

ECOFEMINISM: TRACING THE THEORETICAL ROOTS

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ABSTRACT

Ecofeminist theory is a feminist interpretation of the causes of environmental degradation. It is informed by theories of alienation from nature and by feminist theory. The theories of Hegel, Marx, Sartre, deep ecology, and social ecology have impacted on ecofeminism, as have existential, psychoanalytic, and radical feminism. Socialist feminism has scarcely been considered by ecofeminists, but the incorporation of socialist feminist theory could improve ecofeminist theory.

Theories of alienation from nature propose that there is a subject/object dichotomy that separates humans from nature. Hegel believed that humans are alienated from their natural selves through the development of their self-consciousness. Marx suggested that humans are alienated from nature through the capitalist process of production which creates a false consciousness separating people from their ecological selves. Sartre conceived of alienation as the domination of the intellectual, transcendent mind over the animalistic, immanent body, which reflects a requisite transcendence of humans over nature. Deep ecologists identify anthropocentrism as the main element in alienation from nature, as it ignores the interconnectedness of humans

and nature. Social ecologists proceed to suggest that anthropocentrism and human alienation from nature are reflections of dominant social relations that are projected onto nature.

Feminist theory focuses largely on the gender inequities in a patriarchal society. Existential feminism parallels Sartre, and further suggests that men are considered to be the transcendent, intellectual self, while women are considered to be the immanent, animalistic other. Psychoanalytic feminists believe men and women are alienated from both women and nature due to the negative association of women with nature that accompanies the formation of gendered psyches. Radical feminists focus on the gendered socialization of men and women that relegates women to an inferior position in a patriarchal society. This society then suggests that these gendered traits are biologically based and irreversible. Socialist feminists identify both patriarchy and capitalism as mutually reinforcing systems that are co-responsible for the oppression of women within patriarchal capitalism.

Ecofeminist theory is a feminist approach to environmental degradation. Ecofeminism is an original combination of feminist and alienation theories. Ecofeminism suggests that environmental degradation is rooted in the historical and psychosocial development of humanity. They propose that human alienation from nature is a reflection of

an original alienation of men from women. Ecofeminists maintain that environmental abuse and the abuse of women in society are linked in mutually supporting ways, as a reflection of hierarchical dualism and alienation. The historical association of women and nature reflects and supports the oppression of both.

Ecofeminist theory is only in its infancy, and suffers from an immaturity and lack of development in many of its propositions. A serious problem with this theory is its white, middle-class, Western solipsism. The main areas that ecofeminism should look toward in the future, in order to improve this theory, include a more thoroughly substantiated historical account of alienation from women and nature; the question of essential or socialized characteristics of men and women; a major consideration of material factors that maintain the oppression of women and nature; a definition of the relationship between humans and nature; an account of the role of the state in environmental and gender exploitation; and an analysis of ecofeminism as a new social movement.

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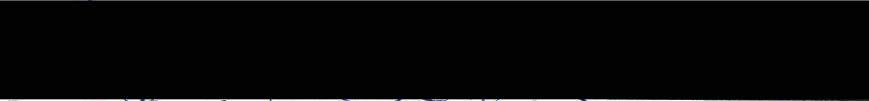
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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the elimination of oppression world wide. Although I acknowledge that ecofeminism, as it now stands, is not the solution to all exploitation and abuse, I hope it may be a step towards the future eradication of all forms of oppression.

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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

The current environmental crisis is of global significance. Natural resources are being depleted at an unsustainable level. The earth is losing necessary vegetation and soil and water. Numbers of species are becoming extinct every day. Water, land, and air are being polluted by waste products. Emissions from cars and industry are contributing to global warming and ozone depletion. The use of nuclear power produces the threat of radiation poisoning, core meltdown, and ultimately destructive nuclear war. These ecological catastrophes have had, and will continue to have, significant negative impacts on health, industry, and many other aspects of society (Brown, Brough, Durning, Flavin, French, Jacobsen, Lenssen, Lowe, Postel, Renner, Ryan, Starke, and Young, 1992; Goldsmith and Hildyard, 1988; Miller, 1988; O'Riordan, 1981).

In these times of increasing intensity and awareness of environmental ruin, ecofeminism offers some much needed explanations and proposals for solutions to these problems. The two main propositions of ecofeminism are that human alienation from nature and the association of women with nature have had an impact on the exploitation and abuse of both women and nature. Thus, ecofeminist theory is based mainly on previous theories of human alienation from and oppression of nature, as well as on feminist theories which delineate the association of women with nature and the subsequent oppression of women.

The ecofeminist analysis of alienation from nature is informed by Hegel, Marx, Sartre, deep ecologists, and social ecologists. Hegel is generally considered to be the philosopher who initiated the major discussion of human alienation from nature. He believed that the process of

self-definition requires the splitting of human consciousness into subject and object selves. The rational self was defined in opposition to the natural self. Although Hegel believed that the self eventually reunifies, a recognition of human links to nature does not appear to be part of this process.

Marx also believed that humans were alienated from nature. He suggested that this alienation was not inevitable under all conditions, but that it was the capitalist system of production that alienated laborers from the source of production - nature. Marx's proposed solution to this alienation was to change the relations of production through a proletarian revolution.

Sartre followed Hegel's argument, further suggesting that the subject self must transcend the object other in pursuit of self-definition. In this process, humans define themselves as the subject and nature as the object. This objectification of nature leads to a denial of the natural self. Sartre did not believe there was a solution to this alienation, except through self-deception.

Deep ecologists reject the alienation of humans from nature that is manifested as and exacerbated by anthropocentrism. They believe that the denial of human interconnections with nature is responsible for human abuse of the natural environment. The deep ecological proposal to end environmental degradation is for humans to develop an ecological consciousness that gives them an awareness of their links to nature.

Social ecologists support most deep ecological principles, but they further believe that human hierarchies are projected onto nature in order to justify environmental exploitation. The dominant social group then claims that these hierarchies are natural, and this contention is used to support further human exploitation of other humans. Social ecologists believe that oppression must be fought on

all levels in order for human and non-human nature to be free.

Feminist theorists also consider the alienation of humans from nature, but their influence on ecofeminism comes mainly from the feminist elaboration of the association between women and nature, and the negative impact this has had on the treatment of women. Existential feminists recognize that women have become the inferior immanent "other" for men to transcend in their self-definition. Women are identified with nature, which is also an immanent other. However, existential feminists believe that women, like men, can choose to be a subject, and thus free themselves from gender oppression.

Psychoanalytic feminists claim that men and women separate from their mothers in different ways. This leads to the formation of gendered psyches. Men develop more alienated psyches than women. The result is that men seek power over women and nature, who remind men of death and their dependence on women's reproductive capacities. The psychoanalytic feminist proposal for the eradication of gendered psyches is for both men and women to be equally involved in childrearing.

Radical feminists suggest that patriarchy is responsible for the alienation from, and oppression of, women that is the prototype for the oppression of nature, racism, and classism. They believe that it is socialized gender, not biological sex differences, which relegate women to an inferior social position based on women's reproductive role. Radical feminists advocate women's reclamation of feminine characteristics as positive traits. They also suggest that women seek to discover their true selves, independent of patriarchal conditioning.

Socialist feminism has not influenced ecofeminist theory significantly to date. However, it is also reviewed here as ecofeminism could gain from an integration of

socialist feminist theory. Socialist feminists believe that patriarchy and capitalism are mutually supporting systems. Some socialist feminists believe that to defeat capitalism would also eradicate patriarchy, while others maintain that these two oppressions must be fought separately. As the particular concerns of ecofeminism are the abuse of women and of the environment, it seems logical that a patriarchal system that oppresses women and a capitalist system that oppresses nature should be considered in conjunction.

Although ecofeminism is largely a reiteration of previous theories, it goes beyond these other theories to provide an original synthesis of past explanations for the exploitation and abuse of women and nature. Ecofeminism suggests that the oppression of women and nature have the same roots, are mutually supportive, and should be combatted together. Ecofeminist theory is divided into two main areas, the first of which consists of explanations of the historical, psychological, and material development of alienation and hierarchies.

Ecofeminists suggest that hierarchical dualism and alienation have, over time, become an integral part of the human psyche. Humanity (including women) is thus seen, by ecofeminists, as being alienated from both women and nature. The ecofeminist presentation of the history of alienation and hierarchy focuses on the development of patriarchy and environmental abuse. Patriarchy is explained as a result of the realization of paternity or invasions by hierarchical tribes. The abuse of nature is linked to the emergence of the scientific and industrial revolutions.

The ecofeminist analysis of the psychological roots of alienation and hierarchy focuses on the self-definitional separation of the self from the other that results in human alienation from both women and nature. Women and nature are consequently relegated to an inferior position and subjected to exploitation and abuse. Patriarchal socialization

conditions women to complicity in this alienation from nature and themselves.

Ecofeminist theory does not present much material analysis of alienation and hierarchy. However, some ecofeminists do recognize the impact of economic, structural, and material factors on human alienation from nature. They suggest that these factors are not a basic enough explanation and return to psychological accounts of alienation and hierarchy.

The biological, social, and psychic association of women with nature is the other precept of ecofeminism. Ecofeminists propose that patriarchy has made this association in order to rationalize the oppression of women and nature. This association is complicated by the ecofeminist belief that women and nature are associated, although in positive ways. Some ecofeminists believe that, because women are closer to nature, women are better able to solve environmental problems.

Ecofeminists propose that the links between human and non-human nature must be realized before environmental degradation can be stopped. They also believe that unless all structures of oppression are eliminated, no oppressed group can be free. Ecofeminists, thus, advocate coalition politics to fight social exploitation based on sex, race, class, and humanity.

This thesis critically analyzes ecofeminist theory in an attempt to gain a greater understanding of its precepts, to deal with its problems, and to strengthen this promising theory. This involves a discussion of many of the strengths and weaknesses of ecofeminism. The reader should keep in mind throughout the discussion of ecofeminist theory that it has a narrow focus based on a white, middle-class, Western view of the world. It is important to consider that the patterns and relationships referred to by ecofeminists may not be the same world wide. Many contradictions and

omissions in the historical, psychological, and material explanations of alienation and hierarchies are linked to the root theories of ecofeminism. Controversies over the association of women with nature and the advocacy of embracing feminine traits (such as caring and nurturance) are discussed. Inadequacies and dilemmas in proposals for change are also presented.

Ecofeminist presentations of the history of alienation and hierarchy are neither complete nor totally convincing. Psychological explanations for the emergence of alienation and hierarchies are elaborated much more completely than the history of alienation, but these arguments often seem tautological and contradictory. Few ecofeminists elaborate on the material roots of alienation and hierarchy. The role of the state in maintaining the oppression of women, other groups, and nature is also not addressed. These omissions need to be remedied.

The association of women with nature is one of the most controversial topics in ecofeminist theory. On the one hand, this association is rejected, as it has been used by patriarchy to justify the mutual oppression of both women and nature. On the other hand, some ecofeminists believe that this association should be embraced in a positive way. Whether this association should be adopted is a subject that needs further thought in order to reconcile this dilemma.

Proposals for change suggested by ecofeminists include the development of an ecological consciousness that recognizes human links with nature, and the eradication of abuse and exploitation through the combined efforts of all oppressed groups (and champions for the environment) working together. However, few concrete suggestions for how these goals are to be obtained are offered.

In conclusion, there are many future areas of study which may improve ecofeminist theory. The inadequate and incomplete historical explanation for the development of

patriarchy points to the need for further archaeological and anthropological study. Given ecofeminist theory's minor consideration of materialism, it may benefit from the socialist feminist view that patriarchy and capitalism are interconnected, mutually supportive systems of oppression. The implication of the state in the continuing oppression of marginalized groups also needs attention. Whether or not there is an essence of femininity, and what it might consist of, need further consideration and elaboration. Ecological data on the interconnections between human and non-human nature should be examined. Recent studies of new social movements might offer helpful suggestions for coalition politics.

Despite these inadequacies, ecofeminism has provided a promising, albeit inchoate, feminist theory of environmental destruction. Ecofeminist theory has opened up new avenues of thought and links between theories of alienation and feminist theory. This unique combination of mutual explanations shows the promise, if not yet the fulfillment, of an answer to both human alienation from and abuse of their natural environment and women.

CHAPTER II

THEORIES OF ALIENATION FROM NATURE

Introduction

Psychological alienation of humans from nature has been identified as a foundation for the attitudes and behaviors which are responsible for environmental degradation (Devall and Sessions, 1985; Bookchin, 1988; 1987; King, 1989; 1983). Alienation from nature has been alluded to and explicitly discussed for centuries, although it is difficult to pinpoint exactly when this alienation began, if indeed there ever was a time when alienation from nature did not exist.

Many theoretical attempts to explain environmental degradation have an underlying assumption, if not an explicit statement, of human alienation from nature as a cause of abuse of the environment (Bookchin, 1987; 1982; Devall and Sessions, 1985; Hegel, 1977; Marx, 1974; 1971; Naess, 1984a; 1984b; Sartre, 1975; 1971). Many philosophers, sociologists, and psychologists have approached the question of alienation, but "it is only in recent times that this alienation has taken on catastrophic proportions" (Dupre, 1966:99), due to the escalating threat of environmental problems. The ensuing potential for destruction of not only humanity, but the entire earth, makes an examination of the concept of human alienation from nature increasingly vital to an understanding of contemporary human action.

Contemporary ecologists and ecofeminists talk about the manifestations of alienation from nature with some reference to past philosophers on this topic. This chapter will present the development of the concept of alienation from nature beginning with the theories of Hegel, continuing through Marxism, and ending with Sartre's existentialism. These earlier philosophers consider that alienation is required and inevitable in the course of human self-definition. The more modern theories of ecology which decry

the development of alienation from nature include deep and social ecology, as well as ecofeminism. These theorists suggest that humans must overcome this alienation, and realize their interdependence with nature, in order for a resolution of environmental problems to occur.

The concept of alienation has been used in varying ways throughout sociological literature. It has come to have too many differing meanings to be used without some contextual clarification (Wrong, 1985), so it is important that it be defined in regard to its use here. The term alienation, as used here, is an indifference or hostility of the self for the other, which results from the breakdown of natural interconnections between the developing self and that which it is defined in opposition to (Ritzer, 1988). It is manifested as a psychological state of disassociation from nature, others, and one's own self (Josephson and Josephson, 1962).

Nature is another term that has differing connotations. A broad definition is used here: "the processes and forces producing and controlling the physical world" (Webster's II: New Riverside Dictionary, 1984). It is important to note that humans' alienation from nature is actually alienation from at least a part of themselves.

A common element to the philosophies of Hegel, Marx, and Sartre suggests that alienation is the result of the development of human self-definition, self-consciousness, or individuality. Marx suggested that only in a capitalist society does alienation result from the objectification of the other, due to the production relations that separate the proletariat from their own interests, and from themselves, on an individual and societal level (Bottomore, 1983; Hyppolite, 1969; Marx, 1961). Following from Hegel's assertion that the definition of self-consciousness requires opposition to an other-consciousness (Lauer, 1976; Hegel, 1977; Kainz, 1983), Sartre also claimed that there must be a

contrast between the self and the other; the self must be defined as separate or different from the other on an individual level (Desan, 1966; Sartre, 1971; Tong, 1989).

Contemporary ecologists also recognize the impact of alienation from nature on human treatment of their natural environment. Ecology is a sub discipline of biology that studies the structures and functions of nature, and the interactions of living organisms with each other and with their environment (Miller, 1988). Academic ecologists formulated basic ecological principles such as the interconnectedness of humans and nature, the balance of nature, and the importance of diversity, holism, and biotic equality¹ (Goldsmith and Hildyard, 1988; Miller, 1988).

Deep and social ecologists recognize these concepts and suggest that environmental degradation cannot be stopped without incorporating these values into our culture. They view the environmental crisis as a fundamentally social one, and believe that a solution requires radical changes in the way humans view their basic relationships with the natural world, and in society's basic social and economic goals. Both deep and social ecologists believe that a new, ecological world view and a society geared to the recognition of our interrelationship with the natural world

¹ Humans and nature are interconnected in ways that are not always recognized. In these times of increasing environmental problems, an awareness of the link between old growth forests and the air humans need to survive is one example of this interconnection. By the same token, the ability of trees to change CO₂ into O₂ is one facet of the balance maintained by nature. The balance of nature is maintained in old growth forests through the interaction of a wide diversity of plants and animals that work together to maintain the viability of this ecosystem. The whole of these interactions is greater than the sum of each of the parts, and each of these parts is equally important in the biosphere. The equal importance of each biological component of an ecosystem (biotic equality) is recognized by deep ecologists.

are necessary in order to solve environmental problems (Goldsmith and Hildyard, 1988).

Alienation from nature is also discussed by feminist theorists, who include a consideration of the association of women and nature in their argument. These theories will be discussed in the following chapter. Ecofeminists embrace most precepts of both deep and social ecology, and carry the critique of alienation and domination even further. They suggest that human alienation from nature is a reflection of the original alienation of men from women. This alienation of men from women is expressed and supported through the patriarchal association of women with nature, and their mutual oppression. Ecofeminist theory will be discussed in detail in Chapter IV.

Hegel

Despite all others who dealt with the concept previously, "the true philosophical history of alienation begins with Hegel" (Bottomore, 1983:10). In seeking to explain the development of human consciousness and self-definition, Hegel (1977) suggested that human consciousness begins as a unified whole, but that self-realization requires an inescapable, indeed essential, objectification of and alienation from the self (Taylor, 1975). Consciousness thus splits into a self-consciousness which embraces the familiar and the other-consciousness which consists of components of the self that are denied by the self-consciousness. The formation of the individual's consciousness requires self-reflection, which results from this alienation of the self-consciousness from the other-consciousness, and a recognition of the other by the self. Thus, the two consciousness are re-unified in the process of the self-consciousness knowing the other consciousness (Dupre, 1966).

Hegel (1977) suggested that the development of human consciousness and individuality requires objectification (the identification of an object as separate from the subject), and the alienation of the subject from that object (Dupre, 1966; Hegel, 1977; Hyppolite, 1969). Self-consciousness is defined when consciousness "alienates itself from itself in the very act of externalizing itself; thus makes itself actual" (Kainz, 1983:37). It results from a confrontation of the subject consciousness with the object consciousness in which the former must master the latter (Dupre, 1966).

According to Hegel (1977), the immature and unreflected self-consciousness becomes clearly and fully itself through its negation of its other-consciousness component. The self-consciousness can only exist by recognizing, and being recognized by, the other-consciousness (Desan, 1965) and by overcoming its opposite: "by negating its own negation" (Taylor, 1975:104). Thus, the whole self can only be stated in terms of overcoming the opposition of this dualism (Taylor, 1975). In the course of this process, the object comes to exist only for the subject, which denies an interdependence of the two (Hegel, 1977). For Hegel, consciousness presides in an arena with the transcendent self, or observing ego on the one side, and the immanent self (other), or the observed ego, on the other (Tong, 1989). Furthermore, the self "does not regard the other as essentially real, but sees its own self in the other" (Dupre, 1966:30).

Hegel's concept of the self-consciousness as not knowing the other-consciousness as it knows itself requires that the self attempt a reconciliation with the other. This means that self-consciousness develops through the recognition of the other, requiring self-objectification (Hegel, 1977). Thus, Hegel suggests that one can only be a subject if recognized by the object, and vice versa (Desan,

1965:34). But there is a dilemma inherent in this dialectical development of self-consciousness. If the self-consciousness requires recognition by the other-consciousness which it is denying, a complete self can never be attained (Hegel, 1977). Self-objectification is also the source of alienation because "there can be no direct meeting between the two consciousnesses" (Hayim, 1980:35).

Hegel (1977) believed that it was possible to transcend the natural aspects of humanity, as this transcendence was only the alienation of the self-consciousness (Hyppolite, 1969). He argued that humans are at odds with themselves because they are both rational and natural. They are led by a psychological development process to shatter the unity between the rational (self) and the natural (other) parts of their psyches in order to arrive at a mediation between the two (Hegel, 1977). This requires turning against nature both internally and externally, and the curbing of instincts. The earlier unity and communion with nature has to be broken and nature subjected to human will. Nature is seen only as a raw material to be shaped by human will (Taylor, 1975).

According to Hegel (1977), human history does not end with the discord between self-consciousness and other-consciousness, but moves to a higher level of mediated consciousness that preserves this division within its unity. This reconciliation allows the coexistence of the rational and the natural by overcoming their opposition (Kainz, 1983; Taylor, 1975). Hegel sees the mediation between the subject and object consciousnesses as a gradual process through the individual attainment of knowledge of the other (Desan, 1965; May, 1984).

The idea of culture necessarily implies a high degree of alienation as culture tends to ignore human links to nature (Kainz, 1983). According to Hegel, the "desacralization" of the world inherent in the alienation of humans from nature is an essential step towards freedom of

the rational self (subject) from the natural self (object) (Taylor, 1975). Thus, Hegel saw the development of culture as a protection against the necessity of the rational self recognizing that humans have links to nature.

Marx

Marx's earlier writings, particularly, showed the influence of Hegel's philosophy. The later works of Marx attempted to fuse Hegel's philosophy with an economic model (Collins, 1988). Marxist theory has not been applied significantly to environmental problems until very recently (O'Connor, 1988;1989). Thus, it is left to contemporary theorists to interpret Marx regarding this issue. Although there is much current interest in the application of Marxist theory to environmental degradation, the notion of alienation from nature as a separation of the transcendent rational self from immanent, natural connections has not been explicitly developed by Marxists to date. This concept can be developed, however, from other Marxist concepts.

The Marxist use of the term "alienation" usually refers to alienated labor². As the term is used here, however, it is more closely linked to the concept of false consciousness³. Instead of capitalism obscuring the common self interest of the working class, alienation is the result

² Alienated labor is a term Marx used to describe the relationship of laborers to the production process in a capitalist society. Marx believed that workers (the proletariat) were alienated from themselves and from the products of their labor mainly because they did not consume what they produced, but rather produced for the middle class (the bourgeoisie). The profits from this production also went to the bourgeoisie.

³ Marx suggested that under capitalism, the proletariat came to have a false consciousness that reflected the interests of the bourgeoisie rather than their own. This was necessary in order for the workers to continue to support the middle class at the expense of proletarian interests.

of industrial capitalism hiding the common ecological self interest of humanity. The conditions of production in an industrial society result in a false consciousness that not only alienates the integrated self from the socially defined self, but also alienates this self from the ecologically connected self (Ely, 1988). This would seem to indicate that Marx realized that the total self was composed of both social and natural components.

Marx supported Hegel's conception of alienation when Marx suggested that alienation was the result of the objectification inherent in alienated labor (Mandel, 1971). However, Marx believed that the connection between objectification and alienation was not necessary, but historically contingent (Hyppolite, 1969). He suggested that objectification always occurs, but alienation will follow only in a capitalist society. Thus, Marx proposed revolutionary change into a communist social and economic system as the solution to alienation (May, 1984).

In Marx's view, humans were originally material, sensuous beings existing in nature and in a state of dependence on it, yet at the same time capable of transcending nature and adapting it to their conceptions of nature (Fetscher, 1973; Taylor, 1975). As did Hegel, Marx proposed that the beginning of human self-consciousness was a key to emancipation from the forces of nature. He believed that the specific essence of humanity is labor which changes the natural environment and is alienated from nature (Fetscher, 1973). This suggested process of emancipation from nature would appear to contradict Marx's assertion that it is only in a capitalist society that labor is alienated from nature.

Marx (1974; 1961) believed that capitalism exacerbated the same division of humanity from nature that was described by Hegel. He argued that the material emphasis of social life, particularly since the advent of capitalism, changed

the human consciousness of nature (O'Connor, 1989). Nature was then appropriated for the satisfaction of human needs. This appropriation resulted in dominance, control, and mastery of nature. Thus, said Marx, societal structures were constructed to support the belief that a capitalist system was capable of emancipating society from the power and determinism of natural forces (Deleage, 1989). Although Marx recognized that nature was commodified for human use (Goldman, 1989), it is not clear that he realized that this commodification also obscured the interconnectedness of humanity and nature.

According to Dupre (1966), Marx believed that the real alienation is not Hegel's alienation of self-consciousness, but the alienation of humanity from its social nature, expressed in the institution of private property. The capitalist state estranges people from their social nature because they are forced to live "in a sphere entirely determined by individual interests" (Dupre, 1966:108). This is the separation of social life from natural life.

Marx theorized that, as a result of the class division of labor, the individual becomes dependent on society, not nature (Hyppolite, 1969). However, because humans can produce universally and consciously, they transform nature into an expression of themselves, and in the process self-create themselves as human. This is what Marx referred to as objectification - "the self-creation of man [sic] through the fashioning of an adequate external expression" (Taylor, 1975:549).

However, according to Marx, individual humans cannot achieve adequate self-expression because the subject of the transformation is not the individual but the "species being" (Taylor, 1975). Since humans are considered to be the only beings having a memory and an ability to conceptualize their species' past, humanity has fallen prey to the socioeconomic systems that its liberation from nature produced as an

unintended corollary (Fetscher, 1973). This led to alienation in human psyches, which is matched by an alienated consciousness on a societal level. This alienated consciousness causes humanity not to recognize their own objectification of themselves by themselves (Taylor, 1975). This enslavement to a false consciousness is Marx's idea of alienation (Fetscher, 1973).

Thus, Marx believed that this true alienation of humanity "does not consist in man's [sic] relation to nature but in his estrangement from nature, in his inhuman relation to nature" (Dupre, 1966:125). Human beings differ from other animals in that they produce objects for consumption. Therein lies the root of alienation, because in human society individual production and consumption are separable, and the objects of production can become lost to the producer. Consequently, for Marx, alienation takes place in the act of production, not in consciousness (Press, 1977):

By identifying man [sic] with consciousness, says Marx, Hegel has made man into a spiritual, unworldly being, and severed his vital relation to nature (Dupre, 1966:124).

In Marx's conceptualization, self-alienation follows from the alienation of a person from the products of their labor, from nature, and/or from other humans (Bottomore, 1983; Fromm, 1961). Self-alienation, for Marx, is "the very essence and basic structure of alienation" (Bottomore, 1983:10), and all forms of alienation are different aspects of human self-alienation: the individual is alienated from human "essence" or "nature", and from humanity in general (Bottomore, 1983).

According to Marx, the human self/object relation to nature is a productive as well as an alienated one:

man [sic] on his own accord starts, regulates, controls the material reactions between himself and nature. He opposes himself to nature as one of her forces, setting in motion arms and legs, head

and hands, the natural forces of his body, in order to appropriate Nature's productions in a form adequate to his wants (Marx, 1974:173)

Mies (1986) recognizes that, for men particularly, this production relation is one of dominance, exploitation, and destruction of nature: "Without dominance and control over nature, men cannot conceive of themselves as being productive" (Mies, 1986:62).

There is a contradiction in Marx's theory of alienation based partially on his definition of nature. Marx divided nature into "first" nature, which is akin to what we see as wilderness, and "second" nature, which is a social view of nature as existing for human use. When Marx decried human alienation from nature, it was this "second" nature to which he referred. His concern was for labor's alienation from the resources for production that relegates the proletariat to an inferior position in society, not for the alienation of humans from their natural roots (Ely, 1988; O'Connor, 1989). In fact, it has been suggested that Marx believed that the social emancipation of human beings requires the domination of "first" nature by turning it into "second" nature (Ely, 1988).

Marx supported Hegel's theorization of objectification and externalization as necessary for the development of humanity as a species being (Hyppolite, 1969). For Marx, the transformation of nature is of major significance (Taylor, 1975). He saw objectification as "the sole means of integrating man and nature" (Hyppolite, 1969:82); this was how the natural human became a social human. In a capitalist society, alienation is reflected in class divisions which can only be overcome by further mastery over nature (Taylor, 1975). In order to overcome this alienated condition and be free, Marx suggested that humanity must replace the capitalist system with a communist organization of production (Fetscher, 1973).

Sartre

Following from Hegel's assertion that definition of the self requires opposition to the other (Lauer, 1976; Hegel, 1977; Kainz, 1983), Sartre claimed that there must be a contrast between the self and the other; the self must be defined as separate or different from the other (Sartre, 1971). While Hegel's other was the alienated part of the individual's self-consciousness, Sartre expanded the concept of other to include not only internal components of the self, but other humans and non-human nature as well.

Sartre (1971) thought that the existence of the human being precedes its essence. That is, humans exist only as bodily organisms until they consciously develop separate and essential identities (Tong, 1989). Sartre suggested that because humans need a meaningful existence they must transcend the animal level to give mental, emotional meaning to life through consciousness (de Beauvoir, 1970; Sartre, 1971). This requires the objectification of the natural condition. As de Beauvoir (1970) explained:

Once the subject seeks to assert himself [sic], the Other, who limits and denies him, is none the less a necessity to him: he attains himself only through that reality which he is not, which is something other than himself (p. 139).

Sartre (1971) supported Hegel's notion of the necessary internal objectification and alienation of the two parts of consciousness by upholding the distinction between Hegel's transcendent observer and immanent observed. Being was divided into two parts: being-for-itself (social self) and being-in-itself (natural self). In-itself refers to the material, animalistic existence of humans, whereas for-itself refers to "the conscious existence that humans share only with other humans" (Tong, 1989:196). Self-definition requires the objectification of the animalistic nature by the rational consciousness (Sartre, 1971).

Sartre also described the "perpetual conflict as each For-itself seeks to recover its own Being by directly or indirectly making an object out of the other" (Sartre, 1971:548). As each being-for-itself establishes itself as a subject by objectifying the other (being-in-itself), self-consciousness becomes alienated from itself (Blackham, 1952).

Sartre uses this notion of objectification to explain the relationship between one individual (self) and another (other). The self objectifies the other in order to define its own existence. The other must be objectified to make the self the subject and protect the self from objectification (Sartre, 1971). There is the possibility of perpetual conflict between the self and the other on the basis of the potential transformation of the self and the other into subject and object, respectively (Craib, 1976). There can be no mediation between the two, because this would require mutual recognition between the self and the other, and to be recognized by the other is to be an object for the other (Hayim, 1980).

Thus, Sartre (1971) takes a pessimistic view of the resolution of alienation of humans from nature. The elimination of this alienation requires the merging of the self and the other. A dilemma arises from any need or desire to join with an other, as every subject "conceives of itself as transcendent and free and views the Other as immanent and enslaved" (Tong, 1989:197). For the self to merge with the other, one must turn one's self into an object as well. This is contrary to the main purpose of making the self transcendent, and is, therefore, impossible. In fact, being-for-itself is the nihilation of being-in-itself because recognition of the self by the other would objectify the

self. Bad faith⁴ results from the inability to bond the self to the other. It requires that one lie to oneself within the unity of a single consciousness as the only circumvention of alienation (Sartre, 1975; 1971): "if you live in bad faith, lies will appear to you like the truth" (Herbert, 1981:405).

According to Sartre (1971), the nihilation of being-in-itself by being-for-itself explains the degradation of nature by humans. He believed that the self could not be thought of as an other who is immanent. Thus, humans could not consciously accept their links to nature, as to recognize the natural component of the self is to fail to transcend it. Sartre suggested that hatred for the other results from this inability to bond. The conflict between the individual self and an objectified other leads to the subjugation of both nature by humans and the subjugation of one human group over another (Sartre, 1971). Thus, the realization of the interrelationship humans have with the otherness of nature leads to a continuing conflict between humans and nature, a hatred of human dependence on nature, and a need for transcendence and domination (Devall and Sessions, 1985).

In conclusion, Sartre (1971) believed that the self must be defined in opposition to, and in protection against, the other, both internally (mind) and externally (body). The self and the other compete for the human world, and it is this conflict that characterizes the work of both Sartre and Hegel (Hayim, 1980). However, Sartre did not adhere to Hegel's theory of mediation between the self and the other; he believed that the conflict is both inevitable and permanent (Flynn, 1984; Sartre, 1971).

⁴ Bad faith is the self-deception that one uses to ignore the contradictions inherent in the separation between being-for-itself and being-in-itself (Sartre, 1975; 1971).

Deep Ecology

Deep ecologists believe that humans are alienated from nature in that they ignore their interconnectedness to the natural environment. Although this alienation is seen as a long-standing historical state, deep ecologists do not believe that this alienation is necessary. In fact, deep ecologists suggest that this alienation, manifested as anthropocentrism, must be overcome in order to eliminate environmental abuse (Devall and Sessions, 1985; Naess, 1984a; 1984b).

Deep ecology is a term coined by Arne Naess in 1973 in contrast to what he terms shallow ecology. According to deep ecologists, the so-called shallow ecology of some academics and environmentalists does not question the dominant anthropocentric world view that humans are different from non-human nature, over which they have mastery. Deep ecology claims to be a radical philosophy that enables humans to discover that they are an integral part of nature. This would lead to harmonious relations between human and non-human nature, and less environmental abuse (Drengson, 1988; Naess, 1973).

According to deep ecologists, shallow ecology is anthropocentric to the extent that its environmentalism is only in the interests of human survival, and human interconnections with nature are ignored. However, they argue that it is this ignoring of human links to nature that is threatening both human and non-human survival. Deep ecologists react in opposition to this anthropocentrism, because they believe it has led to the consideration of nature as a resource to be used only for human needs. Deep ecologists reject the "mechanical materialism" of industrialization, where economic growth and development take priority over environmental considerations (Goldsmith and Hildyard, 1988). Deep ecologists see humans as an interconnected part of nature and claim that both human and

non-human nature have equal rights (Devall and Sessions, 1985; Naess, 1973).

Deep ecologists believe that "the major problems in the world are the result of the difference between the way nature works and the way man [sic] thinks" (Devall and Sessions, 1985:1). As expressed by the review of the theories of Hegel, Sartre, and Marx in the previous sections, contrary to the holism of nature, our psyches have been conditioned to see the self as separate from the other, and the overdevelopment of the rational part of our minds has concealed the essential natural components of humanity (Zimmerman, 1983). The conception humans have of themselves is a narrow self image based on dualisms that have subject/object dichotomies and human/nature antagonisms (Devall and Sessions, 1985). Humanity is, thus, so blind to its dependence on nature that it is actually committing slow suicide and does not even see that in harming nature it harms itself (Luke, 1988).

Deep ecology has indicated the futility of dealing with nature as a separate entity, rather than as inextricably connected with human life. A deep ecological perspective attempts to show us that the mind/body, subject/object, and human/nature dualisms are conceptual, not actual. This "unified whole" view of deep ecology parallels eastern mysticism. For example, Taoism says that there is a natural order of all things that does not involve dominance, but rather respect for all things. In fact, the more one tries to dominate, the less control there is (Devall and Sessions, 1985).

Modern hegemonic scientific inquiry is based on the Cartesian separation of mind and matter that "allows" objectivity and requires objectification in scientific pursuit (Barbour, 1980). This scientific method suggests that researchers can, and must, separate themselves intellectually from their physical subjects of inquiry in

order to eliminate bias in their studies. Interconnections between the rational and the natural are ignored.

Deep ecology challenges this classical scientific method that so-called shallow ecologists support. The influence of this scientific method has led shallow ecologists to a consideration of parts as separate from the whole, ignoring the synergy of these parts. Deep ecologists believe that this dualism between mind and matter has led to the alienation of humans from nature, to which they are inextricably linked (Devall and Sessions, 1985).

Deep ecologists argue that, as an extension of this scientific paradigm, the dominant social paradigm supports the notion that humans have unlimited potential to deal with any change in nature, thus human conceptions of "progress" are not concerned about any consequences of human action (Catton and Dunlap, 1980; Devall and Sessions, 1985). Nature is viewed simply as resources for human use; technology promotes development and can deal with any ensuing problems such as pollution and resource depletion. In this dominant world view, the opportunity for social advancement based on resource depletion takes precedence over the intrinsic value of nature (Devall and Sessions, 1985; Miller, 1989).

Technology is seen by deep ecologists as both a result and a cause of the continuing alienation from nature that exacerbates environmental degradation. Industrial society relies on technology to enforce human dominance over nature and other humans. Humans psychologically separate themselves from their interconnections to nature, and contrarily attempt to dominate that which they depend on, through use of technology. The attempt to ignore dependence on nature and to dominate it through technology have led to the further psychic alienation of humans from nature, and the vicious cycle continues (Naess, 1973).

The resulting technological society alienates humans from non-human nature, other humans, and even from

themselves. Technological triumphs increase the arrogance of humans about their dominance over nature, causing natural resources to be further taken for granted (Devall and Sessions, 1985). According to deep ecologists, these destructive values and practices and a technological worldview promote the conquest of nature. Reliance on technological development:

necessarily promotes destructive values and goals which often destroy the basis for stable viable human communities interacting with the natural world. The technological worldview has as its ultimate vision the total conquest and domination of Nature and spontaneous nature processes - a vision of a "totally artificial environment" remodeled to human specifications and managed by humans for humans (Devall and Sessions, 1985:48).

Deep ecologists reject technological and scientific dominance and instead advocate reliance on the "natural" self and "natural" wisdom, and offer suggestions for finding these natural components of humanity. They advocate a bioregional design of living which encompasses ecological principles within individual ecosystems. Deep ecologists propose the development of a new, integrative balance between human societies and nature. This involves cultivating an ecological consciousness of the harmony and connectedness of all nature - including human beings. Faith and trust in our most basic intuitions, honesty, and responsibility for our actions are required. Deep ecologists believe that this change in attitude must be cultural as well as personal (Devall and Sessions, 1985; Miller, 1989; Naess, 1973).

Social Ecology

Social ecologists are concerned with the alienated relationship of society to nature, and how it can destroy the natural world (Bookchin, 1989). This alienation is viewed, as by deep ecologists, as the human rejection of

their links to the natural environment on which they depend. Social ecologists focus on the social nature of humanity and the social origins of the ecological crisis, as they believe that responsibility for ecological problems is in the social relationships that produce these problems (Wrabley, 1989; Bookchin, 1988). The lack of societal recognition of the embeddedness of human consciousness in nature is emphasized by social ecologists as a source of the separation of humans from nature (Tokar, 1988).

Hierarchy is fundamental to domination, say social ecologists, including "cultural, traditional, and psychological systems of obedience and command" (Wrabley, 1989:39). It is not only a social condition but also a state of consciousness (Bookchin, 1982) "continually reproduced in early childhood socialization processes and traditional institutions" (Wrabley, 1989:40). A hierarchical mentality is introduced in the formation of the psyche. It becomes part of the process of self definition that alienates humans from other humans, from themselves, and from nature (Wrabley, 1989). This system of dominance even brings the oppressed into collusion with their oppressors through socialization techniques and guilt mechanisms (Wrabley, 1989). This is akin to the Marxist concept of false consciousness as discussed in an earlier section of this chapter.

Social ecologists propose that the domination of humans over nature required the domination of some humans over other humans "as the earliest means of production and the use of human beings as instruments for harnessing the natural world" (Bookchin, 1989:32). Technological development increasingly disrupted natural and ecological patterns. Domination by sex, race, and class undermined human relationships and freedom (Bookchin, 1990). This type of mechanized, hierarchical society could not allow much freedom to change from these accustomed relations, because

systems of dominance rely on hierarchical control over people and the natural environment, as well as human alienation from nature and themselves, to fulfill the material expectations of society (Reader, 1984). Human freedom presupposes domination not only of nature, but of other humans who are used to exploit and control nature (Wrabley, 1989).

Social ecologists suggest that increasingly broader social hierarchical domination of humans by other humans led gradually to the notion that it is human destiny to dominate nature (Tokar, 1988; Bookchin, 1982). Because of the power of nature, it is viewed as a threat that must be dominated if humans are to be free.

According to social ecologists, the alienation of humans from each other and themselves is reflected in the theoretical separation of human beings from nature. This separation leads to the conceptual dualization of nature itself, as human survival relies on connections to nature, even while these connections are being denied. The legacy of this system of domination is the undermining of the social world by destroying nature, on which it relies (Bookchin, 1988). Social ecologists differ from Hegel and Sartre in that they believe that it is not the evolution of calculating, rational human beings that is alien to nature; it is social relations which alienate human consciousness from nature (Bookchin, 1988;1989). Social ecologists are thus influenced by the Marxist focus on the influence that social relations have on the human relationship with nature.

Social ecologists believe that the concept of an ecological society must begin with the precept that society and nature are not antithetical or locked in a struggle for dominance. They see human beings not as a species undifferentiated from the rest of nature, but rather as social beings. Human society and culture are "natural" developments inseparable from the evolution of nature.

Society emerges from and exists as a part of nature (Wrabley, 1989). Thus, social ecologists recognize the unique qualities of humans such as self consciousness, self-reflection, rationality, ethics, and foresight (Wrabley, 1989). The development of these traits in humanity is considered to be a natural development, but one which differentiates humans from non-human nature (Wrabley, 1989; Bookchin, 1982).

The social ecologists' view of social organization shows the influence of anarchism on social ecology. Anarchists do not believe that a politically organized government is necessary nor desirable, because a natural societal organization would remove the need for coercion (Theodorson and Theodorson, 1969). Bookchin (1982) sees an ecological society where "freedom would no longer be placed in opposition to nature, individuality to society, choice to necessity, or personality to the needs of social coherence" (p. 318). Although they are unapologetically human centered, social ecologists do not view nature solely as a means of satisfying human material needs (Yih, 1990). Social ecologists seek what they believe is a natural harmony between humans and non-human nature, while still fulfilling human needs (Bookchin, 1982).

Social ecologists call for freedom for the oppressed human beings in society as well as for oppressed nature (Yih, 1990). They believe that the solution to the environmental crisis is for humans to cease their domination of other humans, for:

as long as hierarchy persists, as long as domination organizes humanity around a system of elites, the project of dominating nature will continue to exist and inevitably lead our planet to ecological extinction (Bookchin, 1980b:2).

Because hierarchy has become both necessary for and a result of domination, social ecologists propose that all

hierarchies must be eradicated in order for both humans and nature to be free from oppression.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined several different concepts of alienation as they related to ecological questions. The theories of Hegel and Sartre both suggested that the attempts to dominate and transform nature are a necessary element of self-definition. Marx, however, believed that alienation only occurs in a capitalist system. Both Hegel and Marx saw the possibility of a reconciliation of human alienation from nature, whereas Sartre advocates this separation of human from non-human nature. Hegel proposed that knowledge of the other - nature - would result in a reconciliation of this aspect of consciousness into the whole. Sartre believed that this embrace of the natural aspects of humanity was neither possible nor desirable. Marx suggested that alienation from nature would be overcome if the economic system was not capitalism..

Deep ecologists decry the anthropocentrism of humanity that is both a cause and a result of the alienation of humans from nature. They advocate the eradication of this alienation through closer physical experience of nature, reasoning that this will lead to the embrace of nature as an integral part of human lives. Social ecologists believe that human alienation from nature is a reflection of alienation from other humans, which has resulted from hierarchical social relations. They call for a realistic assessment of the differences between human and non-human nature so that human society can live in harmony with the natural world.

After a long standing tradition of philosophers who expounded the necessity of human alienation from nature, as did Hegel, Marx, and Sartre, the notion that this alienation is inevitable is difficult to dismiss. Even though Hegel and Marx proposed solutions to the alienation of the self from

the other, neither devoted much attention to the integration of nature in human consciousness.

Hegel's solution for overcoming alienation of the self from the other is to gain absolute knowledge of both; the triumph is one of intellectual consciousness (Hegel, 1977; Hyppolite, 1969). Hegel does not, however, adequately explain why an originally integrated consciousness must split in order to reform. He believes that human transcendence of nature is desirable, and he does not consider that nature will be reintegrated into human consciousness.

Marx suggested a structural solution to alienation. He felt that transcendence of nature and attainment of consciousness can be achieved only in one burst, when all alienation has been overcome by a sudden reconstruction of the social and economic order. Marx advocated the overthrow of capitalism and its resultant division of labor through the conscious establishment of communism (Desan, 1965; May, 1984; Taylor, 1975). It is not clear how this solution would liberate nature from human abuse, however.

For Sartre, the transcendence of immanent nature is a desirable and permanent process. Sartre believed that there is no mediation possible between the subject and the object, but that the subject attempts to eradicate the object, and ignore the interdependence between the two (Sartre, 1971). Thus, there is no possible resolution to human alienation from nature; indeed, it is not to be sought.

Deep and social ecologists decry the suggestion that human alienation from nature is ever necessary, yet they do recognize that in contemporary society humans are not in touch with their natural connections. They consider why this is so, and what should be done about it. Deep ecologists suggest, as did Marx, that humans see nature as a commodity to be used to fulfill their needs. Indeed, humans must rely on nature for survival, but deep ecologists believe that the

fragile interconnections between the components of nature must be recognized and accommodated. They advocate the development of an ecological consciousness but their proposal for accomplishing this is somewhat contradictory.

Social ecologists agree that humans must recognize these inextricable links with nature, but also suggest that humans have unique qualities that allow them to develop in ways that are separate from non-human nature. They believe that humans have developed different forms of societies than other animals, but decry the ways these societies oppress people on the basis of class, race, and gender. The proposed solutions of social ecologists are not very clear about specific actions that will end the oppression of human and non-human nature.

CHAPTER III FEMINIST THEORY

Introduction

Although it is often difficult to categorize the theoretical perspectives of various feminists, there are common conceptual groupings often used to define different forms of feminism (see Tong, 1989). This chapter reviews existential, psychoanalytic, radical and socialist feminism as they pertain to ecofeminist theory. This is not a comprehensive literature review of all four feminisms, but is rather a summary of the concepts of alienation from nature and the association of women with nature, as well as some other feminist ideas that have either influenced ecofeminism or that may be beneficial for ecofeminist theorists to incorporate in the future.

Existential, psychoanalytic, and particularly radical feminism have all directly influenced ecofeminist theory. Existential feminists recognize that women have become the inferior immanent "other" for men to transcend in the process of their self-definition (de Beauvoir, 1970). Psychoanalytic feminists claim that men seek power over women because they remind men of their dependence on women's reproductive capacities (Chodorow, 1978; Dinnerstein, 1976). Radical feminists suggest that it is socialized gender, not biological sex differences, which relegates women to an inferior social position based on women's reproductive role (Merchant, 1990). Socialist feminism has not influenced ecofeminism significantly, but the addition of the socialist feminist analysis of the material factors which contribute to the oppression of both women and nature may be beneficial for the future of ecofeminist theory.

Before beginning a more detailed description of these four categories of feminism, it is important to define a few terms. Writers do not always make a distinction between sex

and gender. This omission often causes confusion about whether it is biological or social characteristics that are being referred to. Consequently, in this paper, they are defined as the following.

The terms "female" and "male" are used when referring to biological/sex differences (e.g., vaginas and penises). Gender is defined as a social construction, which is based on attributed sex. The two gender categories I will use are "women" and "men". These categories are based on exhibited sex characteristics and gendered behavioral characteristics. The terms feminine and masculine will be used to refer to these gendered behavioral characteristics that are socialized, not inherent. For instance, nurturing is a feminine characteristic because women are socialized to develop this trait. The same is true for men and the characteristic of aggression. Again, this is not to say that these traits are biologically based (Devor, 1989).

The term patriarchy is also often used without giving an indication as to what is meant by the word. This paper uses Mary Daly's (1987) definition. Patriarchy is a:

society manufactured and controlled by males ... ;
 [a] society in which every legitimated institution
 is entirely in the hands of males and a few
 selected henchwomen; [a] society characterized by
 oppression, repression, depression, narcissism,
 cruelty, racism, classism, ageism,
 objectification, sadomasochism, necrophilia; ...
 [a] society fixated on proliferation, propagation,
 procreation, and bent on the destruction of all
 Life (Daly, 1987:87-88).

As will become clear throughout the rest of this chapter and the subsequent chapter on ecofeminist theory, Daly's definition of patriarchy is particularly germane to this thesis.

Existential Feminism

Existential feminism is epitomized by the work of Simone de Beauvoir (1970), who was greatly influenced by the existentialism of Sartre (1971). According to existential thought, in order for humans to have a meaningful existence, they have an essential need to transcend the animal level. Humans need to exist - to live for themselves and make choices for self-definition. Women and men have no essential nature, but rather choose what they are to become. These choices are influenced by the socioeconomic and political structures of society. Living and existing are two separate states of being that can be chosen. Living, or being-in-itself, means existing at an animal or base level, whereas existing transcends this level to being-for-itself (de Beauvoir, 1970; Sartre, 1971).

De Beauvoir (1970) suggested that there has been a historical division in society, based on sex. Men have gained the power to define women as "other" through control of societal institutions of power. Women are considered to be immanent in nature, and patriarchy associates one gender as for-itself (men), and the other as in-itself (women). Humanity is considered to be male, and woman is defined in relation to man:

[Woman] is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute - she is the Other (de Beauvoir, 1970:xxviii).

Women were also urged to define themselves as what patriarchal society demands. Women internalize what men want them to be and believe that this is women's true nature (de Beauvoir, 1970; Tong, 1989).

If men cast women as the other, suggested de Beauvoir, this leaves the domain of the mind to men, and removes men's relation to their bodies. This denial of the body defines

male existence. Male thinkers and educators don't have to consider themselves as bodies. The reproductive differences between men and women have allowed patriarchy to relegate women to the inferior immanence of the body, and allowed men to transcend the physical and embrace intellectual superiority. Patriarchy associates women with the carnal, physical, reproductive body, and men are supposedly sexual only for women; they are lowering themselves to meet women.

De Beauvoir also suggested that patriarchy places a higher value on destruction than creation:

for it is not in giving life but in risking life that man [sic] is raised above the animal; that is why superiority has been accorded in humanity not to the sex that brings forth but to that which kills. (de Beauvoir, 1970:64)

De Beauvoir (1970) felt that the societal expectations of a wife restricted women's freedom. These expectations were a daily way to reinforce the status of women as "other". Motherhood was also seen by de Beauvoir as a limitation to women's self-development. The mother becomes an object to the child as she is a mechanism for fulfilling the child's needs. The child is objectified by the mother because of the mother's frustration at this limited role. This leads to mutual objectification and alienation between mother and child, thus motherhood is alienated labor (de Beauvoir, 1970).

When de Beauvoir (1970) says that "One is not born, but rather becomes a woman" (p. 267), she is differentiating sex from gender. Women are born female, but gender is learned through a socialization process which requires that a series of choices be made throughout one's life. Females become women through the choices they make, not because of the sex they are born to. This choice to be a woman is constantly remade by women throughout their lives, and even if women do try to step out of their roles, patriarchy has ways to keep them tied to gender stereotypes (de Beauvoir, 1970).

Gender is seen as the core of self-definition by de Beauvoir. Patriarchy has the power to define women as the other, and women are socialized to accept this definition. This acceptance prevents women from forming a joint consciousness, because they are also "other" for each other. Acceptance of status as the "other" thus precludes the formation of joint resistance against the hegemony of this definition because of the false consciousness women have of themselves. Although women don't have to accept the definition as "other", to resist is to lose social status as a woman. Societal sanctions are brought to bear on women who step outside their traditional gender roles. Because of the definitional importance of gender in a patriarchal society, it is difficult for women to abandon these gender stereotypes (de Beauvoir, 1970). Men also experience this false consciousness as a result of the dilemma of self-definition, but de Beauvoir was particularly interested in the impact this process had on women.

According to de Beauvoir (1970) patriarchy ideologically connects women and nature, as both women and nature are reminders of life and death. She identified a complicated and conflictual relationship for men with both women and nature:

we know what ambivalent feelings Nature inspires in man. He exploits her, but she crushes him, he is born of her and dies in her; she is the source of his being and the realm that he subjugates to his will; Nature is a vein of gross material in which the soul is imprisoned, and she is the supreme reality; she is contingency and Idea, the finite and the whole; she is what opposes the Spirit and the Spirit itself. Now ally, now enemy, she appears as the dark chaos from whence life wells up, as this life itself, and as the over-yonder toward which life tends. Woman sums up nature as Mother, Wife, and Idea; these forms now mingle and now conflict, and each of them wears a double visage (de Beauvoir, 1970:144).

The confusion is resolved by men devoting themselves to a more determined transcendence of women, and the nature that women represent (de Beauvoir, 1970).

De Beauvoir suggests that if gender is chosen, it can also be unchosen, or not chosen at all. In order to break down gender oppression, women must become subjects both to themselves and to others. They must strive for transcendence of their base selves in the same way as men. In order to accomplish this transcendence of their physiology and feel like a subject, de Beauvoir recommends that women must seek paid employment outside the home. Women must also develop their intellect which transcends the body. She also argues that a socialist society is a precondition for women's transcendence of nature because adequate food, clothing, and shelter are necessary before psychological barriers between people can be broken down (de Beauvoir, 1970; Tong, 1989).

Psychoanalytic Feminism

Psychoanalytic feminism is based largely on Freudian concepts regarding psychological development as the child separates from its mother. Psychoanalytic feminists also further develop the existential concept of the definition of the self in opposition to the other, and the resulting alienation of the self from the other. Existential and psychoanalytic feminists recognize that both women and men see women as objects and men as subjects, that a patriarchal world view depends on the exclusion of women, and what they represent, from culture. Women buy into this definition because of their own psychic formation within the confines of patriarchy (Eisenstein, 1983).

Psychoanalytic feminists suggest that it is the process of separation from the mother that leads to gendered psyches. Boys and girls experience this separation in different ways, thus their psychologies are not the same. According to Dinnerstein both boys and girls end up fearing

and hating their mothers (and nature) because of the dependence that is shattered in the separation process. Chodorow (1978) suggests that boys react by avoiding relationships and attempting to control women and nature. Girls transfer their affection to men and recapture the security of infancy by having children and perpetuating this process.

Dinnerstein (1977), particularly, writes of the alienation of humans from nature as well as the association of women with nature. She sees that the "prevailing male-female arrangement" confuses and restricts the relationships humans have with other humans and nature. This arrangement results in women being relegated to the private sphere and in the technological abuse of nature. Dinnerstein believes that these relations are based not on biology, but rather on psychological development.

Dinnerstein suggests that the two conditions which limit gender relations and human relations with nature are women's responsibility for child care and the inadequate consideration of the human connection and uniqueness from nature. She believes that female dominated child care leads to a mutually supported double standard of sexual behavior between men and women. This form of childrearing leads to immaturity in adults and human antagonism toward women. The association between women and nature appears clear in the assumption that woman

exists as a natural resource, as an asset to be owned and harnessed, harvested and mined, with no fellow-feeling for her depletion and no responsibility for her conservation or replenishment (Dinnerstein, 1977:36).

Both Dinnerstein (1977) and Chodorow (1978) focus on the process of gendered individuation. They believe that because patriarchy makes women primarily responsible for childrearing, it is the mother with whom the child initially bonds and from whom the child later learns to differentiate

itself. The father is generally known to the child only after this stage of development, thus the child sees the father as a separate entity throughout the father/child relationship (Eisenstein, 1983; Tong, 1989).

According to Dinnerstein (1977), the mother is at first considered by the child to be an omnipotent being, inseparable from the universe and nature. The mother is also experienced by the infant as "capricious, unreliable, and unpredictable" (Eisenstein, 1983:81), as she brings both pleasure and pain to the infant. Because nature is also powerful and unpredictable, nature is further identified with women by the child, and later by the adult:

The early mother's apparent omnipotence and ambivalent role as ultimate source of good and evil is a central source of humans' uneasy, unstable stance towards nature (Dinnerstein, 1977:100).

Dinnerstein suggests that the inconsistency the child feels toward its mother leads to ambivalent feelings towards the mother and nature: love and fear. It is torn between greed for and control of its mother's bounty and the impulse to resolve "these feelings, which threaten to destroy what is most precious and deeply needed" (Dinnerstein, 1977:100).

As the child experiences the separation from its originally unified world, says Dinnerstein, it then realizes that the mother is also separate from the rest of the universe. Men realize that they are separate from their mothers, and feel that they are also separate from nature. Both mother and nature are a threat to the self as they impose boundaries on self-definition. These boundaries must be removed by dominating both women and nature. This control is facilitated by keeping women at home and out of the public domain, and by degrading nature. Women are also socialized to consider themselves as a part of nature, which must be controlled (Dinnerstein, 1977).

Dinnerstein also suggests that the human sense of themselves as a species with a past and a present reaching beyond the individual both increases their awareness and fear of mortality and a feeling of self-importance and decreases the fear of mortality by allowing them to have an impact on the world that outlives them. This contradiction leads to human malaise about their mortal condition. Because both mortality, women, and nature are associated with the flesh, women and nature are feared and desired to be dominated. As existential feminists point out, men try to transcend that which ties them to their fleshly existence - women and nature. Sexual relations also associate women and the flesh for men, leading men to deny the bonds between themselves and women (Dinnerstein, 1977).

Both Dinnerstein and Chodorow believe that these psychological gender differences could be avoided if both men and women took responsibility for parenting. Dinnerstein suggests that when enough people are aware of the creation of gendered psyches that this process, it will disintegrate and "undermine certain time-honored modes of interaction - deadly, but cozily familiar - which now govern our intimate everyday relations with each other and with the natural environment" (Dinnerstein, 1977:23). She believes that equal participation in childrearing would then accomplish the eradication of the hatred and fear of women (Dinnerstein, 1977). According to Chodorow, with dual parenting, both men and women would acquire the urge to parent, and women would be free to make other life-choices. Men and women would grow up expecting each other to be both loving and autonomous (Chodorow, 1978). However, Dinnerstein also recognizes that it is difficult to break the cycle of present childrearing in order that men can develop as willing participants in the parenting process (Dinnerstein, 1977). The problem of overcoming the current psychological and structural constraints that restrict changes in parenting and the

gendered formation of psyches is recognized by Dinnerstein, but not solved, however.

Dinnerstein (1977) formulated an analogy to represent the division of psychological characteristics between men and women and the impact that this has on human relationships with nature:

The treacherous mermaid, seductive and impenetrable female representative of the dark and magic underwater world from which our life comes and in which we cannot live, lures voyagers to their doom. The fearsome minotaur, gigantic and eternally infantile offspring of a mother's unnatural lust, male representative of mindless, greedy power, insatiably devours live human flesh.
(p. 5)

Eisenstein (1983) interprets this metaphor as an indication of a growing inability of humans to live in harmony with themselves and their natural environment. She sees patriarchal structures as the embodiment of the reaction against the powerlessness of infancy and the association of women with nature. Patriarchy thus attempts to mechanize the world and control natural processes (Eisenstein, 1983). Ironically, the resulting megamachine threatens the existence of humanity (Dinnerstein, 1977). Eisenstein's interpretation suggests that perhaps self-destruction is ultimately the only way men can resolve their conflicts with women and nature.

Radical Feminism

Radical feminism was originally a reaction against liberal feminism and leftist politics. It developed a ground-breaking new analysis of women's oppression (Young, 1980). Whereas liberal feminists suggested that women are as capable as men and could simply join the public sector and succeed by employing the same strategies as men (Eisenstein, 1983; Tong, 1989), radical feminists focussed on the role patriarchal structures play in relegating women to the

private sector. Radical feminism was also a reaction against the male-oriented politics of the left. Although the left talked about the common links between class and gender oppression, sexism was not a prevalent concern in their movement. Consequently, radical feminists established their own movement in order to deal with women's issues (Eisenstein, 1983).

Radical feminism is a woman-centred analysis that identifies patriarchy as a social system that is constructed and controlled by men. This system is characterized by a hierarchical division of men and women, and by the oppression of women (Descarries-Boulanger and Roy, 1991). Radical feminists believe that gender oppression is the oldest and original form of exploitation, and that the source of women's oppression and inferior status in society is patriarchy. Gender relations are seen as a prototype for all other power relations; nature, race, and class oppression also stem from patriarchy (Eisenstein, 1983; French, 1985; Millet, 1970).

French (1985) traces the origins of patriarchy to primitive societies where people originally lived in harmony with nature, and women and nature were aligned in a positive way. However, she speculated that when food became scarce, people began to view nature as dangerous and capricious. As humanity fears and hates what it is dependent upon, humanity became alienated from nature. Alienation from women, who were associated with nature, also resulted (French, 1985).

French suggests that this alienation of men from nature and women, and women from nature and themselves, led to further feelings of hostility and hatred toward both women and nature, and the attitude developed that both nature and women must be dominated and controlled. Ensuing patriarchal socialization of women supported women's alienation from themselves through the development of a false consciousness that was contrary to women's best interests (French, 1985).

Radical feminists see the dichotomy between men and women as "the primary contradiction in society" (Worcester, 1983:47). They identify a social power difference between men and women which is historically based on women's role in the reproductive process. The lived experiences of women's reproductive role and the dependence of infants on mothers for food set the stage for a dependency on men for women's and children's survival. Radical feminists suggest that a gendered division of labor is also based on reproductive differences.

In time, men and women developed different psychological characteristics. Women were socialized to acquire expressive traits such as nurturance, affection, and obedience. Men acquired instrumental traits such as aggression, ambition, and originality. These characteristics then made men more suitable for positions in the patriarchal public sphere, and women more suited to roles as housewives and mothers. This gender role stereotyping also conditioned women into accepting their secondary position in society (Eisenstein, 1983; Firestone, 1971; Janeway, 1971).

Radical feminists believe that through this process, a social mythology emerged that gendered traits were biologically determined. The respective associations of men and women with the private and public spheres consequently became an ideology. In a circular fashion, women were then considered by a patriarchal society to be incapable of fulfilling traditionally masculine roles in society because of physiological inabilities (Descarries-Boulanger and Roy, 1991; Warren, 1987). Social, psychological, economic, and political pressures kept both genders from breaching the boundaries of traits and behaviors that were acceptable for their gender (Eisenstein, 1983; Janeway, 1971; Millet, 1970).

French (1985) suggests that patriarchy was built on the concept of "power over" - the domination of, and competition

with, others. Radical feminists believe that male control is maintained through brainwashing both men and women to believe that men should have control. Social institutions also support the hegemony of patriarchy. Women who don't conform to societal notions of femininity are punished in both subtle and blatant ways (Daly, 1978; Millet, 1970).

In speaking of how the environment of women is controlled by patriarchy, Daly (1978) describes the objective of patriarchy as necrophilia - the love of the dead. She itemizes ways that this necrophilia is expressed through the abuse of women. Suttee in India, Chinese footbinding, clitoridectomy in Africa, European witch burning, and modern gynecology are given as examples⁵. Daly sees these all as attempts to kill women, in body or in spirit. This physical or spiritual death is a way of ensuring the conformity of women to hegemonic gender ideals (Daly, 1978).

Daly (1973) also writes about how the institution of patriarchal religion supports the social consideration of women as an inferior group. God is the prototype for patriarchs:

If God in "his" heaven is a father ruling "his" people, then it is in the "nature" of things and according to divine plan and the order of the universe that society be male dominated (Daly, 1973:13).

⁵ Suttee requires that a widow throw herself on her husband's funeral pyre, and burn to death with him. In China, the practice of foot binding cripples women in the name of beauty. The African ritual of clitoridectomy removes a young woman's clitoris and sews her labia together so that sexual intercourse and childbirth are more painful and physically damaging. The witch burning in Europe is described as an attempt to get rid of women who were respected and successful as health care practitioners. Modern gynecology carries on these misogynist practices through the pharmaceutical control of "hysteria", hysterectomies, and clitoridectomies to cure hyper-sexuality (Daly, 1978).

God is the model for human relations; he is transcendent and humans are immanent. Because men are made in the image of God, they are also transcendent. Women and nature are immanent. Women are conditioned through religion to accept this immanent status (Daly, 1973).

Radical feminists believe that "natural" differences between men and women cannot justify the exploitation and abuse of women. Instead, radical feminism focuses on the interconnection between sex and gender, and on "the arbitrary division of social life into public and private domains" (Descarries-Boulanger and Roy, 1991:12). Although gender socialization is based on attributed sex at birth and afterwards, radical feminists argued that these gender characteristics are not biologically determined. They suggest that these socialized traits are used as a means of justifying human limitations based on their sex (Eisenstein, 1983; Janeway, 1971; Millet, 1970).

According to radical feminists, in order for women to be liberated, they must rid themselves of the relations of oppression endemic to patriarchy. The way to do this is to end male control of women's bodies by freeing women from their reproductive functions and traditional links to mothering (de Beauvoir, 1970; Descarries-Boulanger and Roy, 1991; Firestone, 1971; Jagger, 1983; Rich, 1976; Warren, 1987). Many early radical feminists such as Firestone (1971) embraced the idea of reproductive technologies as they would liberate women from the reproductive process⁶ (Descarries-Boulanger and Roy, 1991).

Not only did earlier radical feminists believe that freedom from the constraints of reproduction would allow women to develop the traditionally masculine traits that

⁶ Feminists now recognize that reproductive technologies, in the hands of patriarchy, will not necessarily free women from their reproductive functions, but have the potential to increase male control over reproduction (Tong, 1989).

allowed men to dominate society, they also felt that the elimination of gender differences and definitions was best accomplished through the embrace of androgyny, which is beyond masculinity and femininity (Daly, 1973). Radical feminists thought that by integrating the best of feminine and masculine characteristics, and "de-gendering" these traits, the best human would result (Millet, 1970).

The advocacy of androgyny has been abandoned by most radical feminists, however, because of the implied superiority of masculine traits over feminine characteristics (Eisenstein, 1983). Daly (1984; 1978) argues that androgyny involved the embrace of too many masculine traits, and is seen as a male attempt to coopt women and to avoid the development of the natural femininity. She suggests that letting women take on some masculine traits just keeps women as cooperating members of traditional society, and destroys women by turning them partly into men (Daly, 1984; 1978).

French (1985) advocates ending male control by changing to a system of empowerment for women. She supports the concept of androgyny, but believes that women's values of caring are more empowering than destructive masculine values. She suggests that some masculine traits (rationality for instance) might be beneficial in limited circumstances. These few masculine traits could be combined with feminine traits, and used in appropriate situations (French, 1985).

The radical feminist alternative to androgyny was the development of a woman-centered perspective which allows women to explore an identity separate from patriarchal conditioning (Eisenstein, 1983). The development of a woman-centered consciousness involved the reclamation of socialized feminine characteristics as positive attributes, as well as seeking a wild, natural woman by rejecting the traditional conception of femininity as a caged, tamed female (Daly, 1978; Eisenstein, 1983).

The stereotypically feminine characteristics that are usually used by patriarchy to support the inferiority and oppression of women are reclaimed by radical feminists as positive, desirable, superior characteristics that contain the seeds of women's liberation. This reverse hierarchical dualism of masculine and feminine characteristics places women in a position of superiority to men (Eisenstein, 1983). Radical feminists believe that if women can reject the patriarchal conceptions of femininity and get in touch with women's strength and power, patriarchal control will be overcome (Daly, 1984).

Radical feminists suggest that in a patriarchal society, differential gender characteristics link women to nature in ways that define both as inferior. Feminine traits such as caring and nurturance are denigrated in a patriarchal society and women are conditioned such that they do not realize the positive nature of these characteristics. Radical feminists believe these traits should be embraced as desirable, and that both women and men should be socialized to have feminine traits. These characteristics are seen as having potential value in attempts to solve environmental, and other social, problems.

Socialist Feminism

Socialist feminism is an attempt to integrate radical feminist concerns with those of Marxists and Marxist feminists, by combining their respective critiques of patriarchy and of capitalism. Socialist feminism is partly a feminist reaction against the failure of Marxism to consider the oppression of women as seriously as labor oppression. It is also a reaction to the limited political economic analysis in radical feminism. A socialist feminist analysis focuses not only on biological reproduction of the species but also on social reproduction of political and economic systems. Socialist feminists consider both capitalism and

patriarchy as interconnected systems of oppression that contribute to domination by gender, race, and class (Jagger, 1983). The domination of nature as it is linked to these other oppressions seems to be a logical extension of socialist feminism, although these theorists have hardly included this dimension, to date.

Socialist feminists believe that human nature is formed through the interaction between sex, the natural and built environment, and society (Jagger, 1983). They support the radical feminist claim that the differences between men and women are social constructions that are supported and perpetuated by social structures. These differences are not directly biologically determined, although socialization is based on attributed sex, beginning at birth (Eisenstein, 1983). Socialist feminists also support the Marxist feminist claim that capitalism creates a hierarchical system of workers that allows for the manifestation of a division of labor based on class, gender, and race (Hartmann, 1981).

Socialist feminists suggest that social relations are influenced by economic structures and processes which are, in turn, determined by power relations supported by the state. Although all socialist feminists agree that patriarchy and capitalism (and other forms of political economies) interact to oppress women and other marginalized groups, they are often divided into two categories - dual systems theory and unified systems theory. Dual systems theorists (Hartmann, 1981; Mitchell, 1971) suggest that patriarchy and capitalism are two separate, interacting systems with their own origins and historical courses. Solutions to the problems created by these two systems require individual strategies for each. Unified systems theorists (Jagger, 1983; Young, 1981; 1980) believe that patriarchy and capitalism cannot be separated, as they are intertwined into one system. They developed together, not

separately, and to battle class oppression is also to battle gender oppression (and vice versa) (Tong, 1989).

Dual systems theory, exemplified by Juliet Mitchell (1971) and Heidi Hartmann (1981), is a direct response to the failure of Marxist feminism to deal adequately with the implications of patriarchy. Mitchell (1971) proposes that some gender issues result from material as well as biological and psychological causes, and that some gender inequality can be addressed through economic change. However, she also believes that the psychological conditioning of men and women that is used to perpetuate patriarchy will not be touched by changes in the economic structure alone. Thus, those who would change the position of women in society must deal with questions of ideology and psychology as well as with materialism. Patriarchy and capitalism must be addressed separately as there is only some overlap between the two (Mitchell, 1971; Tong, 1989).

Hartmann (1981) suggests that the separate systems of patriarchy and capitalism are both the result of material conditions, and that gender hierarchies can be partially explained in terms of gendered relations to the means of production. However, women's oppression is also seen, by Hartmann, as the result of patriarchal conditions. Women have been historically subject to oppression in both the family and the labor market. Men have material control over women's labor power both at home and in public, whereas capitalism controls women's access to the marketplace as well as women's relationships to men and their families (Hartmann, 1981).

Hartmann (1981) believes that patriarchy and capitalism sometimes have conflicting labor interests. Capitalism only cares about the financial picture regardless of who does the work, whereas patriarchy is very concerned about the gendered division of labor. Men want women doing domestic service in their homes, and don't want women competing for

jobs, particularly as women generally are paid less. On the other hand, capitalism likes competition as it drives wages down (Hartmann, 1981; Tong, 1989). Consequently, both patriarchy and capitalism have used women (as well as other marginalized groups) as a reserve army of labor which is brought into the labor market when low priced, unskilled labor is needed. This reserve army is dismissed with no concern for their livelihoods when they are no longer needed. This gendered division of labor maintains patriarchal and capitalist control over women, who can't often get jobs. The little employment that is available is low paying. These restrictions on the labor market increase women's financial dependence on men, and marriage is often the way this dependence is manifested (Hartmann, 1981; Tong, 1989).

Dual systems theorists claim that patriarchy and capitalism are separate systems that intersect in their exploitation of women. They believe that both capitalism and patriarchy must be combatted individually, because the modification of one can be counterbalanced by the strengthening of the other. The aim is to abolish socially constructed categories of class and gender, and restructure the labor market (Hartmann, 1981; Mitchell, 1971).

The criticism of dual systems theory by socialist feminists such as Iris Young (1981;1980) and Alison Jagger (1983) led to the development of unified systems theory. Mitchell's (1971) dual systems suggestion that gender oppression is based in both ideology, particularly psychology, and materialism, implies that some aspects of gender inequalities are universal and cannot be changed through a materialist approach. Unified systems theorists believe that the material and ideological roots are so intertwined that both patriarchy and capitalism are patriarchal capitalism. Patriarchal capitalism can be fought on either the ideological or material level, suggest unified

systems theorists, as the weakening of one component will also weaken the other (Young, 1981; 1980).

Prior to the industrial revolution, claims Young (1981), the marketplace was in the home, and all family members contributed to production. With the development of workplaces outside the home, men began to leave women at home with the children when they went to work. Thus, the separate domains of the home and marketplace resulted from capitalist development, with women's reproductive functions relegating them to the private domain. Contrary to what Hartmann (1981) claims, Young believes that capitalism does care about the gendered division of labor, because it is a patriarchal capitalism that wants to keep women marginalized and dependent on men (Tong, 1989; Young, 1981).

Jagger's (1983) use of the concept of alienation parallels the Marxist concept of false consciousness when she attempts to explain patriarchal capitalism, and women's relation to both components of it. Jagger suggests that women's oppression takes the form of alienation from anything, particularly their own abilities, that could liberate them from the inequitable division of labor. Social and cultural institutions cooperate under capitalism in this oppression (Jagger, 1983).

Unified systems theorists maintain that patriarchy and capitalism are inseparable, and that patriarchal capitalism is responsible for women's oppression (Jagger, 1983; Young, 1981; 1980). They believe that because patriarchy and capitalism are so intertwined, breaking down one component of patriarchal capitalism weakens the other (Jagger, 1983; Mitchell, 1971).

Socialist feminists see the social construction of gender (race and class) as the products of patriarchal socialization that is supported by the state. The impact of the family, schools, the media, etc. on maintaining a patriarchal status quo are also incorporated into a

socialist feminist analysis. The socialist feminist analysis of social structures and the state fill a gap in other feminist theories.

Although socialist feminists have little to say about the impact of patriarchy and capitalism on nature, the notion that this combination is mutually culpable for the oppression of women may also be applied to the ecofeminist argument that patriarchy and capitalism (as well as other forms of political economic organization) are responsible for environmental oppression. Both women and nature are exploited by human development that aims to free humanity from the constraints of nature. Socialist feminists believe that nature is socially and historically constructed (defined) to suit human needs. They also recognize the need for sustainable development and a non-dominant dialectic with nature (Jagger, 1983; Merchant, 1990).

Conclusion

Existential, psychoanalytic, radical, and socialist feminists all share the view that women's reproductive processes are in some way responsible for women being relegated to the private sphere, made dependent on men, and associated with nature. In a patriarchal society, these associations are such that women are considered to be the inferior gender, and socialization processes ensure that they remain in this position.

Many solutions to this problem of gender inequality focus on reproduction and mothering. They range from recommending that women not have children (de Beauvoir, 1970), to men equitably sharing the responsibility of childrearing (Chodorow, 1978; Dinnerstein, 1977), and the development and use of reproductive technologies that would free women from the burden of childbearing (Firestone, 1971).

There is also a focus on revamping gender constructions. Some suggestions are that women simply choose not to be the inferior gender (de Beauvoir, 1970), and that if women and men participate equally in child rearing these gendered differences will disappear (Chodorow, 1978; Dinnerstein, 1977). Also mentioned are an embrace of androgyny where women and men can exhibit either masculine or feminine traits, or women's reclamation of feminine traits by seeing their positive value.

Although radical feminists devote some attention to institutional reinforcement of gender stereotypes, only socialist feminists deal significantly with the impact of social structures and the state on gender oppression. Socialist feminists advocate transforming the relations of power endemic to patriarchal capitalism and constructing alternative social structures to limit the oppressive socioeconomic and political forces in a patriarchal society. The practical implications of the socialist feminist agenda to eliminate the oppression of women can also be applied to nature as will be discussed further in Chapter V.

CHAPTER IV ECOFEMINIST THEORY

Introduction

Ecofeminist theory is not an original new theory in and of itself, but rather an original combination of the theories of alienation and feminism which have preceded it. This is not to say that ecofeminism has nothing new to offer. The previous theories of alienation were not concerned with the oppression of women, and previous feminist theories were not concerned with the oppression of nature. Ecofeminist theory combines the issues of environmental abuse and the abuse of women to provide a unified explanation of the exploitation of both women and nature that has not been previously explicated. The excitement of ecofeminism is not only in this combination, but in the future prospects it has for combining other social oppressions in its theory, as it has barely begun to do, to date. Ecofeminism as it stands is only the beginning of a radical theory that must work hard to fulfill its promise.

Although ecofeminist theory is influenced by many deep and social ecological principles, ecofeminists suggest that neither deep nor social ecology deals adequately with the links between the abuse of women and nature:

Without a thorough analysis of social domination that reveals the interconnected roots of misogyny and hatred of nature, ecology remains an abstraction: it is incomplete. If male ecological scientists and social ecologists fail to deal with misogyny, the deepest manifestation of nature-hating in their own lives, they are not living the ecological lives or creating the ecological society they claim (King, 1989:24).

Ecofeminism combines this consideration of mysogyny with ecological theory to present a feminist theory of environmental devastation.

Ecofeminists consider environmental devastation, by patriarchal capitalism, to be a feminist concern (King, 1983). Francoise d'Eaubonne coined the term "eco-feminisme" in 1974. She believed that the fate of the earth and humanity were at stake and that traditional male solutions would not counteract the devastation of the environment. D'Eaubonne argued that environmental dangers could better be addressed by women than by men, as women are more directly linked to nature and thus more concerned with environmental abuse (Daly, 1979).

This chapter presents a review of ecofeminist theory: the history of human alienation from women and nature, the psychology of this alienation, the material bases of alienation, the basis for an association of women with nature, and ecofeminist proposals for change and practice. The roots of ecofeminist propositions in theories of alienation and feminism, as reviewed in the previous two chapters, are indicated. A discussion of issues and problems that emerge from these theories follows in Chapter V.

The History of Alienation and Hierarchy

Ecofeminists (Eisler, 1990; Spretnak, 1988) suggest that prehistoric civilizations to the time of ancient Greece had a long standing tradition of worshipping women for their fertility and also revering women for their wisdom. The present hierarchical model of social organization did not exist (Eisler, 1990). However, ecofeminists speculate that around 4500 B.C., this image of women was reversed, and patriarchy was introduced, through the invasion of a warring tribe that did not have the same respect for women (Spretnak, 1989; Stone, 1976). Another proposed explanation is that alienation and patriarchal hierarchies developed when men first realized that they were responsible for the impregnation of women (Biehl, 1991; Eisler, 1990). Whatever the cause, ecofeminists believe that since then this

hierarchical mentality has manifested itself through masculine power and domination over women, and the abuse and exploitation of women (Hynes, 1990).

Stone (1976) traces the transformation of ancient Greece from a goddess worshipping culture to one that worshipped a male god, around 2500 B.C. Again, she attributes this change to the invasion of a tribe with a male deity. The goddesses that were revered as healers and providers were re-imagined by patriarchy to represent evil. At the same time, the reverence for and interconnections with nature, which goddess worship represented, was changed to a patriarchal religion advocating alienation from, mastery over, and stewardship of nature (Stone, 1973).

Merchant's (1983) examination of the historical development of human alienation from nature focuses on a change in imagery from a nurturing to a machinistic world. She suggests that this led to a corresponding change of behaviors and attitudes towards the earth, and the sanctioning of the exploitation of the environment through the emergence of the scientific and industrial revolutions.

Merchant (1983) describes how, during the early seventeenth century, the

image of the earth as a living organism and nurturing mother had served as a cultural constraint restricting the actions of human beings ... with subtle ethical controls and restraints (Merchant, 1983:100)

that protected the earth from exploitation. She believes that circumvention of the nurturant mother concept by the mechanism of nature, the development of modern science, and increasing industrial technology sanctioned exploitation of the earth. Value frameworks began to change, leading to a new ethic of exploitation of the earth (Merchant, 1983).

According to Griffin (1978) and Merchant (1983), seventeenth century writings by Francis Bacon advocated the domination and control of nature so as to extract her

secrets through violent means. A recreation of the original domination of nature in the garden of Eden was again sought by Bacon. Nature was to be constrained and kept in order, as well as made open to technological manipulation for the creation of products for human use. This exploration of nature was not a natural process, but was to be accomplished by means of dissection; this, Merchant argues, was the root of the modern experimental method (Merchant, 1983).

The Cartesian dualism between mind and matter, mentioned in Chapter II, also emerged during the early seventeenth century. The ensuing hierarchical and dualistic nature of science imbued scientists with arrogance, competitiveness, and a false sense of superiority. Ecofeminist theorists concur with deep ecologists (Devall and Sessions, 1985) that these traits have blinded humanity to the holistic nature of the earth (Hallen, 1988). Along with the belief in unlimited human control of nature, and faith in science as a solution to any problem, came unchecked scientific exploration and the environmental degradation experienced today (King, 1989).

Ecofeminists propose, as do deep ecologists (Devall and Sessions, 1985), that modern science reflects and shapes human alienation from the earth. Science is based on the detachment, domination, and division between a subject and an object (Hallen, 1988). The scientific revolution taught us that our senses cannot be trusted, that the appearance of the material world is deceptive, "and that we are alien to our surroundings" (Griffin, 1989:9).

Ecofeminists argue, along with deep and social ecologists (Bookchin, 1989; Devall and Sessions, 1985) and socialist feminists (Young, 1981), that in the course of the industrial revolution, nature "became something to be dominated, overcome, made to serve the needs of men - reduced to natural resources to be exploited by human beings to fulfill human needs and purposes which were defined in

opposition to nature" (King, 1989:20). During this period, mechanization and "the domination of nature came to be core concepts and controlling images of our modern world" (Merchant, 1983:99). Griffin (1989) suggests that "even those of us who suffer materially and psychologically from this delusory system of control have been educated to feel a false sense of safety from it" (p. 12). This delusion endangers us all by teaching us to ignore our dependence on the environment.

The Psychology of Alienation and Hierarchy

Ecofeminists are influenced by the theories of alienation described in Chapter II, that suggest that human psychology is based largely on dichotomies that separate the self from the other: men from women, humans from nature, and even the self from itself. They believe that self-interested patriarchs have objectified both women and the earth (Plant, 1989). Existential, psychoanalytic, radical, and socialist feminists, as well as ecofeminists, all believe that alienation from women has led to the support of patriarchy and mysogyny by both men and women in our society, and our natural environment is facing disaster because our patriarchal, industrial society does not respect the other (King, 1989).

Ecofeminists reiterate the Hegelian (1977), existential (Sartre, 1971), existential feminist (de Beauvoir, 1970), and psychoanalytic feminist (Chodorow, 1978; Dinnerstein, 1977) view that dichotomization, or dualism, is an essential developmental stage for the human consciousness; identifying the other signifies the ego's birth from the unconscious. This dualism is manifested in the creation of mental constructs of "irreconcilable opposites" such as subject/object, man/woman, human/nature, and mind/body (Leland, 1983).

According to ecofeminist and social ecological theory, humans are alienated from others according to gender, humanity, race, class, and sexuality, and have established a hierarchy among these divisions (Bookchin, 1982; 1980a; Griffin, 1989). This hierarchy of the self over the other, says Plant (1989), exacerbates the alienation between the self and the other. The other is objectified and only has value as benefits the subject, which is the self. This self-centered view does not recognize human dependence on each other and on the whole of the natural environment (Plant, 1989).

Ecofeminists and existential feminists (de Beauvoir, 1970; Hallen, 1988; Leland, 1983) believe that placing a greater value on one side of the self/other dichotomy leads to a hierarchical social structure where the male is the subject and the female is the inferior object. Ecofeminists and existential feminists are joined by psychoanalytic feminists (Chodorow, 1978; Dinnerstein, 1977) in the suggestion that women's reproductive function reminds men of their mortality and small part in the reproductive process. This leads to a fear and hatred of women, and a need for security through the domination of women. The ensuing misogyny results in the oppression of women based on the assumption that women are inferior to men (Hallen, 1988; King 1989; Leland, 1983).

Like deep ecologists (Devall and Sessions, 1985) and social ecologists (Bookchin, 1982), ecofeminists suggest that humanity has lost touch with its oneness with all of nature in their pursuit of individualism (Biehl, 1988). The human separation from nature led to a fear of death and loss of the meaning of human interconnections to nature, illustrated by angst about the further alienation from the natural environment (Henderson, 1983).

Ecofeminists believe that nature and women remind humans of their mortality. Consequently, because humans fear

death, nature was transformed into a mental construct that denies the interconnections between humans and nature. Social ecologists (Bookchin, 1988; 1989) and ecofeminists (King, 1989; Leland, 1983) agree that an artificial, anthropomorphic human hierarchy was, thus, projected onto nature to justify its domination and control. Thus, an attempt was made to control the fear of nature by conceiving of culture as the self and of nature as the inferior other (Griffin, 1989).

According to ecofeminists, humanity depends on culture, not nature, for a sense of safety, and has come to believe that human survival depends on control of the natural environment. Destruction of the natural environment, says Griffin (1989) gives a false sense of conquest and control⁷, and is a reflection of humanity's own insecure, alienated inner life. Because the human mind identifies its survival and existence with culture, not nature, to contradict this delusion is to threaten human sanity. "Ideas, words, numbers, concepts have become more real to this mind than material reality; ... it will go to any lengths to defend its delusory idea of reality" (Griffin, 1989:13).

Ecofeminist theory reflects the deep and social ecological belief that culture allows people to ignore their dependence on the environment. Dependence on the technological means used to dominate and control nature have led to a further alienation of humans from nature. This alienation allows environmental exploitation because of the increasing ignorance of human dependence on nature. This alienation is both a cause and a result of ignoring human interconnections with nature (Miller, 1989; Naess, 1973; Thomas, 1983).

*⁷ This belief in control through destruction follows the logic that the "power to destroy a thing is the absolute control over it" (Herbert, 1977:476).

Deep ecologists and ecofeminists believe that not only do people reject their interconnections with nature, they also refuse to take responsibility for their self-creation, the society they have made, and the ecosystem which nurtures them. On the contrary, they suicidally try to destroy nature of which they are an inseparable part. Deep ecologists and ecofeminists further suggest that humans are mostly oblivious to the slow death that they are inflicting upon themselves and the earth (Dinnerstein, 1988; Griffin, 1989; Luke, 1988).

Ecofeminist theory proposes, as do existential feminists (de Beauvoir, 1970) and deep ecologists (Devall and Sessions, 1985), that the dichotomy between the self and the other has been carried to its ultimate extreme in the situation of the self alienated from the self. Humans are neurotically alienated from their own selves, say ecofeminists, which allows them to abdicate any responsibility for their behavior. This alienation also leads to neurosis and self-hatred; people do not trust their own instincts and feelings. They are divided from and punish themselves as a result of the denial of the natural components of their selves (Griffin, 1989).

This alienation of self from self is mirrored in much female support of patriarchal and misogynist practices. This female support of their own oppression happens because women have also become alienated from themselves and nature in a patriarchal and misogynist society through the development of a false consciousness, as suggested by existential, radical, and socialist feminists (de Beauvoir, 1970; French, 1985; Jagger, 1983), as well as ecofeminists (King, 1989).

In summary, ecofeminists believe that the dichotomies human beings feel between themselves and others are both a cause and a result of an alienation from, and fear of, others. These dichotomies stress differences as opposed to relationships, and create an insecurity and a need to

dominate others who are perceived to be different (Leland, 1983). People raised in misogynist societies are frightened by their dependence on women and nature and the mortality that women and nature represent. The objectification of both is geared toward controlling fear of the other, and forgetting this dependence and mortality (King, 1989). Humanity abuses and oppresses others in order to increase its own material and psychological security. This leads to the exploitation of women and nature, with little concern exhibited for their needs or for human interconnectedness with them. Again, women are socialized into complicity in their own oppression.

The Material Bases of Alienation and Hierarchy

Some ecofeminists touch briefly on the material factors that contribute to the formation and maintenance of a hierarchical society (Griffin, 1989; King, 1981; 1990 Merchant, 1983; 1980). I would suggest that most ecofeminists recognize the impact of industrialization and capitalism, but they largely ignore these material bases of alienation and hierarchy, and rather search beyond these institutions to identify the deeper psychological reasons for the hegemony of materially based social structures.

Merchant (1983; 1980) identifies capitalism and industrialization as major factors contributing to resource depletion. However, as illustrated in the previous section, she focuses mainly on the ideological change in the imagery of the earth that allowed the avarice associated with materialism to develop to the degree that it has.

Griffin (1989) recognizes that economic motivations are an important factor in the oppression of women and nature, but believes that they are not the only cause. She says that there is no real economic profit to destroying the earth, and that the fear of nature has removed rationality from economics. Griffin proposes that the exploitation of the

other is such a strong motivation that it often overrides even economic motivations, as illustrated by the long term effects of resource depletion and pollution excesses (Griffin, 1989).

King (1981) partially grounds her ecofeminism in socialist feminism by recognizing the dialectic between cultural and economic factors of environmental abuse. She supports the socialist feminist attempt to show how economic and gender structures reinforce each other in historically and materially specific ways. Socialist feminism can help us to "understand how the material conditions of our daily lives interact with our bodies and our psychological heritages" (King, 1981:15). King (1981) believes that oppression is not totally historical nor totally biological, and that ecofeminism can also combine spirituality with the insights of materialism.

Ecofeminists support the deep and social ecological identification of technological "progress" and the concomitant material gains as strong motivations for the development that destroys the natural environment. Technological progress is also persuasively associated, by ecofeminists and deep ecologists, with protection from the terrors of nature⁸. However, the material cause of environmental abuse is not a main focus for ecofeminists, who appear to take these factors in environmental abuse for granted, and move along to other considerations.

Consequently, ecofeminists offer brief and very incomplete analyses of the material factors that contribute to sexism and environmental degradation. Ecofeminism could benefit by a more thorough investigation of material conditions, perhaps through an integration of more socialist

⁸ I suspect that ecofeminists would also agree with Herbert's (1977) suggestion that the "concept of progress acts as a protective mechanism to shield us from the terrors of the future" (p. 321).

feminist propositions. Suggestion for this integration will be discussed further in Chapter V.

Association of Women with Nature

The association of women with nature is a complex relationship. Ecofeminists believe, as do radical feminists, that women are the prototype for the oppression of the other in our society. Nature is associated with women as a means of justifying patriarchy and environmental degradation. The subjugation of nature reinforces the mutual oppression of women and nature, as women are believed to be closer to nature, (King, 1989):

Society transforms those who have become symbols of nature into objects of degradation. If a woman is a symbol of nature wherever she is pictured as submissive or wherever she is disempowered in the social order, we can believe that culture has a supernatural power over nature (Griffin, 1989:12).

Existential feminists, psychoanalytic feminists, and ecofeminists suggest that women are identified with the lowest order of existence - nature. The consideration of nature as something wild and beyond control validates the boundary between it and humanity in much the same way as the identification of women with unpredictable nature validates the need to control women (Biehl, 1988).

Ortner (1974) suggests that "every culture implicitly recognizes and asserts a distinction between the operation of nature and the operation of culture" (p. 72-73) based on human transcendence and exploitation of nature. There is an "underlying logic of cultural thinking that assumes the inferiority of women" (Ortner, 1974:68).

Ecofeminists argue, along with other feminists, that women are considered to be closer to nature because of their role in natural reproductive processes. In a patriarchal society, men are viewed as lacking natural creative functions because they play such a small role in

reproduction. Men, then, are thought to assert creativity through technology and symbols. Patriarchy places a higher value on risking and taking life as these activities counter the natural process of reproduction (de Beauvoir, 1970; Hallen, 1988).

Ortner (1974) reiterates the common feminist view that women's social role is seen as closer to nature. Women have the major responsibility for child care, as an extension of their nursing function. Thus, they are associated with children, who are also associated with nature, as they have not yet become acculturated. Women are identified with the private, domestic unit which is considered as a lower level of social development in a patriarchal society. Because men play a small role in childrearing, their sphere of influence is outside the home. Thus, men came to be considered the natural "proprietors of religion, ritual, politics, and those realms of cultural thought and action" (Ortner, 1974:79). Women are the primary socializers of children, but at some point, the socialization of boys is transferred to men. Thus, women's role in socialization is to perform the less valued conversions of young children from nature to culture (Ortner, 1974).

Ortner's (1974) explanation of how women's psychic structures develop differently from men is suggestive of psychoanalytic feminist theory (Chodorow, 1978; Dinnerstein, 1977). Women's psyches are identified with nature because they are socialized in childhood to be more concrete and subjective than men's. Because fathers are often absent from the home, sons must create abstract images for a masculine role model. Society reinforces these abstraction as boys grow up and become part of male culture. Girls have their mothers present as concrete role models, and identify with their mothers' characteristics. Thus women's relationships tend to be immanent in natural things, direct, and personal.

Because mothers are associated with nature, girls also come to identify themselves with nature (Ortner, 1974).

Like de Beauvoir (1970), Ortner (1974) theorizes that in a patriarchal society, women occupy an intermediate position between culture and nature, because patriarchy sees women as achieving less transcendence of nature than men. Women are seen as mediators between nature and culture. Thus, they have lower societal status, and are socially restricted in their activities and in their socialized, traditional attitudes. This intermediacy leads to ambiguities in the patriarchal images of women. Women are "sometimes utterly exalted, sometimes utterly debased, rarely within the normal range of human possibilities" (Ortner, 1974:86).

The patriarchal and ecofeminist perceptions of the association of women with nature is one of the biggest contradictions within ecofeminist discussion. It reflects the dilemma in radical feminist theory over whether women should accept or deny their patriarchally socialized feminine characteristics. Women are socialized to be nurturing and caring and to identify more with nature. These are considered by ecofeminists and patriarchy to be positive qualities for combatting environmental degradation. However, if ecofeminists are to claim these traits, are they not accepting some of the same social categorization that they are trying to disclaim? Not all ecofeminists believe that women are innately closer to nature, and some feminists believe that the connection between nature and women must be severed in order for women to be free from oppression (Diamond and Orenstein, 1988). This dilemma will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Proposals for Change

Ecofeminists and social ecologists believe that "there can be no liberation for them and no solution to the ecological crisis within a society whose fundamental model of relationships tends to be one of domination" (Thomas, 1983:162). King (1983) also suggests that "no person should be made into an other to despise, dehumanize, and exploit" (p. 12). Solutions to ecological and other social problems, say ecofeminists and deep ecologists, depend on the recognition of human interconnectedness and interdependence with nature and each other. Because human survival depends on an understanding of human relations to nature and to their own bodies, the nature-culture dualism must be challenged (King, 1989).

Ecofeminists recommend, as do existential, psychoanalytic, and radical feminists, that a change in gender conceptions is also necessary to eradicate urges that are hostile to life. Some ecofeminists believe that women must be the ones to enact this change because men have a vested interest in maintaining their male privileges (Dinnerstein, 1988). These "deadly privileges" of patriarchy must be given up for values of gentleness, caring, diversity, and responsibility (Thomas, 1983).

Ecofeminism challenges male-biased values and reminds women of their links to nature. Like de Beauvoir (1970), ecofeminists recommend women's refusal to continue being the "unwitting powerless symbol of all the things men wish to deny in themselves and project onto us - the refusal to be the other" (King, 1981:14). Women must reclaim their feminine characteristic as positive (Daly, 1978; Plant, 1989). This includes the embrace of the women/nature connection in a positive way. Davies (1988) also ascribes to the psychoanalytic feminist solution for the elimination of gender differences through dual parenting.

Ecofeminists, socialist feminists, and social ecologists share the view that no one is free until everyone is free. King (1981) believes that the materialist insights of socialist feminism, regarding the impact of capitalism and class divisions, can temper the radical feminist solution by warning women "not to assume an *innate* moral or biological superiority and not to depend on alternative culture alone to transform society" (King, 1981:15).

[Spretnak (1988) and Starhawk (1982) are among those ecofeminists who suggest that a return to the rituals of goddess worship would contribute to the changes in attitudes towards nature that are necessary to solve environmental problems. They believe that the reverence for nature represented by a female deity is a necessary component of an ecological consciousness (Spretnak, 1988; Starhawk, 1982).]

Ecofeminists believe that the contradiction in societal views of women is also reflected in a patriarchal desire to hold women responsible for the solution to environmental problems because they are supposedly closer to nature and thus have a greater interest in and clearer view of solutions to environmental degradation. Patriarchy wants women to be responsible for cleaning up the environmental mess. However, an adequate solution to environmental destruction would require that women be given equal rights and status in society.

Although many ecofeminists suggest that women are more capable of cleaning up the ecological mess society has made, they are also realizing that this suggestion relieves patriarchy of its culpability for environmental problems, doesn't deal with the root of the problem, and perpetuates dysfunctional gender stereotypes (King, 1989). This problem will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

Ecofeminists, as well as deep ecologists, social ecologists, and other feminist theorists realize that critical psycho-social value changes, as well as material

structural changes, are necessary for their respective agendas for change to be realistically achieved. Ecofeminists suggest that the solution to gender and environmental oppression requires that men and women take equal responsibility for their relationships with the environment and each other (Plant, 1989).

Conclusion

Ecofeminists argue that sexism and environmental abuse are linked through a "psychology of domination and repression" (Hallen, 1988:9). Patriarchy is described as a hierarchy of men over women which reflects and demands alienation of men from women and women from themselves, and a denial of the interconnectedness between people and nature (Jones and Jacklin, 1987). Ecofeminists believe that under patriarchy, the oppression of women was the prototype for the oppressions of nature, race, and class.

Ecofeminists hypothesize how society has progressed from the reverence of women and nature to the exploitation and abuse of both. They argue that the development of patriarchy relegated women to an inferior position in society (Eisler, 1990; Stone, 1976), and that industrialization, and the modern scientific method made nature into a commodity for production and an object for impartial examination (Griffin, 1974; Merchant, 1983).

Ecofeminist theory suggests that the process of self-definition requires the separation of the self from the other. Women and nature have come to be seen as inferior others within patriarchy. Men and culture are seen as superior to women and nature, and humans (including women) are alienated from both. This alienation is manifested through mutually reinforcing power, domination, abuse and exploitation of women and nature. Women are excluded from patriarchal culture, nature is controlled by humans, and the

human interconnections with both women and nature are ignored (King, 1989).

Ecofeminist theory argues that men hate and fear women, associate women with nature, and exploit both "in the service of male projects designed to protect men from feared nature and mortality" (King, 1981:12). Women's reproductive functions remind men of nature, mortality, and death, thus men want to control women and exclude them from culture. This domination of both women and nature attempts to deny the natural part of humanity. Feminists try to subvert this mutually reinforcing oppression by linking women and nature in a positive way.

Ecofeminists believe that women are associated with nature in order to reinforce the patriarchal notion of both as inferior to men and culture. Women are believed to be closer to nature naturally, socially, and psychically, says Ortner (1974), because of women's reproductive process, childrearing practices, and psychic socialization. King (1989), Griffin (1989), and Merchant (1983) briefly consider some material factors that contribute toward the oppression of women and nature as well. These factors include the development of modern science, industrialization, and capitalism.

King (1981) suggests that ecofeminism is both a result of and has the potential for causing the downfall of the modern, rational, capitalist world. Ecofeminism, she says, is a crucial social movement that combines two important contemporary movements - feminism and ecology - in order to liberate both human and nonhuman nature from exploitation and abuse. Towards this goal of liberation, ecofeminists are committed to a decentralized, antidualistic, nonhierarchical, ecological humanism (King, 1987).

Ecofeminists suggest that because the devaluation of nature is a result of the devaluation of women, the devastation of the earth is connected to the exploitation of

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Ecofeminists suggest that because the devaluation of nature is a result of the devaluation of women, the devastation of the earth is connected to the exploitation of

women, and the two oppressions must be fought together (King, 1983). Paralleling the arguments of unified systems socialist feminists, ecofeminists believe that the transforming patriarchal power relations would also destroy the general manipulative attitude toward the world (Diamond and Orenstein, 1988).

Ecofeminists suggest that psycho-social value structures would have to change, and men and women would have to take equal responsibility for the necessary solutions to environmental degradation. Women may have more compassion than men, but they have little power to make decisions. The participation of both men and women in solutions to environmental problems will, thus, require changes in gendered social structures. Women should not be considered responsible for cleaning up patriarchal messes just because ecofeminists and patriarchal society consider them more capable (Thomas, 1983).

**CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION**

Introduction

Since ecofeminist theory began with d'Eaubonne in 1974, it has presented an account of environmental degradation that has linked the abuse of women and nature in a manner that has appealed to many feminists. In the years since, writings elaborating on ecofeminist theory have been steadily increasing. Ecofeminism shows the promise of being a unique new theory for explaining the oppression of nature by connecting it with the oppression of women. However, despite its promise, ecofeminism has some serious problems in internal consistency, comprehensiveness, and practicality. The purpose of this chapter is to consider both the positive and negative aspects of ecofeminist theory, to point out connections to the roots of ecofeminism, where some of these issues originated, and to make suggestions for improvements in ecofeminism.

Virtually all the theories of alienation from nature that have been presented in this thesis have discussed alienation of the self from the other (Bookchin, 1987; de Beauvoir, 1970; Chodorow, 1978; Devall and Sessions, 1985; Dinnerstein, 1977; French, 1985; Hegel, 1977; Leland, 1983; Marx, 1974; 1961; Sartre, 1971). Some have indicated that this alienation is necessary (Hegel, 1977; Marx, 1974; 1966; Sartre, 1971), and others have decried this separation (de Beauvoir, 1970; Chodorow, 1978; Dinnerstein, 1977; French, 1985; King, 1989; Leland, 1983). But all agree that it exists, and sometimes even, perhaps inadvertently, endorse the dualisms on which alienation is based (Biehl, 1988; 1987; de Beauvoir, 1970; Salleh, 1984a). After centuries of humanity accepting and encouraging alienation from nature, environmental destruction has reached the stage where environmentalists, including ecofeminists, have implicated

this alienation as a factor contributing to environmental abuse (Bookchin, 1987; Devall and Sessions, 1985; King, 1989; Leland, 1983).

Ecofeminism offers necessary and thought-provoking historical, psychological, and material explanations for human alienation from women and nature, but these explanations are not always convincing or complete. It appears that these alienations may be even more insidious than their opponents suggest, making their eradication a bigger challenge than imagined.

Ecofeminist theory aptly suggests that the association of women with nature, which is linked to gender socialization in a patriarchal society, reinforces the mutual abuse of both women and nature (Griffin, 1989; Hallen, 1988; King, 1989). The association of women with nature and the treatment of differential gender characteristics are perhaps the most controversial areas of ecofeminist theory. Ecofeminists who advocate the association of women with nature appear to take insufficient account of the negative connotations that this same association has had under patriarchy.

The ecofeminist embrace of feminine traits as positive raises concerns about essentialism and reverse sexism, as does the proposal that women are better able to deal with environmental solutions because they are closer to nature (Diamond and Orenstein, 1988; Hallen, 1988). Before the advocacy of the association of women with nature and the acceptance of feminine characteristics can be socially acceptable as positive, a thorough consideration of gender socialization and the necessity for structural changes are required.

Ecofeminist proposals for change speak in general about the aforementioned advocacy of feminine traits and the association of women with nature. They also propose coalition politics as a means to fight joint oppressions.

The ecofeminist rejection of the concept of human alienation from nature and women has resulted in the suitable proposal that this alienation must be eliminated in order to eradicate the oppression of women and nature (Davies, 1988; Leland, 1983). Despite the legitimacy of this suggestion, ecofeminist theory does not adequately deal with the practical application of these suggestions for change. The relationships that humans should have with nature, or that women should have with men, must be delineated in a more concrete manner.

Before beginning a more detailed discussion of ecofeminism, it is necessary to note again that although ecofeminist theory combines explanations for the oppression of women and nature in an original way, it is generally guilty of white, Western, middle class solipsism. That is, most ecofeminists discuss the abuse of women and the environment without considering cultural, racial, or class distinctions between how various women experience exploitation, and how the exploitation of nature is manifested for different groups and in different areas. Most ecofeminists basically assume that everyone has the same basis of experience that they do. Shiva (1990; 1989) is an ecofeminist who writes about the social relations in India that oppress both women and nature, but her work and a consideration of other cultures has yet to receive major attention in other ecofeminist texts. This reservation should be kept in mind throughout the following discussion.

The History of Alienation and Hierarchy

Ecofeminists base their analysis of the historical origins of patriarchy on the radical feminist view that the realization of patriarchy and/or the invasion of ancient Greece by patriarchal cultures were responsible for the change from esteem for, to exploitation and abuse of, women (Eisler, 1987; French, 1985; Spretnak, 1989). This tracing

of the roots of patriarchy is a necessary part of ecofeminist theory, yet, these claims are not substantiated adequately to be totally persuasive. The ecofeminist tracing of the impact of the scientific and industrial revolutions on human alienation from nature are much more thorough (Merchant, 1983). The ecofeminist claim that patriarchy preceded other oppressions may also be supported by these historical explanations.

Ecofeminists base their theories about the origins of patriarchy on other feminist theorists (Eisler, 1987; Stone, 1976), who propose that men's discovery of their paternity potential, and/or the invasion of ancient Greece by patriarchal tribes, may have been responsible for the transition in the image of women as revered, equal participants in society to the subsequent degradation of women. This investigation of the origins of patriarchy is an important component of ecofeminist theory, but it is not convincingly explained how or why the discovery of paternity was an important enough factor to divide men from women and allow the development of patriarchy from a more egalitarian society. There is also an implication that ancient Greeks did not know about paternity and were not patriarchal, but it is not clear that this was the case.

There is also the unanswered question of how the tribes that invaded ancient Greek civilizations developed patriarchy and hierarchy. It may be that these tribes developed patriarchy because of the discovery of paternity, and spread this ideology to other cultures, but this is not made clear within ecofeminist theory. Ecofeminists also do not make clear how and why patriarchal structures developed in ways that were so oppressive to people on the basis of sex, race, and class. The psychological explanations of ecofeminist theory, if synthesized with historical accounts of hierarchies, might produce a more linear account of these

developments and the causes for them, resulting in a strengthening of ecofeminist theory on this subject.

More archaeological evidence is needed to substantiate these historical theories, particularly as there are some disputes about ecofeminist interpretations of the historical evidence of patriarchal development (Biehl, 1991; Prentice, 1988). Some critics of the ecofeminist historical analysis suggest that even societies that worshipped goddesses were violent and hierarchical (Biehl, 1991). Ecofeminism does not address this contradiction to their claim that these ancient societies were peaceloving and egalitarian. A resolution of this controversy requires a more complete scrutiny of ancient civilizations, and perhaps some contemporary cultures.

Merchant's (1983) presentation of the origins of alienation from nature is much better substantiated than the discussions of the origins of patriarchy. She proposes that the advent of the scientific revolution accelerated the separation of humans from nature, and the consideration of nature simply as an object for human study and use. This alienated view of nature, says Merchant, was also adopted by industrialism, which conceived of nature mainly as resources for human use in production. Merchant does not link industrialization to the relegation of women to the home and men to public life, as do socialist feminists (Hartmann, 1981). However, this connection has the potential to substantiate the ecofeminist claim that the oppression of women and nature are linked, and should be considered in further ecofeminist analysis. A discussion of the influence of capitalism on women and nature since the industrial revolution must also be included.

Ecofeminists suggest that patriarchy preceded, and served as a model for, the oppression of nature and oppression based on race and class (King, 1989). Because the explanations ecofeminists give for the origins of patriarchy

far precede those proposed for the origins of human alienation from nature, it appears that the oppression of women did precede the oppression of nature by thousands of years. However, this historical account, which indicates a considerable time period separating men's alienation from women and human alienation from nature, conflicts with psychological explanations, which imply that the alienation of women and nature are temporally closer.

Further analysis of the historical roots of human alienation from and oppression of nature are indicated by the inconsistencies and imperfections of ecofeminist theory on this subject. An integration of historical with psychological and material accounts of the emergence of alienation and hierarchies may improve the comprehensiveness of ecofeminist theory. This suggestion will be reiterated in the following sections.

The Psychology of Alienation and Hierarchy

The area of psychology is a difficult one, because the human psyche is invisible. Speculations about psychological causes for behaviors are very difficult to substantiate. Despite these barriers, ecofeminist theory does present a fairly convincing argument which details the psychological roots of human alienation from women and nature. It is also difficult to change the human psyche because of its early and deep roots. Ecofeminists believe that the alienated psyches that have developed in humans must be changed into more integrated ones. However, ecofeminists do not offer any concrete suggestions as to how to accomplish this change.

Although humanity may be psychologically alienated from nature, it is still physically dependent upon its natural environment. This dependency, and the relationship of human to non-human nature, needs further elaboration by ecofeminists, including an analysis of the differences between humans and the rest of nature. This would require a

comprehensive definition of what is meant by "nature". The role of technology in human development is also germane to the study of human alienation from nature, as ecofeminists briefly theorize that technological development and use are both a result of, and a cause of further, alienation (Thomas, 1983). This connection requires the development of more elaborate arguments.

The most extreme alienation of humans from nature (and thus from a part of themselves) has resulted in the potential for human self-destruction of humanity along with the destruction of their natural environment (Griffin, 1989). This seemingly suicidal behavior must be further accounted for in ecofeminism.

Ecofeminists follow a long standing tradition (Bookchin, 1987; de Beauvoir, 1970; Devall and Sessions, 1985; Hegel, 1977; Marx, 1974; Sartre, 1974; 1971) in theorizing that the psychological alienation of the self from the other has placed men and humanity in the place of the subject and women and nature in the place of the object (Leland, 1983). Ecofeminists place far more emphasis on the psychological causes of alienation than on historical or material explanations. This focus reflects many of the theories that inform ecofeminism, such as deep ecology (Devall and Session, 1985) and existential feminism (de Beauvoir, 1970). It seems, however, that everyone is talking about alienation, but no one has adequately addressed how to counter this alienated human state.

Although *how* the psychological process of alienation manifests itself has been elaborated on extensively from Hegel to ecofeminists, none of these theorists of alienation have explained *why* this alienation is necessary. It is not evident whether patriarchy resulted because of this alienation, or that this alienation is a result of patriarchy. If patriarchy is the result, it should be detailed why men were defined as the subject and women as

the object. (It is more clear how nature was objectified by humans, as nature does not have the intellect to objectify an other.) If patriarchy gives men the power to objectify women, a reason for the emergence of patriarchy is still missing. The direction of this relationship between patriarchy and alienation must be clarified. In any case, ecofeminism should be more explicit about the current power men have to define women and nature as the other, because of the social structures that support this power.

Ecofeminists have not explicitly discussed the dilemma inherent in the psychological or even physical alienation from nature that they recognize: the self "cannot be separated from the physical body in which it is found" (Ritzer, 1988:364). Human biology requires some interaction with the rest of nature for the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the food we eat. This relationship of humans to nature is a difficult one to delineate, given the history of anthropocentric human interactions with their natural environment. This is particularly true given the different conceptions of what nature really is. However, a consideration of human alienation from nature must consider the relationship humans have with nature.

Ecofeminist theory (Biehl, 1988) reflects the social ecological (Bookchin, 1988) recognition that humanity has developed differently from non-human nature, although they suggest that these differences need not result in alienation. Both groups of theorists believe that a consideration of these human distinctions should be integrated into proposals for eradicating the alienation from nature that is seen as a root of environmental devastation. Bookchin (1988) and Biehl (1988) suggest that the relationship between humans and nature must be more fully understood in order for these solutions to be developed. However, ecofeminist theory has not yet focussed on the necessary elaboration of this connection.

Ecofeminists accept the existential (de Beauvoir, 1970), psychoanalytic (Chodorow, 1978; Dinnerstein, 1977), and radical (French, 1985) feminists' suggestions that human alienation from nature results from the identification of women with nature, based on the female role in reproduction. According to these feminists, this association between women and nature reminds people of their mortality, and leads to a patriarchal need to dominate and control both women and nature. Although this argument is clear, it is not altogether convincing, especially when evidence is presented that at one time women and nature were revered for their reproduction. As mentioned in the previous section, historical accounts of this change in the consideration of women and nature are given (Griffin, 1989; Merchant, 1983), but these explanations have deficiencies. The association of women with nature will be discussed in more detail in a later section of this chapter.

Ecofeminists write as if alienation exists in the same way in all cultures, although this inference is not substantiated. It is not clear that other cultures develop, experience, and manifest alienation, hierarchies, gender relations, and nature in the same way. Ecofeminist theory needs to acknowledge these possible differences and do a comparative study of cross-cultural differences. More embrace of the writings of ecofeminists such as Shiva (1990; 1989) is indicated.

Both ecofeminist theory (Griffin, 1989) and deep ecology (Luke, 1988) propose that humans are committing suicide, because they fail to realize that destroying nature will also destroy humanity. Human consciousness is so false that people don't even realize what they are doing to themselves. There is also the possibility that people in a highly alienated patriarchal society are deliberately trying to destroy themselves. Ecofeminist theory echoes de Beauvoir's (1970) suggestion that a patriarchal society

bestows superiority on those who take life, as opposed to those who create life. Perhaps self-destruction is an ultimate expression of superiority over the alienated part of one's self.

The ecofeminist notion of dominance through destruction (Griffin, 1989) is supported by Dinnerstein's (1977) account of the creation of a megamachine in order to control nature. This megamachine is actually threatening the existence of humans along with nature; it is a self-destructive way for humans to control nature. Dinnerstein (1977) also suggests that neither men nor women develop a capacity which enables them to take responsibility for themselves or the world they have made, so perhaps the destruction of humanity through the abuse of its natural environment is based on human inadequacy. Further ecofeminist consideration is necessary regarding why humanity is destroying the natural environment it depends on, when humans should realize that the outcome is self-destruction. More ecofeminist analysis of the development and use of technology might point out that this destruction seems irrelevant to humans, as they have faith in technological solutions to any environmental problems they might create.

Ecofeminists (Thomas, 1983) do focus briefly on how technological development is both a cause and a result of human alienation from nature. However, even the ancient civilizations that ecofeminists value used technology. Thomas' (1983) analysis of modern technology suggests that the modern scientific method has influenced technology so that it has become an area dominated by separation and objectification. This technology excludes women and reflects human alienation from nature. Thomas (1983) advocates resolving this tension through the use of decentralized, non-exploiting alternate technologies which take into account social and political implications. Further consideration of the impact of science and technology on

women and nature could include more attention to feminist research on this topic (e.g., Franklin, 1990; Keller, 1985).

In this section, suggestions were made for the improvement of ecofeminist theory through the inclusion of an analysis of the impact of social, political, and economic structures on the exploitation of women and nature. The following section illustrates how little of this has been done by ecofeminists to date, and suggests directions that an investigation of material factors might take.

The Material Bases of Alienation and Hierarchy

Although King (1981), Griffin (1989), and Merchant (1983; 1980) do include some consideration of the implications of political economics on the oppression of women and nature, one of the major criticisms of ecofeminism is its lack of a thorough analysis of the role of economic structures and the state. The psychoanalytic and radical feminist roots of ecofeminism are also faulted for this omission. Both Chodorow (1978) and Dinnerstein (1977) lack a material analysis in that they ignore most social power structures and their influences on the lives of women. Radical feminism has also been criticized for paying little attention to the material roots of women's oppression, as this gives an incomplete picture of women's position in society (Mitchell, 1971). Ecofeminists reproduce these failures in their insufficient consideration of economic and social structures of power and domination that oppress women and nature.

The brief ecofeminist consideration of the political economics influencing the abuse of the environment (Griffin, 1989; King, 1981; Merchant, 1983) is partly due to the ecofeminist identification of patriarchy as the main cause of environmental oppression. This is in reaction to the deep ecologists' (Devall and Session, 1985; Naess, 1984a; 1984b) ignoring of patriarchy as a factor in the abuse of nature.

Deep ecologists focus instead on the impact Western culture, science, technology, and capitalism have had on the environment. Ecofeminists often appear to take these factors for granted in their efforts to emphasize the implications of patriarchy, and then move along to psychological explanations for the development and dominance of the social structures which oppress women and nature. An analysis of political, economic and social factors must be integrated more specifically into ecofeminist theory in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the oppression of both women and nature, as well as of oppression based on race and class.

Merchant's implication of industrialization in the change from the reverence to the domination of nature is similar to Stone's (1973) implication of patriarchy in the change from goddess worship to male-dominated religion. Although several thousand years separate these occurrences, this parallel suggests an interaction between industrialization and patriarchy in the oppression of women and nature. As mentioned earlier, socialist feminists (Hartmann, 1981) recognize this connection, and ecofeminists would do well to incorporate this analysis into their theory. Chronologically, based on the ecofeminist historical account of human alienation from women and nature, it appears that patriarchy may have been primarily responsible for changing attitudes towards women and nature, and that industrialization (and later capitalism) only exacerbated this trend. This connection should be elaborated on by ecofeminist theory.

Ecofeminists echo the social ecological (Bookchin, 1989) indication that humans' alienations and hierarchies among themselves are projected onto nature in order to justify the abuse of nature (King, 1983). They suggest that this logic is then reversed in order to justify abuse among humans as a natural phenomenon. The social ecological

proposal that capitalism has exacerbated the development of dominance relations between humans based on sex, class, and race is also supported by ecofeminists. They follow the Marxist view that some humans are required by others to provide the labor to produce commodities from natural resources (Bookchin, 1989), and that people are consequently alienated from nature. It appears, then, that the development of environmental exploitation paralleled that of human exploitation, rather than following it, as suggested by the ecofeminist adoption of social ecology (King, 1989). A more thorough account of the impact of capitalism, and other forms of political economies, on race, class, and gender exploitation, as well as that of the environment, is indicated.

Although some applied research suggests that moral values and ideology are more influential than economic motivations on environmental attitudes and behaviors (Buttel, 1987), ecofeminists should still incorporate a more thorough analysis of the impact of material factors on the abuse of women and nature. This analysis could follow de Beauvoir's (1970) recognition that socioeconomic and political structures influence the choices of both men and women. She said that it is patriarchal structures that give men the power to make women the other. These same structures urge women to define themselves in the same way, and place constraints on women's attempts to free themselves. She also recognized that material needs must be met before women could escape their subjugation (de Beauvoir, 1970).

As previously mentioned, the socialist feminist (Hartmann, 1981) analysis of the impact of the industrial revolution on women's lives could be combined with Merchant's (1983) view that this revolution has contributed to the exploitation of nature. This synthesis of socialist feminism and ecofeminist theory could provide a more complete argument that would also indicate the support of

the oppression of women and nature by the state, capitalism, industrialization, and multi-national corporations, since the 1800's. The changing form and dominance of capitalism, as well as its impact on people and the natural environment, since the industrial revolution to the present, should be elucidated.

The socialist feminist (Hartmann, 1981; Jagger, 1983; Mitchell, 1966; Young, 1981; 1980) analysis of the state-supported interaction between various political economies and patriarchal systems of domination would seem to be a suitable match for addressing ecological issues. Although socialist feminists have not focussed their attention on environmental abuse to date, the incorporation of socialist feminist theory by ecofeminists (or ecofeminist theory by socialist feminists) could provide the missing dimension in explanations of the oppression of both women and nature.

Association of Women with Nature

Ecofeminists, as well as the existential, psychoanalytic, and radical feminist theorists discussed previously (Chodorow, 1978; de Beauvoir, 1970; Dinnerstein, 1977; French, 1985; King, 1989; Leland, 1983), hold that women are closer to nature, whether this closeness is considered to be biologically, psychologically, or socially based. The association of women with nature has been used by patriarchy to keep women in a subordinate position. As well, this association is being advocated by some ecofeminists (Plant, 1989) as the reason why women are more capable than men of dealing with environmental devastation. The ecofeminist advocacy of the association of women with nature has serious potential for undermining ecofeminist theory, however, because of the negative connotations of this association under patriarchy.

Ecofeminists provide a sound account of how women have historically been identified with nature by patriarchy as a

means of reinforcing their subjugation (Chodorow, 1978; de Beauvoir, 1970; Dinnerstein, 1977; French, 1985; King, 1989; Leland, 1983). Because nature is considered to be inferior to humanity, women are considered to be inferior to men, by virtue of women's close ties to nature (King, 1989).

Many ecofeminists follow the radical feminist (Daly, 1984; 1978) advocacy of reclaiming feminine traits when they try to reverse this logic by claiming that women are actually superior to men by virtue of women's closeness to nature (Griffin, 1989; King, 1989; Starhawk, 1982). Thus, ecofeminists suggest that women are most capable of and suited to solving environmental problems.

Ecofeminists maintain that the increasing social concern with ecology transforms the woman/nature connection into a positive factor (King, 1989; 1981), as women are seen as having traits that are particularly suited to dealing with ecological salvation (Gilligan, 1982; Hallen, 1988). Ecofeminists believe that the feminine characteristics of caring and nurturance are more helpful for actuating human connections to nature than are masculine traits of detachment and independence (Hallen, 1988).

Many socialist feminists (Biehl, 1991; Jagger, 1983) are critical of the radical feminist, essentialist view of women's closeness to nature that many ecofeminists embrace. Ecofeminists disagree among themselves, as do radical feminists, on whether the identification of women with nature will be liberating or will rationalize their continuing subordination.

Ecofeminism and radical feminism both mystify "women's experiences to locate women closer to nature than men" (Griscom, 1987:15), while virtually ignoring the links between women's association with nature and the oppression of women. Saying that women are closer to nature than men, even if it is considered to be a positive association, perpetuates the natural/cultural distinction that originally

led to the abuse of women and the environment. This is done not necessarily through intent, but as the result of logical inconsistencies in the "conceptually flawed" radical feminist arguments that carry through to ecofeminism (Griscom, 1985; Warren, 1987).

Women must recognize that both severing themselves from their natural roots and raising themselves above men because they are closer to nature are complicit with the nature/culture dualism. Although ecofeminists recognize the nature/culture dualism as a product of patriarchal culture and as a main factor contributing to the abuse of women and nature, they choose to use the woman/nature connection as a basis for a new culture that would integrate intuitive, spiritual, and rational knowledge for the creation of a free ecological society (King, 1989). Ecofeminist theory must clarify how this reversal is to be achieved without maintaining the nature/culture dualism.

Assigning women the responsibility for alleviating environmental problems because they are more closely linked to nature is seen by some feminists as reactionary (Biehl, 1991; Warren, 1987). As the association of women with nature has historically been to the detriment of women, insisting that women are closer to nature, even in a positive context, can be seen as contributing to a biologically determinist position for women. These critics of ecofeminism identify what they perceive as a regression to

harmful patriarchal sex-role stereotyping which feeds the prejudice that women have specifically female or womanly interests in preventing pollution, nurturing animals, or saving the planet (Warren, 1987:14).

The ecofeminist and radical feminist belief that women are not "intellectual beings whose essential nature exists independently" (Warren, 1987:14) from their bodily experience, but that women's bodies and reproductive

capacities are integral to women's nature (Warren, 1987) exacerbates the concern about biological determinism.

Many radical feminists recognize that patriarchal social structures both support the gendered socialization of men and women, and convince both men and women that this is a natural occurrence. However some radical feminists, and many ecofeminists, are criticized for ignoring the interaction of nature, culture, and history in forming gender, and are not clear whether women's association with nature has been socialized or is innate (Warren, 1987). Perhaps it would be beneficial to ecofeminist theory to explicitly note that all humans have been socialized to reject their ties to nature, and that women are socialized to be connected to nature only in ways socially defined as inferior (Ortner, 1974). The recognition of gendered traits as socialized would also allow the potential for men to develop the characteristics that would enable them to fight environmental abuse as capably as women.

The ecofeminist suggestions that men are alienated from women and that humans are alienated from nature reflects a Western, industrialized view of alienation that is not necessarily true in all cultures. Given the world-wide abuse of both women and the environment, perhaps this theory is widely generalizable, but more investigation of other cultures might offer valuable qualifications to ecofeminist claims. For instance, Prentice (1988) comments on anthropological studies that have shown a reversal of the gendered division of labor common to Western, industrialized nations. In some cultures men are responsible for childcare, while women provide for their families materially (Prentice, 1988). There have also been anthropological studies that suggest that human relationships to nature vary in different cultures, and that not all humans participate in the same alienated and destructive practices towards their natural

environments (Bauer, 1987; Berkes, 1987; Brightman, 1987; Carrier, 1987; Peters, 1987; Stocks, 1987; Vondal, 1987).

In conclusion, psychological theories are difficult to elucidate and substantiate. It follows that it is also difficult to formulate and actuate proposals for change in psychological areas. A combination of historical and material analyses with a psychological analysis might help to overcome some of these difficulties. As was seen in the previous section, and as will be pointed out in the next section, a lack of consideration of the historical and material factors involved in the oppression of women and nature is a weak point of ecofeminist theory that should be remedied.

Proposals for Change

The development of suggestions for the elimination of alienation from, and abuse of, both women and nature is a difficult challenge for ecofeminism. The proposals for concrete and workable solutions to problems are often the most complex issues for theorists to deal with. Ecofeminists focus mainly on psychological explanations for the alienation of the self from the other, so it is not surprising that ecofeminist proposals for change also focus largely on this area. The psychological changes that ecofeminists propose are necessary, but it is not clear how ecofeminists propose to eradicate the alienation of humans from nature or of men from women. Humanity relies on nature for its survival, and ecofeminists believe that it is necessary for humanity to live with regard for ecological principles, yet they do not define human needs and other ecological principles sufficiently for proposals for change to emerge in this area.

The ecofeminist embrace of feminine traits as positive is to be applauded. However, the suggestion that feminine traits locate women closer to nature, and better suit women

for dealing with environmental problems than men (Griffin, 1989; King, 1989; Starhawk, 1982), needs to address the implications of excluding men from the solution.

Ecofeminists promote coalition politics as a way to simultaneously battle oppressions based on humanity, gender, race, and class (King, 1983). This strategy may sound reasonable in theory, but is more difficult to apply, particularly without an adequate consideration of the social structures that maintain the status quo. The practice of ecofeminism appears to transcend most of these concerns, as will be discussed later in this section, but it is not clear that what is called ecofeminist practice by ecofeminist theorists is linked with ecofeminist theory.

Ecofeminists uphold the deep and social ecological belief that in order to halt the destruction of the environment human alienation from nature must be overcome by the development of an ecological consciousness (Bookchin, 1980a; Leland, 1983; Naess, 1984a; 1984b). However, how this can be done is not clear. Some ecofeminists recommend the rituals of goddess worship in much the same way deep ecologists advocate wilderness rituals as a means of embracing nature as an essential part of human life (Devall and Sessions, 1985; Spretnak, 1988; 1982; Starhawk, 1982). The ecofeminist reversion to goddess worship is criticized by those who believe that this is a "step backward to an era whose consciousness was permeated by myths and by mystifications of reality" (Biehl, 1991:6). Advocates of the return to the rituals of goddess worship believe that these rituals are not the objective of ecofeminism, however, but rather an approach for developing an awareness of human links to nature which would result in less environmental abuse (Spretnak, 1988).

Ecofeminists, deep ecologists, and social ecologists also maintain that humans should live according to ecological principles (Bookchin, 1980a; Leland, 1983; Naess,

1984a; 1984b). This is a good proposal, but ecosystems are extremely complex, and it is not certain that humanity yet knows completely what these principles are. It is clear that humans depend on nature to live, but it is not clear how much exploitation of nature is necessary to fulfill human needs. Although ecofeminists "wonder how much [the deep ecological] concept of 'vital needs' is shaped by the values of patriarchal culture" (Spretnak, 1988:10), they do not address just what the vital needs of humans are. It is necessary to define these needs and how they are to be attained with minimal environmental exploitation.

Although ecofeminists decry the alienation from nature that is manifested as anthropocentrism, some suggest that for women to become one with nature denies women the chance to develop as subjects and forge a place for themselves in society, as men have done (Biehl, 1988; 1987; Salleh, 1984a). However, the assertion of subjectivity by women supports the self/other dichotomy that ecofeminists reject. These contradictions must be remedied.

The ecofeminist focus on the development of women's subjectivity grows out of de Beauvoir's (1970) suggestion that women could and should transcend nature just as men do. In advocating the transcendence of the female body in order for women to be free, she accepted the mind/body split which is the masculine standard of humanity (de Beauvoir, 1970). Her proposal that women can transcend nature just as easily as men do endorses human alienation from nature. This may be a solution to gender inequities, but it does not address the psychological separation of humans from nature that ecofeminists identify as problematic. Women may be able to choose to be a subject, but nature does not have this capacity. This is a sensitive area that ecofeminists must consider carefully before defining women's ideal position in society.

Critics of the ecofeminist advocacy of the valorization of feminine traits suggest that this position is reactionary, as it appears to suggest the same biological determinism that radical feminists initially decried (Biehl, 1991; Prentice, 1988). Ecofeminists must be careful not to entrap themselves in a biological determinist argument when they suggest that women's closeness to nature makes them superior to men and better able to deal with ecological problems. The challenge to ecofeminism is to clarify their position on whether feminine traits are a result of biology or social conditioning. If ecofeminism specifies that feminine characteristics are socialized, the argument of essentialism can be overcome.

There is the potential for negative reactions from both men and women to the perceived "blame" that is put on historical "man" for societal ills. The reclamation of feminine traits as better than masculine traits has the potential for a counter-dichotomization of men and women, this time with women put forth as the superior gender. Ecofeminism is vulnerable, as is radical feminism, to the problem of buying into the same masculine dichotomization that is in patriarchy's, not women's interest (Tong, 1989), because such dualisms have been identified by ecofeminists as the main factors leading to the abuse of women and nature.

Some ecofeminists (Biehl, 1991; Plant, 1989) aptly suggest that both women and men must be addressed as coresponsible for the acceptance and practical application of ecofeminist solutions. Men, as well as women, must "cultivate the human characteristics of gentleness and caring" (Plant, 1989:3) and seek to renew their connections to nature in order to fulfill the ecofeminist vision. An adequate solution to environmental abuse requires that attention be paid to all humans' culpability for environmental degradation, the root problem in the

association of women with nature, and continuing gender stereotypes (Plant, 1989).

As a means of both men and women developing the positive characteristics necessary to fight the oppression of women and nature, some ecofeminists (Davies, 1988) also uphold the psychoanalytic feminist recommendation of dual parenting as a solution to gendered psychic development (Chodorow, 1978; Dinnerstein, 1977). They believe that equal participation in childrearing by men and women would eliminate men's alienation from women, and human alienation from nature. However, neither psychoanalytic feminists nor ecofeminists adequately consider the structural barriers to the possibility of dual parenting, such as the family, schools, and the media. Thus, practical suggestions for the application of this solution are missing.

Eisenstein (1983) believes that the separation of radical feminism from Marxist and socialist feminism and the focus on psychological, as opposed to economic, factors in explanations of the oppression of women have both contributed to the ecofeminist advocacy of promoting feminine characteristics as positive. She suggests that ecofeminist theory also needs an analysis of the impact of power structures and material considerations on gendered characteristics (Eisenstein, 1983). This would involve an investigation of how capitalism is mainly interested in economic development and profit. Capitalism promotes a division of labor based on sex, race, and class as well as the dominance of nature, women, people of color, and lower classes. The state is complicit in the maintenance of these relations of power, as they allow the state to retain hegemony (Mies, 1986). Ecofeminism must also look at different forms of political economic organization, such as so-called socialist states, who experience environmental degradation at least as severely as capitalist nations. The

destruction of nature in non-industrialized countries must also be explained.

The ecofeminist agenda for change is a counter hegemonic project; an alliance between all oppressed groups that will combat the dominant power structure which is the corporate patriarchy. Ecofeminists (King, 1983), social ecologists (Bookchin, 1982), and socialist feminists (Hartmann, 1981; Jagger, 1983; Mitchell, 1971; Young, 1981; 1980), agree that because breaking down one component of social oppression weakens the other components, the elimination of social oppression would also eliminate environmental oppression. Because of the inextricable links between the abuse of women and nature, fighting one abuse would also fight the other. An understanding and appreciation of the crucial links among all humans with each other and with nature is necessary for the success of this project.

However, it is difficult for people involved in combatting sexism and environmental degradation to attribute the equal importance implied by ecofeminist theory to two practical agendas in this alliance between feminism and environmentalism. A distinction between environmentalists and feminists can be drawn, and the two groups do not necessarily have the same priorities.

Ecofeminist theory has sparked criticism among some feminists (Biehl, 1988) and environmentalists (Drengson, 1992) who each feel that their interests are undermined by the other. Hynes (1990) suggests that there is a potential problem with combining the ecology movement with the feminist movement. The pairing of feminism with environmentalism, she says, is resisted by many anti-feminists who believe that ecofeminist principles are sound, but rebel against the term feminism. Identifying environmentalism with feminism is alienating to many people, and thus detrimental to the environmental movement.

Environmentalism has now gained popularity and respect through the criticism of hegemonic political economies, yet the reverse is true for feminism; there are "increasing differences between the conditions of women under patriarchy and nature under patriarchy" that make "men want to be known as environmentalists, even when they are not ... [and] makes women not want to be called feminists, even when they are" (Hynes, 1990:169).

Among some feminists there is also controversy around allying feminism and ecology (Gregory, 1989). Ecofeminism is basically a feminist approach to the environmental problem. Although feminist sentiments are an integral part of the movement, the main focus is ecological. This dominance of environmental issues is identified as a source of contention for feminists who see environmentalism as a new cause that detracts from feminism. Many feminists resent the cooptation of their concerns by the environmental movement, and its implication that fighting mysogyny is not an important enough concern on its own (Gregory, 1989). These problems associated with a coalition of ecological and feminist concerns must be addressed. A consideration of the practical problems involved in coalition politics is a necessary part of this ecofeminist agenda for change.

The ecofeminist advocacy of coalition politics includes a perfunctory inclusion of race and class oppression. However, although ecofeminism applies the concept of hierarchical dualism to race and class issues as well as to women and nature, very brief mention is made of these problems. Consequently, it appears that ecofeminist proposals for change are directed at the oppression of white, middle-class women and nature, to the exclusion of race and class exploitation. Perhaps this theory, as it stands, is more applicable to sexism and environmental abuse, but a broadening of the scope into other areas would strengthen this ecofeminist proposal for change.

Consumerism and capitalism/industrialization are popularly identified as causes of environmental degradation (Barbour, 1980; Goldsmith and Hildyard, 1988; Miller, 1989; O'Riordan, 1981). Although, as mentioned earlier, ecofeminists seem to recognize these factors, their chosen focus is mainly on the psychology that allows, and has allowed, humanity to let these factors gain such strong control over it. While these psychological reasons may provide explanations for environmental abuse, it is difficult to extract solutions from them. For instance, it is difficult to convince people that this psychology exists and must be changed. Even if people were convinced, this is a very long term solution, and the environmental crisis requires more immediacy. In order to change human psychology, material conditions have to change as well, so a consideration of these factors is vital to an ecofeminist agenda for change.

This thesis has focused on theory and not practice, but it should be noted that the practice of ecofeminism appears to overcome the theoretical evasion of the material cause of environmental abuse. Some ecofeminist writings do contain examples of women who are challenging both the government, corporations, and individuals over practices that are destructive to both nature and humanity (Cook and Kirk, 1983; Diamond and Orenstein, 1990; Harris and King, 1989).

The peace movement is one area of the ecological movement in which feminists have participated extensively. Many ecofeminists propose that women have a special interest in, perspective on, and ability to promote the peace movement (Cook and Kirk, 1983; Harris and King, 1989). These authors do suggest that "the relationship of feminism and women's peace politics is a mutually enhancing one" (Harris and King, 1989:2), and acknowledge the connection between the domination of nature and women by a patriarchal society.

Women and development is another area that is receiving increasing attention from ecofeminists. Connections between women and ecological issues have been drawn by some women in developing nations (Shiva, 1990; 1989). Shiva demonstrates how, in India, development exacerbates gender oppression, and discusses the oppositional practices of women. She suggests that opposition to "western" development and science is both ecological and feminist (Shiva, 1990; 1989).

Biehl (1991) believes that ecofeminists categorize all women who work as ecological activists as ecofeminists. She suggests that although some of these women undoubtedly are self-identified as ecofeminists, some (including herself) may resent the categorization due to embarrassing contradictions in ecofeminist theory. According to Biehl (1991), ecofeminists ignore these contradictions in the name of unity. Indeed, the contradictions within ecofeminism do need recognition and examination, but that doesn't necessarily invalidate their propositions. Whether or not activists would identify themselves as ecofeminists does not lessen the validity of combining feminist and ecological principles. The relationship between the theory and practice of ecofeminism needs to be explored. Perhaps a synthesis of the practice of ecofeminism with ecofeminist theory could suggest improvements for the theory.

Conclusion

Ecofeminism presents a promising first feminist explanation of environmental degradation by linking the abuse of nature with the abuse of women. However, ecofeminist theory is not yet a totally comprehensive nor consistent theory of environmental destruction. It is, however, the first feminist attempt to explain the abuse of the environment by linking the mutual oppression of women and nature. This chapter has discussed several problems

within ecofeminism that prevent this theory from being widely accepted by either feminists or environmentalists. Several areas of ecofeminism that need further explication are briefly suggested in the course of these arguments. These will be presented in more detail in the next chapter.

The historical, psychological, and material reasons that are offered by ecofeminists to explain human alienation from women and nature all suffer from inconsistencies or omissions. Ecofeminists, deep ecologists, social ecologists, existential, psychoanalytic, and radical feminists all decry the alienation of humans from nature, but agree that it exists. None of these theorists, including ecofeminists, offer reasons why it exists, and so concrete proposals for the eradication of this alienation do not emerge from the theories.

This chapter has illustrated that the roots of alienation as expressed by ecofeminists are not always consistent, convincing, or complete, either historically, psychologically, or materially. The association of women with nature has been shown to be a controversial element of ecofeminist theory as it is both decried and embraced. This chapter also demonstrated that ecofeminist proposals for change are more theoretical and idealistic than practical. As suggested, the integration of socialist feminism and applied ecofeminism might do much to improve the comprehensiveness of ecofeminist theory. In general, ecofeminism must increase its scope both theoretically, ideologically, and culturally in order to become more convincing. Following a summary of this thesis, the conclusion points to some areas of investigation that might improve ecofeminist theory.

CHAPTER VI CONCLUSION

Ecofeminist theory is informed by theories of alienation from nature and by feminist theory. The influence of theories of alienation from nature as expressed by the philosophies of Hegel (1977), Marx (1974; 1961), and Sartre (1971), as well as of deep ecologists (Devall and Sessions, 1985; Naess, 1984a; 1984b; 1973) and social ecologists (Bookchin, 1990; 1987; 1982) is apparent in ecofeminist theory. Hegel (1977) identified alienation from nature as a necessary process that humans go through in order to reconcile their social and natural selves. By contrast, Marx (1974) believed that human alienation from nature is only necessary in conjunction with a capitalist system of alienated labor. Sartre (1971) further elucidated Hegel's position when he suggested that alienation from nature is an integral and inevitable part of the process of human self-definition.

Deep ecology clearly points to human alienation from nature as a primary factor in environmental abuse (Devall and Sessions, 1985; Naess, 1984a; 1984b). Social ecology extrapolates this argument to suggest that human alienation from nature is a reflection of dominant social relations (Bookchin, 1990; 1988; 1982). Ecofeminism carries these concepts even further by suggesting that human alienation from nature is a reflection of human alienation from women, expressed through the association of women and nature (Biehl, 1987; Hallen, 1988; King, 1989; Leland, 1983).

Ecofeminism is also informed by existential, psychoanalytic, and radical feminism. Existential feminism further elaborates Sartre's concept of the alienation of the self from the other, by considering the impact this separation has on women (de Beauvoir, 1970). Psychoanalytic feminists focus on how women's responsibility for

childrearing has led to the development of gendered psyches (Chodorow, 1978; Dinnerstein, 1977). Radical feminists concentrate on patriarchy as a system which exploits and abuses women and other objectified members of society (Daly, 1984; 1978; French, 1985). Socialist feminism has not influenced ecofeminism much to date, but ecofeminist theory could benefit from an integration of socialist feminist propositions. Socialist feminist theory deals with the interaction between patriarchy and capitalism, and how it contributes to the oppression of women (Hartmann, 1981; Jagger, 1983; Mitchell, 1971; Young, 1981).

Building on these theoretical roots, ecofeminist theory suggests that patriarchy makes both women and nature the other, and that women and nature are associated in mutually oppressive ways. Ecofeminists trace the historical, psychological, and material roots of alienation from, and hierarchy over, women and nature. The association of women with nature and the process of gender socialization are also elaborated on by ecofeminist theory. Ecofeminist proposals for change include the elimination of alienation, of gender socialization, and of the oppression of women and nature.

The discussion section of this thesis brought up many positive features of ecofeminism as well as areas of deficiency within ecofeminist theory that need to be remedied. This section will reiterate suggestions for the improvement of ecofeminist theory. These proposals will be elaborated through the presentation of areas for future research that ecofeminists might address.

The historical accounts of the development of the alienation of humans from nature, and of men from women, are not complete enough to present a comprehensive argument. The reasons for the emergence of modern science and industrialization as dominant features of society need further consideration. Although the effects of industrialization on nature are well established by Merchant

(1983), connections need to be drawn between the impact of industrialization on the social view of nature and of women. This would support the ecofeminist contention that the oppression of women and nature are interactive. Ecofeminists must also note that society has changed to a post-industrial and post-modern stage. The implications of these changes on the abuse of women and the environment must be addressed. An integration of post-modern and post-modern feminist literature is indicated.

Given the ecofeminist discussion of the origins of the oppression of both women and of nature, it appears that more research on when and how alienation actually started is necessary. Descartes referred to a mind/body split and Bacon advocated this split in the seventeenth century, but it seems clear that alienation of the self from the other began many centuries earlier. Certainly there were gender, class, and race oppressions before then.

The historical development of the psycho-social attitudes we have about our selves and others must be further elucidated to be accepted as an explanation for contemporary human psychology. It is difficult to convince people that they fear and hate both women and nature, as these concepts have been deeply impressed into our subconscious over the centuries. Thus it is also difficult to convince people that eradicating their psychological alienation from nature is part of a solution to environmental problems. The post modern concept of a fragmented self might have rewarding applications in this area, especially considering the changing economic structures as societies pass from industrial to post-industrial.

The causal links between the alienation of humanity from women and nature must be established more clearly. Ecofeminism makes more evident how humans came to be alienated from nature than it does how men came to be

alienated from women. Ecofeminists do not make clear whether they believe patriarchy produced alienation or alienation produced patriarchy. The direction of the relationship between these two institutions must be clarified and explained by ecofeminist theory.

A serious difficulty with theories of alienation is that they are difficult to substantiate. This presents a challenge to ecofeminists, who recognize that human alienation from nature is a weighty factor influencing the destruction of the environment. However, it is necessary to explain this alienation more comprehensively in order to develop strategies to counter the abuse of nature it engenders.

Psychological explanations of alienation that are offered by ecofeminists follow existential and psychoanalytic feminists in exploring the reasons for a gendered psychic development. Although their argument is clear regarding how men's and women's psyches develop in the present, they do not present an explanation for why this process evolved in the first instance. Ecofeminists suggest that at some point the psychological process of dualization leading to alienation did not exist and yet they present this process as an innate one. If there was a point in ancient Greece when dualisms did not produce alienation, ecofeminist theory must explain why this process was not present and also why it emerged. One way to further examine the possibility of this evolution may be through anthropological, cross-cultural studies that have indicated that human alienation from women and nature have different manifestations in different cultures.

The concept of nature needs further definition by ecofeminists before the human relationship to nature can be explored. Perhaps this is the first step that needs to be taken before ecofeminists continue their discussion of the oppression of nature. This definition would include a

consideration of the intrinsic value of nature as opposed to its function of providing for human needs. As discussed earlier, deep ecologists are still struggling with this connection, and ecofeminists must progress past this point.

To date there has been little measurement of societal valuations of, and attitudes toward, nature and technology. This is obviously a crucial area of exploration if change is to occur. A more complete study of the historical development and use of science and technology in relation to nature could aid this investigation. Examining the positive and negative influences technology has had on society and nature in the past, and potential use and abuse in the future, are also important components of future research.

Finding the fine balance between human and non-human development is an area that needs a great deal of consideration and research. It is obvious that humans have an interconnected relationship with nature, and that they need nature for survival, but the questions regarding how much and what kind of impact humans need to have on their natural environments should be addressed.

Ecofeminists echo the social ecological suggestion that humans have unique qualities that separate them from the rest of nature. Developing a working definition of the human relationship with nature that delineates precisely how humans differ and are the same as non-human nature is an important facet of identifying the role human society should, and can, play in an ecosystem. The questions of whether humans are no different than, and simply a part of, nature or whether they have special traits that define their role in the biosphere must be addressed. A workable definition of the human relationship with nature would involve a reconciliation between deep and social ecological principles - the division between anthropocentric and biocentric values needs to be transcended and replaced with a new eco-centrism. This definitional process should also

include a scrutiny of the ways in which humanity defines nature to suit human requirements from nature, both physical and psychological.

Much more work is needed to substantiate the association ecofeminists and social ecologists suggest exists between oppressive social relations and treatment of the natural environment. This would involve tracing the development of hierarchy in society and showing how this hierarchy has been projected onto nature. As mentioned earlier, the ecofeminist histories of hierarchical development and the accounts of the connections between human hierarchies and the subjugation of nature are both incomplete and must be expanded.

Ecofeminists believe that human alienation from women and nature must be eradicated, but are not so clear on how this is to be accomplished. Again, a delineation of the relationship between humans and nature is crucial before these plans can be developed. An extensive consideration of the social structures that stand in the way of accomplishing this goal is vital.

The impact of industrialization and the resulting urbanization, division of labor, and further separation of people from each other and nature should also be investigated in aid of increasing the scope of ecofeminism. The lack of material analysis in the ecofeminist explanation of environmental destruction may be dealt with if ecofeminist theory incorporates the socialist feminist critique of patriarchy and capitalism. Although socialist feminists have not dealt with the environmental problem to date, their consideration of social structures could be combined with the more psychological explanations of ecofeminism to form a more comprehensive theory of the alienation of humans from nature and of men from women. The dialectic between material and psychological conditions needs further investigation.

The patriarchal, and ecofeminist, associations of women with nature are used, respectively, as an explanation for the oppression of women and nature, and as a cure for this oppression (King, 1983). This dual representation of the association of women with nature needs to be considered more fully as well. The suggestion that women are more suited to deal with environmental problems than are men is related to arguments regarding gendered psyches and socialized gender characteristics. However, further investigation of these factors is necessary for clarification of the roles men and women should, and do, play in society. Ecofeminists should be clear on how the negative connotations of the association of women with nature are to be overcome. This issue requires a more extensive consideration of the power that social structures have to maintain the status quo.

The ecofeminist embrace of feminine characteristics as superior to masculine ones (Davies, 1988; King, 1981; Plant, 1989) needs examination. Feminine and masculine characteristics need to be considered as socialized, not biologically determined, traits. Therefore, men can have feminine characteristics, and women can have masculine ones. Otherwise, the acceptance of feminine traits as superior and more proficient for solutions to the ecological crisis has the potential for excluding men from participation in these solutions. The reactionary implications of this strategy need to be addressed by ecofeminists in the future.

The expression of self alienation is briefly mentioned by ecofeminist theorists when they talk about women's complicity in their own oppression, and humans' destruction of themselves along with nature (Griffin, 1989; Hallen, 1988). This connection is not elaborated on enough to be thoroughly convincing, however. Denying our natural roots, advocating androgyny, and valuing male accomplishment over our own are seen by some ecofeminists as forms of self-hatred which challenge ecofeminist proposals for change. The

ecofeminist suggestions that women separate themselves from their natural roots and raise themselves above men because they are closer to nature are complicit with the nature/culture dualism. Dinnerstein (1977) suggests that neither men nor women develop a capacity which enables them to take responsibility for themselves or the world they have made. Continuing a dichotomy between men and women may also preserve this inability to cope with environmental problems. Historical, cross-cultural, and materialist considerations might put biology, psychology, and culture into perspective.

Formulating practice out of theory is always challenging. The development of strategies for the application and practice of deep, social, and feminist ecological principles is a difficult and important future task. Ecofeminism has begun to make advances in that area, but it is still an area in need of much attention.

Deep and social ecology, and ecofeminism, advocate changes in human and societal attitudes and behavior toward nature (Bookchin, 1990; Devall and Sessions, 1985; Hallen, 1988). Their proposals for how these changes are to be accomplished are not very concrete. An examination of the literature on the human capacity for social and attitudinal change and how this is best achieved is a necessary component of future research to enable ecofeminists to develop workable strategies for change.

The ecofeminist identification of joint oppression and unified strategies for change are represented by the lyrics of the song "Unity of Oppression" by Consolidated (1991).

Men rape women,
and man [sic] rapes the environment,
and people with the post religious views
are violent.
How can we advance with a memory so short;
we live a society that kills animals for sport.
And how can we discuss gender, class, or race
when we can't respect the rights
of lesbians and gays.

Your singular issues, that just can't understand
how you can love one
and have hatred for the other:
you torture your sisters
while saying peace to your brothers...
I hear you condemning all racist sentiments,
and then I hear you making anti-semitic comments
... As long as we insist on being so oppressive,
we will continue to play
the role of the oppressor...
Instead of only allowing one type of equality,
and place the blame on each other,
we should be expanding our scope
of understanding and hope...
When men and women, straight and gay,
whites and non-whites begin to unite,
when humans can treat non-human species
with fairness and dignity,
then - only then - is there unity.

The promise of ecofeminism lies in this conception of environmental oppression as linked with the oppression of people based on sex, race, class, and sexuality. Although the main focus of ecofeminism is on the abuse of women and nature, it has begun, and should continue, to iterate the ways in which dominant social structures exploit some social groups and nature based on alienations from and associations between these groups.

The ecofeminist suggestion that coalition politics is the best way to combat the mutual oppressions of nature, sex, race, class, and sexuality faces some serious obstacles both within ecofeminist theory and practice. The material constraints on this proposed solution must be recognized and dealt with. Research on new social movements has shown that although this unity of oppression is advocated by many groups, there are tactical problems in applying this strategy (Adamson, et al., 1988; Cunningham, et al., 1988; Scott, 1990). These barriers need further examination by ecofeminist theory.

Even though race and class oppressions are mentioned by ecofeminism, it virtually ignores these issues. Ecofeminism suggests that the natural environment must be considered

along with women's exploitation, but class and race issues are only mentioned in passing. The feminist movement emerged partly because women's needs were not being addressed by other social protest groups. It appears that this omission is being recreated by the inadequate consideration of race and class oppression by ecofeminists (and most other feminists).

There has also been a problem in the past with combining class and environmental issues. This is partly because it is assumed that the only way the lower classes can achieve economic equality is through the same environmentally destructive practices that have allowed the upper classes to become wealthy. This solution to class issues requires more resource depletion, doesn't address the growth paradigm that contributes to environmental degradation, and also does not deal with all of the underlying roots of class oppression. Remedies to class inequalities that do not require further abuse of nature, or of other oppressed groups, must be developed.

Although many women have been involved in the peace movement and the environmental movement, they would not necessarily categorize themselves as ecofeminists. Often women who are associated with ecofeminism by ecofeminist theorists may not, in fact, all agree with the ecofeminist categorization of themselves (Biehl, 1991). However, even if this label is not assumed explicitly by feminists who are also ecological activists, the connections made by at least some branches of ecofeminism may apply to their actions and ideologies. The application and acceptance of the ecofeminist label is an entire area of study in itself, and much more investigation in this area is necessary for such affiliations and identifications to be made clear.

Ecofeminism has barely begun the process of developing a complete explanation for environmental abuse, much less for gender, race, and class exploitation. However,

ecofeminist theory has made a start in a promising direction for further investigation of human and non-human oppressions. The need for much more explicit historical and material analysis of these social problems remains. The combination of these analyses with the psychological and philosophical explanations that ecofeminists offer would strengthen this theory. Ecofeminism would also benefit from broadening its field of research to include work that has been done on social movements and social change, in order to bolster its proposals for solutions to social oppression. An integration of the theory and the practice of ecofeminism may also help to strengthen this movement for change.

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