

The Ecofeminism/Deep Ecology Debate: A Reply to Patriarchal Reason

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I discuss conceptual confusions shared by deep ecologists over such questions as gender, essentialism, normative dualism, and eco-centrism. I conclude that deep ecologists have failed to grasp both the epistemological challenge offered by ecofeminism and the practical labor involved in bringing about social change. While convergencies between deep ecology and ecofeminism promise to be fruitful, these are celebrated in false consciousness, unless remedial work is done.

I. ECOFEMINISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

THE AUTONOMY OF ECOFEMINISM

Environmental ethics is an emerging field in philosophy that examines “man’s relation to nature,” as distinct from socialism, which treats “man’s relation to man,” and feminism, which takes up the question of “man’s relation to woman.” Ecofeminism, like Green politics—at least in its ideal form, expresses a synthesis of all three concerns. Within the field of environmental ethics itself, several alternative paradigms coexist: the mystical wilderness tradition of Thoreau; the ecological stance of Naess and others with its increasingly psychological emphasis; an aesthetic, playful, humanist tendency manifest in Goodman; the agrarian approach of Mollison; Singer’s legalistic ethical extensionism; and Ehrlich’s managerial focus on resource conservation. These various formulations range roughly across a continuum of human attitudes toward the natural world from “soft” to “hard,” from “let it be” to “let’s get the most out of it.” Accordingly, a number of them have been crossed in debate: such deep ecologists as Devall have criticized resource conservationists for the shallowness of their environmentalism and such ethical extensionists as Regan have accused ecological holists, for

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example, Callicott, of ecocentric fascism! On the other hand, there is not always a clear distinction between one ethical position and another. The agrarian approach as articulated by Berry has mystical elements, while some rights theorists, for example, Stone, are just as committed to seeing a paradigm shift away from anthropocentrism as their deep ecology critics are.¹

Contrary to the assumption of many environmental ethicists, ecofeminism did not evolve out of these philosophical inquiries, which for the most part reflect the endeavors of academic men and middle-class nature lovers. Even so, although ecofeminism cannot be subsumed by environmental ethics, tendencies within the feminist tradition can be found that parallel the various eco-ethical standpoints. Those who take pleasure in mystical identification with a re-enchanted nature, for example, wilderness environmentalists and deep ecologists, are matched by such ecofeminists from the U.S. West Coast as Starhawk or Deena Metzger, who celebrate the cycles of nature and the communion of women's bodies with these changes, and weave powerful spiritually affirmative feminist rituals around this link to the source of our being. In England and West Germany, through the work of Monica Sjoo, pagan nature worship and the lost wisdom of "witches" are being rediscovered. A parallel to the artistic and agrarian ethic appears among Canadian feminists, associated with the journal *Women and Environments*, who design domestic and city spaces for mothers with small children, the disabled, and the aged. Practitioners of organic farming include Lea Harrison in Australia and Margrit Kennedy in Germany. Women bioregionalists and communitarian socialists also converge on an agrarian ethic. The ethical extensionists find their equivalent among feminist animal liberation and wilderness preservation activists. Nevertheless, most ecofeminists have moved away from arguments about rights toward a radical-feminist-inspired depth analysis of interspecies exploitation. Andree Collard and Connie Salamone in the U.S. are notable instances. Meanwhile, resource conservationists can be found within feminism as well. In Kenya, Wangari Maathai and women of the Greenbelt Movement recently received an Alternative Nobel Prize for their work in reforesting the marginal areas of their farm lands. In the industrial nations, women interested in resource conservation per se tend to be liberal feminists, who recognize no particular connection between this and women's immediate political concerns. Like urban based Marxist feminists, they tend to envisage environmental questions as management problems with technological solutions.

The major difference between ecofeminism and the field of environmental ethics is that none of the latter's paradigms succeed in integrating a social analysis. For this reason, while many Greens and eco-political activists are now interested in the highly popularized environmental ethics position called deep ecology, at the

¹ Roderick Nash's *The Rights of Nature* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989) is a good introduction to the field.

same time, they are encountering a number of trenchant critiques of the stand. As far as I am aware, the debate between ecofeminism and deep ecology began with a paper I presented at a conference in Australia in 1983, "Deeper than Deep Ecology: The Eco-Feminist Connection," which was published in *Environmental Ethics* a year later.² Nevertheless, feminist and ecofeminist difficulties with deep ecology continue to be uncovered as essays by Janet Biehl, Ynestra King, and Sharon Doubiago demonstrate. In addition to the reservations expressed by women, left-wing radicals as theoretically diverse as Tim Luke, Murray Bookchin, and George Bradford also regularly contest deep ecology's philosophical coherence and political adequacy.³ One thing is sure: the passion that deep ecology arouses testifies to the fact that it has hit a significant nerve in modern Western societies—and, of course, the same can be said for ecofeminism.

A DIALECTICAL PROCESS

Ecofeminism has a specific history of its own, shaped by the day-to-day efforts of ordinary women to survive with their families. In highlighting the ecological dimension and drawing on the grass-roots experiences of women in both developed and so-called developing countries, ecofeminism opens up the feminist movement itself to a new cluster of problems and challenges urban-based theoretical paradigms—liberal, Marxist, radical, post-structuralist—that have dominated feminist politics over the last two decades. By pitting new empirical concerns against established feminist analyses, ecofeminism is encouraging a new synthesis in feminist political thought. In seeking a review of "man's relation to nature," ecofeminism certainly addresses the same project as environmental ethics. As a feminism, however, ecofeminism takes on its project in a compound sense, since it simultaneously calls for a review of "man's relation to woman" as it goes along. Unlike environmental ethics in general, and deep ecology in particular, ecofeminism does not go after its object with a simple linear critique. It is obliged to engage in a zig-zag dialectical course between (a) its feminist task of establishing the right of women to a political voice; (b) its ecofeminist task of undermining the patriarchal basis of that political validation by dismantling the

² Ariel Salleh, "Deeper than Deep Ecology: The Eco-Feminist Connection," *Environmental Ethics* 6 (1984): 335-41. The critique addresses two texts: Arne Naess, "The Shallow and the Deep, Long Range Ecology Movement," *Inquiry* 16 (1973): 95-100, and Bill Devall, "The Deep Ecology Movement," *Natural Resources Journal* 20 (1980): 299-322.

³ See Janet Biehl, "It's Deep But is It Broad?" *Kick it Over*, Winter 1987, pp. 2A-4A; Ynestra King, "What is Eco-Feminism?" *The Nation*, 12 December 1987, pp. 702, 730-731; Sharon Doubiago, "Mama Coyote Talks to the Boys," in J. Plant, ed., *Healing the Wounds* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1989); Murray Bookchin, "Social Ecology versus Deep Ecology," *Socialist Review* 18 (1988); Tim Luke, "The Dreams of Deep Ecology," *Telos* 76 (1988): 65-92; George Bradford, *How Deep is Deep Ecology?* (Ojai, Calif.: Times Change Press, 1989).

patriarchal relation of man to nature; and (c) its ecological task of demonstrating how women have been able to live differently in relation to nature.

The need for a multilevered and reflexive epistemological stance is not often recognized by men, for whom patriarchal social reality is a relatively straightforward affair, in large part because the underbelly of their social life is held together by psychosocial maintenance work that women of most races are socialized to do. Women are thus already sensitized to meta-levels of communication as a result of the “master-slave dialectic” that they find built into patriarchy.⁴ Furthermore, as women begin forging new cultural meanings of their own and such shared realities as feminist understanding, many men find themselves left behind—which can be a very disturbing experience. To a large extent, some of the category mistakes and misrepresentation of ecofeminism made by deep ecologists are a result of their attempts to cope with this dialectical process. The deep ecologists and their comrades at arms, Earth First!, were quick to come to the aid of their environmental ethic. Unfortunately, many of their replies have been mere reassertions of the standpoint or attempts to “shoot the (feminist) messenger,” rather than efforts to assimilate the criticism and nurture a shared feminist ecological perspective. Hopefully, the following review of deep ecological responses to ecofeminism, based largely on material published in *Environmental Ethics* since 1986, will help locate the obstacles to that common political understanding. Broadly, there are three kinds of difficulties: *philosophical* points at issue; the *sociopolitical* grounding of deep ecology itself; and the *psychosexual dynamic* which runs through the exchange. Although these problems are interlocked and each works to reinforce the others, in the present paper I focus only on the first of these areas.⁵

Talk about examining the “relative merits” of deep ecology and ecofeminism, a competitive either/or approach common to several defenders of deep ecology, misses the intent of the original ecofeminist criticism, which was not to dismiss deep ecology, but to urge it to sharpen up its political awareness. As I affirmed right at the beginning of “Deeper than Deep Ecology”:

. . . deep ecology is already an attempt to transcend the shortsighted instrumental pragmatism of the resource-management approach to the environmental crisis. It argues for a new metaphysics and an ethic based on recognition of the intrinsic worth of the nonhuman world. It abandons the hardheaded scientific approach to reality in favor of a more spiritual consciousness. It asks for voluntary simplicity in living and a nonexploitative steady-state economy. *The appropriateness of these attitudes as*

⁴ My position, temporarily and strategically privileging women’s standpoint, is similar to Sandra Harding’s formulation in *The Science Question in Feminism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986). See also the earlier epistemological essay, “On the Dialectics of Signifying Practice,” *Thesis Eleven* 5-6 (1982): 72-84, where I discuss the role of suffering as a phenomenological lever behind political perception.

⁵ The other two difficulties will be covered in Ariel Salleh, “Class, Race, and Gender Discourse in the Ecofeminism/Deep Ecology Debate,” *Environmental Ethics*, forthcoming.

*expressed in Naess and Devall's seminal papers on the deep ecology movement is indisputable.*⁶

For some reason, none of the respondents to that ecofeminist position paper has acknowledged this endorsement of the deep ecological project. Each proceeds "as if" I had dispensed with deep ecology itself, by indicating where it falls short from a viewpoint based on women's experiences. Needless to say, this continuing oversight has been destructive of future unity between deep ecology and ecofeminist aims. At least, the need for some kind of synthesis has now been acknowledged by deep ecologists—and that is an achievement. But there is still a lot of flailing around over what can only be called "scholastics."

It is possible that the wry title phrase "Deeper than Deep Ecology" has been felt as a threat by deep ecologists, particularly, among them, men not used to having their ideas tested by women. If so, then it negates the reason for the paper in the first place. If we are to forge a politics based on a radically new appreciation of the potentials of all beings, then men's openness to the views of women is an essential part of the program. Women and men are at a point in history when each is learning to find and use the parts of themselves previously suppressed by patriarchal lore. The same rediscovery is a major facet of deep ecology, and again, one acknowledged by my own statement: "This is the self-estranged male reaching for the original androgynous natural unity within himself." Conversely, women are learning to express themselves in public with a new confidence and assertiveness. As committed radicals who are working on themselves, deep ecological men should ideally be able to accept women speaking out, and relate to them appropriately as equals. Women should not have to continue pandering to men's need for authority, as they have been trained to do under patriarchy, by tiptoeing around and dressing up their objections to what men do in euphemisms that safeguard the masculine ego. The recognition of this point is a crucial part of any political work in the twentieth century. Hence, when a male friend read the newly finished "Deeper than Deep Ecology" manuscript and suggested that I change the title to "Deepening Deep Ecology" as a "strategic move," I thought it over and decided not to. First, it seemed to me that to do so would mean accepting the traditional pattern of protecting men from something they might not want to hear from a woman, a reactionary move. Second, his proposed title implied that ecofeminism was not a discrete politics "in its own right," but rather a contribution to a basically male defined environmental ethic. Third, by undertaking the task of "deepening" deep ecology, ecofeminists would simply have slipped back into the role of doing men's theoretical housework for them, tidying up their concepts—unrecognized, unacknowledged, just as mother's work was. Ironically, the fact that a meta-discursive preamble to this paper is called for suggests that women are

⁶ Salleh, "Deeper than Deep Ecology," p. 339 (emphasis added).

still required to attend to the fabric of social relations that sustains patriarchal discourse, including the academic sort.

II. UNFAMILIARITY WITH FEMINIST HISTORY AND THEORY

LIBERAL, MARXIST, RADICAL, POST-STRUCTURAL PARADIGMS

Looking at the *philosophical* points of argument pursued by deep ecologists, it is plain that each man comes to accept the reality of patriarchy in his own time. In this respect, the contrast between Alan Wittbecker's reactive outrage toward ecofeminist criticism in "Deep Anthropology, Ecology and Human Order" in 1986 and Michael Zimmerman's more cautious response in "Feminism, Deep Ecology, and Environmental Ethics" in 1987 is instructive. Zimmerman does make an effort to acquaint himself with the feminist literature and has a veritable think tank of women advisers. The bulk of his long essay, in fact, is quite a useful summary of women's writing on ethics and epistemology. Jim Cheney's piece, "Eco-Feminism and Deep Ecology," in the next issue goes even further. Sympathetic to the synthesis of feminism and ecology, Cheney leaves behind the patriarchal mindset altogether and works creatively with feminist theory. Don Davis' "Ecosophy: The Seduction of Sophia" in 1986 is in a similar vein. Both Davis and Cheney agree that deep ecology responds to criticism by simply attaching ecofeminist insights to a basically masculine ethical orientation. However, Warwick Fox's extended tract in 1989, "The Deep Ecology-Ecofeminism Debate and its Parallels," is, like Zimmerman's, well out of its depth concerning the shifts in consciousness that mark paradigms within feminism—liberal, Marxist, radical, and ecofeminist, in this case. Clearly, the finer points of feminist political thought are not something academics or environmentalists necessarily know about. For that reason, though, some intellectual modesty might have protected deep ecologists here.⁷

Feminism's earliest liberal phase has been and still is concerned mainly with equality for women in a system designed by men—access to educational opportunities and jobs, without discrimination and harassment. Part of the drive for equality, as much of contemporary society understands it, is to ensure that women's reproductive activities do not impede their progress alongside male peers. Accordingly, availability of contraception and the right to abortion are companion political issues in this struggle. The objectives of Marxist feminists have been similar to those following the liberal agenda, but rest on such structural changes as the full-scale entry of women into the waged sector and the socializa-

⁷ Alan Wittbecker, "Deep Anthropology, Ecology, and Human Order," *Environmental Ethics* 8 (1986): 268-70; Donald Davis, "The Seduction of Sophia," *Environmental Ethics* 8 (1986): 151-62; Michael Zimmerman, "Feminism, Deep Ecology, and Environmental Ethics," *Environmental Ethics* 9 (1987): 21-44; Jim Cheney, "Eco-Feminism and Deep Ecology," *Environmental Ethics* 9 (1987): 115-45; Warwick Fox, "The Deep Ecology-Ecofeminism Debate and its Parallels," *Environmental Ethics* 11 (1989): 5-25.

tion of domestic functions. The radical feminist consciousness of women's "difference," and its later convergence with post-structuralism, has broadened the agenda yet again, introducing a substantial challenge to the patriarchal terms of reference on which equality itself has been sought. More recently, an international movement of *ecofeminists* is applying this politics of difference in a full-scale analysis of the global crisis.

Although Zimmerman gives footnote acknowledgment to the fact that the terms *ecofeminism* and *feminism* cannot necessarily be used interchangeably, he forgets this point in constructing his deep ecological reply to ecofeminism. Arguments grounded in liberal or Marxist feminism, for example, cannot be placed against ecofeminism in order to demonstrate the latter's internal inconsistency. Trying to do so is like using arguments from Burke against J. S. Mill in order to prove that Western political thought is contradictory. Ecofeminist theorists in the 1980s worked through the liberal, social, and radical arguments and have digested these concerns in the light of women's lived experiences in a way that is much broader than liberal or Marxist feminism alone. Drawing together the insights of earlier analyses, ecofeminism now moves on to include an ecological sensibility. Despite Karen Warren's helpful exposition along these lines, neither Zimmerman nor Cheney nor Fox appear to be entirely clear about the distinction between liberal feminism and ecofeminism.⁸ Broadly, it can be said that the former focuses on the distribution of power and resources in society, while the latter involves both cultural and structural revolution and spiritual search. Paraphrasing the words of Australian "re-sister" Becca Miller, we do not want a piece of the patriarchal pie: we want to bake a new pie altogether. Fox shows uncertainty about Marxist, radical, and ecofeminist paradigms as well, when he tries to chastise ecofeminists by quoting Warren to the effect that the radical feminists who have influenced them have paid "too little attention to the historical and material features of women's oppression." In fact, Fox gets it upside down. Warren's text actually reads: ". . . there are noteworthy worries about radical feminism from an ecofeminist perspective. First, since radical feminism generally pays too little attention to the historical and material features of women's oppression. . . ."⁹ What can be said is that ecofeminists in the United States, along with Greens and environmentalists there, have paid relatively little attention to historical and material forces. This lack of attention reflects the general suppression of Marxist scholarship and labor history in that society. The same observation does not apply to ecofeminism internationally, though, and a perusal of the European, Asian, and Australian literature makes this point evident.¹⁰

⁸ Karen Warren, "Feminism and Ecology: Making Connections," *Environmental Ethics* 9 (1987): 3-20. Although this article is a very useful, Warren's synchronic philosophical analysis has the effect of setting up static categorical boundaries between paradigms. Actually, a continual process of learning and revisioning has gone on among women within the feminist movement.

⁹ Fox, "The Deep Ecology-Ecofeminism Debate," p. 14, and Warren, "Feminism and Ecology," p. 15.

¹⁰ Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation* (London: Zed, 1987); Vanadana Shiva, *Staying*

The women of many racial backgrounds who are engaged in ecofeminist activities, may not themselves identify with the tradition of feminist ideas produced by educated middle-class Westerners over the past two decades. Nevertheless, they will have their own sense of the underlying patriarchal power at work behind violence against nature and the degradation of women. The Shibokusa grannies of Japan and the Roman Catholic housewives coping with industrial toxins in Seveso, Italy are cases in point. In fact, peace activism and environmental struggle may be a first step toward developing an interest in feminism as an ideology per se. Similarly, in the so-called advanced nations, where women domestic consumers, according to Zimmerman and Fox, are accomplices in environmental exploitation and reap "the advantages" of it, many women become ecofeminist activists without having been feminists first. Some even move on to an understanding of how they have been manipulated into consumerism by a capitalist patriarchy (hence, the organic, grass-roots nature of ecofeminist politics). At the same time, intellectually inclined women have been using the feminist tradition to weave an interpretative literature around woman-nature links. Consider the more strictly feminist contributions of say, Susan Griffin in the U.S., Hilka Pietila in Finland, or Giovanna Merola in Venezuela. Some ecofeminism, then, is contiguous with radical or socialist paradigms, but by going back to women's lived experiences in a time of global crisis, it brings fresh understandings to these movement ideologies.

Now the question arises: why use the word *ecofeminism* at all? Fox certainly believes it is redundant, given what he sees as the broader shoulder of deep ecology. Of course, from the perspective of historians of ideas, sociologists of knowledge and social movements, the term usefully situates a very particular direction in feminist politics. Marking the spontaneous appearance of a new consciousness among women, it is remarkable how it cropped up in several places around the globe during the 1970s. The term *ecofeminism* is a logical combination, integrating and transcending both feminist and environmental concerns alike.

DIFFERENCE AND ASYMMETRY

Consistent with the patriarchal subsumption of women's labor and ideas, deep ecologists miss the point when they propose women simply call ecofeminism "deep ecology." There is an urgent feminist political moment embodied in this little word: the need for lessons from a different cultural experience to be aired, listened to, taken seriously, and acted upon. This difference becomes even plainer as the dialogue between deep ecology and ecofeminism goes on. The number of

deep ecologists who have offered to join women in advancing an ecofeminist sensibility are few. My experience of men in workshops with the U.S. Green movement is more promising. Many see the logic of our analysis, appreciate how it fits with their own emancipation as bearers of patriarchy, and look forward to working with women to restore the balance. Such Green political figures as Per Garton, leader of the Grona in the Swedish parliament, have even publicly endorsed a period of matriarchy to redress the horrors of the patriarchal millennium. Nevertheless, although he means well, Garton's interpretation of ecofeminism is itself patriarchal. Feminism has never been about gaining power over the rest of society, while ecofeminism, specifically, is about a transvaluation of values, such that the repressed feminine, nurturant side of our culture can be woven into all social institutions and practices. Zimmerman observes that the ecofeminist position and deep ecology are at least superficially in agreement over their opposition to a rights-based reform environmentalism. However, again his text slips into using "feminists" here, which nullifies his argument because, although liberal feminists do endorse a rights-based politics, they would be loath to recognize the intrinsic value of nature. Moreover, in the light of the deeper radicalism which an ecofeminist analysis using the theory of difference offers, deep ecology itself looks shallow and reformist.

Zimmerman's "Feminism, Deep Ecology, and Environmental Ethics" starts out with a fair synopsis of my criticism of deep ecology, apart from a couple of points. Keeping in mind that the sentence and quote marks are his, he writes, "Male deep ecologists should consult women who are more in tune with natural world than men."¹¹ This paraphrase disregards the historical process at work here, namely, that it is patriarchal domination that puts women close to nature, while men are seen to be active in the sphere of culture. This process causes women's experiences and identities to be linguistically mediated by reference to nature. Not only is the feminine psyche constructed differently by this means, but the work roles that women are assigned also revolve around nature, "putting the dirt back where it should be." These roles, in turn, reinforce women's hands-on knowledge of natural processes. Zimmerman's "critical observations" expose a very limited understanding of these ideological dynamics, although this failing is not surprising, given the liberal feminist analysis that he so often relies on. Hence, he writes, "After having gone through the phase of seeking to dissolve differences between men and women, many feminists began to affirm those differences—and to conclude that woman is better than man." This cryptic treatment of feminist theory does little to open up understanding of the specificities of women's experience for men of good faith who want to understand them. Even though Zimmerman's text acknowledges the historicity of feminism by noting its "phases," his account fails to amplify the tragic fact that the sameness women initially sought alongside men as liberal feminists, and the radical difference they later asserted, are both

¹¹ Zimmerman, "Feminism, Deep Ecology, and Environmental Ethics," p. 38.

conceptually tied to patriarchal logic. If there is any doubt about the oppressive misogynist web that we are dealing with, remember that the very origin of the word *feminine* itself is *feminus*, a Latin word meaning “without faith.”

Having set up a straw ecofeminist argument about “difference” meaning that women are “better than men,” Zimmerman pits the feminist argument over essentialism against it.¹² Unfortunately, student of Heidegger though he is, Zimmerman has his own proclivity to essentialism. Mixing up sex and gender categories, he asks, “Would authentic female experience be formed by a feminist culture? And what then would happen to authentic male experience?” Here his thinking gets caught in the old dualist—either/or—grid. Feminism at large does not aim to be a blueprint for some purist matriarchal dictatorship—the mirror image of patriarchy. Feminism is a catalyst in the ongoing development of human self-consciousness. Ecofeminists are now waiting for men to take the corresponding next step in their emancipation from patriarchy so that together we can “negotiate” a fair and human “contract” with “nature,” as it were.¹³ Zimmerman is mistaken in supposing that patriarchal culture is just an “interpretative framework” like feminism. The problem is that he has not understood patriarchy as a system of power relations. *Patriarchy* does not simply exist as an idea; rather, the term stands for a solid set of oppressive facts. Recall, for instance, the International Labor Organization statistics showing that women are fifty percent of the world’s population, do sixty-five percent of the world’s work, get less than ten percent of all wages paid, and own less than one percent of all property. Again, the International Women’s Tribune Center in New York reports that because Islam forbids the execution of virgins, women activists in Iran are raped first and then executed. These may be disturbing items of information to educated Westerners, but for millions of women, East and West, daily life under patriarchy is hell. Incredulously, Zimmerman can ask: “Does feminism pretend to provide a non-distorted, impartial way of interpreting experience?”

Under patriarchal culture, the program of repression that has treated women and colored peoples as resources, from the beginning of recorded history, has also been the ideology that plunders nature. This association of women and minorities with nature means that if there is to be any chance of political change in attitudes toward the environment, there will have to be a shift in gendered and racial attitudes at the same time. Although it is encouraging to hear men such as the deep

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 34. He is guided here by Hester Eisenstein and Alice Jardine, *The Future of Difference* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1985). Jardine’s more recent attitude toward difference is more sympathetic, in line with new feminist explorations of the deconstructive potential of stances dismissed earlier as essentialist. A recent paper by Zimmerman in Irene Diamond and Gloria Orenstein, eds., *Reweaving the World* (San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1990) repeats these confusions and ambivalences.

¹³ I am tempted to use the more spiritual word *covenant* here, but both it and *contract* have patriarchal baggage attached. At least *contract* conveys a sense of *the process* of negotiation between women and men that we look forward to.

ecologists wanting to speak on behalf of nature, the deep ecology movement looks rather like a young man driving a car who shifts impatiently from first to fourth gear. All levels of oppression on the "Great Chain of Being"—speciesism, racism, sexism, classism—are interlinked and must be attended to. At this point in history, women, a global majority, both dominated and empowered, are well equipped to take up the case for "other" beings. Nevertheless, it is not a matter of "speaking for": men have always spoken for women and it has not helped much. Rather, it is a matter of unraveling the conceptual roots of an exploitative white male dominant multinational corporate system that continues to take the integrity of other life forms away.

III. CATEGORY MISTAKES AND CONCEPTUAL CONFUSIONS

SEX VERSUS GENDER, FEMINIST VERSUS MASCULINIST

Cheney, for one, is keenly aware of the pitfalls of confusing sex and gender terms. As he notes, *feminine* and *masculine* are gender categories and are culturally defined in such a way that they cannot be expected to overlap in any thoroughly systematic way with biological sex. Further, as those trained in the social sciences recognize, neither are these categories historically or culturally invariant. Wittbecker, a forest conservationist and computer consultant, is less successful in dealing with these issues. His un-self-conscious text still refers to "Man," even while our government directives, publishers, and professional associations promulgate new guidelines for non-sexist language. His use of the term *androgyny* also shows no familiarity with the controversy over the concept in the last decade of feminist literature. Regarding ecofeminism, Wittbecker has three axes to grind—that deep ecology is said to be "ignorant of feminism," that it is accused of being "non-feminine," and that ecofeminism is a "reductionist femocentrism." While the first point may yet be substantiated, it is doubtful that the other two will be. Wittbecker not only overlooks my acknowledgment in "Deeper than Deep Ecology" that deep ecologists are genuinely reaching for the feminine, but he also fails to note my objection that they reappropriate the feminine in an unexamined and politically naive way. There is no hint in his discussion that the feminine role constellation may already contain a deep ecological sense. The deep ecologists' lack of insight into these matters may be connected to the psychosexual context in which the patriarchal ego forms. It is here that the *feminist*, as opposed to *feminine*, argument enters the picture. Had the original deep ecology formulations been more politically reflexive so as to acknowledge the different experiences of women and men, and the unique environmental potential of women's orientation, they would not have drawn criticism.

Wittbecker's lack of assimilation of ecofeminist theory is confirmed by his views on "reductionist femocentrism." As Elizabeth Dodson-Gray's "Great Chain of Being" shows, a fundamental cleavage in consciousness exists between

ruling-class men, God's stewards, and "all others" in descending echelons of the hierarchy—white men over black men, white women over black women, and finally children, animals, plants, and rocks.¹⁴ Significantly, it is easier for white men to acknowledge their exploitation of black men than to acknowledge exploitation of their own women. The psychosexual dynamic of racial "otherness" is not so bound up with the primal structure of masculine identity. Eco-feminism certainly recognizes the rigid patriarchal dualism between male and female as a key political problem, but in going after the psychosexual drive on which all domination feeds, it also embraces children's and animal liberation, and caring for plants and rocks. Remember that the campaign against child sexual abuse was first put on the agenda by the women's movement. As politics, then, our perspective is not a "reductionist femocentrism," as Wittbecker complains, when he says that "Salleh limits the center to a feminine principle." Rather, the paradigm attempts to remedy the way in which women and others have been historically and discursively marginalized by a patriarchal center. In doing so, it makes a major contribution to the same "decentering" to which deep ecology claims it is committed.

Cheney, by contrast, is open to examining whether or not deep ecology embodies a feminist liberatory potential. He could, of course, have surveyed the political activities of men and women in the movement, including what has been until recently a rather macho and racist Earth First! Instead, however, he undertakes a penetrating analysis of how the deep ecological identification with the ecosphere is constituted. Sagely, Cheney clarifies the parameters of his own understanding of ecofeminism at the outset. It refers to ". . . a sensibility, an intimation, that feminist concerns run parallel to, are bound up with, or perhaps are one with concern for a natural world which has been subjected to much the same abuse and ambivalent behavior as have women."¹⁵ However, although he is aware that there are different paradigmatic phases within feminism, his use of the phrase—"that feminist concerns run parallel to"—glosses over these differences, and could lead to the same misunderstanding that Zimmerman produces, especially when he unknowingly pulls out differences between various feminist paradigms in an attempt to illustrate that ecofeminism itself is internally inconsistent. Given the substantial growth of ecofeminism outside movement ideology, Cheney's definition would also be more appropriate if he had said "women's concerns" rather than "feminist concerns."

One further clarification is also needed. We have to make use of the words we have, while still trying to shift their political sense. Ecofeminists do not want to deny ontological continuity between the so-called "natural" and the "social" or historical spheres, as the prevailing liberal paradigm's nature-nurture cliché does.

¹⁴ Elizabeth Dodson-Gray, *Green Paradise Lost* (Wellesley, Mass.: Roundtable, 1981).

¹⁵ Cheney, "Eco-Feminism and Deep Ecology," p. 115.

Nevertheless, any route is vulnerable to the fact that current language is embedded in patriarchal assumptions about the superiority of culture over nature. Deep ecologists should be more attentive to this problem in their writing. In everyday talk, the word *female* is usually used to denote biological functions. If it is used to denote social attributes, the allusion may be a derogatory one. Similarly, use of the word *female* as a noun is invariably a dismissive sense because of the biological connotation. *Male*, as opposed to *masculine*, can also have an undertone of sexual hostility to it. Even so, there are times when it is unavoidably correct to use it. A discerning reader stands advised by the context of a piece of writing as to the intent behind a usage. The inadequacy of the current lexicon crops up again when Cheney writes that "concern for nature in the modern world can be described as a 'feminization' of masculine attitudes toward nature." There is no way of knowing whether he means feminization coming from *feminine* or feminization coming from *feminist*. Cheney's text compounds this ambiguity by using the word *feminist* in parallel to the adjective *masculine*. This semantic asymmetry—*masculine* properly pairs with *feminine* rather than *feminist*—simply reflects modern gender inequalities. *Feminist*, implying a rejection of patriarchal values and a reconstructed sensibility, has no parallel term in the asymmetrically gendered experience of men. Again, the term *masculinist* is incorrectly used by Zimmerman as an equivalent to *feminist*; this designation was devised to express the antagonism of men to the arrival of feminism, and is a renewal of patriarchal attitudes. I wonder how long it will take before some linguistic parity is arrived at?¹⁶

AUTHENTICITY AND ESSENTIALISM

If men and women alike are deformed by patriarchal social relations, how then, Zimmerman wonders, can ecofeminism claim to represent the "authentic" voice of women? Zimmerman assumes some pure archaic essence of "the feminine" in the ecofeminist stand. In other words, he projects an essentialist position onto the argument in "Deeper than Deep Ecology," ignoring my dialectical arguments on overdetermination and the deconstruction of masculine and feminine categories in "Contribution to the Critique of Political Epistemology" and other cited papers.¹⁷ In fact, the many voices of women that we are asking deep ecologists,

¹⁶ An excellent treatment of gender in patriarchal language is Dale Spender, *Man Made Language* (London: Routledge, 1980).

¹⁷ Ariel Salleh, "Contribution to the Critique of Political Epistemology," *Thesis Eleven* 8 (1984): 23-43. For the discussion on essentialism, see pp. 30-33 especially, and for more on overdetermination, see "From Feminism to Ecology," *Social Alternatives* 4 (1984): 8-12. See also "Essentialism and Eco-Feminism," *Arena*, no. 94 (1991): 167-73. A more recent paper by Roger King, "Caring about Nature," *Hypatia* 6 (1991): 75-89, suffers from the same problems as Zimmerman's, as does Catherine Roach's insufficiently researched essay, "Caring for Your Mother," *Hypatia* 6 (1991): 46-59, which uses the label "nature feminism" for the "Deeper than Deep Ecology" position.

socialists, and others to pay attention to are precisely those that love and labor under patriarchy, the real empirical voices of living women now. As I wrote then, “. . . if women’s lived experience were recognized as meaningful and were given legitimation in our culture, it could provide an immediate ‘living’ social basis for the alternative consciousness which the deep ecologist is trying to formulate and introduce as an abstract ethical construct.”¹⁸ Surely this majority is the minority tradition par excellence! The abstract hypothetical authenticity that Zimmerman as a male academic phenomenologist projects here is symptomatic of how thought is shaped in the context of a class, race, and gender stratified division of labor. Under capitalist patriarchy, all people, white or colored, men or women, are proscribed from knowing the full range of their own and each other’s capacities. In a related vein, a literal-minded reader might also want to object to my phrase, “we women need to be allowed to love what we are,” on the grounds that it naively suggests a “nature feminism” with an unproblematic essentialist notion of authenticity and an inadequate appreciation of gender construction. In my understanding of how ideological forces impact on identity formation, however, it is largely women’s historically contrived, or workaday “second Nature” that has political relevance in today’s crisis.

Zimmerman also objects to my use of the word *woman* as a shortcut for the litany of traditionally ascribed feminine characteristics. At this stage in history, what other word are we to use? Nevertheless, on this basis, he levels another charge of essentialism at my thesis: a “genetic doctrine” is his phrase. Wittbecker also falls back on this terminology. Again, where I write “women already . . . flow with the system of nature,” Fox adds the coda, “by their essential nature.”¹⁹ First, because the word *essence* is not used in my text, and second, because the debate over essentialism turns out to have been a spurious byproduct of the dualist thought frame of patriarchal liberalism, Fox’s remarks are particularly off target. It is nonsense to assume that women are any closer to nature than men. The point is that women’s reproductive labor and such patriarchally assigned work roles as cooking and cleaning bridge men and nature in a very obvious way, and one that is denigrated by patriarchal culture. Mining or engineering work similarly is a transaction with nature. The difference is that this work comes to be mediated by a language of domination that ideologically reinforces masculine identity as

¹⁸ Salleh, “Deeper than Deep Ecology,” p. 340. Compare my findings in “Environment: Consciousness and Action,” *Journal of Environmental Education* 20 (1988): 26-31.

¹⁹ See Zimmerman, “Feminism, Deep Ecology, and Environmental Ethics,” p. 265; Fox, “The Deep Ecology-Ecofeminism Debate,” p. 17. On the question of essentialism, it is interesting to compare the glib assertions of deep ecologist Dolores LaChappelle: “What came natural to me, as a woman, was to see that everyone was functioning at their peak level. . . . This larger corpus collosum gives women the advantages of feeling connected to nature. . . . Many women are paranoid for two years after the birth of each child. . . . Such a person cannot make valid decisions for a group. . . .” Dolores LaChappelle, “No, I’m Not an Eco-Feminist: A Few Words in Defence of Man,” *Earth First!*, 21 March 1989.

powerful, aggressive, and separate over and above nature. The language that typifies a woman's experience, in contrast, situates her along with nature itself. She is seen, and accordingly sees herself, as somehow part of it. Although men and women both wear historically manufactured identities, in times of ecological devastation, the feminine one is clearly the more wholesome human attitude. As Ynestra King has put it, ecofeminists would like to see men give up their attempts to control women and nature and join women in their identity with nature. The fact that deep ecologists have embarked on this revolutionary process, but are yet still uneasy with it, is evidenced by their profound discomfort at accepting what women have to say.

UNIVERSAL OPPRESSION AND NORMATIVE DUALISM

Even if the categories of masculine and feminine are individually and culturally variable, the *universality* of women's oppression is still up for debate. However, this debate is riddled with methodological difficulties over empirical evidence and over interpretation. Here the social construction of knowledge meets the social construction of gender head on. Socialists such as Engels and ecofeminists such as Adrienne Rich and Charlene Spretnak have postulated a prehistorical matriarchy in which social relations were organized around loving, sensuous, life-affirming activities rather than on competition and power. But verifiability is impossible, and the matriarchal image is usually depicted simply in the way that a negative utopia might evolve in the future. In my view, this debate over the universality of feminine oppression is sheer scholasticism. Looking at the real world, can one name a single modern society not governed by men or by a token woman operating within patriarchal values?

Citing Ellen Messer-Davidow as his source, Zimmerman points out that according to feminist anthropologists—it is not clear whether these are liberal, radical, or Marxist—the universality of the woman-nature, male-culture divide does not hold cross-culturally. He identifies the polarity as a byproduct of Western Enlightenment thought, but provides no references. Rosemary Ruether, on the other hand, has documented the pervasiveness of this alignment of women and nature since early Judaeo-Christian times.²⁰ Indian and Japanese traditions manifest it as well. Surely, however, the point of the argument is that it is Western patriarchy that is becoming globally dominant through the neo-colonial development process, and that it is this culture that men and women of all races are going to have to contest. Meanwhile, Davidow's own examples of classification by inclusion-exclusion actually support a thesis for the ubiquity of patriarchal logic. The schemas mentioned, "clearing" versus "bush" and degree of language

²⁰ Rosemary Ruether, *New Women, New Earth* (New York: Seabury, 1975); also Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father* (Boston: Beacon, 1973); Marilyn French, *Beyond Power* (New York: Summit, 1985).

competence, closely parallel Levi-Strauss' deep structural categories of "raw" versus "cooked." A related oversight is Davidow's apparently superficial defence of the father of liberalism, John Locke. Here, she is said to claim that since Locke recognized "several categories" of being—children, animals, women, idiots and "other classes"—he cannot be seen as operating within a rigid dichotomizing thought mode. Plainly, the oppressive grid—normative dualism—is still at work here, the self-other, white-black, rational-irrational, valued-nonvalued way of organizing the world.

While I am obviously impatient over our patriarchal division of labor and its psychological consequences for men and women, and clearly will be glad once this way of life is obsolete, Wittbecker, nevertheless, asserts that I divide "the sexes as if they were two species and seem to think women have no masculine aspects."²¹ Of course, it is patriarchal ideology that creates this dichotomy. However, a reader will not recognize the origin of this division unless he or she first acknowledges the reality of patriarchy itself. I have been researching this masculine propensity to dualism in logic, mathematics, philosophy, language, and other social institutions for some time—for gender is not the only popular set of two. The fascinating thing is that even empirical findings suggest the "two sexes" are, in fact, a continuum of assorted potentials. As I have argued in "Contribution to the Critique of Political Epistemology," male-sexed bodies may have feminine personality attributes and vice versa. The past fifteen years of feminism have encouraged women to acknowledge and draw on their own so-called "masculine" capacities in their workplace, sex life, and so on. White men, rewarded as they already are by the status quo, may have little incentive to find their missing other half. Some may be too damaged to know where to begin. Others, working-class or minority men, may have little but the option of their masculinity to get by with. True, some in the gay movement have been remaking sex and gender, although even here there are factions who have used the gay experience to shore up the patriarchal stereotype of masculinity. Patrick Murphy helps clarify this admittedly difficult area when he writes:

Thus the 'other' is always implicated in psychical activities, and indicates that the 'self' itself is not singular, unified, or total, but is multiple, through the non-identity of the conscious and unconscious and self-conceptions and drive. It is precisely this recognition of non-identity and the need for inner-dialogue, specifically between 'masculine' and 'feminine' aspects of the psyche, that Salleh sees missing from the propositions of Deep Ecology and seriously impairs its subversion of patriarchy's hegemony.²²

²¹ Wittbecker, "Deep Anthropology, Ecology, and Human Order," p. 265. Compare Salleh, "Contribution to the Critique of Political Epistemology," pp. 30-33.

²² Patrick Murphy, "Prolegomenon for an Eco-Feminist Dialogics," in D. Bauer and S. McKinstry, eds., *Feminism and the Dialogic* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990). Murphy's reading of my work here corrects the interpretation in his earlier paper, "Sex-Typing the Planet," *Environmental Ethics* 10 (1988): 155-68. For further work on nonidentity, see arguments in Salleh, "On the Dialectics of

Ignoring the dialectic that has women and men moving in opposite directions as they try to reclaim skills unavailable to them by patriarchal convention, Wittbecker thinks he sees bad faith in my use of the masculine medium of academic argument to get an ecofeminist message across. The situation, however, is even more complex. While ecofeminism works to ecologize the feminist movement, and to feminize the consciousness of the environmental movement, it also challenges the very validity of the patriarchal legitimating structures that are its instruments in this process. Conversely, masculine identity meshes with patriarchal structures in an unproblematic way, and only a rare man is motivated to examine this relationship. Wittbecker suggests that I cite my earlier publications in "Deeper than Deep Ecology" as a form of academic "one-upmanship." While it is certainly true that women operating in a male-dominated ecosystem need all the status validation they can get, my reason for referring to this material was to keep my argument short, while yet amplifying more contentious points and showing how these have been debated in a wider context of socialist and feminist politics. All of the papers cited were interlocking. Considering ecofeminist theory's evolution in dialogue with other movements, Wittbecker's concern over its "narrow filter" is especially inappropriate. He would have served deep ecology better by following the normal practice of examining an author's position fully before taking it on.

Part of the trouble is that even in the twentieth century, women under capitalist patriarchy are "to be seen and not heard." As "others," objects in a system of domination, women are looked at, manipulated, used, and finally abused. With political change we may arrive at a society without the engendered differentiations that support this domination. Yet, some among the respective sexes would still be able to grow new members of the species within their bodies. It is symptomatic of the masculine dilemma over this asymmetry that a veritable taboo has been placed on talk about the reproductive side of human relations—especially the birth act. Symptomatic, too, is the fact that in recent times technology has provided patriarchy with new means of controlling this remnant of women's generative power—through the gynecological profession, government-sponsored population programs, and the harvesting of women through *in vitro* fertilization and surrogate motherhood.²³ But, leaving the deeper psychodynamic aside, even though biology provides us with a range of genetic differences which combine randomly with a range of body types, there is no reason in the world why these variations of capacity should be "valued" differently. Race and sex differences can be acknowledged without ascribing a hierarchy of political rights and social privileges to them. Valuing them differently involves a slide from the ontological to the normative again—the very same category mistake that patriarchal thinking both outlaws and perpetrates.

Signifying Practice," and Salleh, "Contribution to the Critique of Political Epistemology."

²³ Rita Arditti et al., eds., *Test Tube Women* (London: Pandora, 1984).

ECO-EGALITARIANISM VERSUS ANDROCENTRISM

In "The Deep Ecology-Ecofeminism Debate and its Parallels," Fox is concerned that many ecofeminists "do not make their (presumed) commitment to an ecocentric egalitarianism particularly explicit," with the result that they reinforce anthropocentrism rather than overcome it.²⁴ Ecocentrism should not need to be made explicit; it is fundamental to an ecofeminist deconstruction of the nature-humanity split and our very first premise. Griffin's prologue to *Women and Nature* comes to mind here:

We are the birds' eggs. Birds' eggs, flowers, butterflies, rabbits, cows, sheep; we are caterpillars, leaves of ivy and sprigs of wallflower. We are women. We rise from the wave. We are gazelle and doe, elephant and whale, lilies and roses and peach, we are air, we are flame, we are oyster and pearl, we are girls. We are women and nature. And he says he cannot hear us speak.²⁵

Wittbecker similarly fails to comprehend my comment regarding "women's special potency," which is about revaluing life itself and nurture, not a denial of egalitarianism. Let us look more deeply into this misunderstanding, for it seems to have an existential basis.

The literature on "the woman-nature" link suggests that the relationship of a man to his mother, a dependency which is very exclusive under patriarchal conditions, is deeply problematic for the masculine sense of self. The originative power of his mother appears to leave a residue of psychosexual insecurity and unresolved resentment, one that expresses itself in modern attempts to better Mother Nature through dam construction, intergalactic travel, genetic engineering. One of the political aims of ecofeminists and their allies is to replace this intense female nurturing, destructive to women as much as to their sons, by setting up communal forms of child care. Liberated men are already involving themselves as equals in this nurturant labor. Wittbecker should be reassured by these moves toward egalitarianism. In the meantime, however, the deep ecologists' own approach to mothering, via population "control" as a panacea for environmental preservation, remains patronizing and managerial, sitting badly with their professed egalitarianism. Given that women, no longer chattels, are now supposed to be treated with "intrinsic worth and dignity" and have "the freedom to unfold in their own way," they, not men, must be allowed to make decisions about how they use their own bodies. They must also have the opportunity to make their decisions in an informed way. Historically, the time has come when the issue of fertility should pass back into women's hands. As we build a new society based on a new relation to nature, men of all races are going to have to relinquish some of the

²⁴ Fox, "The Deep Ecology-Ecofeminism Debate," p. 13.

²⁵ Susan Griffin, *Made from this Planet* (London: Women's Press, 1982), p. 83.

privileges they have held for centuries, including the "appropriation" of life through monogamous marriage and the arbitrary "elimination" of life through war. A first step, however, is for thinking men to recognize what their privileges are and to ask whether they, as individuals, really need these props anymore.

Symptomatically, while he can proclaim that "anthropocentrism is the natural centering of human experience" or that "the foot is a unit of measurement based on the length of the human foot," Wittbecker denies that "woman" is "other," because, like Zimmerman and Fox, he seems unable to recognize the factuality of patriarchal relations. Instead, he reaches for a spiritual or transcendent "other," a projection of our material selves as "ultra human nature." These remarks sound dangerously like the kind of transcendental projection of human essence that Ruether, Marilyn French, and Mary Daly describe in their conjectural accounts of patriarchy's formative stages. Surely, we want reintegration with our natural, material base, not abstract, disembodied, transcendence out of it? Nevertheless, Fox lobbies for "biocentrism" and Wittbecker an "ultra-human nature." Yet, as opposed to Fox, Wittbecker's own evolutionist document is also favorably disposed to "anthropomorphism," "anthropocentrism," and "anthropometrisim," while deep ecology itself is characterized as "polycentric." This sesquipedalian logic is best left to the deep ecologists themselves to sort out.

Meanwhile, as Fox vacillates back and forth about whether deep ecology is truly "androcentric itself" or simply "androcentric in focus," he strongly objects to Green political claims that draw on such "androcentric" causes as class and race as "the root problem," treating the nonhuman "natural" world simply as a backdrop. He argues correctly that it is quite possible to conceive of a nonandrocentric and egalitarian society that is nevertheless anthropocentric and exploitative of nature. Ecofeminism, however, attempts a synthesis of all these levels. Although my own commitment to ecocentrism goes back to arguments about instrumental reason as early as 1979 and surfaces in several later papers,²⁶ Fox's superficial acquaintance with that writing leads him to classify my perspective as "thoroughly interhuman." Further, he does not understand why women should use the epithet *feminist* at all, if they are genuinely committed to establishing a biocentric egalitarianism.²⁷ Like Wittbecker before him, Fox mistakes the focus of my critique for its philosophical vision. The former, although it is merely remedial and transitional, nonetheless, has a very necessary knot to unravel. What is needed in the deep ecologists' response to ecofeminism is a sense of the

²⁶ Ariel Salleh, "Of Portnoy's Complaint and Feminist Problematics," *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology* 17 (1981): 4-13. Alternatively, see Ariel Salleh, "Epistemology and the Metaphors of Production," *Studies in the Humanities* 15 (1988): 130-39, and Ariel Salleh, "At the Interface," *Australian Society* 7 (1984).

²⁷ Fox's status quo liberalism is echoed in a recent paper by Robyn Eckersley, who also asks whether ecofeminism really adds anything. See "The Paradox of Eco-Feminism," in Ken Dyer and John Young, eds., *Ecopolitics IV Proceedings*, Adelaide, 1989.

complex interlocking issues, economic and ideological, that have to be dealt with, and a sense of the “labor” involved in bringing about social change. There are many centers to work from—speciesism, sexism, racism, classism. Gender is strategically crucial to dismantling each one of these. Without this political work, the deep ecologist’s “biocentrism” may become a premature and reductionist closure, failing to help us out of the global impasse.

CONCLUSION

There is nothing uniquely patriarchal about deep ecology. The exchange between deep ecology and ecofeminism is merely an exemplar for women’s critiques of other standpoints within the field of environmental ethics. As far as deep ecology goes, we do not question the ultimate intentions of the project, and especially its aim to break down the ontological dualism of humanity versus nature. Nevertheless, the movement’s unconscious androcentrism continues to be a very real obstacle to that “self-realization,” as they call it. While feminism has moved on, society in general and many men in particular, have not yet assimilated the message of even its first stage—liberal feminism. As a result, as ecofeminists put it, the very ground that society stands on is in danger of being washed away by the flood tides of reaction. Women’s views are still not listened to unconditionally, whether they use patriarchal tools like parliament or academia, befitting the first stage of feminist consciousness, or alternative homespun methods of protest. Women’s efforts to share their experience outside the narrow confines of a supportive movement are still ridiculed by those with a vested interest in keeping them quiet. What is missing from the deep ecologists’ caricature of ecofeminist politics is a comprehension of this historical context together with the fact that feminism is not a static bloc, but a fluid, subtle weave of intentions and opportunities. The feminist consciousness in politics has learned to be aware not only of where “the master” is at, viz., government preference for a rights-based ethic, but when to use liberal strategies, or socialist analyses, or ecofeminist arguments. Many men fail to see that there is no symmetry between men’s and women’s use of patriarchal discourse and institutions. Women must handle these things self-consciously and reflexively; for most men, it is simply “the way it’s done.” Having spent a good decade learning to appear “like men,” and later rejecting this tack, the feminist political consciousness is complex in contrast to the relatively unproblematic one-dimensional social reality of patriarchal relations. Accordingly, many of the weaknesses and inconsistencies that deep ecologists have picked out in feminism are simply reflections of deep ecology’s inability to grasp feminism’s transformative energies dialectically.

In some retrospective comments on “Deep Ecology and Its Critics,” Kirkpatrick Sale has noted that

... it is probably accurate to say that ecologists think primarily in biotic rather than social terms. They regard the fundamental issue to be the destruction of nature and

the suffering of rapidly dying species and eco-systems as distinct from those who regard the basic issue as the absence of justice and the suffering of human populations.²⁸

This is a concise summation of the matter as deep ecologists perceive it: you either struggle “for nature” or “for man.” Ecofeminists are believed to belong to the second category of activists, those who give human concerns priority.

However, there are four important issues embedded in this statement. First, the dichotomizing either/or conceptualization of the problem serves to replicate the patriarchal logic at the very root of the environmental crisis. The “rational” severance of humanity-nature, man-woman, remains intact. Accordingly, ecofeminists are judged to be injecting exclusively “women’s questions” into Green politics, thereby deflecting energy from the main culprit, anthropocentric attitudes. What is lost by marginalizing the ecofeminist project in this conventional way is its broad epistemological challenge. Ecofeminism confronts not only social institutions and practices, but the language and logics by which Western patriarchy constructs its relation to nature. In doing so, it has already traveled a long way down the very same road that deep ecological opponents of anthro-pocentrism are looking for.

Instead of perpetuating the polarized mindset of “man” versus “nature,” a social versus a biocentric emphasis, ecofeminism demands to know how and why the cultural dichotomy has become established at all. This observation introduces the second point at issue: there is a certain naive realism in the claim that matters are either social or biocentric. Ecofeminists are acutely aware that the discursive and institutional medium through which our political debates are being hammered out is not itself neutral or transparent. Ecofeminism takes on a critical examination and deconstruction of that “reason” by which the anthropocentric man-nature split is always regenerated. Instead of thinking man vis-à-vis woman or man vis-à-vis nature, we invite deep ecologists to reorient their static, dualistic thought patterns around, in, and through a several-dimensioned formula, “woman-nature-man.”

Woman, or rather the social fabrication of feminine identity under patriarchal domination, serves as a prism through which radical ecologists can come to see how and why they themselves have been constituted as men against nature. Herein lies the third embedded issue. By working through this broader constellation of relationships, deep ecology can gain an actively historical sense of itself, a deeper realization.

Fourth, as deep ecologists come to appreciate how “man’s relation to nature” is constructed by means of his relation to woman, they will help build the movement bridges necessary for the emergence of holistic Green politics. To conclude, the convergencies between ecofeminism and deep ecology promise to

²⁸ Kirkpatrick Sale, “Deep Ecology and its Critics,” *The Nation*, 14 May 1989, p. 672.

be fruitful. Yet, if we are to celebrate these without false consciousness, careful remedial work needs to be done. By dealing with ecological resistances to the appearance of ecofeminism, I have here attempted to catalyze that deeper insight and understanding.