

ECOFEMINISM: INTRA-GENERATIONAL AND INTERGENERATIONAL EQUITY

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Summary

Ecofeminism is an important modern movement. Studying the relationship between males controlling women and males controlling nature, it combines women's liberation and environmental protection. It aims at eliminating gender oppression. Because of the close relationship between gender oppression and males' oppression of nature, feminists hope to combine the elimination of gender oppression and of males' oppression of nature, thereby constructing a new theory for the practice of feminism.

The most urgent problems facing modern environmental ethics are intra-generational equity and intergenerational equity. Equity, in a moral sense, embodies the interests of society, the justice of welfare, and equal responsibility. The moral principle of justice calls for the fair handling of the interests of the present generation and the next generation as well as the equal division of rights and responsibilities among the present generation.

Nowadays, there is much unfairness, including racial discrimination, class oppression and discrimination, gender oppression, etc. These inequitable social phenomena not only lead to social instability, they also bring about environment crises. Sexism and the problems of intra-generational and intergenerational inequity are closely related to many respects of the environment and social sustainable development.

1. Ecofeminism: A Major Aspect of Anti-Mainstream Culture

Ecofeminism is an important social ethos and social movement in contemporary society. It is based on research into the relationship between males governing females and humans governing nature, and asserts the coalition of female thinking and the protection of our environment, and the coalition of the feminist movement and the environment protection movement.

The term ecofeminism was coined in 1974 by the French scholar Françoise d'Eaubonne in her book *Le Féminisme ou la Mort*. Her purpose in creating the word was to publicize the potential of ecological movements, and call on females to lead an ecological revolution. She predicted that the revolution would form a refreshing relationship between humans and nature, males and females.

Ecology encyclopedia define ecofeminism as (1) a radical political movement, originating from the coalition of women's rights, human rights, and the ecology movement; and (2) all theories about the various approaches to society governing the environment.

1.1. From Feminism to Ecofeminism

The purpose of traditional feminism is to emancipate women and oppose sexual discrimination, to take women's liberation as a part of human liberation, or as a measure of human liberation. In modern references, there are many different expositions. Teresa Billington-Greig (1911) defined it as a movement to reform the world on the basis of gender equity in all human relationships; a repudiation of polarity between people on the basis of sex, abrogating all gender rights and gender oppression, and constructing a common cognitive movement between women and men on the basis of laws and traditions.

In 1792, the English writer Mary Wollstonecraft advocated in *Vindication of the Rights of Women* bestowing on women the rights of education and equal social status and was seen as the precursor of women's movements throughout the world. In 1949, the French writer Simone de Beauvoir published *The Second Sex* in which she analyzed female psychological growth at great length. She gave reasons why women were inferior to men in the second characters, and elaborated ways for women to cultivate independent personalities and to alter their passive status and liberate themselves. The book became a Bible for many Western women.

From the late 1960s to the early 1970s, the environment protection movement thrived. Women took an active part in it. Demanding for females their legitimate rights in society, the economy, and childbearing, they strongly condemned the armament race and opposed the infinite robbing of natural resources and the destruction of the environment. The feminist movement went beyond its traditional range. In order to give free rein to women's efforts in these movements, Françoise d'Eaubonne put forward the definition of ecofeminism. Feminist movements began to develop into ecofeminism. Ecofeminism claimed that the aim of feminism was to eliminate sexual oppression, but

that sexual oppression and human government of nature were closely connected not only at the conceptual level, but also at the practical level. Traditional feminism neglected the relationship between governing females and governing nature. Modern feminist movements syncretized the elimination of sexual oppression and ending human government of nature, and constructed new feminist theories and practical frameworks. In 1993, the German scholar Maria Mies wrote *Ecofeminism* in cooperation with the Indian scholar Vandana Shiva. They suggested that we faced the problem not only of the survival of women, young people, and adults, but also of the protection of plant and animal diversity. These problems were caused by capitalist patriarchy, and were built on the foundation of governing women and nature. Therefore, the struggle against patriarchy should link women's liberation closely with the protection of nature. They believed that action against destroying the ecology or/and the destructive nature of nuclear power would immediately raise consciousness of the relations between patriarchy's violent objections to women, others, and nature. Mutinying against patriarchy was to make a commitment to our descendants, life, and this earth.

In 1994, the American scholar Karen J. Warren published an article entitled "The power and the promise of ecological feminism." She believed there was a very important historical and visual relation between males governing females and humans governing nature. This relationship was rooted in the patriarchal system, which ruled with governmental logic. So she drew two conclusions: 1) traditional feminism should move, in terms of logic, towards ecofeminism; 2) ecofeminism provides a framework for constructing explicit feminism ethics. The aims of the rights and promises of ecofeminism were to construct feminist theories, criticize masculinity, and all anti-nature activities, oppose all oppression, get rid of oppressive systems, put a value on males governing females and humans governing nature, and give up this ethic of governing the environment.

In addition, many papers and monographs were published that proposed different theories and contributed to ecofeminism.

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Biographical Sketches

Mouchang Yu, born in 1935, gained his bachelor's degree from Wuhan University in 1962 and his master's degree from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS). Since then, he has worked on natural dialectics in the Institute of Philosophy. Professor Yu is currently a professor, doctoral supervisor, and president of the Chinese Society for Environmental Ethics.

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