

## ECOFEMINISM

Because feminist thought and theories is intricately connected to environmental issues, ecofeminism aims to show the connections among all forms of human oppression. It also emphasizes human beings' attempts to dominate the nonhuman world, especially nature. There are conceptual, symbolic, and linguistic connections between feminists and ecological issues because women have been culturally tied to nature, and because women have been "naturalized" (i.e. they are described in animal terms such as cows, chicks, and bitches) and nature has been "feminized" (i.e. when "she" is raped, conquered, and controlled by men) it is difficult to know where the oppression of one ends and the other begins. In *Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation* (1975) Rosemary Ruether claims that women's and nature's liberation are jointly connected. "Women must see that there can be no liberation for them and no solution to the ecological aims within a society whose fundamental model of relationships continues to be one of domination. They must unite the demands of the women's movement with those of the ecological movement to envision a radical reshaping of the basic socioeconomic relations and the underlying values of this society." Human-centered environmentalists provide reasons for respecting nature based on furthering human interests and emphasize that we harm ourselves when we harm the environments, while Earth-centered environmentalists provide reasons for respecting nature based on the intrinsic value of the earth itself.

There are many forms of Ecofeminism, including (but not limited to) spiritual ecofeminism, social ecofeminism, socialist ecofeminism, social-constructionist ecofeminism, and transformative-socialist ecofeminism. Spiritual ecofeminists are often critiqued for substituting religion for politics and for spending too much time dancing in

the moonlight, casting magic spells, chanting mantras, doing yoga, “mindfully” meditating, and give each other massages. Social ecofeminists and social-constructionist ecofeminists deny women are “naturally” caring and nurturing, and instead claim that women’s feminine characteristics are the products of enculturation or socialization. However, deemphasizing the connections between women’s and nature’s life-giving capacities somewhat diminishes the original ecofeminist passion to reclaim nature in an organic sense. In socialist ecofeminism and transformative-socialist ecofeminism, the degree of activism (i.e. tree-huggers’ devotion to their pursuits) and changes in lifestyle (i.e. transforming to a vegetarian diet) that are required are too challenging for ordinary people to accept since most people are neither willing nor able to embrace (because of the ways in which they have been socialized) new ways of life.

One of the main problems in ecofeminism arises in deciding whether to link or not to link women with nature. Although ecofeminists agree the association of women with nature is the root cause of both sexism and naturism, they disagree about whether women’s connections to nature are mostly biological and psychological or social and cultural. They also disagree about whether women should deemphasize, emphasize, or reconsider their existing connections with nature. Identifying the relationships between women and nature and of women’s “linking” position between nature and culture allows for three possible objectives of ecofeminism that: (1) involve the severing of the woman-nature connection by totally integrating women into culture and the realm of production, (2) involve reaffirmation of the women-nature connection, proposing that female nature is not only different than but somehow better than male culture, and (3) imply a recognition that although the nature-culture dichotomy is a product of culture, it can be

used for creating a different kind of culture and politics. No matter the differences that exist between ecofeminists, all believe human beings are connected to one another and to the non-human world. However, the relationships to and responsibilities for other people are not always acknowledged and as a result, we do violence to each other and to nature.