

婦女與環境：女性生態學的省思

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(中文摘要)

本文討論美國女性環保主義者陸瑟 (Ruether)、孟立特 (Merchant) 及葛瑞 (Gray) 的主要理論；作者指出自然之女性化並非泛文化之現象，女環保主義的理論之周延性有待加強。另外，部分女環保主義者將環保問題全歸諸於男女性別區分之極端化，此一趨向實不足以解釋環保問題之複雜性。雖然如此，自然之女性化顯示男性的文化統馭權，而且父系社會對於女性及自然環境之壓制確實有對稱及類似之處，這是推行環保運動所不可疏忽的。

WOMAN AND NATURE: REFLECTIONS ON THE
EMERGENCE OF ECOFEMINISM

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I offer a cross-cultural examination of the three different explanatory accounts of the conceptual connections between the oppression of women and the oppression of nature proposed by Ruether, Merchant, and Gray. I argue that their arguments are not universally valid because they overlook the non-Western cultural perception of male-female and culture-nature relations. However, I find that the perception of woman/nature affinity in the West reveals male hegemony over culture formation and that there are parallels between the operation of sexual oppression and the human exploitation of nature. Nevertheless, I disagree with a reductionistic approach in ecofeminist theorizing which underestimates the complexity of environmental problems.

Key Words: Ecofeminism, Ecological feminism, Feminized nature

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I. INTRODUCTION:

In 1974, French feminist Françoise d'Eaubonne, in suggesting that women have the potential of solving today's ecological crises, coined the term "ecofeminism" (Daly, 1978). In 1976 in the U.S. Ynestra King started to use "ecofeminism" in her classroom teaching at the Institute of Social Ecology. In 1980, King and other women organized "women and Life on Earth: Ecofeminism in the 1980's," a conference attended by 600 women. Gradually, "ecofeminism" has come to be used to label a variety of feminist works concerning the ecological issues.

Regardless of their different theoretical positions, ecofeminists appear to agree that there are important conceptual connections between the oppression women and the oppression of nature (Warren, 1987; 1990). Ecofeminists consider that the traditional sex/gender system has had significant impacts on today's environmental problems. Moreover, many ecofeminists in the English-speaking countries accept the age-old perception of an affinity between woman and nature as a self-evident explanation for the the connections between these two forms of oppression. On the one hand, ecofeminists believe that there are perceived similarities between woman and nature, such as passivity, life-giving, and nurturing. These attributes ascribed both to woman and nature make them equally vulnerable to male-domination (Griffin, 1980). On the other hand, ecofeminists proclaim that women's association with nature gives women a special stake in healing the alienation between humanity and nature and, eventually, in solving today's environmental problems (King, 1983).

However, the association of woman and nature is not a trans-historical and trans-cultural phenomenon.⁽¹⁾ At the global level, the woman/nature affinity as the

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(1) MacCormack, C. P. & Strathern, M. (Eds.) *Nature, Culture, and Gender* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980) offers a fuller cross-cultural analyses of the woman/nature connections.

theoretical grounding of ecofeminism appears to be problematic. Moreover, critics of ecofeminism argue that ecofeminists oversimplify the etiology of environmental problems by making men responsible for what actually is beyond male hegemony.

Do ecofeminists overestimate the influence of the sex/gender role system on environmental problems? Would there still be significant connections between the oppression of women and the oppression of nature without considering the age-old perception of a woman/nature affinity? Is it reactionary for ecofeminists to relate today's ecological destruction to the social structure of male domination?

In response to the above questions, I examine the three different explanatory accounts of the conceptual connections between the oppression of women and the oppression of nature proposed by Ruether, Merchant, and Gray. From a cross-cultural perspective, I argue that their arguments are not universally valid because they overlook the non-Western cultural perception of male-female and culture-nature relations. However, I find that ecofeminists have duly drawn our attention to the fact that gender has been the crucial metaphor for constructing culture-nature relations in Western culture which may be more implicated in today's worldwide environmental degradation than other cultures. Subsequently, I argue that the perception of woman/nature affinity reveals male hegemony over culture formation and that there are parallels between the operation of sexual oppression and the human exploitation of nature. Nevertheless, I disagree with a reductionistic approach in ecofeminist theorizing which tends to attribute the interrelated factors of the human exploitation of nature to the polarization of sex/gender differences. I argue that such a reductionistic view is based on a linear, cause-and-effect paradigm which is unable to elucidate the complexity of the environmental problems.

II. THE PROBLEMATIC CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE HUMAN DOMINATION AND WOMEN'S OPPRESSION:

Among ecofeminist works, R. Ruether's *New Woman/New Earth* (1975), E. Gray's *Green Paradise Lost* (1979) and C. Merchant's *The Death of Nature* (1980) offer systematic explorations of the common conceptual roots of the oppression of women and the oppression of nature. The varied perspectives of Ruether, Gray, and Merchant enable us to probe into the conceptual roots of oppressive systems from

different angles.

(i) Transcendent dualism as the conceptual root of oppression:

In *New Woman/New Earth* (1975), Ruether advocates the view that the feminists' "vision of a new society of social justice must reckon with the ecological crises" (p. 31). She argues that both the human destruction of nature and women's oppression are legitimized and perpetuated by a hierarchal social structure that allows one group to dominate another. According to Ruether, this hierarchical social structure is rooted in a dualistic ideology which she labels "transcendent dualism." This ideology stresses separation, polarization, and detachment between sexes, classes, human beings and non-human beings. In these binary oppositions, man/upper class/white/human beings are considered as superior to woman/lower class/people of color/nature. The subjugation of the inferior groups thus is accepted as a legitimate social arrangement.

Ruether further claims that women's oppression was historically prior to the other forms of oppression (i.e. racism and classism). Thus, sexist ideology can be considered as the pivot of the constitution of various forms of oppression. In her own words,

The psychic organization of consciousness, the dualistic view of the self and the world, the hierarchical concept of society, the relation of humanity and nature, and of God and creation—all these relationships have been modeled on sexual dualism. (Ruether, 1975, p. 3)

Apparently, Ruether regards "sexual oppression" as the primordial model for the operation of any other oppressive system. To illustrate, the lower classes, and subjugated racial groups all are said to share the repressive characteristics ascribed to femininity, such as passivity, sensuality, irrationality, and dependence in patriarchal society. In contrast, the dominant race and class are assumed to represent true humanity, rationality, and to possess the capacity for autonomy and higher virtues. Based on the age-old perception of woman/nature affinity, Ruether concludes that "the structures of patriarchal consciousness that destroy the harmony of nature are expressed symbolically and socially in the repression of women" (p. 196) and that the dismantling of the structure of male domination is the common goal of both the women's movement and environmental movement.

“Woman as Mother” is a central issue in Ruether’s demystification of transcendent dualism. Although Ruether considers that the concept of matriarchy is un-historical, she still presumes that there was a woman-identified culture prior to the present patriarchal culture. Ruether implies that in the woman-identified culture the female capacity for human reproduction leads women to an implicit acceptance and identification with the cyclical ecology of death and rebirth. Such a “coming-to-be-and-passing-away” world-view reveals a total acceptance of human mortality. In contrast, men’s inability to bear children induces them to contrive a male deity that creates human beings and transcends the finite bodily existence. Rooted in transcendent dualism, patriarchal religion seeks to pursue the infinitude of human existence. Following patriarchal religion, the development of science and technology in the West also seeks to “realize infinite demand through infinite material ‘progress,’ impelling nature forward to infinite expansion of productive power. Infinite demand incarnate in finite nature, in the form of infinite exploitation of the earth’s resources for production, results in ecological disaster” (Ruether, 1975, p. 194). In short, Ruether suggests that patriarchal culture, bound for pursuing “transcendence,” eventually leads to the annihilation of nature.

Seemingly, Ruether considers that transcendent dualism is the ultimate cause of various forms of oppression. However, Ruether is not clear about the origin of the transcendent dualism. Thus, Val Plumwood (1986) poses the following questions:

Transcendent dualism itself presumably did not appear in a social vacuum; did it produce inferiorisation of the spheres of women and nature? Or were the foundations already present in the inferior treatment of women, nature and inferior social groups such as slaves? Are women inferiorised because of identification with the female sphere? Or are we faced with a set of interlocking structures of domination which mutually evolve and reinforce one another, in turn both aiding and drawing strength from the conceptual structure of transcendent dualism? (p. 123)

With regard to the sociohistoric background of the development of the transcendent dualism, it would appear that Ruether is likely to view transcendent dualism as constructed by men in order to compensate for their inability to create life. Thus, the conceptual inferiorisation of the female sphere and its association can be regarded as a necessary process for legitimizing the social structure of male-domination. In other words, transcendent dualism does not produce the inferiorization of the sphere of woman and nature. The inferiorization of the feminine is part of

transcendent dualism. After all, there might be a "collusion" between the conceptual system (i.e. transcendent dualism) and cultural practices (i.e. the inferior treatment of women). Thus, conceptualization is neither the cause nor the effect of cultural practices. A particular conceptual system can be acquired by individuals through the acculturation process. Yet, acculturation does not refer to the indoctrination of abstract conceptual systems only. Conceptual systems are already embedded in cultural practices. Hence, it is a futile effort to attempt to determine the causal relationship between transcendent dualism and the inferior social treatment of woman and nature.

Without sufficient historical evidence, it is virtually impossible to determine whether women's oppression is due to the identification with nature or nature is exploited because of its identification with woman. As the woman/nature affinity is taken for granted in Ruether's arguments, I think that Ruether is very likely to agree that these two forms of oppression mutually evolved and reinforced each other.

Since dualism has been a predominant ideology in Western society, Ruether's argument appears to be plausible. However, Val Plumwood (1986) further points out that "the reproductively related features of masculinity and femininity . . . were (until recently at least) universal, but the alleged consequent, the transcendent apriority of the rational is not a universal feature." In other words, men's inability to procreate does not universally lead to the pursuit of transcendence. This casts doubt on Ruether's claim that transcendent dualism is the ultimate cause of both women's oppression and the human domination of nature.

I am particularly puzzled about the fact that the absence of transcendent dualism in Chinese society does not preclude women's being oppressed. There are no parallels between Chinese people's respectful attitude toward nature and their inferior social treatment of women. This fact exemplifies the idea that the association of women and nature is not a cross-cultural phenomenon. Specifically, nature as a whole is not identified with woman in Chinese society. Following Mote's (1971) characterizing the Chinese vision of nature as the "all-enfolding harmony of impersonal cosmic function," Tu (1984) notes that wholeness, dynamism, and continuity are the three motifs of Chinese cosmology. He further explains:

The idea of all-enfolding harmony involves two interrelated meanings. It means that

nature is all-inclusive, the spontaneously self-generating life process which excludes nothing. The Taoist idea of tzu-jan ("self-so"), which is used in modern Chinese to translate the English word nature, aptly captures this spirit. To say that self-so is all-inclusive is to posit a nondiscriminatory and nonjudgemental position, to allow all modalities of being to display themselves as they are. This is possible, however, only if competitiveness, domination, and aggression are thoroughly transformed. (p. 118)

In short, Chinese people consider that the enduring pattern of nature is "union rather than disunion, integration than disintegration, and synthesis rather than separation (Tu, 1984, p. 119)." Thus, Tu concludes that "To see nature as an external object out there is to create an artificial barrier which obstructs our true vision and undermines our human capacity to experience nature from within" (p. 125).⁽²⁾

Based on "being together with nature," "nature reverence" has been Chinese people's common attitude toward nature. However, such a holistic world-view previously did not prevent the establishment of male-domination and female-subordination and the ensuing oppression of women. At present, the pursuit of economic development, not transcendence, has entailed constant and accelerating exploitation of nature in Chinese society, despite the continuous presence of natural reverence. Thus, it is doubtful that transcendent dualism is the ultimate cause of various forms of oppression, and that the exploitation of nature is modeled after sexual oppression.

(2) In his article "The continuity of Being: Chinese Visions of Nature," Tu does not address the complexity of Chinese religion. Nor does he discuss a variety of folk definitions of nature. However, his interpretation of Chinese visions of nature, in general, is consistent with Confucianism, Taoism, and Neo-Confucianism. While Ruether's articulation of "transcendent dualism" represents the predominant world-view in the West, Tu's interpretation of Chinese visions of nature also captures the prevalent world-view in Chinese society. The following articles offer further discussion on the relations between Chinese traditions and environmental ethics: Callicott, J. B. (1987). "Environmental ethics in Asian traditions of thought: A propaedeutic," *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 37, no. 2, pp. 115-130; Hall, D. L. (1987). "On seeking a change of environment-A quasi-Taoist proposal," *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 37, no. 2, pp. 160-71; Cheng, C. (1986). "On the environmental ethics of the Tao and Ch'i," *Environmental Ethics*, Vol. 8, no. 4, pp. 351-370; Ames, R. T. (1986). "Taoism and the nature of nature," *Environmental Ethics*, Vol. 8, no. 4, pp. 317-349.

(ii) Merchant's critiques of the mechanistic world-view:

Woman's maternal role is also a central issue in Merchant's analysis. In *The Death of Nature*, Merchant makes a sweeping claim that "the ancient identity of nature as a nurturing mother links women's history with the history of the environment and ecological change" (1980, p. xvi). According to Merchant, the identification of nature with a nurturing mother prevents human destruction of nature in early human history. She states: "the image of the earth as a living organism and nurturing mother has served as cultural constraint restricting the actions of human beings, one does not readily slay a mother, dig into her entrails for gold or mutilate her body. . . (Merchant, 1980, p. 3)." She further claims that "Not only did the image of nature as a nurturing mother contain ethical implications but the organic framework itself, as a conceptual system, also carried with it an associated value system" (Merchant, 1980, P. 5). Although Merchant does not claim that the organic world view is woman-identified, her connecting the organic world-view with the nurturing mother is allied to Ruether's valuing a "coming-to-be-and-passing-away" world-view. In other words, Merchant and Ruether alike suggest that the female principle plays an important role in an organically-oriented mentality.

Nevertheless, the image of nature could also be identified with a disorderly woman that brought plagues, famines, and tempests. Merchant further argues that the image of nature as a disorderly woman called forth human control over nature in the Scientific Revolution. According to Merchant, Francis Bacon, the celebrated father of science, was renowned for utilizing female imagery to develop scientific knowledge and methods. To illustrate, Merchant suggests that Bacon's new scientific objectives and methods were derived from witch trials in European society. More specifically, the use of mechanical devices to interrogate and torture the suspected witches are similar to science's treating nature as a female to be tortured through mechanical inventions. Merchant argues that "This method, so readily applicable when nature is denoted by the female gender, degraded and made possible the exploitation of the natural environment" (1980). Symbolically, Bacon even considers that to relentlessly interrogate another female—nature—could also mean to regain the human dominion over nature that was lost when Adam and Eve were expelled from paradise (Merchant, 1980).

As a whole, the Baconian doctrine of domination over nature is correlated with

the perception of disorder in the feminized nature. Thus, Merchant concludes that "For Bacon, . . . sexual politics helped to structure the nature of the empirical method that would produce a new form of knowledge and a new ideology of objectivity seemingly devoid of cultural and political assumptions" (Merchant, 1980, p. 172). This belief paved the way for "the rise of mechanism as a rational antidote to the disintegration of the organic cosmos" (Merchant, 1980, p. 192).

In view of the two-sided images of nature (the nurturing mother and the disorderly woman), Merchant states that "The change in controlling imagery was directly related to changes in human attitudes and behavior toward the earth" (1980, p. 2). As the identification of nature with a nurturing mother apparently impeded the progress of commercialism and industrialization, the identification of nature with a disorderly woman emerged in the seventeenth century as a cultural sanction for the domination of nature. In other words, the changing images of nature (from a nurturing mother to a disorderly woman) are socially constructed in order to launch into a new scientific epoch. Mechanism, with its emphasis on power and order, became a conceptual instrument to continue the promotion of the domination of nature. Merchant suggests that a mechanistic world-view not only entails the devaluation of traditional femininity, but also results in the human exploitation of nature.

As discussed above, Merchant's critique of mechanism complements Ruether's demystification of transcendent dualism. After all, it is dualism that lays the foundation for a mechanistic world-view. Conversely, it is mechanism that eventually severs the organic relationship between human beings and nature.

However, Merchant's argument regarding the conceptual links between women's oppression and the human domination of nature is neither well grounded nor fully developed. Above all, Merchant's connecting women's history with the history of the environment is based on the ancient conceptualization of nature as a nurturing mother. She seems to assume that the identification of nature with a nurturing mother precludes the human domination of nature. She further claims that the conceptualization of nature as a machine sanctions the domination of both nature and women. However, women's oppression occurred much earlier than the machine's becoming the predominant metaphor of reality. In particular, it is worth noting that Chinese misogyny actually coexisted with organic world-views. Without

the sanctions of mechanism, the Baconian doctrine of domination already accepted witch trials as the model of developing natural science. Thus, the organic world-view may have restrained the human destruction of nature, but it certainly was not the panacea for men's domination of women.

On the other hand, a mechanistic world view is not absolutely detrimental to women, even though it aggravates the exploitation of a feminized nature. For instance, Merchant (1980) points out that following the rise of mechanism "[A] new concept of the self as a rational master of passions housed in a machinelike body began to replace the concept of the self as an integral part of a close-knit harmony of organic parts united to the cosmos and society" (p. 214). The development of individualism in the mechanistic world model produced social changes that might have contributed to the contemporary feminist movement. Hence, Merchant's argument that mechanism sanctions women's oppression appears to be untenable. Regardless of the significant influence of mechanism on today's ecological crises, an adequate account of the conceptual links between women's oppression and human domination of nature must go beyond critiquing a mechanistic world-view.

(iii) Gray's critiques of sex/gender role differentiation:

Drawing from Nancy Chodorow's (1974) and Dorothy Dinnerstein's (1976) theories, Gray claims that there is a psycho-sexual root of male domination over both women and nature. In *The Mermaid and the Minotaur* (1976), Dinnerstein argues that the feminization of nature can be traced to the human infant's failure to distinguish clearly between its mother and nature. Like Merchant, Gray suggests that the awareness of human dependence upon nature led men in early human history to view the destruction of natural resources as antagonistic toward nature and thus as dangerous behavior. However, an euphoric sense of conquering nature following the advancement of technology replaced men's fear of antagonizing nature.

In accordance with Nancy Chodorow (1974), Gray further claims that men's need to conquer women and the feminized nature is the result of sexual differentiation in gender role development. Chodorow (1974) argues that human beings, in most cases, experience a sense of oneness with their mother in the state of infantile dependence. The female infant's sense of oneness with mother is sustained

by modeling her mother to develop her gender identity. The development of the male infant's gender identity leads to rejection and denial of his dependence on and attachment to his mother. Gray argues that man's ambivalent feeling toward dependence upon the mother has enormous psycho-sexual repercussions on men's relationship with women and whatever is perceived as feminine. Consequently, it is impossible for men, as the dominant sex, to think clearly and feel positively about their dependence upon nature. In order to ensure men's continuous independence and detachment from mother and female in general, it is essential for patriarchal culture to prescribe the wife's role to be submissive, economically impotent, and generally inferior. To Gray, the advancement of technology mainly aspires to "transform [men's] psychologically intolerable dependence upon a seemingly powerful and capricious 'Mother Nature' into a soothing and acceptable dependence upon a subordinated and non-threatening 'wife'."

There are some major gaps in Gray's argument. First of all, it is difficult to substantiate Dinnerstein's claim because the woman/nature affinity is not a cross-cultural phenomenon. The concept of the infant's inability to distinguish mother and nature as the root of oppression is challenged by the fact that this infantile experience does not develop into the conceptual affiliation between women and nature in all cultures.

Chodorow's analysis appears to be a circular argument. If there were no well-established sex/gender role system, the development of masculinity would not require a rejection of man's early dependence upon mother. Undoubtedly, the presence of woman as the primary child care-taker reduces the influence of male adults, especially fathers, on the development of the male infants. Nevertheless, it is still likely that men in their early years develop some identification with their fathers. In other words, the abruptness of the rejection of mother may be overstated in Chodorow's analysis. Hence, Chodorow's argument does not completely verify her claim that sexual differentiation in the development of gender identity is the conceptual root of male domination of women and the feminized nature.

In addition, Gray assumes that man's rejection of his dependence on mother eventually results in a desire to dominate both woman and nature. Gray may intend to imply that men's striving for total independence underlines their cult of toughness and their aggression against woman and nature. Still, Gray does not give us a

satisfactory account of why a need for independence must turn into a desire for domination.

As discussed above, ecofeminists endeavor to reveal the conceptual connections between the oppression of women and the oppression of nature. To ecofeminists, a recognition of the connections between these two forms of oppression are essential for any adequate understanding of the oppression of women and the oppression of nature, respectively (Warren, 1987).

However, the above ecofeminists' analyses are based mainly on Western culture. A lack of global cultural awareness in the theorizing of ecofeminism inevitably weakens ecofeminists' claims. From a cross-cultural perspective, the origins of the woman/nature affinity require further elaboration. My suggestion is that the woman/nature affinity is more likely to be socially constructed. Women's closeness to nature, as perceived by Western people, is not biologically determined. Also, it is groundless to argue that the perception of an affinity between woman and nature is an essential feature of universal unconsciousness structure. A further examination of the woman/nature affinity must take sociohistoric conditions into consideration. More cross-cultural studies of the relations between various conceptualizations of nature and the corresponding social treatment of women are needed for a more comprehensive understanding of the conceptual links between the oppression of women and the oppression of nature. After all, the women's movement and the environmental movement alike are global issues. If the goal of developing theory is to "represent our experience of the world in as comprehensive and inclusive a way as possible" (Keller, 1985), then it is important for ecofeminists to expand the scope and depth of their theoretic investigation.

III. THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE WOMAN/NATURE AFFINITY:

W. Fox (1989) suggests that Western culture might be far more implicated in today's ecological breakdown than non-Western cultures. Also, it is evident that Western culture to a large extent has homogenized world culture. Although ecofeminists' arguments (as discussed before) may not be universally valid, their analyses still shed significant light on understanding the social construction of the woman/nature affinity within the context of Western culture which may play a

central role in generating today's global environmental problems.

The social construction of the woman/nature affinity in the West indicates that the image of woman has been used as an available and powerful metaphor to describe as well as prescribe the human perception of nature. It is worth noting that an ever increasing number of philosophers and cognitive scientists recently have argued that metaphors are not merely the ornaments of language. By providing a critical link between experience and abstract thinking, metaphors play a significant role in human conceptualization (Pepper, 1942; Lakoff & Johnson, 1982). Hence, woman as metaphor, exemplified by the identification of nature with woman, deserves our further attention.

In the process of metaphorization, the subject who utters the metaphor and the metaphoric vehicle represent two distinct groups, for example, men and women. Eva Feder Kittay (1988) argues that women are persistently used as metaphors for men's activities and projects, while there are no equivalent metaphors where men are the metaphoric vehicle for women and women's activities. This reveals a very fundamental inequality between men and women: women's disinclination to employ men as metaphoric vehicle and/or women's lower participation, compared with men's, in the conceptualization process (which presumably involves the employment of metaphors).

From Simone de Beauvoir's (1952) standpoint, it is woman's secondary status in the sexual hierarchy that provides motivation for the metaphoric use of woman. Beauvoir's claim is based on Hegelian metaphysics. In the Hegelian schema, the category of Other, as distinctively opposite to self, provides epistemological and ontological conditions for the development of self-consciousness. In a male-dominated society, woman, as the subordinated sex, is perceived as Other in man's conception. As an Other to man, woman is always available as the metaphoric vehicle for the self-conception of man. By internalizing man's perception of woman as "other", woman therefore perceives man as "self" and woman as "other." Thus, woman is unlikely to employ man as metaphoric vehicle.

Based on Chodorow's "object-relations" psychoanalytic theory, Kittay (1988) further explains that the fact that women have never reciprocally constituted men as Other is due to the asymmetrical gender-differentiated relations between men and

women. Due to the imperatives of the sex/gender role system, men's gender identity must be in opposition to the mother. In other words, mother as Other is essential to men's self-formation. In contrast, women's self-formation is based on a continuing identity with mother. As a result, mother does not necessarily appear to be an Other to woman. By continuously identifying with mother, woman is less likely to be in need of employing the category of Other, such as man, for self-formation.

Focusing on individual psychosexual development, the above explanations provided by Beauvoir, Chodorow, and Kittay may be considered as sufficient to account for the prominence of women's metaphoric images in men's activities in an already sex/gender differentiated society. With regard to women's lower participation in the conceptualization process on a larger scale, I argue that it is essential to inquire into the implications of the exclusion of women from the creation of symbol systems. According to Lerner (1986):

When humankind made a qualitative leap forward in its ability to conceptualize large symbol systems which explain the world and the universe, women were already so greatly disadvantaged that they were excluded from participation in this important cultural advance. (p. 186)

The development of monotheism (i.e. the Judeo-Christian tradition) in particular made the exclusion of women from the creation of symbol systems become fully institutionalized (Lerner, 1986). Thus, Mary Daly (1973) considers Adam's "naming" the animals and the woman as the prototype of male dominance over symbol systems, cultural institutions, and methods. Naming is a powerful instrument to order and structure our perception of the world in which we are living. Conversely, our understanding of the world is restricted by the prefigured patterns in language and thought, which are the very product of a systematic process of naming. This is why Ernest Schachtel (1959) states that "Nature is to man whatever name he wants to give her. He will perceive nature according to the names he gives her, according to the relations and perspective he chooses." In male-identified monotheism, the symbolic constructs of this world are "based on the counterfactual metaphor of male procreativity and redefine female existence in a narrow and sexually dependent way" (p. 220). Within this patriarchal framework, the very metaphors for gender have expressed the male as norm and the female as deviant. Also, "man" is used to subsume "woman" (Lerner, 1986). Consequently, the exclusion of women from naming leads to the marginalization and even omission of

women's experiences in human culture formation. Also, men, as the dominant group in society, by holding a monopoly on naming, certainly are able to indoctrinate and to reinforce the male-identified values in women who do not necessarily share the same world-view with men.

Following patriarchal religion, the development of science not only utilizes the metaphoric images of woman to develop a methodology for manipulating nature, but also deliberately devalues and further excludes femininity. Merchant's (1980) critiques of the mechanistic world-view have indicated the significance of sexual metaphor in the early development of science. Evelyn Fox Keller (1985) further points out that the enormity of sexual metaphors in science also reflects the relations between scientific and sociopolitical developments of the time. Keller (1985) states "in the end of seventeenth century, . . . [D]efinition of male and female were becoming polarized in ways that were eminently well suited to the growing division between work and home required by early industrial capitalism" (p. 62). The male-female polarity also corresponded with "an ever greater polarization of mind and nature, reason and feeling, objective and subjective" (p. 63) in the development of modern science. Ensuing from the polarization of man and woman, new ideal womanhood—"a chaste, desexualized, and harmless dependent" (p. 62)—gradually and eventually emerged to facilitate "a deanimated, desanctified, and increasingly mechanized conception of nature" (p. 63-4). At the same time, science in conjunction with masculinity became the active agent to initiate and effect the transformation of both nature and culture. Thus, Keller (1985) concludes:

Given the success of modern science, defined in opposition to every female, fears of both Nature and woman could subside. With the one reduced to its mechanical substrate, and the other to her asexual virtue, the essence of Mater could be both tamed and conquered; male potency was confirmed. (p. 64)

In short, the woman/nature affinity reveals women's role in male-identified conceptual apparatuses as well as the male monopoly of symbol systems. Ecofeminists do not specifically address and discuss the above implications of the woman/nature affinity. Yet, ecofeminists' critiques of male domination with emphases on patriarchal religion (i.e. Ruether and Gray) and the masculinization of the development of science (i. e. Merchant) show how the androcentric fallacies have been built into Western cultural formation. This is why ecofeminists argue that human destruction of nature should be attributed to androcentrism rather than anthropocentrism

(Salleh, 1984).

IV. THE PARALLELS BETWEEN SEXUAL OPPRESSION AND THE HUMAN EXPLOITATION OF NATURE:

Although human actions which are destructive of nature are occasionally described as rapes of nature, the connections between the oppression of woman and the exploitative treatment of nature have not been fully brought to light. This may be due to the perceptible differences between the oppression of woman and the oppression of nature. To many people, it is simply absurd to associate strip mining, toxic ocean dumping, and nuclear weaponry with sexual harassment of woman, wife battery, and female sexual slavery. Notwithstanding the age-old woman/nature affinity, a further exploration of how the oppressive systems operate may be beneficial for a better understanding of the parallels between sexual oppression and the human exploitation of nature.

The term "oppression" has been widely used to refer to the forceful subordination of women in patriarchal society. Gerda Lerner (1986) argues that "oppression" involves the malicious intention of the oppressor and a power struggle that results in the dominance of one group over the other. Since "the oppression of women" inevitably misleads us to "conceptualize women-as-a-group primarily as victims" (p. 234) and to overlook the fact that women "have collaborated in their own subordination through their acceptance of the sex/gender system" (p. 234), thus, Lerner claims that "oppression" is inadequate to describe women's situation in society.

I agree with Lerner that the sex/gender role system is a historical establishment which was constructed by both women and men. In other words, the female-subordinate and the male-dominant social structure is legitimized mainly by an elaborate sex/gender role system rather than by a constant power struggle between men and women. However, through centuries of acculturation, individuals have been indoctrinated into accepting the sex/gender role system as a natural and immutable arrangement. Without developing gender awareness, women individually or collectively may not be aware of their complicity in the maintenance and perpetuation of the sex/gender role system. As the establishment of the sex/gender role

system sets up a male-dominated and female-subordinated sexual hierarchy, the powerlessness of women especially restrains their capability to confront sexual inequality and gender injustice. Consequently, women-as-a-group all share their vulnerability to male violence, discrimination by male dominant cultural institutions, and the mystification of male superiority, regardless of their differences in ages, classes, and ethnic backgrounds. Thus, the forceful subordination of women is not merely a collusion between men and women at a conscious level. The oppressiveness of women's situations in patriarchal society should not be erased by emphasizing women's acceptance of sex/gender role system.

In short, oppression is not necessarily constituted by the deliberate intention of the oppressor (the dominant) and the unconscious acceptance of the oppressed (the subordinate) at an individual level. An examination of oppression should emphasize how the oppressive system operates in society.

Marilyn Frye's (1983) illuminating analysis of oppression provides us with a better understanding of the operative process of oppression. According to Frye (1983), oppression is:

A system of interrelative *barriers* and *forces* which *reduce*, *immobilize*, and *mold* people who belong to a certain group, and effect their subordination to another group (individually to individuals of the other group, and as a group, to that group). (my emphases, p. 33)

Evidently, the structure of an oppressive system presupposes two distinct and well-defined groups. In the case of sexual oppression, women, through socialization and acculturation, must be *molded* into the subordinate group, and men into the dominant group. In the molding process, women's internalization of female inferiority, the cultivation of female self-abnegation, and nurturant training are all indispensable to the fabric of the male-dominated and female-subordinated social structure. In order to make the hierarchical relationship between men and women appear to be natural and immutable, interrelated barriers and forces (i.e. patriarchal religion, sexist legislation, educational deprivation of women) are erected and maintained. Sexual division of labor and the separation between the public and the domestic spheres in particular are essential to confine and *immobilize* women in "the service sector" (Frye, 1983). The *immobilization* of women eventually contributes to a greater *reduction* of women's own needs, values, and capacities.

In light of Marilyn Frye's (1983) analysis of sexual oppression, *reduction*, *immobilization*, and *molding* can also be considered as the key elements of the operation of the oppression of nature. Ecofeminists argue that both the nature/culture and the male/female polarity are rooted in dualistic ideology. In Western society, the conceptualization of nature especially stresses the separation of nature and human culture. To illustrate, the meanings of nature defined as "inherent power or force by which the physical and mental activities of *mæn* [sic] are sustained" and "the material world, or its collective objects and phenomena . . . the features and products of earth itself, as contrasted with those of human civilization" (*The Oxford English Dictionary*) reveal that nature and human civilization are viewed as two opposite systems. A sense of an organic natural-cultural continuum is missing (Thurman, 1984). Based on such a dualistic standpoint, nature has been *reduced* to a resource reservoir for providing the material needs of human beings. In other words, the instrumental values of natural resources to human beings have eclipsed the intrinsic values of nature. In contrast to the dynamic human civilization process nature thus has to be regarded as static, fixed and immutable. The *immobilization* (to speak metaphorically) of nature then highlights human innovation and creativity which challenge the fixity of nature. Following the Scientific Revolution, the advancement of technology in particular enhances human capabilities of controlling, manipulating, and further *molding* the natural environment. Pollution of air, water, soil, large scale deforestation, the destruction of wildlife and wilderness, in particular, demonstrate the powerfulness of human technology in molding the natural environment.

To sum up, there are undeniable parallels between the oppression of women and the exploitative treatment of nature. The interlocking structure of oppression, stressed by ecofeminists, sheds valuable light on a further understanding of the operation of the oppressive system.

V. THE PROBLEMS OF A REDUCTIONISTIC APPROACH IN THE THEORIZING OF ECOFEMINISM:

In view of the male hegemony over culture formation and the parallels between the oppression of woman and the oppression of nature, ecofeminists contend that an adequate understanding of the human exploitation of nature should not overlook

the permeation of the ideology of male domination in the formation of human culture. By applying the sex/gender analysis to today's environmental problems, ecofeminists also enable us to beware of the profound impacts of gender on today's environmental problems. In critiquing the social structure of male domination, some ecofeminists tend to reduce all the interrelated etiological factors of today's ecological problems to the polarization of sexual difference. More specifically, some ecofeminists tend to relate the ecological destruction that is now occurring with those traits associated with men (i.e. aggression, competitiveness, and militarism), whereas ecological sensibility is related to those traits associated with women (nurturing, caring, and compassion). However, there are problem with such a reductionistic analysis.

First of all, factors contributing to environmental problems can be irrelevant to the social structure of male domination. For instance, the rise and fall of the population certainly has an important influence on the ecological balance of the ecosystem. In fact, overpopulation has been considered a serious threat to human welfare as well as to the welfare of non-human species in the whole eco-sphere. Yet the sex/gender differentiation seems to have trivial or even zero impact on determining the size of population. Instead, the predominant economic structure can have very direct influence on the size of population. For instance, the birth rate in an agrarian society usually is higher than in an industrialized society.

Technology appears to be the most powerful instrument in gaining mastery over nature. The use of destructive technology (e.g. the escalating pesticide use, nuclear weaponry), in particular, exacerbate most of the ecological problems. Merchant's (1980) critique of the Baconian doctrine of conquering nature clearly shows the masculinization in the early development of science, which paved the way for the advancement of modern technology. Also, there is no denying that the current population of scientists and engineers in the field of science and technology is overwhelmingly male. However, the development of science and technology can not be exclusively identified with the men-associated traits. John Burke (1970) points out that human inquisitiveness plays an important role in technological invention and innovation. Doubtless, inquisitiveness is a common human characteristic shared by both men and women. In *The Myth of the Machine*, Lewis Mumford (1966) argues that women as domesticators made significant contributions to the development of technology in early cultures. He states:

Protection, storage, enclosure, accumulation, continuity—these contributions of neolithic culture largely stem from woman and woman's vocation. In our current preoccupations with speed and motion and spatial extension, we tend to devalue all these stabilizing process. . . But without this original emphasis on the organs of continuity . . . the higher functions of culture could never have developed. (p. 141)

Autumn Stanley's (1984) re-examination of the history of technology also shows that women had significant achievements in technological inventions, such as taming animals, making fire, introducing rotary motion, medicine. Evidently, men and women share an equal capacity for technological inventions, which is mainly based on the human need to improve material life. Thus, women's relatively low involvement in the invention of destructive modern technology can be attributed to the sex/gender segregation of work, rather than the inherent sex differences between men and women.

The orientation of capitalism has been directed towards the most profitable form of production. The tendency toward growth, expansion, and accumulation is inherent in capitalism. The enticement of profit not only maximizes production but also actuates consumption. A continuous pursuit of economic growth exponentially eventually is achieved at the cost of considerable damage to the natural environment and the diminishing of non-renewable resources. It is true that the sexual division of labor was established before the rapid development of science/technology as well as before the rise of capitalism. The early separation between the domestic sphere and the public sphere to a large extent has excluded most women from the executive and decision-making positions in economic institutions. As a result, women's participation in the labor force following industrialization has not changed women's secondary status in society. In a male dominated society, women, as the subordinated, actually have minimum control over the whole socioeconomic structure. Thus, ecofeminists tend to claim that the asymmetrical power relationship between men and women is the fundamental cause of socioeconomic injustice, which then is extended to the exploitative treatment of nature. In other words, ecofeminists presume that the development of capitalism is in accordance with the man-associated traits, especially aggression and competitiveness. There is no evidence to prove that women inherently have an ecological sensibility while men inherently have an impulse toward the destruction of nature. In fact, it is more likely that both men and women share a common desire for an affluent and comfortable material life, which may significantly contribute to the development of capitalism. Thus, it is

untenable to assume that an egalitarian relationship between men and women or an elimination of sexual differentiation can preclude any establishment of exploitative economic institutions and limitless commercial expansion. Above all, it should be noted that such a reductionistic standpoint can easily mislead us to fall back into the conceptual trap—the male-female dichotomy, which presumably is the basis of oppression.

In brief, the split of humanity into femininity and masculinity deprives human beings of what could be common to both men and women in terms of personality traits, behavioral patterns, and value systems. The polarization of maleness and femaleness is in line with the establishment of the male-dominated and the female-subordinated sexual hierarchy. Justification for male aggression is provided by the ideology of the dominant class, males. The overgenderization in human culture not only produces women's oppression but also constructs an aggression-oriented society. While genetic factors may contribute to male aggressiveness, other factors are also important. In accordance with the primary ecological principle that everything is interconnected with everything else, an inquiry into the impact of genderization must include a consideration of the interrelated sociohistorical conditions, events, and processes.

VI. CONCLUSION:

The deteriorating conditions of our living environments are no respectors of persons. Acid rain, toxic ocean dump, the green-house effect, and the possibility of nuclear meltdown manifestly reveal the lethal effects of our oppressive/exploitative treatment of nature. Speaking of women's concerns for today's environmental problems, ecofeminism has emerged as a relatively new version of feminism. In my examination of ecofeminism, I first have pointed out that the woman/nature affinity is not a cross-cultural phenomenon. The woman/nature affinity as the theoretic ground of ecofeminism is inadequate to account for the conceptual connections between the human exploitation of nature and women's oppression at the global level.

However, my exploration of the implications of the woman/nature affinity reveals that the ideology of human domination over nature indeed reflects the man-

identified world-view which is not necessarily shared by women. In light of Marilyn Frye's (1983) analysis of oppression, I argue that there are parallels between the oppression of women and the oppression of nature even without considering the woman/nature affinity.

Some ecofeminists tend to applaud the perception of an affinity between woman and nature. The ecological sensibility is viewed as a woman-associated trait while the ecological destruction is regarded as a man-associated trait. I agree with the ecofeminists' view that the split of humanity into femininity and masculinity might have contributed to the constitution of oppressive systems. However, the differences between men and women in terms of personality traits, behavioral patterns, and value systems are not biologically determined. A reductionistic perspective is reactionary and inadequate to explain the complexity of today's environmental problems.

All in all, ecofeminists consider that gender ideology had profound influences on shaping our world-view and the construction of cultural institutions. The ecofeminists' sex/gender analyses have undertaken a fundamental re-examination of the Western historical and cultural roots of today's ecological breakdown. Although there is a limitation in ecofeminists' contextual analyses (based on Western culture), ecofeminists' critiques of dualism and mechanism still shed valuable light on understanding the conceptual roots of the global ecological destruction which may ensue from Western economic, military, and scientific imperialism.

As mentioned before, the conceptual link between the oppression of women and the oppression of nature is central to the theorizing of ecofeminism. However, ecofeminists' analysis of oppression does not merely focus on the binding relations between these two forms of oppression. What is highly stressed is how the operation of one oppressive system is intimately interrelated with the other forms of oppression. For instance, Sheila Collins (1974) succinctly states that "[R]acism, sexism, class exploitation, and ecological destruction are four interlocking pillars upon which the structure of patriarchal [sic] rests." In the preface to *New Woman/New Earth*, Ruether also indicates that an examination of ideologies which support sexism must not overlook "the interrelationship of sexism with other structures of oppression, such as race, class, and technological power" (p. xi). In other words, the actual praxis of ecofeminism aims at ending the interrelated oppressive systems. For

non-Western women, this approach appears to be more plausible to ensure the solidarity of the global ecofeminist movement than the demystification of the woman/nature affinity.

Speaking of women's acute awareness of ecological crises in India, Vandana Shiva's (1988) analysis of "development" especially offers us a lucid explanatory account of how the interrelated oppressive systems entail ecological degradation in the Third World. According to Shiva (1988), the "ideology of development is in large part based on a vision of bringing all natural resources into the market economy for commodity production" (p. 9). From the standpoint of a market economy, natural forests remain unproductive, notwithstanding the fact that Indian women's self-sufficient subsistence economy is based on forests and forests are central to Indian civilization. Thus, forests must be "developed into monoculture plantations of commercial species" (Shiva, 1988, p. 4). Through *Military power*, the British introduced a so-called "scientific management" of forests, which aimed at transforming forests into timber mines for commercial purposes. The reduction of forests into timber mines sunders forestry from water management, from agriculture, and from animal husbandry. By focusing on economic growth, the pursuit of "development," as a post-colonial project, actually continues the process of colonization. As nature and local people's needs are managed through market mechanisms, nature's productivity and renewability are deeply impaired. Thus, Shiva argues that "development is equivalent to maldevelopment, a development bereft of the feminine, the construction, the ecological principle" (p. 6). Evidently, the causes of wide-scale deforestation are all interrelated. Thus, Shiva argues that a comprehensive understanding of ecological disasters certainly can not overlook "the scientific-military-industrial complex of capitalist patriarchy" (1988, p. 31).

Shiva's criticisms of "development" are based on Indian women's lived experience of multiple oppression (e.g. sexism, imperialism, colonialism, and capitalism). Inalienable personal experience lead Indian women to be keenly aware of how ecological breakdown and socio-economic inequalities are intrinsically interrelated with each other. The inseparability of social and ecological issues, stressed and illuminated by Shiva's analysis of "development," is essential for a better understanding of the framework of environmental ethics.

Aldo Leopold (1949), an early advocate of environmental ethics, claims that

“We have a well articulated human-to-human ethic; what we need is a comparable human-to-land ethic” (p. 204). Here, Leopold uses “land” as a collective term to refer to an ecosystem which includes soils, waters, plants, and animals. In order to delineate an ethics that can “supplement and guide the economic relation to land,” Leopold finds it is necessary to “presuppose the existence of some mental image of land as a biotic mechanism” (p. 204). In searching for such a human-to-land ethic, some environmental ethicists are inclined to see human affairs as irrelevant to the inquiry of environmental issues. For instance, Holmes Rolston III (1988) contends that “In an environmental ethics, what humans want to value is not compassion, charity, rights, personality, justice, fairness or even pleasure and the pursuit of happiness. Those values belong in inter-human ethics—in culture, not nature—and to look for them has to make a category mistake” (p. 112).

It is true that environmental ethics is beyond the conventional scope of ethics which focuses on interpersonal relationships. Also, environmental ethics has specifically to address what are the normative presuppositions regarding our behaviors toward nature, such as a protection of the diversity in an ecosystem. Yet, environmental ethics should not be established on a human-nature binary system. From the vantage point of ecofeminism, human beings are part of nature, and nature and culture are interrelated. From this perspective, Rolston’s attempt to separate environmental ethics from inter-human ethics is based on a nature/culture dichotomy. To ecofeminists, nature is not an abstract, static, and fixed entity, but rather a complex and interconnected web of life. Ecofeminists’ ethical concerns regarding environmental issues are extended to any indication of the brokenness and disharmony of the web of life. Thus, ecofeminists do not believe that an ethical inquiry into environmental issues can be separated from human ethics. War, class exploitation, poverty, and animal experimentation are not regarded as peripheral in the framework of environmental ethics to the other urgent ecological issues, such as air/water pollution, oil spills, and the extenction of wilderness and wildlife. Consequently, the ecofeminist movement encompasses a variety of issues such as anti-militarism, anti-nuclear movement, the abuse and misuse of reproductive technology, and the economic exploitation of the Third World.

In conclusion, the framework of environmental ethics envisioned by ecofeminists is integrative as well as inclusive. Ecofeminists’ critiques of the social structure of male domination, transcendent dualism, mechanism, and sex/gender role differ-

entiation lead us be aware that a fundamental reconstruction of patriarchal culture is needed for solving the ecological dilemma. Moreover, the ecofeminists' elucidation of the interrelatedness of oppressive systems indicates that inter-human ethics and environmental ethics are inseparable. The ecofeminists' transformative vision of the framework of environmental ethics underscores the ecological principle: everything is connected with everything else. Hence, ecofeminism can be the key to establishing an ecological path of harmony, sustainability, and diversity in the age of science and technology.

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