrinsic value is possible without the valuers. We do not enter into this debate. As nature is the locus of intrinsic value and intrinsic value is one that can be comprehended as an end in itself, we think that it can be accepted or comprehended as an end in itself without the valuers. This brings back the relevance of environmental ethics. We think the remark of Callicott is particularly relevant here. Callicott says, “Our special affections are extended to our fellow members and to the social whole of which we are part. The intrinsic value we attribute to individual human beings and to humanity express only our feelings for co-members of our global village and for our human community”^[24]. This clearly suggests that the value of nature in eco-feminists perspectives actually deserves ethical motivation. Here, ethical motivation is based on social affections felt and extended towards members of our own species with whom we share feelings, commonality, kinship and understanding. The objective of ecofeminism actually hinges on the feelings of a special attachment to humans and nature, i.e., in short on the whole biotic community. Even Paul Taylor once remarked that nature is worthy of moral consideration because it’s individual living members have inherent worth^[25]. Each strives towards good when it has the freedom to and that good ought to be valued and respected for its own sake.

Ecological feminists hold that the starting point of moral consideration is nothing short of the condition of being alive. This justifies that life requires death and many of us think of an achievable good human life requires quite a bit of death and destruction. Ecofeminism thus begins with a perception of human-being which directly follows from normative implication of feminism which desires to promote the flourishing of women and others. Thus, the flourishing of women as well as nature is the objective of ecofeminism. The most significant philosophical commitment of ecofeminism is to address in what sense women as well as nature can be perceived as moral agents. It further tries to show in what sense women along with non-humans beings have moral value. In this regard, feminist ethics appears to be ecological feminism. Ecofeminism tries to develop a form of moral community where both biotic and abiotic communities are its members. Thus in one sense feminist ethics is a source of wisdom for ecological feminism. Ecofeminism involves values of nature through careful, consistent, methodologically sound inquiries that would be interested to the wellbeing of women and nature^[26]. It asserts that women and nature have full moral value as they are the legitimate moral agents and objects. As a result of that it has rebelled against the propensity to undervalue both women and nature.

According to Vandana Shiva, nature, like women, is a living organism^[26]. One simply has to realize it. Ecofeminism tries to correlate women and nature and thereby tries to restore the value of nature. Ecofeminism identifies a variety of approaches that also see a connection between social domination and the domination of nature. Since its introduction in 1974 first by Francoise d’Eduborne, ecofeminism has generated a significant amount of interesting writing and research^[27]. According to Warren, ecofeminism or ecological feminism “is the position that there are important connections-historical, experimental, symbolic, theoretical-between the domination of women and the domination of nature, an

understanding of which is crucial to both feminism and environmental ethics”^[27]. Ecofeminism is deeply engaged in exploring the connections between the feminist and ecological movements. Feminists offer a wide diversity of viewpoints concerning the nature and analysis of women’s oppression. They also have diverse views concerning the connections between the domination of women and the domination of nature. We have already outlined the nature and logic of domination as elucidated by Warren. This logic of domination is a pattern of thinking in which two groups, men and nature, are distinguished in terms of some characteristics, such as, for example, men are rational and women are emotional. Here a value hierarchy is attributed to these characteristics. One framework for organizing feminist thinking that has influenced many Eco-feminists was developed by philosopher Alison Jaggar. Jaggar distinguishes various forms of feminism, such as, Marxist, radical, liberal and socialist forms of feminism^[28]. Each offers an account of the oppression of women and an alternative social philosophy. Liberal feminists, for example, deny that any relevant difference between men and women exists. They argue that all humans possess the same nature as free and rational beings and that any unequal treatment of women would deny this moral equality and would therefore be unjust. Thus, liberal feminists devote much of their energy to locating discrimination and fighting for equal rights and equal opportunity. Marxist feminists argue that women in general are oppressed because they are demoted to domestic, and therefore dependent forms of labor^[29]. They argue that the Lockean theory of private property rights makes sense only within a context in which women’s labor is ignored^[30]. A necessary precondition for a ‘man’ to ‘mix his labor’ with some unowned land is that there exist women who are performing full-time domestic labor, allowing the man the free time necessary to accumulate land.

Domestic labor did not give women property rights of ownership over the home. Only by becoming full participants in independent and productive forms of labor do women become liberated from economic and political exploitation. Socialist feminists reject the strict class analysis offered by Marxists and claim that a complex web of social relationship underlies the oppression of women^[31]. These relationships include both economic factors and traditional patterns of gender roles and identities. Radical feminists believe that biological and sexual differences between men and women have been made the basis of women’s oppression. This type of feminism is radical in the sense that it denies that women’s oppression can be reduced to some other more basic form of oppression. Women have been culturally defined in terms of their biology. This biological difference has been used to justify a wide-ranging gender system that ensures that women remain dominated by men. As the roles of women are associated with childbearing, child raising and human sexuality, women have been characterized as more controlled by their bodies, more passive, and more emotional than men. Given the logic of domination it may be decided that men, by being more reasonable and active than women, ought to be in position of authority over women. Looking to overcome the oppression of women, some radical feminists conclude that women can escape oppression only when traditional gender roles are abolished. They further argue that women should strive for a ‘unisex’ whereas others advocate for separatism between women and men. Instead of denying biological, sexual and gender differences between men and women, these feminists seek to encourage and celebrate the female. We think that a significant amount of work on ecological issues has come from this branch of radical feminism. Radical feminism has been alternatively designated as cultural ecofeminism. It accepts the view that there exists authentic and particular women’s ways of experiencing, understanding, and valuing the world.

Cultural ecofeminism holds that women’s perspectives historically have been and remain closely identified with nature and that women, like nature, have been systematically oppressed in the process^[32]. Instead of denying the link between women and nature, cultural eco-feminists aim “ to remedy ecological and other problems through the creation of an alternative ‘women’s culture’ ... based on revaluing, celebrating and defending what patriarchy has devalued, including the feminine, non-human nature, the body and the emotions”^[32]. We think that the connections between alternative women’s cultures and ecological concerns have been explored in a number of ways. Here we will briefly consider two: an ecological ethics based on care and relationships, and women’s spirituality movement. The domestic roles of women as mothers and wives meant that those values important to women-caring, relationships, love, and responsibility remain outside of mainstream ethical theorizing. In recent decades some feminists have brought many of the values traditionally associated with women’s role, which we shall summarize as an ‘ethics of care’ into the forefront of ethical theorizing. Drawing on the work of Gilligan, NelNoddings, Sara Ruddick, and others, these feminists seek to articulate and defend a

perspective that deemphasizes abstract rules and principles in favor of a contextual ethics focusing on caring and relationship.

Traditional ethical concepts, such as, moral laws, rights, duties, obligations, and justice presupposes a world in which interests conflicts, in which the commands of justice restrict and limit human freedom, in which morality battles egoism. An ethics of care begins with a moral universe in which cooperation replaces conflict, relationships replace confrontation, and caring for the other replaces rights and duties^[33]. It is a moral universe in which mothering and friendship serve as moral ideals rather than abstract principles like individual autonomy and freedom from interference. Feminists, of course, offer different interpretations for why an ethics of care is particularly a women's perspective. In general feminists understand an ethics of care as more compatible with the life experiences of women. The vocabulary of rights and duties, autonomy and justice, rules and laws is highly artificial and inappropriate within the context of a mother child relationship^[33]. Some cultural eco-feminists build on these observations concerning an ethics of care. These thinkers acknowledge that women historically have been portrayed as closer to nature than man. But rather than criticizing this portrayal as the basis for much of the violence done to women, some eco-feminists build on this identification as a basis for a benevolent relationship between women and nature. From this perspective, the ethics of care covers human nature relationships as appropriately as it covers mother-child relationships^[34]. Women, who are taught to experience this caring more directly and more immediately than men, are the more appropriate voices for nature's interests. Besides care ethics, women's spirituality movement is a second area in which cultural eco-feminists have explored a bond between women and nature. Mainstream western religion considered God as outside of or transcended, formed, and breathed life into the dust. In much of this tradition, women again are associated with nature because they are so dependent on their bodies and are so passive. Thus, organized religion often sees women as lacking the special spirituality that would qualify them as priests, rabbis, ministers, popes, and so on. Thus, within much of this mainstream we again can witness the dual defamation of women and nature. Having said this, many cultural eco-feminists seek a spiritualism or theology that reverses these trends. Instead we should observe and honor the identification of women, nature and the divine. Ancient religions conceived that God was identified both as the earth itself and as a woman. Some cultural ecofeminists honor a spirituality that views the Goddess as immanent in nature and views the natural world as revealing the divine^[32]. Thus, the earth itself is worshiped as divine and caring for or loving the earth is a spiritual as well as ecological responsibility. Celebrating Mother Nature or the Greek goddess Gaia, for example, becomes the way for women's spirituality to rejoice in the sacredness of women and nature.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS OF ECOFEMINISM

Besides the earlier developments of ecofeminism, there we notice considerable developments of ecofeminism in recent past which deviate in some sense or other from the earlier developments. Despite the earlier developments, many feminists are reluctant to accept the strategy of those who embrace the view that distinctive and separate 'women's ways' of understanding, experiencing and valuing the world really exist. They, however, fear that by accepting the dualism implicit in viewing women as 'closer to nature' than man, these feminists only reinforce the way of thinking that underlies hierarchies and the logic of domination. Philosopher Val Plumwood calls this 'the feminism of uncritical reversal' and sees it as 'perpetuating women's oppression in a new and subtle form'^[35]. In this context, Ynestra King suggests that an 'unwitting complicity' in a patriarchal mind-set underlies the cultural-nature split that this view assumes^[35]. However, in place of cultural ecofeminism, Plumwood and Warren seek a 'third wave' of feminism that 'is an integrative and transformative feminism or that moves us beyond the current debate over the four leading versions of feminism and makes a responsible ecological perspective central to feminist theory and practice'^[36]. To introduce this third wave of ecofeminism, it would be helpful to follow Plumwood's review of the first two waves. The first wave of feminism known as liberal feminism seeks to end discrimination and attain equality for women. The problem with this view is that in a culture in which masculine traits and characteristics dominate equality for women amounts to little more than requiring women to adopt these dominant male traits. In effect, women can be equal to men only if they become masculine. Here women always fall just a little short of full equality. The ecological implications of the first wave can be distressing. Women can liberate themselves from an oppressive identification with nature only if they, like men, become oppression of nature.

The second wave of feminism is represented by the ‘uncritical reversal’ of some feminists. It promotes and celebrates a distinctive female point of view ^[37]. The third wave seeks an alternative to both liberal and radical versions of feminism ^[38]. It sees the domination of nature and the domination of women are inextricably connected. Here women have been identified as closer to nature and nature has been identified as feminine. These identifications have mutually reinforced the oppression of each. Thus, in a sense environmental philosophy and feminism need to develop in unison where each is recognizing parallel interests. Both Warren and Plumwood are of the opinion that at the most general level, both feminism and ecological movement need to address a cluster of dualism and dualistic ways of thinking under the logic of domination. This type of ecofeminism challenges both feminists and environmentalists alike to uncover the patterns of domination common to the oppression of women and nature. It thus begins with exploring alternative and nondualistic ways of thinking about both human and non-human nature. This type of ecofeminism is also similar to Bookchin’s more general analysis of hierarchies and domination ^[36]. It is further stated that some of these dualistic ways of thinking that are specially relevant to ecofeminism involve the split between masculine and feminine, human and nature, reason and emotion, mind and body, and objectivity as well as subjectivity. Each dualism typically gets used within our culture in contexts that support domination: masculine over feminine, human over nature, reason over emotion, mind over body and objectivity over subjectivity. The goal of ecofeminism is to weed out dualisms and develop alternative patterns of thinking. Ecofeminism concerns itself more with science, technology, and a scientific understanding of nature. A number of feminist scholars have chronicled the many ways that culture has identified women with nature.

Science has typically been identified with the dominant part of these dualisms, masculine, human, rational, mental, and objective. In this regard we can refer to the feminist scientist Evelyn Fox Keller who has outlined the ways in which a particular way of understanding nature, women and even marriage has also helped shape the early development of western science ^[37]. In this regard one can turn to Keller. In fact Keller quotes the early scientist Francis Bacon to show how many of the models and metaphors of early science displayed an aggressive attitude towards both women and nature. According to Bacon, science seeks to establish a chaste and lawful marriage between Mind and Nature ^[36]. Science and technology do not ‘merely exert a gentle guidance over nature’s course; they have the power to conquer and subdue her, to shake her to the foundations’. Bacon’s images are very precise and clear. Nature is a woman, and she is to become married to man who will subdue her and turn her into a slave ^[37]. Bacon associates nature not only with women and marriage but with a particularly dominating and abusive type of marriage. Many would say that scientific and technological development is responsible for all sorts of dualisms stated above and one should not forget it. Science and technology sees natural value as use or instrumental value and it forgoes or seldom recognizes the intrinsic value of nature.

Keller describes an approach to science that exhibits this ‘feeling for the organism’, an approach that is very often called and then dismissed as ‘a woman’s way of thinking’^[38]. Keller, however, does not suggest that mainstream science be abandoned in favor of this more particularized approach to knowledge but that science, done only from the controlling and dominant perspective, will likely miss much that is important. A second direction for further environmental thinking encouraged by this type of ecofeminism develops from a much more modest conception of human action, ethics and understanding. This third wave of ecofeminism encourages thinking that is contextualist, pluralistic, inclusive and holistic. It is contextualist in the sense that it seeks to avoid abstract and universal ethical pronouncements. This process of abstraction can prevent us from recognizing the rich diversity within both human and non-human nature. It has simply taken characteristics of the dominant group and turned them into ethical and philosophical ideals. It can thus reinforce the oppression of women, animals, and the rest of the natural world.

The third wave of ecofeminism is pluralistic and inclusive in the sense that it respects diversity and differences ^[38]. The key aspect of a dominating ideology is the belief that there is only one right way of being, thinking, and acting ^[39]. A philosophy that selfconsciously avoids hierarchies and domination will celebrate diversity and resist attempts to establish one ‘correct’ environmental theory. Finally, this ecofeminism is holistic in the sense that it assists and encourages us to understand human beings as essentially a part of their human and natural communities. This ecofeminism rejects the view that humans are abstract individuals, fully constituted by their private consciousness, thoughts and choices. Thus, in an absolute sense humans are created by and are an inextricable part of their social and natural environments. Thus, ecofeminism as such advocates a radical shift in the ways in which the major and

dominant sectors of the contemporary world think about and understand the relationship between humans and the rest of the natural world^[40].

CONCLUSION

This work believes that both social ecology and ecofeminism are more specific about the roots of environmental and ecological devastation. In fact, the domination of the natural world is part of more general patterns of domination and control. Therefore, until all patterns of dominations are eliminated, we can expect little real progress to be made on the environmental front. Having said this, ecofeminism actually faces serious challenges. How exactly are we to understand the connections between human domination of other humans and the human domination of nonhuman nature? Has one really caused the other? Are they mutually reinforcing? Should one have ethical priority? Are they simply parallel developments with little direct connection? What are the ethical and philosophically preferable strategies of resisting these forms of domination? What exactly are the connections between the domination of women and other forms of social domination? Is ecofeminism a branch of social ecology? These and many more questions are relevant when examining the concept of ecofeminism. Ecofeminism especially resists attempts to construct a unified and overarching environmental philosophy. Accordingly, we need to be careful about this when raising challenges to these views. Many of these challenges seek the type of universal and abstract answers that eco-feminists identify as part of the problem. Having said this, ecofeminism has already made significant contributions to environmental ethics and environmental philosophy.

REFERENCES

- [1] Warren, K. (1996). Ecological feminist philosophies: An overview of the issues. *APA Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy*, 108–116. <http://www.vedegylet.hu/okopolitika/Warren - Ecofeminism Overview.pdf>
- [2] Kaufman, F. (1994). Warren on the Logic of Domination. *Environmental Ethics*, 16(3), 333–334. <https://doi.org/10.5840/enviroethics199416323>
- [3] Tickner, J. A. (1993). States and Markets: An Ecofeminist Perspective on International Political Economy. *International Political Science Review*, 14(1), 59–69. <https://doi.org/10.1177/019251219301400104>
- [4] Baidur, M. (2017). Nature, body and woman: An Indian perspective on value dualisms. In *Science and Narratives of Nature: East and West* (pp. 33–54). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315088358>
- [5] Bassegy, S. A. (2020). Technology, Environmental Sustainability and the Ethics of Anthropoholism. *Przestrzeń Społeczna*, 1, 19.
- [6] Plumwood, V. (2017). Ecofeminist analysis and the culture of ecological Denial. In *Feminist Ecologies: Changing Environments in the Anthropocene* (pp. 97–112). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-64385-4_6
- [7] Camperio Ciani, A. (2003). Eco-ethology of sexual strategies in animals. In *Journal of endocrinological investigation* (Vol. 26, Issue 3 Suppl, pp. 38–44).
- [8] Taylor, N., & Fraser, H. (2019). Resisting sexism and speciesism in the social sciences: Using feminist, species-inclusive, visual methods to value the work of women and (other) animals. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 26(3), 343–357. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12246>
- [9] Kean, H. (2012). Challenges for Historians Writing Animal–Human History: What Is Really Enough? *Anthrozoös*, 25(sup1), s57–s72. <https://doi.org/10.2752/175303712x13353430377011>
- [10] Osuala, A. N. ., & Nyok, E.-I. E. (2020). New Twist to Political Corruption in 4th Republic Nigeria given Non- Human Animals Stealing millions: A Case for the Defense of Animal Rights. *GNOSI: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Human Theory and Praxis*, 1(2), 15-37.
- [11] Mann, S. A. (2011). Pioneers of U.S. Ecofeminism and Environmental Justice. *Feminist Formations*, 23(2), 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.1353/ff.2011.0028>
- [12] Hendler, S., & Berman, T. (1996). Voices of protest, voices of harmony: reflections on ecofeminism. *Alternatives*, 21(2).
- [13] Mallory, C. (2011). Ecofeminism and a politics of performative affinity: Direct action, subaltern voices, and the green public sphere. *Advances in Ecopolitics*, 1(2), 2–13. <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/books.htm?chapterid=1954409&show=pdf>

- [14] Herles, C. (2000). Muddying the Waters Does Not Have to Entail Erosion: Ecological Feminist Concerns with Purity. *International Journal of Sexuality and Gender Studies*, 5(2), 109–123. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1010120511552>
- [15] Gaard, G. (2002). Vegetarian Ecofeminism. *Frontiers*, 23(3), 117–147.
- [16] Kaufman, F. (1994). Warren on the Logic of Domination. *Environmental Ethics*, 16(3), 333–334. <https://doi.org/10.5840/enviroethics199416323>
- [17] Bassey, S. A., Orji, M. O., & Afolabi, O. (2020). An Overview of Materialistic and Unified approach to Man - Nature Relationship. *GNOSI: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Human Theory and Praxis*, 3(3), 17-28.
- [18] Kings, A. E. (2017). Intersectionality and the changing face of ecofeminism. In *Ethics and the Environment* (Vol. 22, Issue 1, pp. 63–87). <https://doi.org/10.2979/ethicsenviro.22.1.04>
- [19] Kuperus, G., & Starr, G. (2020). Nature and Experience: Phenomenology and the Environment. *Comparative and Continental Philosophy*, 12(1), 79–81. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17570638.2020.1719671>
- [20] Eba, M. B. A. (2020). Human Right and Sustainable Development. *GNOSI: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Human Theory and Praxis*, 3(3), 67-82.
- [21] Njar, B. I., & Enagu, D. A. (2019). Development and Environmental Sustainability in Nigeria: An African Perspective. *GNOSI: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Human Theory and Praxis*, 2(1), 37-47.
- [22] Vanderheiden, S. (2002). Rousseau, Cronon, and the wilderness idea. In *Environmental Ethics* (Vol. 24, Issue 2, pp. 169–188). <https://doi.org/10.5840/enviroethics200224229>
- [23] BASSEY, S., & Pimaro Jr, T. M. (2019). Enyimba's Notion of Madukaku and The Question of Anthropocentrism In African Environmental Ethics. *International Journal of Environmental Pollution and Environmental Modelling*, 2(3), 129-136.
- [24] Clarke, M. (2003). Land, Value, Community: Callicott and Environmental Philosophy. *Environmental Ethics*, 25(4), 427–430. <https://doi.org/10.5840/enviroethics200325411>
- [25] Smerić, T. (1991). Paul W. Taylor, Respect for Nature. *Revija Za Sociologiju*, 22(1-2), 222–225.
- [26] Schell, E. E. (2017). VANDANA SHIVA AND THE RHETORICS OF BIODIVERSITY: In *Feminist Rhetorical Resilience* (pp. 30–53). <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt4cgpws.4>
- [27] Erdős, L., & Erdős, L. (2019). Vandana Shiva – Defending Traditional Agriculture. In *Green Heroes* (pp. 187–192). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-31806-2_37
- [28] Hrynkow, C. (2018). Situating Earth Democracy: Vandana Shiva on Agroecology, Contemporary Politics and Resilience. *Political Studies Review*, 16(3), 205–216. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1478929917720429>
- [29] Giménez, M. E. (2018). What's Material about Materialist Feminism? A Marxist-Feminist Critique. In *Marx, Women, and Capitalist Social Reproduction* (pp. 110–128). https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004291560_007
- [30] Chatterjee, M. (2020). Lockean Copyright versus Lockean Property. *Journal of Legal Analysis*, 12, 136–182. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jla/laaa002>
- [31] Combellick-Bidney, S. (2006). Ecofeminism and Cross-Cultural Analysis. *Women's Studies Journal*, 20(1), 59.
- [32] McKenna, E. (1998). Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature. *Teaching Philosophy*, 21(2), 189–191. <https://doi.org/10.5840/teachphil199821225>
- [33] Ogar, T. E., & Ogar, J. N. (2018). Globalization in Africa and Beyond: The Quest for Global Ethics. *GNOSI: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Human Theory and Praxis*, 1(2), 38-47.
- [34] Nwoye, L. (2018). Ethical Issues in Arms Technology. *GNOSI: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Human Theory and Praxis*, 1(1), 25-33.
- [35] Chandra Mondal, G., & Majumder, P. (2019). Ecofeminism: Encouraging Interconnectedness with Our Environment in Modern Society. *American Journal of Educational Research*, 7(7), 482–484. <https://doi.org/10.12691/education-7-7-7>
- [36] Drew, E. (2013). Teaching and Learning Guide for: Ecocriticism and Eighteenth-Century English Studies. *Literature Compass*, 10(4), 301–310. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lic3.12050>
- [37] Oksala, J. (2018). Feminism, Capitalism, and Ecology. *Hypatia*, 33(2), 216–234. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hypa.12395>

- [38] Molina-Motos, D. (2019). Ecophilosophical principles for an ecocentric environmental education. *Education Sciences*, 9(1). <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci9010037>
- [39] Moe-Lobeda, C. (2017). From Climate Debt to Climate Justice: God's Love Embodied in Garden Earth. In *The Wiley Blackwell companion to religion and ecology* (pp. 203–2019). <http://www.myilibrary.com?id=1004493>
- [40] Gaard, G. (2010). New Directions for Ecofeminism: Toward a More Feminist Ecocriticism. *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, 17(4), 643–665. <https://doi.org/10.1093/isle/isq108>