Ecofeminisms in Process
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[This offers a lengthy discussion on ecofeminism including background, theory and debates. Since it is sole authored it is of course a partial account. So please seek out other sources to get a more rounded story. Comments to **Richard@ecofem.org**]

The term *ecofeminism,* as almost every article on the subject reminds us, was first coined by the French feminist Francois d'Eaubonne (1974). However during the 1970s there was not a *coherent* body of ecofeminist theory. Instead there were differing accounts that wove together a perceived interconnection between the domination of women and nature. Notably, Rosemary Radford-Ruether's *New Woman, New Earth- Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation* (1975), Susan Griffin's *Women and Nature - The Roaring Inside Her* (1978) and Carolyn Merchant's *The Death of Nature - Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution* (1980). None of these texts actually articulate an 'ecofeminism' per se[1]. However, they all provide important historical evidence for the Western association of women with nature. Mary Daly's *Gyn/Ecology* (1979) is sometimes framed this way also, and although D'Eaubonne influences her choice of title, this is not strictly speaking an *eco*feminist text. In an activist context, the women's movement during the 1970s was clearly intertwined with a peace and environmental movement. By 1980 these connections had coalesced into *eco*feminist activist groups and conferences on both sides of the Atlantic (see Sturgeon 1997: 26). Ecofeminism as an academic discourse did not develop until the mid to late 1980s (e.g. Salleh 1984, Plumwood 1986 & Warren 1987). The diversity of ecofeminism is illustrated by its geographical spread, having a significant academic and activist presence in the US, Canada, Northwest Europe, India and Australia.

It is also problematic to speak of a singular 'ecofeminism' since it is a far from homogenous standpoint. But modestly it may be said that all ecofeminists regard the Western domination of 'women' and 'nature' as conceptually linked and that the processes of inferiorisation have mutually reinforced each other. For example, Merchant (op. cit. p.165) argues that from its beginning the discourse of modern science in the West was informed by imagery that portrayed nature as female. Given women's status this both aided and eroticised the domination of nature for 'men of science'. Interwoven with *this* discourse has been the inferiorisation of women via the discourse of 'women as closer to nature' and thus 'further away' from a dualistically opposed and politically deployed concept of 'reason'. This is by no means a solely ecofeminist argument and has become part of the established discourse of *feminist* theory. However, the feminist treatment of this historical insight has tended to be in terms of what this association meant for women, instead of what it meant for both women *and* nature.

A neat typology of ecofeminisms is impossible and perhaps suspect (see below and Sturgeon 1997: 178-186), though it is worth exploring Plumwood's distinction between **cultural** and **social** ecofeminism (1992:10). The difference between the two pivots upon what they do with, and how they conceive of, a women-nature connection. Cultural ecofeminists tend to naturalise this connection and see 'women' as having an epistemologically privileged understanding of 'nature' through, for example, access to a 'subsistence principle' (Mies & Shiva 1993: 20). Moreover, essentialism is deployed in positing a polarised and rigid notion of 'feminine' and 'masculine' values, as in Spretnak's (1989: 129) claim that women are more empathic than men. However, a closer textual examination of both these examples illustrates a more ambiguous reality and calls into question Plumwood's (1992) neat social/cultural ecofeminist typology. Mies and Shiva speak of their

"basic understanding of ecofeminism as a perspective which starts from the fundamental necessities of life; we call this the subsistence perspective. Our opinion is that women are nearer to this perspective than men - Women in the South working and living, fighting for their immediate survival are nearer to it than urban middle-class women and men in the North. Yet all women and all men have a body which is directly affected by the destructions of the industrial system" (Ibid.).

This is somewhat different and not simply open to 'charges of essentialism'. The epistemological advantage claimed here is the result of an entrenched historical and gendered relation rather than a fixed biological sex difference. Thus it may be suggested, following Mies and Shiva's argument, that in some cultural and historical moments (some) women are 'closer to nature' than (some) men *and* (some) women. However, this remains a shallow point since it is still framed within a dualistic discourse that retains a separation between culture (humans) and nature. Spretnak, who Plumwood (1992: 10) argues is a 'cultural ecofeminist', presents a more ambiguous argument:

"Not feeling intrinsically involved in the process of birthing and nurture, nor strongly predisposed toward empathetic communion, men may have turned their attention, for many eras, toward the other aspect of the cycle, death… That there are similarities and very real differences between the sexes is not news. What is new is our refusal to accept patriarchal perceptions and interpretations of those differences. To achieve a sane society that reflects, spiritually and culturally, holistic truths, we must encourage awareness or 'mindfulness' of such truths. Admittedly, women seem to have an elemental advantage, but men may consider that old feminist adage: Biology is not destiny. All minds contain all possibilities." (1990: 129-130).

This is a confused passage mixing both sexual stereotyping *and* social constructionism. This lack of rigor leaves itself open to criticism in that it does not specify precisely or consistently just what sexual difference is being proffered and the nature of it. Cultural ecofeminism, it is argued, is also more concerned with issues connected to spirituality and 'personal growth': and risks naïve discourses such as that of 'gender complimentarity'. It is more

likely to espouse a romantic discourse of 'Mother Earth' that uncritically *reproduces* a feminisation of nature. Despite this example I would argue that naïve essentialism in ecofeminist discourse is rare and now virtually non-existent in an academic context. This is not to deny the existence of a problematic divide between academic, theoretical ecofeminism and activist ecofeminism. Both require each other.

Remaining, a little reluctantly, with Plumwood's typology, 'social ecofeminism', in contrast, historicises the women-nature connection. This is a specific consequence of Western dualistic discourse, stretching back to Greek philosophy, where it was used as a means of structuring the mutual inferiorisation of 'women' and 'nature'. The feminisation of 'nature' (and the naturalisation/animalisation of 'women') represents a process of ideological mystification, rather than a source of romanticist oppositional practice as in 'cultural ecofeminism'. Social ecofeminism romanticises neither hegemonic 'feminine' or 'masculine' identities, instead it takes both a historical and sociological view of mutually reinforcing dualisms. Analysing the discursive uses of both 'reason' and 'nature', social ecofeminism is better placed to consider other forms of oppression and resists a theory of power which is either reductive to class or gender. It advocates a model of oppression as forming an intersectional web-like structure, illustrating both interconnections between class, 'race', gender and nature domination, and pointing to the way in which, contextually, people may be placed as oppressed *and* oppressors (Plumwood 1992: 10, 1994). Social ecofeminism is not detached from the recent histories of feminist theory and for this reason is more reflexive to essentialism and the reduction of power wholly to gender. For example the environmental crisis is not viewed as reducible to masculinism. Indeed 'social ecofeminism' attempts to go beyond the essentialist/constructivist debate in terms of theorising the connection between 'women and nature'. The argument that 'women' are 'closer to nature' and 'more embodied' than 'men' is premised upon the problematic notion that (some of) humanity is separate rather than situated within nature, and attempts to subvert this mastering narrative by reproducing it are inevitably problematic. An account of the association of 'women' with nature and of 'nature' as female based upon dualism stresses the socio-historical. However, social ecofeminism remains reflexive to the ways in which constructivist explanations can over-emphasise causality as solely in the realm of 'culture' and in doing so reinscribe nature, or the body, as inert and passive realms. The 'human' and the 'natural' are historically interwoven, for example, the role of past environmental changes in impacting upon human relations. The arguments of several ecofeminists (especially Alaimo 2000, Gaard 1997, Plumwood 1992, 1993, Sandilands 1999, Sturgeon 1997, Warren 1990, 1996) form the model of a critical ecofeminism that is espoused here and elaborated below. Ultimately, I question Plumwood's typology since it over exaggerates the perspective of 'cultural ecofeminism'. Of further importance to ecofeminism is, first, a focus upon outlining the Western cultural

association of women and animals and more specifically an ecofeminist literature on animal ethics (e.g. Adams 1990, Gaard 1993, Plumwood 2000, Dunayer 2001), second, 'earth-based spirituality' (Starhawk 1990) and, third, reconstituting male-centred theology (Ruether 1992, Adams ed. 1993).

It is clear that during its short history ecofeminism has undergone a process of academisation and thus has been subject to various pressures and constraints. Moreover, this has had certain consequences for ecofeminism as a whole. In the academic context it has been argued that ecofeminism has been disproportionately colonised by philosophical perspectives (Cook 1998). Cook writes, *"The tactics being employed by some to gain academic standing for philosophical ecofeminism reduce ecofeminism to philosophy without considering the implications of doing so"* (ibid. p.246). The concern here is that a specific philosophical ecofeminism is attempting to speak for ecofeminism as a whole. Cook cites Karen Warren's edited collection *Ecological Feminism* (1994) as a specific example of this colonising practice. The important point that Cook makes is the tendency of philosophical ecofeminist positions to engage in a preliminary disavowal of essentialist or spiritual (often conflated) ecofeminist positions without actually engaging textually with such positions or even identifying specific texts. A recent example of the defensive philosophising move is Chris Cuomo's *Feminism and Ecological Communities - An Ethic of Flourishing* that favours the term 'ecological feminism' over what she sees as the falsely universalising tendencies of *ecofeminism* (1998: 6). In contrast some ecofeminists have recently reflexively outlined the history of their own movement, including a textual defence of early works (e.g. see Carlassare 1994, Mellor 1997: 48-51).

As an academic discourse ecofeminism has been conceptualised as part of the field of Environmental Ethics along with theories/movements such as *deep ecology*[2] and *social ecology*[3]. Beyond this there has been a curious lack of engagement with ecofeminism from feminist academics. It is very rare to find mention of ecofeminism in feminist/Women's Studies texts[4]. This absence is particularly true in the UK, and only slightly less so in Australia and the US. There is some evidence that ecofeminism has not just been ignored but also silenced. Of her experiences Noël Sturgeon writes,

"Such is the prejudice against ecofeminists among many academic feminist theorists that I was once advised, by a prominent feminist theorist who wanted to support my work, to remove the word 'ecofeminism' from the title of one of my papers about the movement, because she said she would never choose to read an article about ecofeminism. I have been advised by a feminist mentor to leave my editorship of The Ecofeminist Newsletter off my vita when applying for grants and jobs" (1997: 6).

This suggests a process of silencing, and relatedly, Sturgeon also points out the simplifying process that takes place when ecofeminism is set up as a 'straw-woman'. Herein, the essentialist statements made by a minority of ecofeminists are taken to be representative of ecofeminism as a whole which

then provides the ground on which to dismiss movements to connect feminism and ecology wholesale. In this context academic ecofeminism has become understandably defensive and the construction of a specific philosophical ecofeminism has been bound up in the delineation of a safe 'essentialism-free' and thus academically more acceptable ecofeminism. However, I want to argue that this has arisen out of a mistaken imitation of mainstream feminism (see Sturgeon below). In other words ecofeminism has believed its own bad press that has grossly exaggerated the problem of essentialism with ecofeminism. Thus, as Cook (1998) argues, it has embarked on a process of identifying and exposing possible cases of essentialist ecofeminism but in a non-rigorous way. This cedes too much ground to the view that *any* attempt to interweave feminism and ecology is *inherently* essentialist. This is as untenable as viewing feminist explorations of embodiment or the emotions as similarly compromised. This is not to denigrate philosophical ecofeminists. Indeed they have done the most to advance ecofeminist theory and have themselves risked academic exclusion. However, it seriously risks a theory/practice separation wherein activism is de-emphasised or is separated off from the theoretical advances of ecofeminist theory, such as reflexivity to essentialism or analyses of dualism.

Sturgeon (1997) astutely points out another commonality between recent ecofeminism and earlier feminism. The typologizing of different ecofeminisms of the early 1990s mirrors that of feminisms in the 1970s and early 1980s. Whilst it is important to outline such differences in analysis the act of typologizing lends itself to stereotyping and the portrayal of different eco/feminisms as *static*. Moreover, Sturgeon suggests that typologizing within feminism has been part of the process of privileging a white academic feminism, inadvertently creating a dualism between theory and practice (ibid. p. 170-175). This points to the need of reflexivity towards such categorisations and a more *temporal* view of such political, social and theoretical *movements*. As Donna Haraway writes (on the cover of Sturgeon's *Ecofeminist Natures* book) *"(ecofeminism) must not be stereotyped as an essentialist dogma, frozen at one caricatured historical moment"* (1997). Following Quinby, ecofeminism is a social movement *in process* and

"Listening to all voices of subjugation and hearing their insurrectionary truths make us better able to question our own political and personal practices. This questioning may well entail the end of ecofeminism as currently constituted, for, like any social movement, ecofeminism is inevitably a provisional politics…. and if another term and a different politics emerge from this questioning, it will be in the service of new local actions, new creative energies, and new alliances against power" (1990: 127).

Ecofeminism has also been objected to upon other grounds. Cameron has stated, for example

"The term 'ecofeminism' is an insult to the women who put themselves on the line, risked public disapproval, risked even violence and jail…Feminism has always been

actively involved in the peace movement, in the antinuclear movement, and in the environmental protection movement"(1989: 64).

In contrast to this view I argue that ecofeminism is very complimentary to recent trends in feminist theory. In the past thirty years feminism has undergone internal critique in the name of recognising diverse female positionality. It is accepted that second wave feminism proffered too partial a view of female experience in terms of class, age, 'race', sexuality and dis/ability. In the face of these critiques feminism is now concerned with the *intersection* of 'race', class, sexuality, age and disability for example. Moreover ecofeminism can highlight the constructions of 'nature' at play within these and thus highlight better their intersection/s. Ideas of 'nature' are not only salient to gender, but also to class, sexuality, race, age, disability and so on. Oppressed groups have been caught in a firm trap of devaluation both by being associated with 'nature' and the 'body' but also through a process of policing by various discourses of nature and the natural. Ecofeminism echoes the call of Collins to re-vision class, gender and 'race' as interlocking systems of oppression, and yet does so in critique of her call for a "*humanist vision*" (1990: 221). This points to an important *post-humanist* difference between ecofeminism and most feminisms. For ecofeminism *does* present a decisive ethical challenge to feminism in its revaluation of nature and nonhuman animals. Ecofeminism offers a more thorough examination of the political and exclusionary uses of ideas of the 'human' colonised as it has been by constructions of masculinity and rationality. Clearly this impacts upon a critique of liberal or mere equality feminism that Plumwood refers to as a position of 'uncritical equality' (1992: 11). This is not to denigrate such feminism or to deny its pragmatic political goals but to emphasise the limited consequence of equality with a sphere which has been colonised by partial definitions of the 'human': namely as white, male, middle-class, disembodied and as based on notions of 'reason', distance and objectivity which are mistakenly assumed to be neutral, tenable and universal values.

Ecofeminism builds upon the lessons of second wave feminism. First its theory follows a methodology that argues against prioritising one form of oppression over another. Plumwood's desire to set up class, 'race', nature and gender as the four tectonic plates of liberation theory resists the urge to prioritise one over another[5](1993: 1). She states "*Methodological priority for gender assumes that women's oppression must always be ranked as more fundamental, strategically prior to other forms of oppression in all contexts*" (1996b: 194). I will touch further upon this argument for non-reductionism below. Second it builds upon the recognition by feminist theory that gender is inseparable from 'race' and class. In critiquing this methodological *purity* (as opposed to *priority*) ecofeminism is in fact a very promising response to some of the problems of feminist theory (see for example Ramazanoglu 1989 and Stacey 1993). Ramazanoglu writes,

"Feminism is not a total social theory that can explain the connections between different forms of oppression. But the problem remains that the oppression of women is, in complex and contradictory ways, enmeshed in all other forms of oppression that people have created…<u>Feminist energy needs to go into making the connections between gender and other forms of oppression</u>" my emphasis (1989: 178).

I am not suggesting that *eco*feminism is a total critical-social theory or even that such a thing is possible. However I am suggesting that the ecofeminist endeavour too much ignored by mainstream feminist theory has initiated in important ways (e.g. Plumwood 1993, Sturgeon 1997) this *very* process called for by Ramazanoglu. Ecofeminism is not alone in arguing for the importance of theorising intersectionality. Such calls can also be heard within disability studies and the growing field of critical gerontology. For example recent research has examined how empirical gerontological studies support or discount various theories of intersectionality between age, gender, race and class (Dressel et. al. 1999: 283-287).

Ecofeminism and the Question/ing of Dualism

Central to ecofeminism is its analysis of Western dualisms. From these spring two radical tenets of ecofeminism. First a non-reductionist view of power, and second, a view that conceptualises domination as interconnected, especially that of nature with *intra-human* relations of power. From these tenets emerge a critique of decisive Western concepts such as the 'human' and 'reason', though potentially, all concepts constructed through dualism. Before exploring these two tenets in more detail I shall focus upon the ecofeminist critique of dualism from which they emerge.

Dualism is a particularly entrenched conceptual schema throughout Western history. Whilst many of the associations and separations were consolidated and developed during the Enlightenment, the key gendered distinctions between reason/nature, mind/body and reason/emotion stem from the Greek Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle[6] (see Plumwood 1993). It is important to note that dualism in the ecofeminist analysis refers to more than just dichotomy. Val Plumwood offers several original definitions of dualism. It is "*the process by which contrasting concepts are formed by domination and subordination and constructed as oppositional and exclusive*" (1992: 12), a way "*of construing difference in terms of the logic of hierarchy*" (ibid.) and "*a process by which power forms identity, one which distorts both sides of what it splits apart*" (ibid.). In this analysis dualism supersedes dichotomy because it involves a hierarchical relation between two spheres and is given a role in the constitution of identities. **Table 1** presents the main intersecting Western dualisms. These ought to be read both as horizontal hierarchies and as vertical mappings, and overall as an "*interlocking structure*" (Plumwood 1993: 43).

Reason/Nature	Reason/Madness (unreason)
Culture/Nature	Mental/Manual
Mind/Body	Urban (city)/Rural (countryside)
Male/Female	Civilised/Primitive
Masculine/Feminine	Self/Other
Human/Animal	Active/Passive
Reason/Emotion	Production/Reproduction
Subject/Object	Order/Disorder
Public/Private	Heterosexual/Queer
Adult/Child	Master/Slave
Universal/Particular	Theory/Practice
Freedom/Nature	Reason/Matter (physicality)
Reason/the Erotic	White/Non-White

Table 1 – Intersecting Western dualisms.
Adapted from Plumwood (1993) and Gaard (1997).

I have placed the opposition between reason and nature in bold to indicate the primacy that Plumwood gives to it in her account. The terms on the left hand side have been culturally valued in the West in opposition to those on the right. Reading the left hand side terms vertically provides an indication of various cultural hegemonies, most notably the colonisation of the 'human' in a particularly partial way. Reading the right hand terms vertically indicates the inter-related means by which oppressed groups have been mutually devalued. Thus animalisation, feminisation and naturalisation are common discourses that construct identities or essences across class, 'race', gender, age and so on. Plumwood specifies the inter-relation between dualistic pairs with the notion of 'linking postulates' that are "*assumptions normally made implicit in the cultural background which create equivalences or mapping between the pairs*" (ibid. p.45). Such postulates include the notion of men as more 'rational', of humans being uniquely social (cultural) or of the body as passive. The repetition of reason/nature dualism throughout the majority of these pairs serves to solidify the culturally constructed identities or essences implied by these horizontal hierarchies and vertical mappings. A consolidation via a relational definition occurs then both within *and* between dualistic pairs.

- *Backgrounding* (denial) - the left-hand side terms are taken to form a singular, centred reality or perspective, whilst the right-hand side terms contribution to this formation is denied.
- *Radical Exclusion* (hyperseparation) - certain characteristics ('language' as in human/animal) are mobilised as signifying a polarised difference between two realms.
- *Incorporation* (relational definition) - the devalued side is defined hierarchically in relation to the valued side, as in masculine/feminine.
- *Instrumentalism* (objectification) - the devalued are rendered passive and conceived as having no ends in their own right.
- *Homogenisation* (stereotyping) - differences within the devalued are denied, as in 'they're all the same'.

Table 2 – Plumwood's five features of dualisms (1993: 48-60).

Plumwood goes further and specifies five features of dualism (see **Table 2** above). These pertain to important common themes that pervade and construct further interconnections between dualistic pairings. Thus the devalued sphere is backgrounded as in nature to culture. Each pair is set up as a polarised opposite[7] and the devalued sphere is typically subjected to a process of homogenisation[8].

While the act of representing these dualisms as in **Table 1** above has heuristic value in that it gives us an important awareness of the interconnection of different oppressions, *and* the way in which they form a mutually reinforcing structure, it should be taken into account that contextual transformations take place (Jordanova 1980: 43). As Plumwood herself points out a more recent discourse, for example, has associated men with nature through essentialist ideas of aggressiveness and competitiveness, informed by Social Darwinism (1992: 8). This discursive transformation, that has not had the same effect of inferiorising men, is facilitated by other ideas, as Jordanova argues, which romanticised women as the holders of a civilising and redeeming morality (op.cit.). So it is important to recognise the possibility of other dualisms and new transformations arising via a degree of fluidity in the whole structure. Moreover if one studies the list of dualisms in **Table 1** closely one may note some contradictions. I refer specifically to the dualities concerning sexuality. At first glance it appears rather paradoxical that non-heterosexual ('queer') sexualities are being devalued via an association with reproduction. This of course appears to run counter to the view that heterosexuality has policed its own normality in part by portraying other sexualities as non-reproductive. Thus the representation in **Table 1** (like any representation) does not allow for temporality, contradictions and periodic reversals of dualistic association. Consequently it is not being suggested that 'queer' sexualities have been associated with reproduction, rather that, following Gaard (1997), that 'they' *have* been associated with nature, *but* via an association with a construction of the erotic as non-rational, animalistic and disordered.

A further risk is that in representing this dualistic structure one perpetuates the ethnocentric view that Western culture is synonymous with human culture, or that there has not been Western resistance to it. Given that the discursive formation of dualisms has originated in the West and that the association of women with nature is not a universal means of discursive inferiorisation of 'women' it is wise to be cautious in any grandiose claims of global explanation. For example, Huey-li Li argues that in Chinese society -

"There are no parallels between Chinese people's respectful attitude toward nature and the inferior social position of women. The association of women and nature is not a cross-cultural phenomenon, since nature as a whole is not identified with women in Chinese culture" (1993: 276).

We may say that the contemporary universality of the domination of both 'women' and 'nature' is significantly greater than that of the conceptual

reinforcement of each, which is a particularly Western association. It may be argued that the partiality of the ecofeminist deconstruction of Western dualistic discourse does not negate its utility. Whilst the deconstruction of Western dualistic discourse remains most relevant to its own context, the central tenet of ecofeminisms protesting against devaluation in terms of class, gender, 'race' and nature provides it with a global relevance. Ecofeminism does not confine its claims to 'women' but points to the ways in which reason/nature dualism intersects with further hierarchical mappings. In this way it is able to point to additional connections between the contemporary colonisation of nature and the effect upon disenfranchised communities. An example of this is 'environmental racism' where non-white communities are disproportionately affected by the risks and impacts from pollution such as being located near toxic waste dumps – research argues that this incidence *cannot* be reduced to class factors (see Bullard 1990 & Higgins 1994).

An analysis of power based on a critique of dualism may appear in some ways to ignore more recent theoretical arguments over the operations of power. Thus it is worth briefly comparing this analysis with some points made by a Foucaultian understanding of power[9]. For example Plumwood (1993) may be critiqued for concentrating too much on a master/slave top down hierarchical model of power that ignores some important Foucaultian insights [although she is at least partly reflexive to notions of the 'oppressor within' – see Plumwood (1992)]. Foucault argues that power is decentralised, dispersed and internalised and moreover, should not be viewed as being possessed by a particular group (1980: 96-99). He wrote

"*Rather than ask ourselves how the sovereign appears to us in his lofty isolation, we should try to discover how it is that subjects are gradually, progressively, really and materially constituted through a multiplicity of organisms, forces, energies, materials, desires, thoughts etc*" (Ibid. p.97).

Whilst Plumwood does not especially take on board these points her critique of dualism does in fact lend itself to such an interpretation of power. Since she puts the stress on the generative power of dualisms to perpetuate and essentialise particular identities it then in fact provides a promising model for considering processes of subjectification. Foucault continues

"*Power must be analysed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localised here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth*" (Ibid. p.98).

Despite his tendency to overstatement, Foucault's arguments on power do anticipate at times a critique of dualism as a central repeating "*discursive formation*" (1972: 38). Dualism provides an unconscious frame of reference in our typical self-constitutions. We tend to regard, for example, our bodies and

minds as separate, despite evidence to the contrary. Moreover, our culture encourages us to break down the perception of *others* in terms of appearance and personality. We tend to 'think dualistically' and this impinges upon our social experience and performance of emotions and how we view 'our bodies' and those of others. However this 'we' is misleading as relations of gender, 'race' and class may enhance the experience of this separation. Specifically, this experience may be brought into relief in various institutional contexts. For example, Martin recounts women's experiences (and compares for class and 'race') of menstruation, menopause and birth when encountering medical institutions and reports a marked feeling of separation between 'self' and 'body' (1987: 79). This experience is not dissimilar to that described in Fanon's famous work of phenomenology and 'race': *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) where he described the feeling of being visually judged, of being separated into mind and body, in a white dominated racist society. When the body is split off and culturally conceived as an object, it makes process of objectification and dehumanisation all the more easier.

However, in Foucaultian terms dualism may be thought of as 'productive' to an extent. Thus dualism is not accurately portrayed solely as an imposed from above notion of power but rather fits well in with an idea of power as more dispersed and multi-directional. This may be expanded upon by returning to the two radical tenets of ecofeminism mentioned at the outset of this section that emerge from its critique of dualism.

To recall, these are first, a non-reductionist view of power, and second, an interconnected view that links the domination of nature with intra-human relations of power. The explication of the dualistic structure underlines the interconnections between different oppressions and has compelled ecofeminists to move beyond the obvious historical inter-association between reason/nature and gender. The non-reductionist view of power builds upon the aforementioned lessons from feminist theory and follows a pragmatic line in explanatory humility. Thus ecofeminism does not reduce the environmental crisis to the gendering of reason/nature and, for example, any explanation of the domination of nature that ignores a critique of capitalism is simply inadequate (see Merchant 1995: 223/4). Conversely any attempt to explain patriarchy, institutional racism and the instrumentalisation of nature purely in class terms is similarly rejected. This commitment to non-reductionism is seen in Plumwood's formulation of what she terms a 'master identity':

"Much feminist theory has detected a masculine presence in the officially gender-neutral concept of reason. In contrast my account suggests that it is not a masculine identity pure and simple, but the multiple, complex cultural identity of the master formed in the context of class, race, species and gender domination, which is at issue. This cultural identity has framed the dominant concepts of Western thought, especially those of reason and nature. The recognition of a more complex dominator identity is, I would argue, essential if feminism is not to repeat the mistakes of a

reductionist programme such as Marxism, which treats one form of domination as central and aims to reduce all others to subsidiary forms of it which will 'wither away' once the 'fundamental' form is overcome" (1993: 5).

Thus by using the concept of a 'master-identity', gleaned as it is from the recognition of interconnection between dualisms it is intended to sharpen the ecofeminist critique (and that of others) by avoiding both simplistic one dimensional explanations and the re-emergence of colonising frameworks such as vulgar Marxism, or white Western feminism.

The second view linking the mastery of nature with intra-human relations of power also follows from the analysis of interlocking dualisms. Key here is the mutual mapping of the reason/nature, mind/body and human/animal dualisms. The suspect dualist disentanglement of the body from the 'social' and its association instead with nature (which is such a vital point of critique for the new sociologies of the body) enabled body mastery and nature mastery to be understood as similar projects. From here it was a short step to associate various human groups with the body, identified as irrational, not mind-like and antithetical to the newly emerging idea of the 'human'. This is the point where dehumanisation occurs. The understanding of the mutual mapping of body mastery onto the mastery of nature was perhaps first expressed by critical theorists. This was put forward as a distinction between 'internal' and 'external' nature (Leiss 1972: 153, Horkheimer 1947: 93). The idea of 'internal nature' was also taken to refer to emotionality and the importance of its denial and control if 'external' nature were to be mastered (Leiss 1972: 152). In line with Foucaultian ideas on power this mapping also gave dualism a 'productive' role since to be complicit with the positive dualistic valuations of masculinity, rationality, culture and so on provided certain subjects with the opportunity to be complicit with the 'human' and further 'radically excluded' from nature-associated (sub) humans. Similarly, complicity with gender hegemonies and regimes of body mastery can be seen, albeit contradictorily, as examples of productive power.

A further addition to theories of power that fits well with these arguments is the Gramscian theory of hegemony. Hegemonic dominance is formed through an alliance of positions in which a dominant group secures the consent and complicity of others (see Gramsci 1971: 12, 80). Gramsci's notion shares with Foucault a de-emphasis on coercive power (although he does not discount it) and introduces a sense of temporality into relations of power. Gramsci stressed this temporality with his assertion that hegemony is both temporary and instable. As Barker writes, "*it needs to be constantly rewon, renegotiated, so that culture is a terrain of conflict and struggle over meanings*" (2000: 60-61). Gramsci's concept has already been utilised in gender studies with Connell's notion of 'hegemonic masculinity' (1995). Connell's heuristic use of hegemony in the context of masculinities underlines the power relations *between* men and the reproduction of and complicity with a

traditional masculinity. Thus what we refer to as 'patriarchy' ought also to be conceptualised as including power relations *between* hegemonic and non-hegemonic masculinities since the object of critique for feminism is not men *per se*, but the exercise of power by men identifying with hegemonic masculinity. Moreover, Connell draws on the temporality of the notion of hegemony to point to contexts of contestation of such masculinity, such as men in the environmental movement and the social construction of non-heterosexual masculinities. Gramsci's theory is also relevant to contemporary social movements such as ecofeminism since it argues for the importance of alliance and coalition in the formation of new counter-hegemonies, and *against* the totalising power of dualistic frameworks.

The interweaving of dualism provides one of the most convincing arguments for just such a view that the goals of, for example, feminism cannot be achieved in isolation from other movements (see below). Only limited gains can be made for women as long as a specific model of humanity remains hegemonic. Thus ecofeminism does not figure the solution to dualism either on the level of value reversal or on uncritical equality (see Plumwood 1992, 1993) but on the reconceptualisation of dualised terms and spheres. The ultimate prize upon which ecofeminist eyes gaze and perhaps its most significant defining quality is the formation of human identities not based on mastery.

The intention here is not to present ecofeminism and its related critique of dualism as a panacea. In certain ways it remains an underdeveloped set of theories. Moreover it has not been the only approach of theorising and researching links between gender and ecology. For example there is a more globalised perspective known as feminist political ecology (Rocheleau et. al. 1996) and related research into gender and sustainable development (see Littig 2001). It would be prudent for these areas not to become too detached from ecofeminism and indeed they highlight some limitations of ecofeminist theory as currently constituted. For example there has been limited discussion of globalisation and also of issues of social class. Whilst above I outlined the non-reductionism of Plumwood's ecofeminist theory that argues *against* a reduction of environmental crises to gender or of women's oppression to their association with nature it remains an admirable aim that has not been theoretically brought home. For example, a synthesis with eco-socialism could bring a fruitful critique of globalisation[10].

Further discussion would also be helpful on the subject of 'identity politics' and ecofeminism (see Sturgeon 1997). The most pertinent question for ecofeminism is: to what extent does the notion of 'identity politics' impede its goal of coalition formation? The danger is that to frame ecofeminism as an 'identity politics' may be to risk the creation of political exclusions and the perpetuation of a small compartmentalised and stereotyped movement. Highleyman refers to identity politics as "*political organizing based on*

membership in a group or class, usually defined according to some immutable (or believed to be immutable) characteristic" (1995: 74). This is contrasted with an alternative notion of **idea politics** that she defines as based on "*shared beliefs, commitments, values, and goals rather than on shared immutable characteristics or oppressions*" (ibid.). The point that Highleyman then makes is that identity politics in the context of sexuality works against creating links with, for example, progressive heterosexuals and between gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people. She writes, "*People of all sexualities have a reason to challenge our society's erotophobia and its belief that sex is sinful and the body is shameful*" (ibid. p.90). This argument is of course transferable, for example, the point that men can/could benefit from the challenge to gender stereotypes. Whilst the initial essentialist claim of 'immutable characteristics' may have the effect of creating a point of unity, it typically does so in collusion with hegemonic notions of identity, that constructs biology as static truth. Moreover, it compartmentalises a particular struggle at the expense of creating wider, more diverse and effective social movements. This works against the ecofeminist argument that there are in fact important connections between seemingly different social movements, and prolongs the impression of disparate *single-issue* movements. It is just such possible arguments of interconnection that could prove beneficial in providing bases for coalition between the various contemporary anti-globalisation groups.

This is not an argument against all forms of 'identity politics' but certainly offers caution in terms of the type of process of identity formation. Also, from Highleyman, we can underline the importance of some overarching *ideas* that may be used as connecting lines between social movements. This is the task of those people serious about coalitionary politics: and the realisation that this is contingent upon the collective learning of, and from, a whole series of oppositional movements. Here I refer to Plumwood's class-race-gender-nature nexus, but also the development of this model to include sexuality, disability and age (see Gaard 1997, Twine 2001). Despite the fact that many of these movements have not gone as far down the road as ecofeminism when it comes to recognising the intersectionality of power relations, they all reconvene on the need to redefine what it is to be human.

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[1] Moreover, it should be stressed that 1970s feminism was not the sole catalyst for ecofeminism. The movement of social ecology, the Women's spirituality movements and more abstractly, Frankfurt School critical theory also played a role.

[2] Deep ecology is associated with the writings of Arne Naess, Warwick Fox, Bill Devall and George Sessions.

[3] Social ecology is associated with the writings of Murray Bookchin and insofar has close links with the anarchist movement. In contrast to deep ecology, social ecology has a closer relation to ecofeminism. Chaia Heller, Ynestra King and Ariel Salleh especially, are all social ecologists who have written important contributions to ecofeminist theory.

[4] Alison Jagger's (ed.) *Living with Contradictions- Controversies in Feminist Social Ethics* (1994) is a notable exception.

[5] It is a reasonable point to make that the term 'ecofeminism' is gradually becoming misleading in that it implies that it is only about connecting feminist and ecological

movements, when in fact it is in reality a far more inclusive liberation theory. To quote Val Plumwood: "*If we are exceptionally brave and don't mind the looks on our listeners faces, we can, of course, try to speak of white supremacist, naturist, capitalist patriarchy. But a simple enumeration of oppressions has more problems than just awkwardness: enumeration suggests an additive account rather than an interlocking one in terms of mutual modification, and generates continuing problems about completeness no matter how long we make the list because it selects not an open but a closed set and provides no way to extend it*" (1996b: 194): Please also refer back to the quote by Quinby on page 5/6.

[6] In fact it is doubtful whether it is accurate to portray Ancient Greek Philosophy as the originator of dualistic thinking. Value dualities such as that between lightness and darkness are common in much earlier theological thinking such as Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism.

[7] I also argue that Plumwood's concept of radical exclusion or hyperseparation can be enhanced by combining it with Kristeva's notion of abjection.

[8] This point really echoes a long-standing point comprehensively made by the social psychological literature pointing to the homogenisation and stereotyping of out-groups. Of course ironically, as I pointed out above, it is a process that ecofeminism itself has been subjected to.

[9] Of course it may be argued that Michel Foucault did not himself produce a coherent theory of power. He did however make extensive points on the subject in several of his texts (esp. 1977 and 1980).

[10] For some ecofeminist discussion of globalisation, see Mies & Shiva (1993). Moreover, Plumwood's closing chapter in *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (1993) contains a warning against the colonising aspect of globalisation. There is clearly more scope to analyse globalisation within her terms of colonialism, instrumentalism and universalism.

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*Yet I wrote that paper between December 1997 and January 1998, and submitted in February 1998 but that's the speed of academic publication for you!