

THINKING GENDER, NATURE AND POWER TOGETHER:
A HOPE FOR STANDPOINT ECOFEMINISM

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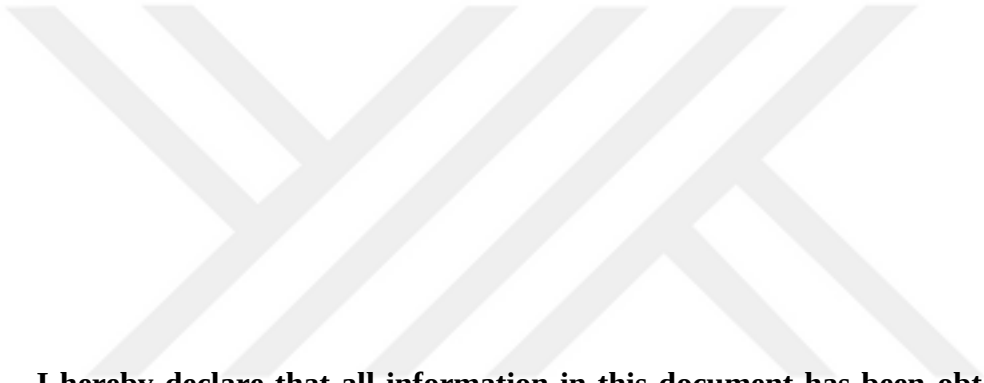
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ABSTRACT

THINKING GENDER, NATURE AND POWER: A HOPE FOR STANDPOINT ECOFEMINISM

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Ecofeminism focuses on the relation between the domination on women and nature and provides widened critique of domination by including the analysis of anthropocentrism in feminism, which is nurtured by the analysis of sexism, capitalism, racism, ethnicity and heterosexism; therefore, it presents an imagination of freedom aimed at including nonhuman entities. It is clear that women's association with nature has been used as an important means of establishing superiority over them. Cultural ecofeminism, which has an important place in the emergence and development of ecofeminism, aims to reverse the dominant system of values which inferiorizes the characteristics attributed to women such as care, emotion, compassion, altruism and being associated with nature to overcome the superiority assumption. Within this framework, while the characteristics attributed women and being associated with nature is positively affirmed, the ideals attributed to man and the realm of

culture are either ignored or rejected. However, this is a kind of acceptance of the normative definition of woman which is constructed through the attribution and universalization of essences without question. Moreover, it is not considered that the characteristics on the opposite side such as rationality, which is a key concept in the legitimation of the domination on women and nature, are reconceptualizable. This indicates both limitations of cultural ecofeminism and the importance of a different understanding of ecofeminism beyond dualism. In this thesis study, it is aimed to overcome the essentialist, universalist and generally anti-rationalist arguments of cultural ecofeminism through re-evaluation from the perspective of standpoint feminist theory.

Keywords: Anthropocentrism, Feminist Standpoint Theory, Essentialism, Universalism, Rationalism

ÖZ

TOPLUMSAL CİNSİYETİ, DOĞAYI VE İKTİDARI BİRLİKTE DÜŞÜNMEK: EKO-FEMİNİST BİR DURUŞ KURAMI UMUDU

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Yüksek Lisans, Toplumsal Cinsiyet ve Kadın Çalışmaları Anabilim Dalı

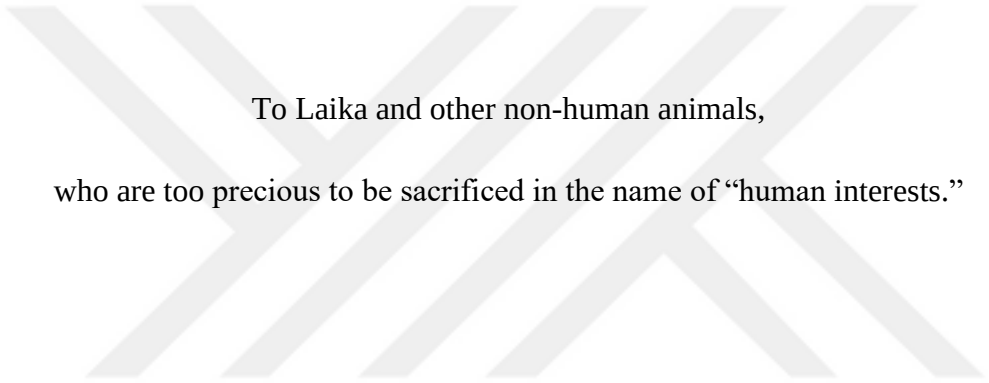
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Ekofeminizm, kadınlar ve doğa üzerinde kurulan egemenlik arasındaki ilişkiye odaklanır ve cinsiyetçilik, kapitalizm, ırkçılık ve heteroseksizm gibi çözümlemelerden beslenen feminizme diğer bir çözümleme olan insan merkezçiliği de katarak genişletilmiş bir tahakküm eleştirisi; dolayısıyla insan olmayan varlıkları da kapsamayı hedefleyen bir özgürlük tahayyülü sunar. Kadınların doğa ile özdeşleştirilmelerinin onlar üzerinde üstünlük kurmanın en önemli araçlarından biri olarak kullanıldığını görüyoruz. Ekofeminizmin ortaya çıkması ve gelişmesinde önemli payı bulunan kültürel ekofeminizm, bunun üstesinden gelebilmek için, kadınlara atfedilen, özen, duygusallık, şefkat, fedakarlık gibi özelliklere ve doğa ile ilişkilendirilmeye olumsuz anlam yükleyen hakim değerler sistemini tersine çevirmeyi amaçlar. Bu çerçevede, söz konusu özellikler ve doğa ile ilişkilendirilme olumlanırken, erkeklere ve kültür alanına atfedilen idealler görmezden gelinir ya da reddedilir. Fakat bu,

öz atfı ve bu özün genellenmesi üzerinden kurulan normatif kadın tanımlamasının sorgulanmadan kabul edilmesi anlamına gelir. Öte yandan, olumlanan özelliklerin karşı kutbunda bulunan, kadınlar ve doğa üzerinde kurulan egemenliğin meşrulaştırılmasında temel kavramlardan biri olan rasyonalitenin yeniden kavramsallaştırılabilir olduğunu göz ardı eder. Bu durum, kültürel ekofeminizmin beraberinde getirebileceği sınırlılıklara ve düalist düşünme biçiminin sınırlarının ötesine geçen bir ekofeminizm anlayışının önemine işaret eder. Bu tez çalışmasında, kültürel ekofeminizmin, feminist duruş kuramı çerçevesinde yeniden değerlendirilerek, özcü, evrenselci ve büyük ölçüde rasyonalite karşıtı argümanlarının üstesinden gelinebilmesi amaçlanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İnsan Merkezilik, Feminist Duruş Kuramı, Özcülük, Evrenselcilik, Rasyonalizm



To Laika and other non-human animals,
who are too precious to be sacrificed in the name of “human interests.”

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PLAGIARISM	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
ÖZ	vi
DEDICATION.....	viii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ix
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	x
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. Methodology of the Study.....	7
2. ECOLOGICAL THOUGHT: QUESTIONING “HUMAN” AND ITS RELATION WITH NATURE.....	11
2.1. Deep Ecology	14
2.2. Social Ecology	18
3. ECOFEMINISM: THINKING GENDER AND NATURE TOGETHER ...	25
3.1. Analyzing Anthropocentrism with Gender Lenses: Sexist Character of Anthropocentrism.....	27
3.1.1. Tracing the Source of the Link Between Sexism and Anthropocentrism.....	29
3.1.2. “Woman”: Identified with or Relatively Close to Nature?	33
3.1.3. The Importance of the Association of Women with Nature: Difference.....	34

3.2. “Anthropocentrism is a Feminist Issue”: Anthropocentric Character of Sexism	39
3.3. Celebration of Femininity and Being Associated with Nature: Cultural Ecofeminism.....	42
3.4. Drawing Attention to Socioeconomic Processes: Materialist Perspectives in Ecofeminism.....	50
3.5. In Lieu of Conclusion: Some Replies to the Materialist Critiques.....	53
4. EVALUATING ECOFEMINISM FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF STANDPOINT FEMINISM	56
4.1. Standpoint Feminist Theory	56
4.1.1. The Situated/Located Knowledge Thesis	57
4.1.2. The Epistemic Advantage Thesis	60
4.2. Towards Standpoint Ecofeminism	63
5. CONCLUSION	76
BIBLIOGRAPHY	83
APPENDICES	
APPENDIX A: TÜRKÇE ÖZET / TURKISH SUMMARY	99
APPENDIX B: TEZ İZİN FORMU / THESIS PERMISSION FORM.....	112

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Civilized Man says: I am Self, I am Master, all the rest is other--outside, below, underneath, subservient. I own, I use, I explore, I exploit, I control. What I do is what matters. What I want is what matter is for. I am that I am, and the rest is women & wilderness, to be used as I see fit.

Ursula K. Le Guin

(1985, p. 161)

Ecofeminism, developed as an intellectual field and social movement in the 1970s, brings the systematic relationship between the domination of women and nature into focus. Anthropocentrism is included in the feminist analysis as it reinforces other forms of domination and therefore provides an insight into the true nature of domination over women. In this context, ecofeminism offers an extended critique of domination, by articulating the analysis of anthropocentrism into feminism, which is nurtured by several analyses including sexism, capitalism, racism and heterosexism; therefore, it presents an imagination of freedom aimed at including “earth others.”

When traditional sources are inspected, it is clear that women’s association with nature and their exclusion from the realm of culture serves as one of the important means of establishing dominance over them. On the assumption that women have various characteristics such as emotionality, care, altruism,

empathy, compassion and intuition, they are associated with nature. These characteristics represent dependence on nature, instincts and, thus, an act against “human subjectivity.” On the practical dimension, essential characteristics attributed to women causes the naturalization of sexual division of labor. As stated by Rosemary Radford Ruether, this interpretation “naturalizes the domination to make it part of the very natures or identities of both the dominant and subordinated items and thus to appear to be inevitable, ‘natural’” (1975, p. 189).

When we consider that the existence of women in public is possible so long as their duties are still fulfilled in the “private sphere,” it becomes difficult to claim that the relation between women and nature is a thing of the past in the Western world (Plumwood, 2003, p. 21). Consequently, it is possible to make a connection between the case and the social status of women in Third World countries. Privatization of family owned lands, their cultivation for “cash-crops,” introduction of monoculture, patents on seeds and production of genetically modified organisms under globalization policies which reflect the “interests” of Western powers, disposed women of their agricultural know-how and wisdom and degraded their status in the livelihood economy (Shiva, 2008; 2010; Mies and Shiva, 2014). It is the common thread of all these phenomena that dominant western culture aims to systematically ignore women’s labour to render them “invisible” (Plumwood, 2003).

The question why women are associated with nature and why this association contains a negative meaning brings along the questioning of dualist thinking and its hierarchical construction. In dualism, categories that are assumed to present two different sides of social reality are separated in a way that does not give rise to any kind of relationality of overlapping and continuity: Soul/body, human/animal, reason/emotion, culture/nature, male/female, rationality/instinct, active/passive and light skinned/dark skinned. As long as these sides are considered to represent a homogeneous unity, the continuity is ensured. For instance, in order to maintain the continuity of sexual

segregation, two opposite categories are required to be defined according to generalized attributes which act as a magnet. Hence reality is totalized, fixed and bound around two separate sides. This way of thinking not only creates a string of opposites: The fact that opposites are separated based on their normative stance leads to a hierarchical relation in-between. Whereas “fitting in” normativity is considered being hierarchically “superior,” “not fitting in” is regarded as a sign of being “inferior.”

As it is elaborated in the first chapter, according to dualistic thinking, the concept of normative human identity and the realm of culture, which implies social relationships, stand in stark in opposition to the realm of nature. The concept of “human” is defined in terms of having reason which may ensure going “beyond” nature and exclusion of the characteristics that evoke natural existence of human including emotions, body and reproduction. Defining the concept of “nature” as it lacks reasoning serves as grounds for legitimacy for human domination over nature. The nature/culture dualism, determinative in our perception of nature, is not independent from other forms of dualism, indeed, it forms a relational network. This perception of nature causes multiple exclusion and control, not only of non-humans, but of various groups of humans. As stated by Val Plumwood,

racism, colonialism and sexism have drawn their conceptual strength from casting sexual, racial and ethnic difference as closer to the animal and the body construed as a sphere of inferiority, as a lesser form of humanity lacking the full measure of rationality or culture (2003, p. 4).

To reveal the relational network of sexism and anthropocentrism, ecofeminists examine intellectual, historical, social, socioeconomic and religious ties between these two forms of domination in this light. In this respect, I find it appropriate to explain ecofeminism as a perspective based on twofold criticism. Ecofeminists adopt a critical approach to ecological thought which disregards the sexist character of anthropocentrism and to feminisms which disregards the anthropocentric character of sexism. They draw attention to understand the relation between the concepts of “men” and “human” and to a

need to problematize it in the name of the liberation of women and nature. Ecofeminism is not the simple combination of the knowledge about the concept of “human” and its relation with “nature” obtained from ecological thought and the knowledge about the concept of “men” and its relation with “women” obtained from feminism. Rather, it is a perspective that attempts to reveal the intersections between these concepts to provide a relatively better way to understand the dynamics of two forms of domination.

However, ecofeminism has been subjected to criticisms for being essentialist, universalist and generally anti-rationalist. While some of the criticisms result from generalization of cultural ecofeminist arguments to ecofeminism and from superficial or misinterpretation of cultural ecofeminism, others sign a need to re-interpretation of ecofeminism from constructive manner. This study aims to be constructive and represents an effort to create a relatively appropriate way to justify the arguments of ecofeminism by making use of the critical stance of social theory. In this context, my research question centers on the justification of why feminism and ecological thought need each other from a perspective quite distant from essentialism, universalism and anti-rationalism.

My thesis consists of three chapters, titled *Ecological Thought: Questioning “Human” and Its Relation with Nature*, *Ecofeminism: Thinking Gender and Nature Together* and *Evaluation of Ecofeminism from the Perspective of Standpoint Feminist Theory*.

In the first chapter titled *Ecological Thought: Questioning “Human” and Its Relation With Nature*, I will mention deep ecology and social ecology which can be regarded as two main perspectives of ecological thought. Differently from environmental movement, deep ecology and social ecology defend that ecological destruction is related with anthropocentric perception, a perception that identifies the concept of “human” in opposition to and hierarchically superior from nature. Both approaches conceptualize “human” in a relational

manner with nonhuman entities and they don't attribute a hierarchical superiority for the characteristics accepted to make human different. Despite differences, it is thought that questioning the concept of "human" and human's relation with nature will have an impact on other forms of oppression. Ecological thought, by making this critical perspective in social theory possible, provides both a basis and a source of criticism for ecofeminism.

In the second chapter titled *Ecofeminism: Thinking Gender and Nature Together*, in line with my research question, I will explain ecofeminism with regard to its critique of ecological thought and ecologically-insensitive feminisms. Ecofeminists argue that ecological thought is deprived of the tool of gender lenses in analysing ecological destruction and thus it ignores women's experience. According to them, the concept of "woman" is not constructed in opposition or hierarchically superior to nature, it is indeed based on relationality. This view is associated with the criticism directed at feminisms who accept the "negative" meaning attributed to being associated with nature. Several philosophers and authors, deemed important in feminist theory, regard this issue as a barrier that needs to be lifted for the liberation of women (Plumwood, 2003, p. 19-29). According to ecofeminists, these feminists overlook the link between the concept of "human" and the ideals attributed to masculinity, aspiring to equalize with men under "human" category. Rather than rejecting women's association with nature in the name of liberation, ecofeminists question why being associated with nature carries negative meaning and how this meaning can be overturned.

Including the analysis of anthropocentrism and analysing its relation with sexism opens new discussion areas in feminism. In this chapter, some of these areas under the subchapters titled *Tracing the Source of the Link Between Sexism and Anthropocentrism*, *"Woman": Identified with or Relatively Close to Nature?*, *Importance of the Relation of Woman and Nature: Difference* are included. After outlining ecofeminism, I will mention about cultural ecofeminism and its critique from the perspective of materialist ecofeminism.

Cultural ecofeminism, which has played an important role in the emergence and development of ecofeminism, aims to reverse the dominant system of values, which negates the characteristics attributed to women, nature and being associated with nature. In this context, characteristics such as emotionality, care, altruism, empathy, compassion and intuition and being in harmony with the ecological system are positively affirmed and celebrated. According to cultural ecofeminists, against the negation which paves the way for hostile attitudes towards women and “mother nature,” women should restore the old glory of feminine values for the establishment of non-sexist and non-anthropocentric order.

Materialist ecofeminist perspectives, which includes the questioning of ecological destruction, in addition to sexism and capitalism, rather than affirming what is attributed to women and being associated with nature, try to draw ecofeminist attention to material processes to make socioeconomic change possible.

In the final chapter titled *Evaluating Ecofeminism from the Perspective of Standpoint Feminist Theory*, I will try to create an ecofeminist perspective which acknowledges the importance of affirmation but aims to move beyond it. As mentioned before, cultural ecofeminism criticizes dualist thinking on the grounds that it creates a hierarchy of values, and it is argued that reversing the hierarchy is sufficient for overcoming the domination over women and nature. However, confining to this argument leads to a reproduction of the same issue in another form. As Val Plumwood and Genevieve Lloyd discuss, the fact that the characteristics attributed to women and nature are deemed inferior is not the only point to be questioned. Another and more important point required to be considered is that the concepts of “women” and “nature” are constructed according to these characteristics (2003; 2004).

Thus, affirming what has been negated might mean the acceptance of female stereotypes without questioning in a sense. The acceptance includes

essentialism and universalism because cultural ecofeminists maintain the assumption that women have the same set of characteristics and they are in a relatively close relation with nature. This approach, on the one hand, accepts the oppositional construction of differences and ignores the differences among women. On the other hand, it fails to recognize that the ideals, especially rationality, can be re-conceptualized in a different manner. This case points to the limitations of cultural ecofeminist agenda and to the importance of an ecofeminist perspective that goes beyond the limits of dualistic thinking.

Based on this criticism, in the final chapter, I will defend that feminist standpoint theory is an appropriate way to reinterpret the arguments of cultural ecofeminism. The claim of feminist standpoint theory that the meaning of social categories might be acquired by the mediation of the effects of the complex relationship between various forms of domination including sexism, racism, classism, heterosexism on experience paves the way for differences among women and it makes possible to go beyond dualist thinking which constructs social categories by attributing and generalizing an essence. On the other side, this effort, combined with including the analysis of anthropocentrism as a form of domination in feminism, might entail a hope for reconceptualization of the concept of rationality in a way that excludes opposition and hierarchy. Accordingly, standpoint feminism embodies a hope of an ecofeminist perspective which is based on the guidance of women's knowledge nourished by different experiences to liberate hand in hand with nonhuman beings.

1.1.Methodology of the Study

My research question centers on the justification of the relation between the liberation of women and nature. From this point on, I prefer to explain ecofeminism by emphasizing its critiques both to ecological thought and feminism: On the one hand, ecofeminism criticizes ecological thought which excludes women's distinctive experience by ignoring the relation of the

anthropocentrism with sexism; on the other hand, ecofeminism criticizes feminisms which are insensitive to ecological problems by ignoring the relation of sexism with anthropocentrism. As is indicated in the following part, arguments of cultural ecofeminism have been widely criticized for being essentialist, universalist and generally anti-rationalist. I defend that two important aspects of standpoint feminist theory –the situated knowledge thesis and the epistemic advantage thesis provide relatively consistent way for ecofeminism both to justify its own arguments and to reply the criticisms rise against it.

Feminist standpoint theory tries to reveal the exclusionist and misrepresentative character of knowledge and the importance of the attempts to reveal different perspectives to reach more adequate knowledge about social reality. Sandra Harding's perception of feminist standpoint theory relies on the idea that the "unprivileged" social groups are more likely to be privileged with regard to their potential to have less partial and more trustworthy knowledge of the social reality (2004, p. 127-141). "Strong objectivism," which is conceptualized by Harding to explain this point is also subjected to criticisms. Iddo Landau, for instance, writes that this understanding still includes essentialist and universalist arguments by assuming automatic epistemic privilege (2008). However, as Alison Wylie indicates, it is not clear that anyone who advocates feminist standpoint theory assumes that all women share the same set of experiences and thus the same perspective with regards to being woman and that all marginalized groups have epistemic advantage automatically with regards to their social position. As some standpoint feminist theorists accentuate, being woman may not be enough for a standpoint, rather, standpoints are achievements. When viewed from this aspect, the thesis of epistemic advantage can be interpreted as "contingently, with respect to particular epistemic projects, some social locations and standpoints confer epistemic advantage" (Wylie, 2004, p. 346).

Harding writes that social scientific research should start out from marginalized groups to reach less partial and more trustworthy knowledge of the social reality. These groups make it possible for social scientists to reveal “hidden aspects” of social relations between gender and the institutions that support these relations (Harding, 1991, p. 127). The concept of “power relations” becomes important at this point. Christina Rolin thinks that feminist standpoint theory is a source for feminist epistemology for two reasons: On the one hand, it warns feminists to consider power relations as an obstacle against the production of scientific knowledge. On the other hand, it provides feminists a method to reach scientific knowledge even under oppressive conditions (2009, p. 219). Accordingly, standpoint feminist theory opens a way for social scientists to interconnect the process of production of scientific knowledge and the process of empowerment.

Cultural ecofeminism assumes that all women have the attributed characteristics such as emotionality, care, altruism, empathy, compassion and intuition which are accepted as ecologically appropriate human values and by affirming these characteristics positively, women will be the pioneers of the non-sexist and non-anthropocentric order. By choosing standpoint feminist theory, I aim to show that being woman does not guarantee to have these characteristics and an intention to fight against ecological destruction in my thesis. Perceiving women as a social category in terms of situationality and evaluating women’s relatively extensive activities to preserve their environment in terms of epistemic advantage paves the way for an understanding which is quite distant from essentialist and universalist arguments.

Standpoint feminist theory provides a method to criticize and overcome the essentialist and universalist assumptions of modernity. However, it can be asserted that the assumption of rationalism is relatively less discussed subject. Ecofeminism has the possibility to open a new discussion area in feminist

standpoint theory by showing the anthropocentric, and thus exclusionist and misrepresentative character of knowledge about non-human.

Accordingly, by choosing standpoint feminist theory, I take a stand in contemporary –or critical debates of modernism, which tries to reveal specificities of subjectivities by considering the critiques of postmodernism. It can be asserted that ecofeminism is relatively less studied subject, especially in Turkey. I prefer to make a theoretical evaluation both because to provide a source to explain the place of ecofeminism in social theory and to provide a basis to my intended future research about political activities of women in Turkey against state regulations those are harmful to both women and nature.

CHAPTER 2

ECOLOGICAL THOUGHT: QUESTIONING “HUMAN” AND ITS RELATION WITH NATURE

*Despite Copernicus, all the cosmos
rotates around our little globe.*

*Despite Darwin, we are not, in our
hearts, part of the natural process.*

*We are superior to nature, contemptuous
of it, willing to use it for our slightest
whim.*

Lynn White

(1967, p. 1206)

It can be stated that Western culture and values are formed in line with the affirmation of the separation of human from nature. In this regard, the criteria for human advancement are related with moving away from the “necessities” that evokes human’s dependence on nature. This alienation, which corresponds to a linear process, is made possible by the references assumed to be ascribed to normative human identity and the transformation of human perception of nature.

Normative human identity defines itself through the borders of “what-is-excluded” by means of a series of dualities. Accordingly, normative human identity and the realm of culture it has created is coded over having reason. The coding forms the rationality assumption of modernity: What makes humans “human” is sharply in opposition with nature; what is not included within the

boundaries of normative human identity –emotions, body, sexuality, reproduction, primitive or not civilized- are included in the realm of irrationality. Not only does this perception creates series of oppositions that prevents any kind of relationality, continuity or commonization, but also paves the way for a hierarchy-based understanding depriving one side of the dualism of “superior” values. The statement “if you’ve seen one, you’ve seen them all” considers all non-human entities to be the same because of the lack of the values that makes humans “human.” According to Plumwood, “The term ‘nature’ itself partakes of all these problems, homogenizing in the sweep of ‘the rest’ things as diverse as seals, waves and rocks, oysters and clouds, forests, viruses and eagles” (2003, p. 70).

The assumption of “deprivation” is used to give grounds for legitimacy for achieving domination over the “deprived.” The fact that nature is described lacking agency and autonomy makes human actions against nature emphatically and morally impossible to restrict. In this regard, nature is a mechanism that is subject to the direction of the utilizer; regarding that the “direction” cannot be dissociated from the interests of the utilizer, nature becomes an object that might be functional for humans.

Nature, regarded as a blessed, holistic, feminine and live “organic cosmos,” has begun to be perceived as a mechanism with the rise of science. After this transformation in human perception, the concern of understanding and learning nature was replaced with an effort to acquire the information that would bring domination. The perception that nature moves in a computable, measurable and predictable order makes adopting the principle of causality towards nature easier. According to Carolyn Merchant,

the mechanistic view of nature, developed by the seventeenth-century natural philosophers and based on a Western mathematical tradition going back to Plato, is still dominant in science today. This view assumes that nature can be divided into parts and that the parts can be rearranged to create other species of being. ‘Facts’ or information bits can be extracted from the environmental context and rearranged according to a set of rules based on logical and mathematical operations. The results can then be tested and verified by

resubmitting them to nature, the ultimate judge of their validity. Mathematical formalism provides the criterion for rationality and certainty, nature the criterion for empirical validity and acceptance or rejection of the theory (1980, p. 290).

Such an interpretation of nature analogous to a mechanism transforms nature into an object that might be useful for humans. According to Robyn Eckersley, when we consider the earth in this perspective,

there is a clear and morally relevant dividing line between humankind and the rest of nature, that humankind is the only or principle source of value and meaning in the world, and that non-human nature is there for no other purpose but to serve humankind (2003, p. 51).

The concept of “anthropocentrism” becomes important at this point. Anthropocentrism depends on an assumption that humanity is at the centre of the existence. It can be possible to make a distinction between “weak” and “strong” anthropocentrism. In this distinction, while “weak” anthropocentrism signs defending creation of policies to provide the maintenance of natural “resources” for the continuity of human life; “strong” anthropocentrism equated with the concept of “human chauvinism,” which means attributing superior value to the characteristics thought to be uniquely human have. However, I think that there is a close relation between “weak” and “strong” anthropocentrism because prioritizing human needs and, for example, questioning climate change if it has negative impacts on human wellbeing can be accepted as a kind of superiority assumption. Accordingly, I use the concept of “anthropocentrism” to indicate normative human identity which oppositionally separates the chain of life as human and nonhuman and attributes the higher value to human because of having reason.

Therefore, the new role of human, in the relationship between human and nature, is not only related to oppositionally separating its selfhood from nature but also establishing domination over it. It can be stated that overcoming ecological destruction is possible through problematizing this kind of a normative human being and reconceptualizing the human-nature relationship in

this context. At this point, a distinction must be made between environmentalism and ecological thought.

Since the second half of the 20th century, phenomena such as deforestation, desertification, climate change, toxic wastes, biodiversity crisis and maltreatment of animals have become problematizable in social theory. Several matters including the causes of the problems and measures to be taken have begun to be discussed. Environmentalism accepts normative human identity and the relationship between human and nature without question and regards “environmental” problems worth discussing in terms of their effects on humans. Thus, it is possible to assert that environmentalists maintain anthropocentric perception. Ecological thought, on the other hand, re-addresses the questions “what is human?” “what makes human different from other beings?” and “what is the nature of the relationship between human and nature?” and evaluates the consequences of ecological problems without excluding their effects on non-human entities.

The oppressive character of the way of thinking, which places human in the center and hierarchically ranks non-human beings, is associated with degrading various human groups in the same way. Consequently, a new interpretation of the human-nature relationship is of vital importance for overcoming the cruel attitude towards nature and abolishing all forms of social oppression. As they both directed a radical criticism over the relationship between human and nature, and introduced significant initiatives in terms of revealing its connection with different forms of social oppression including sexism, racism, classism, I consider deep ecology and social ecology, which might be regarded as two major movements directly identifying themselves as ecologists, worth being discussed in a separate section.

2.1. Deep Ecology

The origins of the criticism of deep ecology explain the origins of its name. In his article “The Deep Ecological Movement: Some Philosophical Aspects”

philosopher Arne Naess discusses the distinction between the environmental and ecology movements within the framework of two concepts: *shallow ecology* and *deep ecology* (2011). Although these two movements appear to be in agreement on accepting the share of humans in ecological problems and the need for overcoming the effect of this share (Drengson, Schroll, Devall, 2011, p. 107), there are extensive separations between them. More clearly, it is possible to state that deep ecology refuses shallow ecology rather than emphasizing its insufficiency. While shallow ecology argues that non-human beings cannot be addressed ignoring the meaning humans have attributed, deep ecology claims that these kinds of beings bear their meaning in themselves, which might be the main point of the distinction (Kheel, 1991, p. 63). According to Naess, the abovementioned meanings derive from the commonality of having “the universal right to live and blossom” (1989, p. 166-169). Because “the universal right to live and blossom” is a condition of self-realization for all beings, deep ecologists refuse all kinds of intellectual or activistic phenomena that assess the value of a being according to its functionality for humans.

The value perception of deep ecology brings the place of humans on the earth into question. In order to be able to question this ascribed state, the view that the world is “essentially atomistic, divisible, isolable, static, nonrelativistic, comprehensible and mechanical” should be dismissed (Fox, 1984, p. 256) and the idea that the world is composed of a holistic system encompassing all beings from the tiniest bacteria to human should be embarrassed. Dualistic thinking, which assumes an ontological distinction between human and non-human beings, is unacceptable as it regards human as subject and non-human beings as object. This separation not only determines the relationship of humans with non-human entities, but also causes human to become alienated from their biological existence, which ties them with other species. According to deep ecologists, this approach, which is based on a superiority of humans,

and ironically, acts against the very existence of human beings, should be refused.

In order to make the change possible, it is suggested to apply the principle of “self-realization.” The principle refers to overcoming the phenomenon of alienation. According to deep ecologists, overcoming alienation would be possible if it is realized that human is a simple member of a life network composed of relational beings. Rather than a narrow scope of modernist understanding of self, deep ecology locates the concept of “self” in open and living system of relations. According to Naess, *self* refers to social-self and it has something to say about individual’s place in society. However, *self*, -or “the great self,” as described by Naess refers to the process of relating to a greater whole. In this process, people experience an existential questioning and begin to realize that they are a part of the ecological relationship network (2002, p. 114).

The principle of self-realization actually points to a final state. And identification is the key to achieve this, in other words it is the principle that could make humans reconnect with other beings. Christian Diehm argues that there are two different perceptions of identification within the context of deep ecology (2007). The first one is the type of identification conceptualized by Warwick Fox as “identification-as-belonging.” According to Fox, there is no ontological distinction such as subject/object or human/non-human beings. Indeed, all beings are constructed by the mediation of their relationship with each other. When the self widens or deepens to the extent that it regards the interest of others as its own interest, it won't separate its own interest from that of the others and considering the interest of others does not imply self-sacrificing (Fox, 1995).

And the other type is “identification-as-kinship” argued by Naess which can be regarded as a response to the criticism that “identification-as-belonging” might imply removing the boundaries between the self and the other. At this point,

what is discussed is a state of affinity rather than belonging. According to Naess, realizing this affinity, we can discover something of ourselves in the other, or something of the other in ourselves. According to him, this affinity may range from shared physical abilities and vulnerabilities to common social activities and needs. However, according to Naess, identification is strongest when others are suffering (1985, p. 264). In order to explain this type of identification clearly, he gives an example from his experiences:

I was looking through an old-fashioned microscope at the dramatic meeting of two drops of different chemicals. At that moment, a flea jumped from a lemming which was strolling along the table and landed in the middle of the acid chemicals. To save it was impossible. It took many minutes for the flea to die. The movements were dreadfully expressive. Naturally, what I felt was a painful sense of compassion and empathy. But the empathy was not basic, rather it was a process of identification: that 'I saw myself in the flea.' If I had alienated from the flea, not seeing intuitively anything even resembling myself, the death struggle would have left me feeling indifferent (1995, p. 227).

At this point, the identified "other" cannot be regarded as a part of the self. Therefore, the concern of reconceptualizing the sense of self, as indicated in the first type of identification, is replaced by a sense of awareness towards the value or significance that the "other" possesses.

In both cases of identification, it should be strongly emphasized that "rational calculation" or several abstract rules such as ethics or moral do not take any part in the human-nature relationship. What matters is the perception that each and every entity has the "universal right to live and blossom" (Naess, 1989, p. 166-169). Because ecological problems are "not only a crime against humanity, it is a crime against life in general," one can not simply wait until they harm humanity in order to problematize ecological changes. (Naess, 2011, p. 89).

Self-realization through identification is related to another principle of deep ecology: ecocentric/biocentric egalitarianism. According to deep ecologists, anthropocentrism, which assumes a contradiction between the interest of

humans and that of non-human entities and glorifies one against the other, should be replaced by ecocentrism (Sessions, 1988). Ecocentrism argues a sense of life in which the main concern is to sustain the right to live and blossom of soils, waters, plants and animals in biozones that does not cross the boundaries nature established for humans. However, the primary condition of change is to question and transform the intellectual basis of human actions leading to ecological destruction. In order for the principle of self-actualization to be possible, the barriers against the intellectual development of humans should be lifted. These limits are derived from anthropocentric thinking; human perception is stuck between these boundaries. The liberation will not only have an impact on abolishing the human dominance over non-human entities but also lead to other consequences. In these regions where identification with the earth is the fundamental principle, hierarchy is categorically refused and diversity is welcomed. Therefore, humans will be identified based on their place in the ecosystem and any sense of belonging such as gender, race, class, and ethnicity will fall in significance. Deep ecologist inquiry, which brings politics from the level of society to that of the earth, leads the need for political, social, economic and technological change.

2.2. Social Ecology

Social ecology is the other ecological thought that brings the concept of “human” and the relationship between human and nature into question. The commonality with deep ecology comes to an end when it comes to the question: “What is the root of ecological problems?” While deep ecology regards anthropocentrism as the main source of ecological problems, social ecology argues that human domination paved the way for anthropocentrism. Therefore, it can be stated that anthropocentrism is interpreted as a cause by deep ecologist and an effect by social ecologists.

Murray Bookchin, who can be considered to be the major figure in social ecology, also feels the need for emphasizing the distinction between

environmentalism ecological thought. From environmentalist point of view, nature is a subject that is required to be made functional for humans. It aims at maintaining the continuity of human dominance over nature via developing means of alleviating the negative effects of environmental problems on humans (Bookchin, 1980, p. 58). In this context, environmentalism is nothing more than “natural engineering” (Bookchin, 1980, p. 107). On the other hand, the ecological perspective, which attributes “intentionality” to the entirety and harmony of the biosphere, underlines that each form of life has a unique place and that damage to any of these would pose a problem in the working of the whole. In this framework, nature becomes a realm which makes human existence possible, rather than existing for humans to use (Bookchin, 1996).

Bookchin believes that deep ecology has made ecological policies impossible. As he believes that ecological problems derive from the domination of men over women, elderly over young people, state over society, classes over other classes, colonialists over colonies, they imply a social meaning (Bookchin, 1980, p. 76). The emergence of social divisions and hierarchy, and finally domination, have led to the assumption that human can also rule nature. Therefore, inter-society forms of domination precede the domination of nature (Bookchin, 1989). In this respect, it is required to overcome the phenomenon of social domination in the first place in order to reach a solution to ecological problems. But deep ecology ignores the role of social theory in shaping ecological thought, and “political action and education have given way to values of personal redemption, ritualistic behavior, the denigration of human will, and the virtues of human irrationality” (Bookchin, 1996, p. 34).

At this point, Bookchin states that deep ecology is anti-humanist. The deep ecologist understanding of self overlooks the specificities of human existence which separates humans from other species. Nonetheless, accepting that the qualities that make humans “human” distinguish it from non-human entities is different from creating a hierarchy against others in line with these qualities. According to Bookchin, one should neither surrender to normative

understanding of reason nor to anti-rationalism. The way to overcome ecological problems is not to choose the one side of oppositions as deep ecologists do, but to reveal the interaction between the two sides (Bookchin, 1980). From this point of view, social ecology seeks ways to establish “ecological humanism” through rethinking the distinct qualities of human.

Bookchin refers to two different conceptualizations of nature to explain the relationship between nature and society: While first nature represents “the cumulative evolution of the natural world,” second nature means “the evolution of society.” Within the framework of dialectical naturalism, which describes the interacting evolution of natural and social history, second nature develops in continuity with first nature, until both meets in the final state of “free nature” (Bookchin, 1980; 1989; 1996).

According to Bookchin, nature has not been randomly formed; it contains in itself an intention and direction. This points to an evolutionary process proceeding from inorganic to organic, and finally to social. When it is not disturbed, nature provides the planet with lives of increasing subjectivity and consciousness (Bookchin, 1980). Thus, it is possible to state that the concept of society has a natural aspect. In this regard, “social life does not necessarily face nature as a combatant in an unrelenting war.” On the contrary, it is “a natural fact that has its origins in the biology of human socialization” (Bookchin, 1989, p. 26).

Associating society with nature in this manner also tells something about the distinctive qualities of humans: When animals reach a level of intelligence, they obtain a position which enables them to make basic choices that affect their own evolution. They progressively go beyond being the passive objects of natural selection and become the active objects of their own development (Bookchin, 1989, p. 37). Because of this capacity, humans can grasp this intention in organic evolution and develop ethical responsibilities in this direction. While this apprehension brings the hope for minimizing human

intervention in the order of nature through identification with other entities, social ecology attributes human intervention a “natural” quality. Bookchin does not see any problem in humans attempt to intervene in first nature, furthermore, according to him, it is natural and inevitable because the strength of humanity to consciously intervene in and influence first nature has led to second nature (1996, p. 131-140). Similarly, according to Janet Biehl, the negation of this strength of humanity would mean the rejection of the self-actualization of first nature (1999, p. 32-36).

Bookchin and Biehl are aware of the fact that humans might use this capacity to bring organic nature on the brink of destruction. According to Bookchin, current ecological problems arise from the fact that second nature has literally ruined what organic evolution has brought. Social order, for Bookchin,

is simplifying complex food webs by replacing the organic with the inorganic — turning soil into sand, forests into lumber, and land into concrete. In so simplifying the biosphere, this social order is working against the thrust of animal and plant evolution over the past billion years, a thrust which has been to colonize almost every niche on the planet with variegated life-forms, each uniquely, often exquisitely, adapted to fairly intractable material conditions for life (1980, p. 90).

At this point, for Bookchin, it should be considered that second nature is at an unfinished, inadequate stage of development in its entirety (Bookchin, 1996, p. 33). When we consider our creative, attentive and rational potential, it might be stated that we are far from being human in full measure: “Our prevailing society serves to inhibit, rather than realize, our human potential” (Bookchin, 1989, p. 35). Recognition of the fact that the current relationship with first nature is not immanent reveals the need to a different conceptualization of the social. This society, which does not diverge from nature, makes the construction of “what-is-required” in the light of nature’s movement possible. In this context, Bookchin thinks that it burdens the most conscious life-form - humanity with the responsibility towards acting intelligently to foster organic evolution.

Within the concept of “ecological humanism”, human is described as a “life-form that can consciously and richly enhance the natural world, rather than simply damage it” (Bookchin, 1989, p. 32). At this point, the meaning that Bookchin attributes to “reason” becomes prominent. The notion of “instrumental reason” he uses to express dominant reason is criticized as it does not go beyond the limits of “what-is.” To him, “‘reason’ — more properly, as ‘reasonable’ is a strictly functional mentality guided by operational standards of logical consistency and pragmatic success” (Bookchin, 1982, p. 270).

In contrast, “dialectical reason” regards reason as an existential continuum without sanctification and deals with its evolutionary nature. Based on the fact that this phenomenon might be something different: “Reason is not only a means for analyzing and interpreting reality; it extends the boundaries of reality beyond the immediately experienced present” (Bookchin, 1996, p. 23). The “what-should-be” becomes an ethical criterion for judging the truth or validity of an objective “what-is” (Bookchin, 1996).

According to Bookchin, an ecological dialectic would open the way to an objective ethics derived from organic evolution and thus humanity “will become the voice, indeed the expression, of a natural evolution rendered self-conscious” (1989, p. 203). Therefore, in terms of humanity’s intervention in nature to transform it, whether its practice is consistent with an objective ecological ethics that is rationally developed is of high importance.

The weakening of the natural bases of social life has widened the gap between the “what-is” and “what-should-be” more than ever. The future of the biosphere depends on creating a free nature that can ease the pain and suffering of both first and second natures. In this new unity, neither first nor second nature loses its specificity. Second nature would be “the actualization of first nature’s potentiality to achieve mind and truth.” In other words, “human intellection in an ecological society would thus ‘fold back’ upon the

evolutionary continuum” and humanity would add the dimensions of freedom, reason and ethics to it (Bookchin, 1996, p. 136). According to Bookchin, “freedom would no longer be placed in opposition to nature, individuality to society, choice to necessity” (1982, p. 318). This notion of unity or synthesis, based on the gains brought by social and natural history, between community and naturalness takes a quite different stand compared to both the traditional image of nature, regarded as a “realm of necessity,” and deep ecology, which suggests being subject to the laws of nature.

In order to achieve a rationalist and ecological synthesis, the notion of domination should be questioned, and the split between human and the world, country and town, industry and agriculture, intellectual and physical world should be healed; a process of decentralization should be commenced in line with capacity of ecosystems in which they are located; sustained and qualified production should be favored against over large-scale production; technology should be stripped of its destructive capacity; the development -not dictation of a new sense of need supporting healthy life should be aimed, the administration humans should be replaced by the administration of things (Bookchin, 1980).

The common point of deep ecology and social ecology, namely their intellectual distinction, lies in the fact that they bring the concept of normative human identity and the realm of culture into question. As Eckersley indicates:

The environmental crisis is regarded not only as crisis of participation and survival but also a crisis of culture in the broadest sense of the term, that is, the total of the inherited ideas, beliefs, values, and knowledge, which constitute the shared bases of social action (2003, p. 20).

Considering the fact that normative human identity is the key determinant of the human-nature relationship, several questions including “what human is”, “what makes it different from other entities” and “what is the nature of the relationship between human and nature” are deemed crucial to overcome the destruction. Reconceptualization of human in a relationality that excludes any kind of hierarchy with nature points to a new sense of life. In order for this new

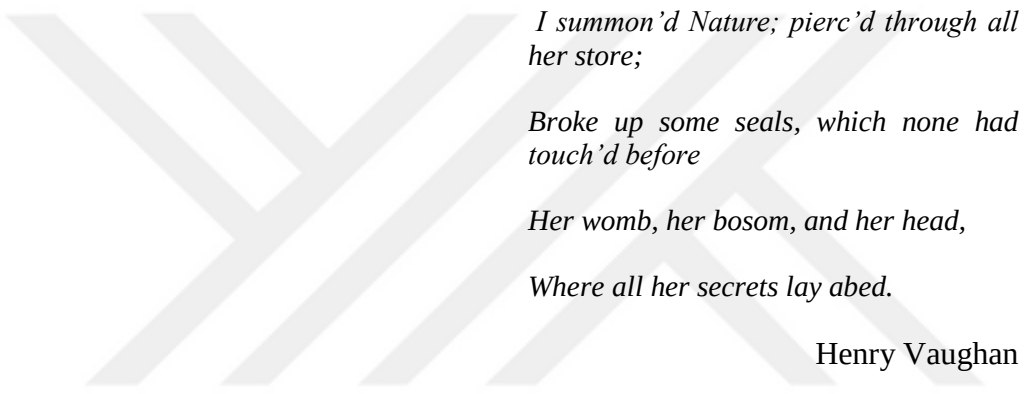
sense of life to become valid, it is argued that human and society should be included in the realm of nature or that what-is-social should be reconceptualized.

Deep ecology and social ecology have paved a substantial and intellectual path for ecofeminism. In addition to the criticism of anthropocentrism, ecofeminists share the concern for developing a new sense of consciousness with deep ecologists and the emphasis on social transformation with social ecologists, and they have directed substantial criticism at these thoughts leading to significant discussions.



CHAPTER 3

ECOFEMINISM: THINKING GENDER AND NATURE TOGETHER



*I summon'd Nature; pierc'd through all
her store;*

*Broke up some seals, which none had
touch'd before*

Her womb, her bosom, and her head,

Where all her secrets lay abed.

Henry Vaughan

(1871: 84-85)

In spite of the fact that arguably one of the most important ecological works, *Silent Spring*, was written by a woman, Rachel Carson (1962), ecological problems became a subject of feminism in the late 1970s. Ecofeminism, emerging from various forms of movements including peace movements, labor movements, environmental and animal liberation movements and women's health care discussions, was first used as a concept by Françoise d'Eaubonne (1981) to underline the women's potential for the solution of ecological problems. After following debates, conferences and publications, it began to influence feminist thought. *New Women/New Earth* (1975) by Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Woman and Nature* (1978) by Susan Griffin, *The Death of Nature* (1980) by Carolyn Merchant and *Gyn/Ecology* (1990) by Mary Daly are regarded as significant sources promoting wider debates.

On the conference titled “Women and Life on Earth: Ecofeminism in the 1980’s”, held in 1980 at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, the relations between feminist and ecological concerns have been debated for the first time. In 1987, during another conference called “Ecofeminist Perspectives,” women were called to lead the ecological revolution. During the past decade, women from different parts of the world have emerged as ecological activists: In Sweden, they protested against the use of herbicides in forests. In India, they joined the movement named Chipco, or “tree hugging” movement, to stop market lumbering from logging trees. In Kenya, they planted millions of trees against desertification under the Greenbelt movement. In England, they camped for many years at Greenham Common against the deployment of nuclear missiles. Native American women protested against uranium mining that is thought to be associated with the rising number of cancer cases. At Love Canal near Niagara Falls, homemaker women demanded action from New York state offices over the disaster that caused birth defects and miscarriages in a neighborhood. Japanese women opposed the use of agricultural chemicals because of their negative effect on food. German women, who organized against nuclear power plants, played an important role in the Whyl movement. Turkish women stood out against the Green Road Project causing the destruction of thousands of trees.

As soon as intellectual and activist background began to form, ecofeminists started to develop arguments based on the fact that women and nature can be liberated together. The hope for dual liberation of women and nature is based on the idea that women and nature are oppressed by similar dynamics. This idea is emerged from the analysis of the interrelated domination, thought to be established over women and nature, on historical, conceptual, empirical, socioeconomic, linguistic, symbolic and literary grounds. From this perspective, in line with my research question, it could be argued that ecofeminism has arisen from the will to speak against “gender-blind” arguments of ecological thought and “ecologically-insensitive” feminisms.

Therefore, ecofeminism should be regarded as a radical and critical standing rather than an “ecologically sensitive feminism.” On the one hand, it criticizes ecological thought which challenges modernity through the problematization of the relationship of human with nature and normative human identity but ignores the relation between anthropocentrism and sexism, thus, women’s experience. On the other hand, it includes the criticism of feminisms which challenge modernity through revealing women’s distinct experience but ignore the relation between sexism and anthropocentrism.

Although, discussions in ecofeminism render making a clear definition of ecofeminism difficult, I will attempt to explain ecofeminism based on the abovementioned two critical approaches tracing the answers of certain questions: “why feminist issues can be addressed in terms of environmental concerns?” and “why the environment is a feminist issue?” which might help us grasp the *raison d'être* of ecofeminism.

3.1. Analyzing Anthropocentrism with Gender Lenses: Sexist Character of Anthropocentrism

According to ecofeminists, the dualism of nature/culture, which determines the normative human identity and its relation with nature to a great extent, is connected to other dualities including men/women, masculine/feminine, public/private, reason/emotion, soul/body and rationality/instinct. For Plumwood,

the sphere of rationality variously contrasts with and excludes the sphere of emotions, the body, the passions, nature, the non-human world, faith, matter and physicality, experience and madness. The masculine rational sphere of public life, production, social and cultural life and rational justice is contrasted with the feminine sphere of the private, domestic and reproductive life, the latter representing the natural and individual against the social and culture. Again, the rational masculine sphere is a sphere where human freedom and control are exercised over affairs and over nature, especially via science and in active struggle against nature and over circumstances. In contrast, the feminine natural and domestic sphere represents the area of immersion in life, the natural part of human being, the sphere of passivity, acceptance of unchangeable human nature and human necessity, of reproduction and necessary and unfree labor (2013, p. 213-214).

This relational network also prepares the ground for a hierarchy-based perception, assuming that one side of the duality is “deprived” of what the other has. While “superior” values are attributed to the side that has these qualities, the other side is associated with “inferior” values. In this context, “superior” values are placed in the concept of “human” and the realm of culture; masculine, white, and Europe-centric ideals are generalized as human ideals and those who are not thought to comply with these ideals are excluded, and placed in the realm of that is “irrational,” thus natural. As Nancy Hartsock stated, this structure refers to “a way of looking at the world characteristic of the dominant white, male, Eurocentric ruling class, a way of dividing up the world that puts an omnipotent subject at the center and constructs marginal Others as sets of negative qualities” (1990, p. 161). Therefore, the separation of human and nature creates a field of multiple exclusion and control encompassing not only non-human entities but also various groups of humans (Ruether, 1975; Griffin, 1978; Griscom, 1981; King, 1981; Lloyd, 1984; Plumwood, 2003).

In this regard, ecofeminists criticize ecological thought on grounds that the dualisms of nature/human and men/women cannot be addressed separately, and they aim to reveal the sexist character of normative human identity. According to Marilyn French, patriarchal ideology is founded on the assumption that man is distinct from nature and superior to it in a way that leaves no place for relationality: “The basis for this superiority is man’s contact with a higher power/knowledge called god, reason or control” (1985, p. 341). Therefore, ecofeminists argue that criticism of the dualism that radically separates human from nature and considers human to be superior is only significant when the relationship between ideals that are associated with masculinity and those that make humans “human” are considered; otherwise, it cannot go beyond an approach about the relationship between normative human identity and nature.

The source of the link between anthropocentrism and sexism, and whether normative woman identity is constructed as identical or relatively close to nature are two important subjects of discussion amongst ecofeminists.

3.1.1. Tracing the Source of the Link Between Sexism and Anthropocentrism

When the first subject of discussion is considered, works of Susan Bordo (1987), Carolyn Merchant (1980), Elizabeth Spelman (1988), Val Plumwood (2003) and Genevieve Lloyd (1984) stand out. These works trace the interconnecting historical, social and philosophical milestones that link women and nature in ways that are detrimental to both.

Bordo and Merchant point to the idea of “mechanism” cherished by the rise of science and the enlightenment period as the origin of using the identification of women with nature as a means of oppression. According to them, the “organic” relation between human and nature began to sunder with the scientific and industrial revolution. Along with those transformations, nature began to be considered as a field that all its sources can be extracted and used for “man” (Bordo, 1987; Merchant, 1980).

In her book titled *The Death of Nature*, Merchant, who studied the period in detail, refers to two opposite images of nature. The first image of nature is associated with “a nurturing mother”: “A kindly beneficent female who provided for the needs of mankind in an ordered, planned universe” (Merchant, 1980, p. 2). In this context, nature, as an entity, was “alive” and “sensitive.” Human acts were thought to have limits against nature, therefore the relation forged with nature required various “cultural constraints.” An idea of “organic unity” based on reciprocity was prominent between human and nature, namely society and cosmos (Merchant, 1980).

The idea of “organic unity” between human and nature began to weaken after social alterations that took place in the 16th century. These alterations affected

human perception towards the environment in which it lived. The altered “image of nature” had a contrasting sense with the other, and it has become a “wild entity” that could contrast human interests and thus needed to be controlled or harnessed. The “cultural constraint” based on the idea that human actions are required to be limited has turned into “cultural sanction” that functions for domination and supremacy. According to Merchant,

the second image, nature as disorder, called forth an important modern idea, that of power over nature. Two new ideas, those of mechanism and of the domination and mastery of nature, became core concepts of the modern world. An organically oriented mentality in which female principles played an important role was undermined and replaced by a mechanically oriented mentality that either eliminated or used female principles in an exploitative manner. As Western culture became increasingly mechanized in the 1600s, the female earth and virgin earth were subdued by the machine (1980, p. 2).

Bordo holds the thoughts of Descartes for this process of reducing nature to a mechanism. According to Bordo, in the pre-Cartesian period it was believed that body and soul (with its lower and higher faculties) were inseparable except at death. Descartes refuses this understanding and plants the seeds of dualism of body and soul. In this way, what-is-irrational is included in the realm of body (1978). As Descartes writes,

the error which has been committed in making it play the part of various personages, usually in opposition one to another, only proceeds from the fact that we have not properly distinguished its functions from those of the body, to which alone we must attribute everything which can be observed in us that is opposed to our reason” (Cited by Bordo, 1999, p. 76).

When viewed from this aspect, human “can transcend the epistemological limitations of the body -even death itself” (Bordo, 2004, p. 4). For Bordo, nature, excluded from the realms of mind, “became defined by its lack of affiliation with divinity, with spirit. All that which is God-like or spiritual – freedom, will, and sentience belong entirely and exclusively to *res cogitans*. All else –the earth, the heavens, animals, the human body is merely mechanically interacting matter” (Bordo, 1999, p. 63).

Merchant and Bordo argue that the sundering of the organic ties between human and nature murdered the “female world-soul.” After this breaking point, association of women with nature began to bear a negative meaning and this meaning has been rendered functional for the domination of both women and nature (Merchant, 1980; Bordo, 1987).

Elizabeth Spelman, Val Plumwood and Genevieve Lloyd, on the other hand, emphasize the “accumulative” nature of knowledge articulating the need for reviewing distinct tendencies before the rise of mechanistic thinking. According to them, negative references to the association of woman with nature are more deep-rooted and it might be traced back to Ancient Greece. These writers claim that Plato’s concept of the body and soul distinction might be regarded as a principal source of this dualism of mind and nature. As Spelman indicates, Plato’s philosophy positions soul as a superior entity opposed to body:

According to Plato, the body, with its deceptive senses, keeps from real knowledge; it rivets us in a world of material which is far removed from the world of reality; and it tempts away from the virtuous life. It is in and through the soul, if that we shall have knowledge, be in touch with reality, and life of virtue. Only the soul can truly know, for only the ascend to the real world, the world of the Forms or Ideas (1982, p. 111).

A number of subjects problematized by Plato are addressed according to this distinction. According to Spelman, “one has no hope of understanding the nature of knowledge, reality, goodness, love, or beauty unless one recognizes the distinction between soul and body; body; and one has no hope of attaining any of these unless one works hard on freeing the soul from the lazy, vulgar, beguiling body” (1982, p. 112-3).

The concept of soul is not considered to be a homogeneous whole in Plato’s philosophy. Plato’s soul has “lower” and “higher” levels. For instance, soul resists not only the passions of body “but of part of its very self.” Thus, a similar conflict is observed between rational, spirited, and appetitive parts of the soul (Spelman, 1982, p. 113-114). Thus, the distinction between soul and

body, and rational and irrational parts of the soul clearly express Plato's view of women. According to Spelman, Plato makes a distinction between women and men considering the fact that women have weaker bodies. However this does not indicate an amiss in women's soul:

Our bodies are not essential to our identity; in their most benign aspect, our bodies are incidental appendages; in their most malignant aspect, they are obstacles to the smooth functioning of our souls. If we are our souls, and our bodies are not essential to who we are, then it doesn't make any difference, ultimately, whether we have a woman's body or a man's body (1982, p. 117-118).

Plato rewards women who carry a distinct soul and who were raised well as suggested by philosophers and they are taken into the class of guards assuming citizenship responsibilities (Plato, 2000). This idea might be considered to be exceptional for Plato's era. According to some feminists, the fact that Plato did not accept women as entities determined by their anatomies to the fullest extent draws him near to feminism (Bluestone, 1987; Nussbaum, 1986).

However, Spelman argues that "lower" and "higher" levels of soul should be considered. Femininity is associated with lower levels of soul, slavish or childish appetites, minding body more than soul, hysterical behaviors at the thought of death, disharmony, uncontrolled emotions, rumors and conviction and inaptitude (Spelman, 1982). Therefore, femininity appears as an insufficiency, a state that soul has to overcome; women might be rewarded so long as they carry "masculine souls" in spite of their bodies (Spelman, 1988, p. 33). According to Plumwood, "it is not women themselves as a sex, then, who are the problem so much as the feminine: The behavior, characteristics and areas of life associated with women" (2003, p. 76-77).

With Aristotelian philosophy progressing under Plato's influence and new Platonic philosophers in the Middle Ages including Saint Augustine, an understanding of hierarchical order in which having reason is regarded as a sign of being "superior" has started to prevail. However, it should be emphasized that those who have been excluded from nature and associated

with the sphere of reason do not include all humans but only those considered to be socially superior. Therefore, it is hard to discuss a generalized duality of human and nature. According to Lloyd, Cartesian and Humanist revolutions, respectively, led to a division under which the realm of culture and reason is on one side, and body and nature is on the other. The previously observed assumption of the superiority of reason is absorbed in this division, the need for dominating inner nature has transformed into the need for dominating outer nature (Lloyd, 1984).

Nonetheless, according to these authors, the idea that people maintained a tradition of respect for the feminine world-soul might vindicate early rationalism and Christian traditions. It can be argued that the distinction of human from nature without any kind of continuity and the intensification of its domination over nature rose with Enlightenment thought. However, it is the result of a process in which distinctive qualities of humans are accepted to be “superior.”

3.1.2. “Woman”: Identified with or Relatively Close to Nature?

The studies, which trace the origins of the dual domination of women and nature, cleared the path for discussions that aims to understand the “depth” of the assumed relation between them. In the second discussion, certain feminists argue that the concept of women is totally identified with nature while others assert that it is included in a realm between nature and culture.

According to Dorothy Dinnerstein, women are identified with the sphere of nature. So much so that, they are perceived as a “natural source;” “as an asset to be owned and harnessed, harvested and mined, with no fellow-feeling for her depletion and no responsibility for her conservation or replenishment” (1976, p. 36-7). Similarly, Adrienne Rich thinks that women “have been perceived for too many centuries as pure Nature, exploited and raped like the earth and the solar system” (Cited by King, 1995, p. 461).

According to Sherry Ortner and Agnes Heller, women are located between the realms pointed by the dualities of culture and nature, and human and animal, in other words relatively close to nature. Ortner examines this subject in her work “Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture” in detail (1972). According to her, social meanings attributed to woman’s physiology and woman’s psyche “make woman appear to be rooted more directly and deeply in nature” (1972, p. 24). However, women are not completely identified with nature. In her view, women are located in a place between the realms of culture and nature. This intermediacy derives from the attributed function of women to transform animal-like infants into cultural beings. On the one hand, it identifies women in the private sphere and leads to a limited existence in the public sphere. On the other hand, nevertheless, it places women as one of culture’s agencies for the conversation of nature into culture. According to Ortner, “any culture’s continued viability depends upon properly socialized individuals who will see the world in that culture’s terms and adhere more or less unquestioningly to its moral precepts” (1972, p. 25). Similarly, Agnes Heller states that following the separation of production from household, upper-class women could not be simply identified with nature. Instead, they are identified with their function to reproduce. Households are still perceived as the realm of emotions, instincts and necessities in opposition to the “freedom” of the public space. However, women are under control now, and they represent the domesticated nature (Heller, 1976, p. 184).

3.1.3. The Importance of the Association of Women with Nature: Difference

The idea that the difference of women derives from the social conditions rather than their biology can be accepted as one of the most important milestones of feminist thought. In this context, Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex*, one of the most-cited sources, contains important texts about women’s relationship with nature and their exclusion from the realm of culture. Beauvoir states that

humankind considers itself to be worthy of living a life above nature, and therefore it seeks ways to escape from its natural destiny (1956).

The fact that freedom is associated with human's severing its ties with nature and liberation from the "realm of necessity" lays the groundwork for rewarding relevant acts with "full agency status." In order to maintain this, men are required to create a "feminine sphere," namely a "sphere of immanence." This sphere has prepared the ground for the assumption of male superiority. In other words, the "transcendence" of men is only possible with women's association with the "sphere of immanence" (Beauvoir, 1956). According to King,

it is the process of culture-building that is based on the increasing domination of nature. It is enterprise. "Immanence," symbolized by women, is that what calls men back, that which reminds man of what he wants to forget. It is his own link to nature that he must forget and overcome to achieve manhood and transcendence (1995, p. 459).

The fact that women are associated with the "sphere of immanence" leads to the illusion that what makes women stems from their essence. According to Griffin, it is assumed that women have "essential" attributes associated with reproduction such as emotionality, care, altruism, empathy, compassion and intuition. These attributions refer to dependence on bodily processes, in other words, the characteristics against transcendence from nature, therefore, against "human subjectivity" (Griffin, 1987).

In her book *Sexes et Parentes*, Luce Irigaray argues that our approach to nature implies unlimited use of resources. This limitlessness is based on the assumption that natural resources are infinite and that consumption of these resources is free of any cost. What is expected from "mother nature" is also expected from women. The care and attention women might provide to raise children and to meet the needs of family members is thought to be infinite and therefore worthless (Irigaray, 1987). The acts associated with the realm of necessity are assumed as "the background services that make 'real' work (the work of the male) and achievement possible, rather than as work or achievement themselves" (Plumwood, 2005, p. 29-30). Therefore, according to

Irigaray, women are “environment;” they form the environment and conditions of the realm of culture, but their acts are not visible (1985).

The characteristics attributed to women and their subsequent association with nature stand in women's way to be included in the realm of culture. Women are not only excluded from politics and academia, but also from church, army, sports, namely the most crucial areas of the public sphere (Beauvoir, 1956). In cases where women pushed themselves beyond these limits, their existence in public life is subject to the condition that they fulfill their “duties” in the private life. Even though they meet the condition, women work in the areas associated with the above-mentioned attributions, their work is deemed insignificant, and they receive a relatively meagre wage in return.

Beauvoir indicates that women’s association with nature and exclusion from the realm of culture is a structural necessity for the persistence of society which might be regarded as the embodiment of masculinist power (1956). This statement makes the objectivity claim of social theory regarding its connection with power relations. From this point of view, as stated by Rosi Braidotti, feminists have started to criticize “myths and mystifications surrounding woman, meant as the construct of the male imagination, inaugurating a tradition that aims at subverting the systematic disqualification and denigration of the female subject” (1991, p. 159).

According to feminists, that women and men are represented and constructed in a different manner would entail a separate experience of life. So, any difference in-between should be assessed not on the level of individuals but considering social processes that make individuals different from one another. In other words, without considering different social processes -sexist social dynamics the individual existence of women cannot be adequately grasped. According to Braidotti, the argument of “women” as a separate and distinctive social category might be accepted as the “founding moment” of feminism and

after the moment, feminists started to form a more adequate category of women by rethinking the bounds that commonize them (1991, p. 159).

Feminist works, arguing that women represent a separate and distinctive category, pave the way for the criticisms of ecofeminism directed at ecological thought. Because the dualisms such as nature/culture, men/women, masculine/feminine, public/private, reason/emotion, soul/body and rationality/instinct indicate relational structure, the relation of women with nature differs from that of men. This means that women are represented and constructed based on their “closeness,” not on separation from and superiority to nature (Kheel, 1991, p. 63). Moreover, cultural ecofeminists, as discussed in further chapters, go a step further and express that women already experience the human and nature relation idealized by ecological thought.

Early ecofeminist literature, hitherto cited, might be said to focus on the experience of women living in the Western world and tend to generalize these experiences. These works were presented in a rather abstract framework based on the analysis of intellectual and historical sources. In the 1980s, studies carried out by women living in Third World countries made it possible to argue women’s specific experiences. Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva call Eurocentric socioeconomic policies, also known as the “Green Revolution,” into question and they argue that these policies are sexist in many respects (Shiva, 2008; 2010; Mies and Shiva; 2014).

In Third World countries, activities regarding subsistence production, processing and preparing food are carried out by women based on sexual division of labor. Mies indicates that this provided women to develop special relation with nature, which is not only based on collecting what nature offers, but also on growing and protecting. She sees a kind of community between women and nature and due to this community, nature is described as feminine and incarnate; and it is a living source from which life emerges. The concept of

“community” does not include a negative meaning; indeed, it is deemed essential for the maintenance of life (Shiva, 1988).

Because of the abovementioned relationship, women have agricultural know-how as a tradition that has passed down for thousands of years. According to Mies and Shiva, the large-scale shift of production to Third World countries in order to meet global food demand administered by patriarchal-capitalist companies destroyed the abovementioned know-how. Privatization of family owned lands, their cultivation for “cash-crops,” introduction of monoculture, patents on seeds, and production of genetically modified organism and women's control over the food chain from seed to plate began to be handed over to global companies (Shiva, 2008; 2010; Mies and Shiva, 2014).

According to Shiva, productivity for subsistence radically differs from productivity for capital accumulation: In the latter, “the transforming, productive power was associated only with male Western labor, and economic development became a design for remodeling the world on that assumption” (1988, 44). In such a system, women’s labor, know-how, productivity, creativity and knowledge remain unrequited.

What is in danger is not only women's subsistence production. The fact that nature’s labor and productivity is devalued and ignored leads to an ecologic crisis in the region. Firstly, seeds have lost their quality of being seeds. Seeds are diverse, they multiply and reproduce; however, they are standardized and inedible at the moment. On the other hand, disregarding local social and ecologic conditions, and cultivation of plants in inappropriate regions has led to increased use of water, pesticides and fertilizers. According to Mies and Shiva, the current ecological crisis has negative impacts on all people in the region. However, women living in Third World countries are relatively more affected due to their separate and distinctive relationship with the local environment. The loss of accessible and fertile land which makes subsistence

farming and resource collection possible forces women onto an ecologically fragile ground (Mies and Shiva, 2014).

It can be stated that the issue of being relatively close to local environment also applies to African women. In Africa, women are responsible for water supply especially for cleaning and preparing food. The separate division of labor between women and men entails the differentiation of the knowledge about water and other natural resources. For instance, men focus on the productive use of water such as irrigation, and women focus on whether it is suitable for domestic use in terms of quality and quantity. From this point of view, it might be argued that water scarcity and pollution, some of the gravest problems in the continent, affect women and men differently. As pointed out in a number of studies, African women are relatively more affected by the policies that causes water crisis. (Harris, Kleiber, Goldin, Darkwah and Morinville, 2017, p. 561-582).

According to ecofeminists, women will assume an important role in overcoming ecological problems due to being dominated through similar dynamics and the distinct experience including the fact that they are relatively more affected by the ecological destruction especially as it is observed in Third World countries and Africa, rather than universal principles such as abstract identification or ethical responsibility, as suggested by ecological thought.

3.2.“Anthropocentrism is a Feminist Issue”: Anthropocentric Character of Sexism

Before ecofeminist discussions, feminists did not dwell on ecological problems. However, it can be argued that the fact that these problems have not been problematized -or relatively less problematized in social theory might have played a part in this. However, it is striking that the very first two critics of Cartesian mechanism are women: Margaret Cavendish, the Duchess of Newcastle (1623-73) and Anne Finch (1631-79). Finch emphatically criticizes and rejects the Cartesian perspective which reduces animals into soulless

mechanisms. According to Finch, like humans they have “knowledge, sense, and love, and divers other faculties and properties of a spirit” (Cited by Merchant, 1980, p. 260). And Cavendish, who can be accepted as one of the first to defend the idea of animal rights, expressed that she does not agree with his ideas on non-human entities in her direct letters to Descartes (Cited by Merchant, 1980, p. 271-272).

Writers who describe themselves as feminists such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Margaret Fuller, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Coral Lansbury, Susan B. Anthony and Grimke sisters had an idea about the political movement called animal rights today (Singer, 1991; Donovan, 1990, p. 359). *The Old Brown Dog* by Lansbury might be one of the most important works in which these ideas are clearly expressed. Lansbury makes an analogy between British suffragettes, who were force-fed, and laboratory animals: “Every dog or cat strapped down for the vivisector’s knife reminded them of their own condition” (1985, p. 82). Nonetheless, the negative meaning attributed to the relationality between women and animals is maintained by the abovementioned feminists. For instance, according to Wollstonecraft;

in what does man’s pre-eminence over the brute creation consist? The answer is as clear as that a half is less than the whole; in Reason. For what purpose were the passions implanted? That man by struggling with them might attain a degree of knowledge denied to the brutes. Consequently the perfection of our nature and capability of happiness, must be estimated by the degree of reason, virtue, and knowledge, that distinguish the individual (2014, p. 37).

In modern emancipatory discourse, entities are praised or degraded based on their compliance with the values attributed to the concept of “human.” Forms of liberal feminism and socialist or humanist-Marxist feminism, which do not approach to the concept of “human” in a critical manner, aim at equalization under the concept of “human” with men arguing that the liberation of women is possible through overcoming the assumption that is based on women’s association with nature. For example, according to Beauvoir, what women demand today is “to be recognized as existents by the same right as men and not to subordinate existence to life, the human being to its animality” (1956, p.

90). As mentioned in the previous section, Beauvoir's works are important sources for the basic criticism directed at the ecological thought by ecofeminism due to her major contribution to understand the dynamics of the association of women with nature. On the other hand, with her ideas on the liberation of women, she paved the way for ecofeminist criticism and the development of ecofeminism.

According to ecofeminists, the concept of "human" itself is normative to a great extent. As the concept of "man," it is constructed by the degradation of a group. As expressed by Adriana Cavarero, when it is used, the concept of "human" is intended to refer the ideals attributed to masculinity:

The concept of man (anthropos) – named in the masculine singular but with a universal-neutral valence that is supposed to indicate humankind as a whole – will make its way into philosophical language. From there it will move into the everyday language that we still speak. Immediately, man named in this way will indicate that his substance, the authentic foundation of his being, lies in his ability to think [...] Bodies, feelings, and the deceptive senses supposedly belong elsewhere. At times, these are a troublesome burden, while at other times they provide clues to something that must be verified by thought (1995, p. 38).

Therefore, the ideals attributed to masculinity are universalized in a way that represents all humanity, and women, thought to be deprived of these qualities, fall into an inferior category. Accordingly, equalization under the concept of "human" implies acquiescing in the claim of dominant values. On the one hand, it would lead to the affirmation of the ideal described with highly valued qualities such as rationalism, objectivism and suppression of emotions and desires; on the other hand, it would imply maintaining the assumption that nature is inferior compared to human. According to Mies and Shiva, the objective of equalization with men under the realm of culture is perceived from the perspective of ecofeminism as:

the attitude promoted by the fathers of modern science and technology. For them, this dependence was an outrage, a mockery of man's right to freedom on his own terms and therefore has forcefully and violently to be abolished. Western rationality, the West's paradigm of science and concept of freedom are all based on overcoming and transcending this dependence, on the

subordination of nature to the (male) will, and the disenchantment of all her forces (2014, p. 18).

Ynestra King, who is one of the founders of ecofeminism, asks all women the question: “What is the point in participating in a system that is destroying us all?” (1990, p. 106). Rather than rejecting women’s association with nature in the name of “liberation” and seek the ways to “catching-up with men,” ecofeminists question why being associated with nature carries a negative meaning and how this meaning can be overturned. According to ecofeminists, consequences of the attitudes of human towards nature such as maltreatment of animals, wrongful use of water resources, deforestation, climate change, desertification, biodiversity crisis, emission of toxic gases should be regarded as a subject of feminism as it would help us both to understand the dynamics of sexism and to provide the liberation of nature with women. As stated by Karen Warren, “if we do not take seriously the negative associations of women with nature, and nature with women, we will not understand how these associations continue to permeate, reinforce, and justify behaviors, policies, theories, institutions, and systems of domination” (2000, p. 57-58).

Accordingly, if a radical change is desired, what will make the change possible will be a feminist perception which problematizes anthropocentrism. At this point, opposing sexism will be appropriate and consistent when it included the questioning of our assumptions about nature.

3.3.Celebration of Femininity and Being Associated with Nature: Cultural Ecofeminism

Differences in ecofeminism become more prominent when it comes to discussing how to change the sexist and anthropocentric order. Cultural ecofeminists, who have significant contributions towards setting intellectual foundations of ecofeminism, accept the dominant system of values as a root of the twin domination. They trace back matrilineal societies, in which the characteristics attributed to women and being associated with nature are considered as high valued. They have revealed that these societies are peaceful

and egalitarian in both interpersonal and human / nature relationships. To make the change possible, they defend that the dominant system of values, which negates the characteristics attributed to women and “mother nature” and glorifies the ideals attributed to men and the realm of culture should be reversed. In this context, they positively affirm “feminine values” including emotionality, care, altruism, empathy, compassion and intuition, which indicate harmony with nature.

At this point, cultural ecofeminism is nurtured by the intellectual heritage of radical feminism formed by Alice Walker, Cherrie Moraga, Gloria Anzaldua and Naomi Littlebear, which rejects the value-system assigning the characteristics attributed to women into an inferior category. This opposition continues with offering an alternative realm in opposition to the realm of culture. In this respect, feminists choose to celebrate feminine values instead of making women accepted in the masculine culture; in other words, they tend towards “me,” rather than defending “me too.” Audre Lorde tells that we need to accept our differences and seek ways to turn them into power (Lorde, 2015). This perspective is also shared by the theorists who advocate cultural separatism, such as Gina Covina (1975) and Barbara Starrett (1975). These separatist feminists trace back a matriarchal history to reveal the differences in the perception of the characteristics attributed to women today and in the past. Starrett, in her article titled “I Dream in Female: The Metaphors of Evolution,” takes a step further and goes back to myths and defends that these myths are required to be reinterpreted. According to her, these sources would provide new cultural symbols for the creation of female culture. Myths, according to Starrett, might play an important role in changing or reversing men centered structures (1975, p. 117).

Cultural ecofeminists reinterpret the approach of affirming the characteristics attributed to women in an ecofeminist perspective. Cultural ecofeminists including Merlin Stone (1978), Susan Griffin (1978), Irene Diamond and Gloria Orenstein (1990), Starhawk (1999) and Riane Eisler (2015) trace back

to ancient times when the characteristics attributed to women and women's association with nature have a positive meaning. They highlight the need for reinterpreting goddess-worshipping civilizations of Paleolithic and Neolithic eras. In this way, they re-arouse people's interest in statues, images, poetry and prehistoric goddesses and rites such as the Mesopotamian Inanna, the Egyptian Isis, the Greek Demeter and Gaia, the Roman Ceres, European paganism and Asian, Latin American, and African female symbols and myths (Merchant, 1980, p. XV). With subsequent rereading studies, it is realized that the matrilineal social order in Old Europe in the pre-patriarchal era were relatively egalitarian and peaceful. According to cultural ecofeminists, these studies might be helpful for women to establish an alternative ecofeminist value-system.

The book titled *The Chalice and The Blade: Our History, Our Future* by Riane Eisler contains detailed information about matrilineal societies and thus it is considered to be a valuable and important source on the subject. In her book, Eisler indicates that the power of giving birth, accordingly, giving life was the reason of goddess worshipping and includes a positive meaning and that "feminine" qualities such as "caring, compassion, and nonviolence" were highly valued (2015, p. 43).

Women had a particularly prominent place in the society because of the power of giving birth; however, its importance was not only derived from their biological existence. Studies have revealed that the survival of humankind was depended upon a gatherer woman rather than hunter man, which overturned the legitimacy of the myths representing women as the "passive" and men as the "creative" (Fisher, 1979; Martin and Voorhies, 1975). As stated by Pervin Erbil, women not only recognized and prepared edible plants for consumption, but also processed the meat brought by men and considerably secured the solution to feed the community while hunting was conditional and random (2007, p. 25). As hunting is a kind of "risk economics," if men were not lucky enough, women needed to provide food for them too. Mies expresses her

discomfort because of the fact that the notion persisting man hunter as the inventor of first tools, protector of society and food provider is still accepted in social sciences. (2012, p. 127 - 129) According to Walker, “the men [...] were better hunters than the women, but only because the women had found they could live quite well on foods rather than meat” (1989, p. 50).

As their involvement in providing food increased, women observed natural phenomena and seeds being scattered over the ground, sprouting, developing and forming grains, and they made an effort to replicate the process artificially, which reinforced their connection with the earth. Within the context of their relationship with nature, women observed all its products and became the first weavers upon learning how to spin yarn from linen, cotton and wool (Erbil, 2007, p. 44-7). Besides, as agriculture entailed long range planning, it was women who invented tools such as pots to cook and store what they have grown. Women, also, had the knowledge about medicine to heal people who were sick, attacked by animals, injured during combat or hunting. It is well-known that their social status had increased consequently, and that they were associated with special powers which would be regarded as magic later. As stated by Erbil in her work, that women’s distinct knowledge of nature, childbirth, nursery, childcaring, nutrition, physics and health provided them a special place in the society and their bodies gained a mystical place (2007, p. 29-30).

However, as argued by Eisler, it should be noted that the state of “having highly valued qualities” as a result of the role of women in the socio-economic structure, thought to continue until Late Neolithic, does not lead to a state of having “power.” According to her, “there can be societies in which difference is not necessarily equated with inferiority or superiority” (2015, p. 18). Eisler stated that such societies are not merely within the bounds of possibility, but evidenced by archeological and anthropological data. According to her, these data demonstrate that the general structure of these societies were relatively egalitarian (2015, p. 30; 46). She states that this type of social organization

which “does not fit into the conventional dominator paradigm” is “a partnership society in which neither half of humanity is ranked over the other and diversity is not equated with inferiority or superiority” (2015, p. 49).

According to ecofeminists, matrilineal societies, in connection with the concept of “partnership society,” provide an example for establishing a relatively peaceful, cooperative and harmonical relationship with nature. Mies expresses that the relationship of men-the-hunter with nature is necessarily violent, destructive and predatory, which is in opposition with the relationship of women-the-gatherer with nature. She indicates that the relationship between women and nature was not limited to gathering and preparing for consumption. Women, by making a connection between their productive and creative body and nature, envisaged nature having the same qualities of production and creation. According to her, women cooperated with their bodies and with the earth “to let grow and to make grow” instead of considering themselves to be owners of their own bodies or of the earth (Mies, 2012, p. 132-133). Therefore, it might be argued that women in matrilineal societies established their relationship with nature, based on learning the need of the earth and seeds, and transforming it in a way that does not include achieving domination or taking possession for the continuity of human’s life (Eisler, 2015; Mies, 2012).

Eisler describes it “as a peaceful era, as a partnership society ruled by ‘the chalice, not blade.’” While “the chalice” symbolizes cooperative, peaceful, egalitarian, partnership society between humans, and human and nature; “the blade” symbolizes an aggressive, violent, war-prone, male-dominated society characterized by unequal power relationships between them. Eisler then claims that “the root of the problem lies in a social system in which the power of the Blade is idealized –in which both men and women are taught to equate true masculinity with violence and dominance and to see men who do not conform to this ideal as ‘too soft’ or ‘effeminate’” (2015).

Some cultural ecofeminists study the contribution of religious precepts toward the evolution of social order from “the chalice” to “the blade” if concepts put forward by Eisler are adopted. These ecofeminists adopt a critical approach holding Judeo-Christian ethics responsible for anthropocentrism and sexism deeply ingrained in the culture. Thus, these cultural ecofeminists open up religious prejudices, which laid the groundwork for hierarchy for discussion and emphasize the need for their reinterpretation or rejection.

Anne Primavesi (1991), Rosemary Radford Ruether (1992) and Eleanor Rae (1994) seek points of reconciliation between ecofeminism and Christianity. These writers suggest that a value-system that includes respect for nature might find its place in Christian tradition, and they aspire to reveal and put this approach forward. Several others, including Charlene Spretnak (1989), Carol Christ (1990), Carol Adams (1993) and Starhawk (1999) express that the domination over women and nature was only possible through nearly world-wide validation of male deity. According to them, God rendered humans as masters of the earth in these teachings and granted unlimited right to human intervention in the ecosystem. The state of being “masters” derives from the quality of “transcendence of the body” granted by God. Women, also, have their share as they are identified with body. Therefore, the Bible is considered to be an effective cultural factor in the mechanism of suppressing women. Adams describes the teachings of the holy book as “patriarchal spirituality.” According to her, “because they emphasize transcending the body and transcending the rest of nature, it makes oppression sacred” (Adams, 1993, p. 1).

In order to make transformation possible, some cultural ecofeminists emphasize the need for cultivating an ecofeminist spirituality, by celebrating pre-modern myths –the Goddess-oriented culture of Old Europe, pagan rituals, Gaia, the body, natural cycles, and the experience of connectedness and embodiment in general (Eckersley, 2003, p. 64). They advocate the need for a spirituality that is embodied in nature rather than monotheistic religions based

on a disembodied god and its teachings. As the ecofeminist theologian Elizabeth Dodson Gray explains, we need to move toward an “embodied ecospirituality” and re-myth Genesis in a way that honors diversity by moving our culture “to a creation-based valuing of all parts of nature” (1981, p. 148). Thus, spirituality points to a relation aspired to be established between human and nature. As Christ indicates,

I share the conviction that the crisis that threatens the destruction of the earth is not only social, political, economic and technological, but is root spiritual. We lost the sense that this Earth is our true home [...] The preservation of the Earth requires a profound shift in consciousness: A recovery of more ancient and traditional views that revere the profound connection of all beings in the web of life and a rethinking of the relation of both humanity and divinity in nature (1990).

Spretnak indicates the re-awakening of the notion of the goddess against the “patriarchal notion of a male sky god.” According to her, goddesses were the embodiment of the regenerative inner movement for life; therefore, they represented an earth-based deity rather than a separate power (1981; 1986; 1989). In her book, *Lost Goddesses of Early Greece*, she tries to show how goddess myths were changed in a way that would abolish their authenticity with the emergence of hierarchical societies. Goddesses, who had represented protection, productivity and fertility, now became companions and lovers of male gods or, even evils (Spretnak, 1981).

The notion that women have a distinct relationship with nature brings along the discussion about the source of the relationship. According to some cultural ecofeminists, the fact that women are expected to fulfill the duties that maintain human life such as caring, nurturing and subsistence in the society makes it possible for them to foster a relationship based on responsibility, compassion and intimacy with the outer world (MacGregor, 2004; Mies and Shiva, 2014; Merchant, 1996; Mellor, 1997). Some cultural feminists including Susan Griffin, Andree Collard and Honeybee connect the relationship between women and nature with women’s biological existence. According to them, specificities of female biology such as birth, breast feeding and menstruation

indicate a special relationship based on reciprocity between women and nature. Griffin expresses her relationship with nature as a woman in an impressive manner:

The earth is my sister; I love her daily grace, her silent daring, and how loved I am how we admire strength in each other, all that we have lost, all that we have suffered, all that we know, we are stunned by this beauty, and I do not forget what she is to me, what I am to her (1978, p. 219).

Honeybee, similarly, relates what mothers provide their offspring while feeding, caring for and protecting them with what “mother-nature” provides for humanity:

Women are more able to tune into intuition. Women are better at tapping into a feeling of connection. Our menstrual cycles make us realize these connections [with our embodied selves and nature]. Having a baby has been huge for me in terms of making me realize this again. When he was exclusively breastfeeding, I provided all his food. I had to pay attention to what I ate and put into my body! She—Mother Earth—is ultimately providing all the food for all of us” (Cited by Mallory, 2010, p. 49).

Collard and Contrucci also emphasize the importance of the relation between women and nature in establishing “mutual wellbeing.” The experience of motherhood combined with the experience of violence and abuse towards female body lead to a higher sense of awareness about the violence and abuse towards nature. The writers, expressing that feminist values and principles feed on ecological values and principles and vice-versa, make a connection between the fate of nature and that of women (1988, p. 137-138).

Whatever the source, cultural ecofeminists believe that there is a relatively close relationship between women and nature. Based on the knowledge acquired after rereading studies, cultural ecofeminists have revealed the ancient times when the characteristics attributed to women and women’s association with nature are valued were egalitarian and peaceful in both societal and ecological levels. This point shows that the negative meaning is not inherent in these characteristics and in natural world. To overcome this, cultural ecofeminists suggest women to affirm and celebrate feminine values and to

play a leading role in the recreation of a culture and spirituality as an alternative to today's sexist and anthropocentric order.

3.4.Drawing Attention to Socioeconomic Processes: Materialist

Perspectives in Ecofeminism

Carolyn Merchant (1980; 1990), Ariel Salleh (1997; 2003) and Mary Mellor (1997) are considered to be among the prominent figures in materialist ecofeminism. Materialist ecofeminists include anthropocentrism and its relations with other forms of domination into their analysis and in this respect; they diverge from orthodox Marxism and socialist feminism. Materialist ecofeminists, who emphasize the need for addressing domination in the context of relationality with different forms of domination, conceptualize this idea as "systems of domination." Socialist feminism offers remarkable insights by adjoining its criticism of sexism to orthodox Marxism which examines social differences based on classes, but it ignores their effects on nature. Merchant criticizes socialist ecofeminism on the grounds that it has "little to say about the problem of the domination of nature" (1990, p. 103).

The fundamental criticism of socialist feminism by materialist ecofeminism makes its place in feminist thought clear. Nonetheless, the boundaries between materialist ecofeminism and cultural ecofeminism become highly complex when the diversity of ecofeminist thought combined with reactionary discussions on these perspectives is considered. Thus, it can be stated that it is quite difficult to make a distinction in-between. Elizabeth Carlassare indicates that there are numerous ecofeminists who describe themselves as materialist ecofeminists; however, it does not apply to cultural feminists with the exception of Spretnak. According to Carlassare, the concept of materialist ecofeminism can be expressed "as part of a power struggle in the production of ecofeminist knowledge to privilege materialist analyses over spiritual and intuitive ways of knowing, and materialist analyses over idealist or cultural strategies for social change" (2000, p. 99). However, it can be said that "materialist strategies for social change are implicated in cultural ecofeminism

and cultural or idealist strategies for social are implicated in socialist ecofeminism” (2000, p. 99). For instance, Merchant, Mies and Shiva can be described as both cultural and materialist ecofeminists considering the affirmation of the ideals attributed to women and their association with nature, and historical studies they carried out to reveal the material conditions of the domination of women and nature.

Nevertheless, certain writers express the need for a materialistic rereading of cultural ecofeminism, which is thought as based on spiritual and biological assumptions, thus their thoughts might be placed under the category of materialist ecofeminism. These writers address that having the characteristics attributed to women and being associated with nature depend on material conditions and emphasize the need for changing material conditions to express the need of bringing ecofeminism to a theoretically and politically tenable ground.

Instead of accepting the normative concept of “women,” just as the concept of “nature,” materialist ecofeminists focus on the social processes responsible for the construction of the concepts in this manner. In this context, what determines being man or woman is not our biology -or nature, but socioeconomic conditions. According to Salleh, affirming women’s special relation with nature is meaningless. According to her, what draws women and nature near is the sexual division of labor and the social meaning that is attributed to women’s labour. Firstly, women have experiences such as birth and breast feeding due to their biological differences. Secondly, they are assigned with various duties such as child raising, cooking, cleaning and mediating between the realm of culture and nature in a sense. Thirdly, they fulfill physically demanding works such as planting, processing raw materials for food and treatment, and providing necessary tools. Finally, the relationship assumed to exist between women and nature is reproduced by the symbols used in poetry, art, philosophy and daily language. Therefore, most women “are organically and discursively implicated in life-affirming activities, and

they develop gender-specific knowledges grounded in this material base” (2003, p. 67).

According to Merchant, who broadly agrees with Salleh, the driving force of ecofeminism is not spiritualism, yet materialism. (1990, p. 103). Therefore, materialist ecofeminists aim at changing material conditions that makes the domination of women and nature relational. As they experience the twin domination relatively more in the daily life, women in Third World countries have made significant contributions to materialist ecofeminist literature.

As mentioned before, women living in these regions have been in a relatively close relationship with the earth. This relation does not consider human needs over or against nature, rather, it indicates a kind of mutuality. However, Eurocentric policies, on the one hand, damage women’s relationship with the earth through ignoring their know-how about seeds, and, on the other hand, the natural destruction they have brought affects women relatively more because of the relation (Shiva, 2008; 2010; Mies and Shiva, 2014). Compared to Western ecofeminists, ecofeminists in Third World countries construct their thought and struggle on a relatively experimental vision nurtured by their relationship with nature in their daily life. As a result of this experience, oppositions to these policies both in the name of women and nature mostly took place in these regions.

However, the studies that open the effects of Western science on women for discussion began to reveal the experience of women living in developed countries. These studies emphasize that the intervention of science is not only made on intellectual grounds but also on bodies. For instance, pharmaceutical companies run by men risk the bodily and functional integrity of women and animals by subjecting them to tests. According to socialist ecofeminists Shiva and Mies, advancements in biotechnology, genetic engineering and reproduction technologies raised awareness among women of the effects of science and technology: “Science’s whole paradigm is characteristically

patriarchal, anti-nature and colonial and aims to dispossess women of their generative capacity as it does the productive capacities of nature” (2014, p. 16).

Consequently, materialist ecofeminists indicate that sexism, capitalism and imperialism are ecologically destructive structures. Because the system that assumes nature as cost-free and the system that ignores the value of women’s labor are highly related, materialist ecofeminists indicate that an analysis of exploitative systems should not ignore their destructive effects on nature.

3.5. In Lieu of Conclusion: Some Replies to the Materialist Critiques

Cultural ecofeminism, which made a significant contribution to ecofeminist thought, assumes the responsibility of responding to basic questions raised by including anthropocentrism in the analysis as a distinct category: What is the relation between normative human identity and sexism? Why is anthropocentrism a subject of feminism? Where does the relation between anthropocentrism and sexism take its roots from? Is the concept of “women” associated with the realm of nature or an intermediary position between the realm of culture and nature? Does affirmation point to a reality, or is it an assumption or strategy? Is it possible to generalize the affirmed category of “woman” in a way that includes the current experience of women living in non-Western countries? The “close relationship” between women and nature includes that of women living in the West?

The criticism of cultural ecofeminism by materialist ecofeminists revolves around the argument that cultural ecofeminism defends ideas based on biological assumptions which do not make way for social transformation. It can be stated that cultural ecofeminism, rather than a homogeneous whole, is a perspective that does not offer ultimate objectives, definitive roadmaps or conclusive arguments and open for different interpretations. Moreover, it provokes different discussions with the abovementioned multitude of questions. Elizabeth Carlassare, Karen Warren and Starhawk attempt to

respond the criticism through rereading cultural ecofeminism from different perspectives.

Carlassare rereads the works of Susan Griffin and Mary Daly, sources of reference for the criticism that cultural ecofeminism involves biological assumptions; and she concludes that these writers traced back the origins of the “essence,” attributed to the relationship between women and nature, and that they did not ignore its connection with social processes. Furthermore, the affirmation of the relationship between women and nature might point to an aim rather than an ascribed state. According to her, the affirmation can be accepted “as a conscious oppositional strategy rather than as unconsciously regressive” (1994, p. 224-6).

According to Warren, spirituality, an important concept addressed by ecofeminists to make the transformation possible, should not be read as the rejection of rationality or defence of irrationality. It might serve as a source of motivation for women against the cold, monolithic, exclusionist and reductive order of patriarchy. Women, nurtured by this source, not only regain their power but also help other women take up position for the construction of a non-sexist and non-anthropocentric society (Warren, 2000, p. 193-217). For that reason, according to Starhawk, ecofeminist spirituality belongs to the “earth-based spirituality” aspiring for building a more egalitarian and peaceful order between every human-being and, humankind and nature (1990, p. 76). Consequently, spiritualism, as a liberating political imagination, makes a connection between woman and social transformation.

Considering the fact that cultural ecofeminist literature is open for reinterpretation, it can be argued that the antagonism between cultural ecofeminism and materialist ecofeminism is unilateral. At that point, cultural ecofeminism might raise the hope for the construction of an intellectual and activist ground beyond pairs such as constructionism/essentialism, social

transformation/individual transformation and materialism/spirituality, systemic manifestations/psychological manifestations assumed to be polar opposites.



CHAPTER 4

EVALUATING ECOFEMINISM FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF STANDPOINT FEMINISM

4.1. Standpoint Feminist Theory

I am speaking from a place in the margins where I am different, where I see things differently. I am talking what I see.

bell hooks

(2004, p. 158)

By the late 70s, Sandra Harding, Nancy Hartsock, Dorothy Smith, Patricia Hill Collins, Hilary Rose and Alison Jaggar, influenced by the works of Karl Marx, Georg Lukacs and Antonio Gramsci began to carry out feminist studies that would lead to rethink the concept of “class consciousness” from the perspective of feminism. In these studies, they attempted to explain in what manner material conditions led to a diversion in women’s experience by adopting historical materialist approach. The analysis of the “insider outsider” position of black feminist women by Patricia Hill Collins (2004); the work of Hilary Rose (2004) arguing that the identification of women with body and emotional labor provided women with a distinctive perspective; the research of Chela Sandoval (2004) on the oppositional consciousness of feminist women in Third World countries and the sociological study of Dorothy Smith (2004) on women’s daily life can be regarded as the other major works based on the abovementioned insight.

As mentioned before, considering “women” as a separate social category might be accepted as the “founding moment” of feminist theory (Braidotti, 1991, p. 159). This involves the criticism that the modern conceptualization of “individual” reflects the experience of men and the way they look at the world. In this regard, feminists indicated that women as a social category cannot be adequately grasped without considering the distinct construction. Then, they began to examine what “being woman” means; and it is explained through their differences from men –the group they have been separated from. This perception points to the fact that differences are constructed on oppositional, thus dualist grounds. As Hill Collins clearly writes,

the terms in dichotomies such as black/ white, male/ female, reason/ emotion, fact/ opinion, and subject/ object gain their meaning only in relation to their difference from their oppositional counterparts (2004, p. 110).

Until the criticisms directed by women from different groups of classes, races, ethnicities and sexual orientation, feminism has tended to find the meaning of being “woman” in opposition to “men” in spite of the differences among women. Standpoint feminist theory, nourished by these different experiences, emphasizes the importance of differences in reaching less exclusionist knowledge of reality from a situational and locational point of view. On the other hand, some standpoint feminist theorists argue that certain commonalities are epistemologically and politically advantageous.

In this chapter, I am going to explain standpoint feminist theory with its two major implications which clearly outline the theory: The situated/ located knowledge thesis and epistemic advantage thesis.

4.1.1. The Situated/Located Knowledge Thesis

The critique of dominant values that we observe in ecofeminism finds its level in standpoint feminist theory in the aim of revealing the relationship between knowledge and power. Considering its perception of objectivity, modernity is based on the assumption that knowledge -or the knowledge of reality can only

be formed independently from subjective arguments. From that perspective, it is argued that subjective thoughts, perspectives and attitudes might damage the process of knowledge generation. Standpoint feminism adopts two distinct critical approaches to this kind of conception of objectivism. Firstly, with the discussion of the concept of “situated knowledges” developed by Donna Haraway as a criticism of abstract generality of the subject, standpoint feminist theorists argue that reality is interpretive, in other words, it is related to the knowledge people from different social locations acquired by the mediation of their experiences (Haraway, 2004; Harding, 2004; Collins, 2004; Hartsock, 2004; Rose, 2004; Smith, 2004). Standpoint feminist theorists defend that the systems of oppression –sexism, classism, racism and heterosexism shape the conditions surrounding people; therefore, people in distinct social locations acquire distinct experiences. As expressed by Uma Narayan, “no point of view is ‘neutral’ because no one exists unembedded in the world” (2004, p. 218).

Harding states that objectivity, described as maximizing social neutrality in theory, is “not itself socially neutral in its effects” (2004, p. 5). This statement reveals the connection of knowledge with power, which is related to the second criticism of the modernist understanding of objectivism. The knowledge that is assumed as reality is a partial knowledge that has been generated by the experiences of the dominant Western, bourgeois, white supremacist, androcentric and heteronormative culture from a particular standpoint. In other words, it is based on the generalization of the reality assumption of those in power. Valerie Walkerdine argues that “what is taken to be universal is itself the imposition of a particular truth, a truth neither apolitical nor otherwise neutral or innocent” (1988, p. 193).

According to standpoint feminist theorists, considering the situated, partial and locational nature of knowledge, all knowledge, claimed to be generalized, is potentially exclusionist and misrepresentative. As Smith indicates: “The concepts and terms in which the world of men is thought as the concepts and terms in which women must think their world” (2004, p. 22). Accordingly, the

more knowledge is claimed to be neutral -that is to say disinterested, value-free or situationally transcend the further it draws away from being appropriately objective. Harding asserts that the problem with the modernist understanding of objectivity does not derive from the fact that it is “too rigorous or too objectifying,” yet that it is not “rigorous or objectifying” (2004, p. 128). Thus, revealing excluded experiences is crucial for reaching less partial and more trustworthy knowledge, and therefore a more appropriate understanding of objectivity, which is conceptualized as “strong objectivity” by Harding (Harding, 2004a)

Standpoint feminist theorists, in the early debates, indicated that characteristics attributed to women and their association with emotional, manual and care labour indicate different processes between women and men. Because different experiences entail differences in the perception of reality, they defend that differences between women’s and men’s experiences have epistemological consequences (Collins, 2004; Rose 2004; Smith, 2004). However, they have moved beyond the interpretation of the concept of “class consciousness” to feminism with ongoing discussions.

These discussions on the importance of revealing women’s knowledge demonstrate that it is difficult to mention about essentialized and universal category of woman. In this respect, social categories cannot be accepted as self-contained or homogenous whole because women from different races, classes, ethnicities and sexual orientations have distinct experiences. Hill Collins expresses that oppression, as a social phenomenon, cannot be reduced into a fundamental type and attempts to explain the “mutually constructed” nature of different types of oppression thought to be analytically different in women’s daily lives (2004). Toni Morrison writes in the name of U.S. Third World women that “there is something inside us that makes us different from other people. It is not like men and it is not like a woman” (Cited by Sandoval, 2004, p. 198)

Therefore, the concept of “difference” in feminist standpoint theory does not only indicate the distinctiveness of the category of “women” from “men,” but also the distinctions among women. When viewed from this aspect, women’s social positions can not be merely explained, for example, by the fact that men excluded them from “primary” social positions. From that point onwards, it can be stated that standpoint feminism steps beyond the oppositional construction of the difference.

The emphasis standpoint feminist theorists laid on differences points to the need for underlining its difference from postmodernism. At that point, it is useful to address the discussion whether any difference can be regarded as a “standpoint” or not. Rather than maintaining the dualism of individual/community, standpoint feminism points to the need for interpreting individual experiences with reference to social context. Harding emphasizes that any difference cannot be regarded as equal because some of them are epistemologically, scientifically and politically advantageous (2004). In this respect, it can be said that simply to be a woman is not sufficient to guarantee a standpoint. Rather, standpoints are thought to be achieved through recognition of the connection between experiences and power relations. With the recognition of the connection of experience with power relations, women become enable to grasp that the knowledge about social reality is based on the assumptions of those in power and to acknowledge the possibility to end the oppression. This point leads us to second implication of standpoint feminism: Epistemic advantage thesis.

4.1.2. The Epistemic Advantage Thesis

Standpoint feminist theorists state that different experiences entail distinct opportunities and limitations in the acquisition of knowledge about social order (Harding, p. 257). Groups that hold power tend to generalize knowledge to maintain the continuity of knowledge that reflects and serves their interests. The tendency to generalize knowledge includes the risk of mystification.

According to Harding, androcentric, economically advantaged, racist, Eurocentric and heterosexist frameworks causes systematic error about not only the oppressed, but also the oppressors and thus about how social relations work (2004, p. 5) However, marginalized groups have a distinct place, as stated by bell hooks, because they are the “part of the whole but outside the main body” (2004, p. 156).

The distinct place of marginalized groups is conceptualized in different manners by different theorists as “double vision,” “outsider within,” “dislocation,” “third” or “hybrid” location (Pels, 2004, p. 277). The studies demonstrate that women who have been held responsible for the maintenance of life (Smith, 2004), identified with body and emotional labor (Rose, 2004), living in developed countries as black women (Collins, 2004; hooks, 2004), undertaking meeting others bodily and emotional needs (Ruddick, 2004), systematically subjected to violence (MacKinnon, 2004), and pushed into a disadvantageous position with the policies of globalization in Third World countries (Mies and Shiva, 2004; 2014) have a distinctive insight with the mediation of these experiences.

The distinct insight of marginalized groups is accepted as advantageous by standpoint feminist theorists for two reasons. Firstly, the members of such groups live in the society which has marginalized them have the potential of grasping that the knowledge on social reality are composed of assumptions that do not include them. Because these groups have no interest to mystify the reality, they might provide less partial and more trustworthy knowledge about oppressed, oppressor and the relation between them (Jaggar, 2004, p. 57). As Nancy J. Hirschmann writes,

standpoint feminism allows us to understand degrees of power and privilege that cohere to particular ‘differences’ by holding onto the material reality of oppression. For instance, it allows the recognition that a Black feminist standpoint as a starting point for theory can reveal things about white women’s experiences which a white feminist standpoint cannot reveal, precisely because of the privilege that adheres to being white (2004, p. 328).

Secondly, the knowledge offered by the marginalized groups is potentially a significant source for social transformation. “Pain,” says Jaggar, can provide the oppressed group a source of motivation “for finding out what is wrong, for criticizing accepted interpretations of reality” (2004, p. 56). Harding thinks that each marginalized group can learn to turn their oppressive conditions into a source of critical insight about how social relations work (2004, p. 7). At this point, hooks indicates the need to make a distinction between “that marginality which is imposed by oppressive structures” and “that marginality that one chooses as site of resistance” (2004, p. 159). Instead of a kind of “deprivation,” the concept of “marginality” becomes a sphere that nourishes one’s capacity to resist: “Not one wishes to lose –but rather of a site one stays in” (hooks, 2004, p. 157).

Therefore, standpoints of the marginalized groups are accepted as privileged not only because they seem to promise less partial and more trustworthy knowledge; but also, the possibility of transforming the social. Contrary to the perception of objectivity described as maximizing social neutrality, it means that science and politics are internally linked. Nevertheless, Narayan warns that the concept of “epistemic advantage” does not mean that people who do not belong to a marginalized social location cannot have an idea on this specific location:

this commitment does permit us to argue that it is *easier* and *more likely* for the oppressed to have a critical insight into the conditions of their own oppression than it is for those who live outside those structures. Those who actually live the oppressions of class, race, or gender have faced the issues that such oppressions generate in a variety of different situations (2004, p. 220).

According to Hartsock, the claim that the knowledge is acquired by the mediation of the different comments on social reality signs a particular understanding of epistemology that grows in “a complex and contradictory way from material life” (2004, p. 37). Harding asserts that because material life not only structures but also sets limits on the understanding of the social, starting through marginalized lives enables us to reach hidden insights about

the social order to both contribute human knowledge and overcome the oppression (2004a). According to Kathi Weeks, the difference and importance of standpoint feminism become prominent at this point. The difference and importance derive from the fact that women are not only considered to be “victims,” but also “agents:” Standpoint feminist theory combines the epistemological possibilities, that affirms “the seeds of the future” and a theory based on the criticism of different types of domination (Weeks, 1998, p. 92).

In the part titled “Towards Standpoint Ecofeminism,” I will use the main points of standpoint feminist theory –the situated/located knowledge thesis and the thesis of epistemic advantage in regard to their potential to make ecofeminism more appropriate for social theory and fulfill its promise as an emancipatory movement.

4.2. Towards Standpoint Ecofeminism

During the 1990s and 2000s, cultural ecofeminism was criticized by both ecofeminist and non-ecofeminist circles for being based on essentialist and universalist arguments. With regard to these claims, the affirmation of the characteristics attributed to women including emotionality, care, altruism, empathy, compassion and intuition and being associated with nature involves the assumption that all women possess these attributes and that they have an egalitarian and peaceful relationship with nature. According to those who criticize cultural ecofeminism at this point, affirmation ignores social and historical specificities of women (Alcoff, 1988; Roach, 1991; Seager, 1993; Segal, 1994; Jackson, 1995; Narayan, 1998).

According to another critique, affirmation overturns the dominant system of values; thus, it causes the negation of the opposite side. Biehl believes that the values such as rationality, freedom, and the realm of culture are crucial concepts for liberation. However, ecofeminists ignore or reject them on the grounds that they are sexist and anthropocentric and they celebrate various

ideals associated with women and the realm of nature. According to Biehl, affirmation causes ecofeminism to be seen as an irrational thought. (1991)

In her article “Misunderstanding Ecofeminism,” Greta Gaard indicates that such critiques caused a judgement that ecofeminism is theoretically and politically untenable and the aforementioned judgement limited ecofeminist works’ access to academic journals. This has not only caused silencing the ecofeminism. Certain scholars distanced themselves and their work from the label of “ecofeminist” and tried to use expressions such as “gender and the environment” or “feminist ecology” (Gaard, 1994, p. 22).

Standpoint feminist theory allows for the formation of a different understanding of ecofeminism which responds to the criticism raised against cultural ecofeminism. The standpoint feminist emphasis laid on the need for giving place for women’s experience from different social locations to reach less partial and more trustworthy knowledge of social reality and on the importance of these knowledges for social transformation has the potential to make ecofeminism more appropriate for social theory and to fulfill its promise as an emancipatory movement.

Cultural ecofeminism, as explained in the previous chapter, attempts to reverse the dominant system of values. In this context, while the negated characteristics are positively affirmed, the affirmed characteristics are either ignored or rejected. In a social order in which the negation of the characteristics attributed to women and being associated with nature maintains the oppression, affirmation might be considered to be important. Nonetheless, at that point, it should be discussed whether affirmation is appropriate way for the liberation of women and nature; if not, whether there is another way beyond or not. These two discussions are the main problems addressed in this chapter.

Positive affirmation brings along with both theoretical and practical limitations. According to Val Plumwood and Genevieve Lloyd, discovering

that the distinction between women and men is not only a descriptive classification, but also an expression of value necessarily leads to the affirmation of what is assumed as hierarchically inferior. However, “what is hierarchically inferior” is established based on compliance or opposition to the ideals attributed to men. Therefore, the point to be discussed is not only the negative meaning of the characteristics attributed to women but also the fact that the concept of “women” is established through these characteristics (Plumwood, 2003; Lloyd, 1984). Phillys Rooney calls for an attention that the conceptions of “masculine,” “feminine,” “reason,” “feeling,” “intuition” all are exposed to distortion: “They are largely caricatures fed by a metaphorical structure that sets them up in various oppositions to one another” (1991, p. 96-97).

Because affirmation means a kind of acceptance, cultural ecofeminists accepts the ideals attributed to women without questioning. This acceptance, on the one hand, maintains pure, single, homogeneous and ahistorical understanding of women and covers different forms of domination which cuts cross women's social locations. According to Plumwood, though women are associated with the realm of nature, they might not be emphatic, nurturing or prone to cooperation or these characteristics might be limited to their inner circle. They do not necessarily regard all women as their sisters or not all women foster a relationship with nature based on community. Consciously or unconsciously, women might be the main supporters of the culture of consumption nurtured by the domination of nature (Plumwood, 2003, p. 9-10). On the other hand, the acceptance ignores the fact that dualism is a Eurocentric way of thinking which excludes women from the realm of culture and associates them with the realm of nature. As indicated by Marilyn Strathern and Carol McCormack, in certain New Guinean cultures, women are oppressed even if they are associated with home and the realm of culture while men are associated with wild life and forest. This example shows that being associated with nature might not be the driving-force behind women's oppression (1980).

Practical limitations of affirmation arise when social reality is taken into consideration. At this point, materialist ecofeminist critique of capitalism becomes important. Even though materialist ecofeminists differentiate from socialist or Marxist feminists by including the exploitation of nature in analysis, they build their thoughts on socialist or Marxist feminist literature which traces the relation between patriarchy and capitalism. The extent of this relation is still controversial subject among these feminists (Eisenstein, 1990; Holmstorm, 2003; Ehrenreich, 2005; Dedeoğlu and Yaman - Öztürk, 2010; Acar - Savran, Tura - Demiryontan, 2012). However, it can be said about this field of feminism, with reference to Heidi Hartmann, who wrote one of the most influential articles in this field titled “The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism” that both feminist analysis and Marxist analysis need each other to understand the dynamics of Western capitalist societies and women’s distinctive experiences within them (Hartmann, 1979: 2).

Hartmann indicates that the sexual division of labor can be regarded as universal phenomenon. Although the division was not always hierarchical, it signs hierarchical relations in Western society. According to her, men’s and women’s present social status depends on this sex-ordered division. Thus, Hartmann explains patriarchy in terms of social relations. In this division, men draw their strength from the control over women’s labor power. The maintenance of the control is provided through women’s exclusion from production areas and restriction of their sexuality (Hartmann, 1979, p. 14).

The rise of capitalism threatened ongoing traditional division as it destroyed old institutions and brought along with new ones. One of them was free market, which mobilized and welcomed women to attend labor force. However, according to Hartmann, job segregation by sex was “invented” to provide a kind of alliance between the interests of men and capitalists. (Hartmann, 1990: 146-147) Through this “alliance”, men reserve their advantaged position both in household and in the labour market and capitalists provide relatively more “appropriate” or “suitable” workers. According to her,

patriarchy, far from being vanquished by capitalism, is still very virile; it shapes the form that modern capitalism takes, just as the development of capitalism has transformed patriarchal institutions. The resulting mutual accommodation between patriarchy and capitalism has created a vicious circle for women (1990, p. 148).

The analysis of job segregation has become fragmented recently. Firstly, women are being integrated into the economy by the process of feminization: Women are generally integrated into the work areas that are assumed to relate with the characteristics attributed to them such as service sector, which has been on the rise. Second, although the process of feminization makes possible for women to participate in the labour market, they mostly work in the underpaid and low-status jobs such as part-time, informal and unregistered. Finally, women continue to carry the responsibility of domestic labour, thus, in comparison with men, they enter the labour market under distinctive conditions (Bradley, Erickson, Stephenson and Williams, 2000; Fine, 1992; Walby, 1990).

Accordingly, in segregation, gender is the crucial signifier in determining the “value” of the labour. The “value” is dependent on whether it involves a skill or not. Assumed skill level then reflects on the level of the pay and the status of the job. According to Teresa Rees, “skill” is also a socially constructed concept. This situation not only determines which gender fulfills certain tasks, but also how these skills are acquired (Rees, 1992, p. 16-17) Because the characteristics attributed to women are regarded as “innate” to their existence, they are not accepted as an achievement. Then, “feminization of a particular occupation or profession is seen to have the effect of deskilling it” (Rees, 1992, p. 17).

It can be asserted that these dynamics should not be interpreted as the exclusion of the experience of Third World women. The fact that the attitudes towards women and nature, which promoted the formation of normative human identity, reached a broader scope with the global socioeconomic policies made the experience of the women living in Western and non-Western countries relatively more connected. As stated by Mellor,

there is an analysis at the heart of Western ecofeminism that can be seen as having a global applicability, since it focuses on the model of Western society that is being projected across the world in the process of globalization. This analysis directly links the gendered nature of Western society to the global ecological destruction that model is creating (2003, p. 16).

Under these circumstances, acceptance and celebration of the characteristics attributed to women and being associated with nature can be transformed into an “opportunity” by the system and thus it might increase the capacity of capitalism to exploit. Plumwood thinks that accepting affirmation as an ultimate purpose is as problematical as the rejection of these characteristics and it might cause the permanence of the domination of women under a new and subtle form (2003). This critique shows the importance of going beyond the strategy of positive affirmation. According to Lloyd,

the affirmation of the value and importance of “the feminine” cannot itself be expected to shake the underlying normative structures for, ironically, it will occur in a space already prepared for it by the intellectual tradition it seeks to reject (1984, p. 105).

Standpoint feminist theory with its two implications –the situated knowledge and epistemic advantage thesis has the potential for going beyond positive affirmation. Standpoint feminist theorists express that oppression, as a social phenomenon, cannot be reduced into a fundamental type and that different forms of social oppressions cannot be separated from one another; thus, they try to draw feminist attention into the “mutually constructed” effect of different forms of oppression such as sexism, classicism, racism and heterosexism on women's lives. Under the “mutually constructed” character of oppressive systems, as Heidi Safia Mirza writes, “gender is not experienced in the same way when you are positioned as working class or black, or both” (1997, p. 12).

Rather than an abstraction that based on the attribution and universalization of an “essence”, thinking women as a social category in a situational and locational context, expands the scope of the difference and creates space for the differences among women. As stated by Harding, “feminist knowledge has started off from women’s lives, but it has started off from many different

women's lives; there is no typical or essential woman's life from which feminisms starts their thought" (2004a, p. 134). From this perspective, the contrast between the affirmation and rejection of the characteristics attributed to women including emotionality, care, altruism, empathy, compassion and intuition begins to unfold. This does not necessarily imply ignoring the potential effects of the dualities of men/women or culture/nature in women's life situations, but it means problematization of the assumption that being women guarantees bearing the characteristics attributed to women or having positive relationship with nature.

This point also opens the cultural ecofeminist argument that women would be pioneers for solving ecological problems due to their relation with nature up for discussion. Considering that there is no essential, inevitable or spontaneous connection between being woman and being in opposition to sexism, standpoint feminist theorists express the need for making a distinction. As expressed by Weeks,

a standpoint is a collective interpretation of a particular subject position rather than an immediate perspective automatically acquired by an individual who inhabits that position. A standpoint is derived from political practice, from a collective effort to revalue and reconstitute specific practices [...] A standpoint is a project, not an inheritance; it is achieved, not given (1998, p. 136).

According to standpoint feminist theory, women seize the opportunity for gaining a different perspective of reality due to their association with nature exclusion from the realm of culture. According to hooks, whose thoughts can be applied to our subject, "to be in the margin is to be part of the whole but outside the main body. [...] Living as we did –on the edge- we developed a particular way of seeing reality. We looked both from the outside and in from the outside out [...] we understood both" (2004, p. 156). Plumwood indicates that the state of "being on the margin" might direct women to greater discomfort and a deeper questioning (2003, p. 36-37). Similarly, according to Eckersley:

most women do occupy a vantage point of 'critical otherness' from which they can offer a different way of looking at the problems of both patriarchy and ecological destruction. Of course, the same can be said for many other minority groups and classes such as indigenous tribespeople, ethnic minorities, and other oppressed groups—a point that is of crucial importance if we are to develop a general ecocentric emancipatory theory. Here, ecofeminist theorists need to be wary of the problem of over-identifying with, and hence accepting uncritically, the perspective of women (2003, p. 67).

This statement brings along the notion that there is no essential unification of feminism and ecological thought. As Stacy Alaimo indicates, “the relations between feminism and environmentalism cannot be assumed but must be carefully explored” (2008, p. 301). From this perspective, an ecofeminist standpoint becomes possible through the recognition and critical evaluation of the connections between women’s life experiences and twin domination – sexism and anthropocentrism. Through recognition and critical evaluation of the connection, women can form the “epistemological bridge” between nature and culture by which they can offer less partial and more trustworthy aspects about sexism and ecological destruction and the relation between them. In this way, they might become enabled to transform their consciousness into an “oppositional one” to end the twin domination. Therefore, women’s contribution towards overcoming ecological problems arises from their relatively advantageous position in revealing “hidden aspects” and developing a critical approach towards the social dynamics of twin domination, rather than being in distinct, close or positive relation nature.

Standpoint feminist theory provides the possibility to reinterpret cultural ecofeminism, which has an important role in the formation of ecofeminism as an intellectual and activist field. With the reinterpretation, a concept of “women” which is beyond dualistic understanding becomes possible. This interpretation does not deny the importance of affirmation, yet points to the problems that might be brought by the affirmation of a unitary, homogeneous and coherent category of “women.” Allowing differences among women and emphasizing women’s potential of having relatively less partial and more trustworthy knowledge about sexism and anthropocentrism lead to an

understanding of ecofeminism which goes beyond positive affirmation and aim at social transformation, by enabling women to have an opportunity of being subjects.

The question of how an ecofeminist transformation can be achieved without confining itself to accept and celebrate what has been negated and excluded by the dominant system of values involves the discussion of reconceptualizing what has been affirmed and included by the dominant system of values. According to Genevieve Lloyd (1984), Phyllis Rooney (1991) and Val Plumwood (2003), cultural ecofeminists ignore the fact that the concepts such as “culture,” “rationality” and “human” are reconceptualizable, thus they accept the norms attributed to these concepts without question. When the concepts put forward by standpoint feminism are used, Plumwood states that being critical does not derive from the presentation of opposing norms, but from considering the knowledge generated by marginalized locations aiming to transform social order. From this point of view, she stresses the importance of an ecofeminist movement which does not confine itself to positive affirmation, yet recognizes the significance of questioning and reconceptualizing the concept of “rationality”, which has a crucial role in twin domination (Plumwood, 2003). This perception calls for a need to going beyond associating with or rejecting the realm of reason. As Sara Ruddick indicates, associating with reason bears the risk of “both self-contempt and self alienating misogyny” (1989, p. 5). And rejecting it, as Rooney writes, “leaves unexamined the original division that constituted the ‘feminine’ through exclusion from rational knowing” (1991, p. 97).

At this point, I would like to express that evaluation of cultural ecofeminism from the perspective of standpoint feminist theory might have important implications for feminist standpoint theory. Ecofeminism, with the critiques directed to ecological thought and feminism, reveals that the social meaning of the concepts of “women” and “nature” are related with the assumptions of sexist and anthropocentric worldview. At that point, it adopts an important

stance in terms of revealing the relations between the assumptions presented as the knowledge about nature and the concept of “normative human identity.” As Marti Kheel indicates,

behind the preoccupation with universal principles and abstract rules lies a mistrust of nature, including nature as it is found within ourselves –namely, our instincts and feelings of connection to all of life. The quest for ‘truth’ or ‘objective’ knowledge is thus equated with the masculine endeavor to transcend the contingencies of the natural world (1991, p. 63).

Including anthropocentrism in the analysis as a form of domination might create a new channel of discussion in standpoint feminist theory. It makes us to realize that the concept of rationality, deemed determinative in knowledge acquisition process, is relatively less problematized compared to the assumptions of essentialism and universalism of modernity; and it points out the need for reconceptualizing rationality in a way that does not include opposition and hierarchy.

Grand theories of development generally tend to reduce nature to a “resource” for the sustainability of human “needs”. What-is-rational in human - nature relation takes its meaning from whether it is functional for society or not. What-is-functional for society, then, directs us the former questioning, what-is-rational. The circularity creates a kind of unquestioned area in which anthropocentric attitudes find their legitimation and therefore indicates the importance of different conceptualization of rationality. At this point, indigenous knowledge might set precedent for creating an alternative understanding which takes both human and non-human into consideration.

Locally situated knowledge, that is to say indigenous knowledge, is created by different stories, rituals, mores, dreams, visions, practices and experiences. As Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez and Nathalie Kermoal indicates, the source of the legitimacy of this kind of knowledge comes from social relationships and these relationships are not limited with interpersonal relationships, but also with “animals, plants, spirits, water and mountains” (2016, p. 11-12). The indigenous Latin American concept of “Buen Vivir” might be an appropriate

example in this respect. The concept is translated into English as “well living” but it indicates more than that. Rather than the dominant understanding of “wellness” which attributes importance to progress and development, this concept pays attention to preservation of the “wellness” of the existing through ecology/community-responsible production and consumption. However, indigenous knowledge is often labelled as in opposition to Western knowledge – non-scientific, practical, experience based, traditionally-transmitted. This understanding has caused indigenous knowledge to be perceived as an obstacle to development process. Arun Agrawal finds it relatively appropriate to talk about multiple knowledges rather than maintaining “the sterile dichotomy between indigenous knowledge and Western, or traditional and scientific knowledge” (Altamirano-Jiménez and Kermoal, 2016, p. 11).

In the 1990’s, debates on indigenous knowledge, as a field of study, became important. Governments, indigenous communities and academics have started to emphasize that indigenous knowledge might play an important role in planning and management of the land and natural “resources” (Altamirano-Jiménez and Kermoal, 2016, p. 10). Consideration of indigenous knowledge can be regarded as positive development, but the studies emphasize the importance of local ways of knowing tend to underestimate or ignore indigenous women’s knowledge.

As it revealed through some case studies, in some areas of the world, women do not only have different ways of knowing, but also they know different things about nature: Sexual division of labour provides women to have specialized knowledge on seeds, plants, animals and nature’s movement (Cashman, 1991, p. 49-58; Nazarea-Sandoval, 1995; Rocheleau, 1991, p. 156-165; Altamirano-Jiménez and Kermoal, 2016; Shiva, 2010) In this regard, experiences of women living in Third World countries can be an important example. According to Mies, before the negative effects of globalization began to appear, there was a special relationship between women and nature. Women played an important role in subsistence production by sowing, planting,

collecting and preparing for consumption. Mies indicates that this type of production was not only based on picking, but also on observing, discovering, growing and preserving. She sees a kind of community in this relationship and this community provided know-how for women, which has passed down for thousand years (Shiva, 1988, p. 43).

The study of Carole Lévesque, Denise Geoffroy and Geneviève Polèse about Naskapi women, who live in the subarctic region of the Québec, shows that the knowledge about medicinal plants acquired by these women enables them not only to categorize the plants and distinguish their parts, but also “to evaluate their quality, their stage in the growth cycle, and their seasonal availability” (2016, p. 48-49). As one Naskapi woman indicates, plants take their names in terms of their appearance, smell, feel, and use. Plants have also different names in the spring, summer and fall. The knowledge acquired by close relationship with medicinal plants brings along with the need to create and maintain respectful attitude towards them. As another Naskapi woman explains, there are different and special ways to pick up the plants: “Each plant has to be picked in its own way and prepared in its own way. One has to be in good mood, in good dispositions, and one has to pray that the plants have good effects. Nowadays, most people are not in the right frame of mind to gather plants, so it is not done” (2016, p. 49-50).

Women’s lived experience that relatively based on mutuality might provide a source for standpoint feminism to offer an alternative knowledge acquisition process instead of homogenisation, abstraction or reduction. The emphasis on mutuality, according to Lorraine Code, naturalizes the guiding question of feminist epistemology: “Whose knowledge are we talking about?” (2006, p. 21). At this point, social locations, as sources of knowledge, are thought to be relational with the surrounding ecological sphere. According to Code, in this framework,

conception of embodied, materially and socially-affectively situated subjectivity, temporal, physical, social location and interdependence are

integral to the possibility of being, knowing and doing: Ecological human subjects are shaped by and shape their relations, in reciprocity with other subjects and with their (multiple, diverse) environments (2006, p. 69).

Including the specificities of the habitat conditions in the conditions affecting people's experiences and thus their opportunity to know directs a major criticism at modernity which identifies liberation with emancipation from nature and at "oppressive science" which reduces nature to a homogenous entity deprived of intention, specificity or differentiating needs, that is to say, to a mechanism that is to be known about. Haraway calls attention to the importance of ecofeminism in this point:

Ecofeminists have perhaps been most insistent on some version of the world as active subject [...] Acknowledging the agency of the world in knowledge makes room for some unsettling possibilities, including a sense of the world's independent sense of humor. Such a sense of humor is not comfortable for humanists or others committed to the world as resource. There are [...] richly evocative figures to promote feminist visualizations of the world witty agent. We need not lapse into appeals to a primal mother resisting her translation into resource. The Coyote or Trickster [...] suggests the situation we are in when we give up mastery but keep searching for fidelity, knowing all the while that we will be hoodwinked (2004, p. 96).

The discovery of the fact that the knowledge towards nature has not been objectively established and that it is based on the assumptions of "normative human identity" point to the need and requirement for generating less partial and more trustworthy knowledge about non-human entities. These facts cherish the hope of reducing the risk of "talking on behalf of nature" and safeguarding the right to live of non-human entities in the process of political transformation. This new perception of life that might be established on new and less destructive "stories" signs a complex network of locations in which both human and non-human try to live side to side, next to each other, on equal standing, in well-being.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

We are volcanoes. When we women offer our experience as our truth, as human truth, all the maps change. There are new mountains.

Ursula K. Le Guin

(1989: 160)

Because social theory assigns ontological questioning of “human” to the field of philosophy and focuses on interpersonal relations, it is difficult to find any studies about normative human identity and its relation with nature, except for those focused on defending and protecting animal rights or welfare (Singer, 1991; Regan, 1985; 2012). Deep ecology and social ecology take the lead in filling in this gap in social theory by bringing the normative human identity and its relationship with nature into question in favor of both society and nature.

Anthropocentrism is one of the major critical focal points for both intellectual fields because it draws its age-old strength from the assumption that humans are oppositionally separate from and superior to nature. The relation between normative human identity and humans’ attitudes towards nature indicate the cruciality of questioning and re-thinking the concept of “human.” Beyond any doubt, the discussion begins with pointing out the need for thinking the concept of “society” and “nature” as relational which does not involve any forms of

hierarchy. However, they do it in ways that are still shaped by on-going discussions: Deep ecology defends that humans are just one part of nature and suggests developing a self that will remind humans of their connection. On the other hand, social ecology points out the need for reconceptualizing society as a specific phase of organic evolution. The social ecologist emphasis laid on the specificity of human and the society in the evolutionary process is the criticism of deep ecology which regards human as a simple part of nature. Social ecologists assign an important role to humans that can understand the movement and intention of organic evolution and develop ethical responsibility in this direction to overcome ecological destruction. As stated by Bookchin, “Our reentry into natural evolution is no less a humanization of nature than a naturalization of humanity” (1982, p. 315). Thus, the possibility of self-realization of nature is connected to the hope of establishing a new perception of society.

The efforts of deep and social ecologists to fill the gap in social theory are more than simply relating society with nature. Both intellectual fields defend that human’s relation with nature is connected to social relations. Despite significant differences about the cause, extent and direction of this interaction, accepting nature as a subject of social theory implies that human’s relation with nature can shed light upon the social differences and the meaning attributed to these differences.

Though deep ecology and social ecology challenge modern social theory which reduces the analysis into interpersonal relations through aforementioned questionings, they maintain the modernist tendency to address differences on the individual level. Feminists, arguing that women and men are represented and constructed in society in different manners, stress that differences should be addressed in the context of social processes that separate and commonize individuals as social groups. The tendency of ignoring women’s differences as a social group unveils that the knowledge generated about women is merely

composed of men's assumptions about them and therefore brings the consistence of the knowledge about social reality into question.

The opposition of feminism to social theory forms the basis of the criticism directed at deep ecology and social ecology by ecofeminism. Both intellectual movements study the relationship of humans with nature, yet they both ignore gender differences while dealing with the concept of "human." According to ecofeminists, women have been associated with nature on the assumption that they possess "essential" characteristics such as emotionality, care, altruism, empathy, compassion and intuition contrary to men who have been positioned as oppositionally separate from and superior to nature. This indicates the masculine character of the concept of "human" and the realm of culture, and therefore the importance of the gender lenses on the subject of ecological destruction.

This point is linked to the ecofeminist critique of feminisms which accept that women's liberation would be possible with rejection of women's association with nature and equalization with men under the concept of "human." However, as ecofeminists indicate, "human" is a normative concept that idealizes the characteristics attributed to men and human's superiority and opposition to nature. The aspiration to equalization with men under the concept of "human" implies the unquestioning acceptance of superiority of the characteristics attributed to men and of human to nature. Therefore, according to ecofeminists, if we desire a real social transformation, it will be possible through a different perception of feminism which has ecological lenses on the subject of gender inequality.

Cultural ecofeminists have an important role in the emergence and development of ecofeminism. They focus on dominant system of values and aim at reversal of its hierarchical structure, which is conceptualized as "positive affirmation." Within this framework, on the one hand, they positively affirm the characteristics attributed to women such as emotionality, care,

altruism, empathy, compassion and intuition and being associated with nature. On the other hand, they ignore or reject what has been valued by dominant system of values due to the fact that they are hierarchical, aggressive and destructive. Cultural ecofeminists trace back to matrilineal societies, in which the characteristics attributed to women and nature were highly valued. Their studies reveal that these societies are relatively more egalitarian and peaceful in both interpersonal and human/nature relationships. To restore the former glory of these societies, they aim to create an alternative culture and spirituality to today's sexist and anti-ecological social order through affirmation of feminine values which are in harmony with ecological system.

However, essentialist and universalist character of affirmation brings along with theoretical and practical limitations. Positive affirmation, namely moving up the “inferior” and moving down the “superior” in the hierarchical ladder, can be seen as an important liberatory way in societies in which the existence of the dominant depends on the existence of that hierarchy. However, confining to this strategy reproduces the same problem in other form; it leads to accepting the characteristics attributed to women and their association with nature and the ideals attributed to men and their association with the realm of culture without any problematization. As stated by Lloyd, the question that needs to be addressed is not only the attribution of inferior values to the characteristics associated with women and nature, but also that the concepts of women and nature have been constructed based on them (Lloyd, 1984).

Because the affirmation is a kind of acceptance of normative understanding of women which is constructed through attributing and universalizing an essence, this acceptance assumes that all women are emotional, rigorous, altruistic, empathetic, compassionate, intuitive and in relatively more close or positive relationship with nature. This understanding sets limits on different interpretations of the concept of “woman” and makes it difficult to make sense of and analyse these differences.

Practical limitations emerge when we question how affirmation might be translated into social reality. At this point, the arguments of materialist ecofeminism become important. Materialist ecofeminists try to draw attention to patriarchal and capitalist processes which take the advantage of the social meaning of the concepts of “women” and “nature.” Thus, cultural ecofeminism ignores that affirmation might be transformed into an “opportunity” by the social system and therefore might increase the capacity of patriarchal capitalism or capitalist patriarchy to exploit, which considers women's labour to be “unvaluable” and nature to be “cost-free.”

Theoretical and practical limitations of cultural ecofeminist arguments bring about the discussion of whether it is possible to reinterpret differences beyond essentialism and universalism, in other words, beyond dualism. The evaluation of cultural ecofeminism from the perspective of standpoint feminist theory with its two important implications –the situated knowledge and the epistemic advantage thesis includes the possibility of responding to these criticisms.

Standpoint feminist theorists indicate that the systems of oppression –sexism, classism, racism and heterosexism shape social conditions and people in distinct social locations gains different experiences. This understanding expands the concept of “difference” and allows social differences to be revealed. Because different experiences bring along with the possibility of different limitations and opportunities in reaching the knowledge about social reality, some social groups have distinct place. While the groups that hold the power tend to generalize the knowledge to ensure the continuity of their superior social positions, marginalized groups have the opportunity to grasp that the knowledge claimed to be objective is based on the reality assumptions of those in power. This leads marginalized groups both to provide less partial and more trustworthy knowledge and to develop critical insight about social reality. Accordingly, standpoint feminist theory accepts marginalized standpoints as privileged not only for epistemological and therefore scientific reasons, but also for their potential of transforming the social order.

From the perspective of feminist standpoint theory, social categories are not accepted as self-contained but formed through the mediation of the effects of the complex relationship between various forms of domination. Thus, “what makes women” becomes liberated from “what is different from men” and another social categories such as race, class, ethnicity, and sexual orientation become determinative as well as gender. To consider women as a social category and women’s relationship with nature as a situational and locational construct can be seen as an appropriate means of going beyond the essentialist and universalist assumptions of cultural ecofeminism. Evaluation of ecofeminism from the perspective of standpoint feminist theory not only allows creating space for differences among women, but also enables women to reach less partial and more trustworthy knowledge about themselves and the place that they live in, which carries a potential of liberatory power.

An understanding of differences beyond dualism makes it necessary to question what is valued by dominant system of values. Cultural ecofeminists ignore that the ideals attributed to men and the sphere of culture, such as rationalism, which is a crucial concept in the legitimization of the establishment of the domination on women and nature, are reconceptualizable. However, including anthropocentrism in standpoint feminist analysis helps us to recognize that the knowledge about nature is highly related with the anthropocentric point of view. In this regard, an ecofeminist standpoint might create a new ground for discussion on rationalism which is relatively less problematized assumption of modernity compared to essentialism and universalism. This point can be regarded as both the limitation of this thesis and a suggestion for future studies. Nevertheless, I would like to emphasize the importance of the knowledge of indigenous women for this discussion. Women’s distinct relation especially with soil due to sexual division of labour is based on not only to meet human’s needs, but also on considering the specificity –capacity and requirements of nature. Because this relation indicates a kind of mutuality, indigenous women’s knowledge acquisition

process about nature can be an exemplary alternative to rationalism, which takes its justification from whether it is functional for society or not

As a consequence, standpoint feminism, on the one hand, helps us reinterpret ecofeminism as embodied ideas –not an abstractable theory but a process inseparable from social locations from which women live, experience, think, produce knowledge and struggle within specific times and places. And, on the other, it makes possible for ecofeminists to be subject positions who can change and re-create the social meaning.



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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: TÜRKÇE ÖZET / TURKISH SUMMARY

TOPLUMSAL CİNSİYETİ, DOĞAYI VE İKTİDARI BİRLİKTE DÜŞÜNMEK: EKOFEİNİST BİR DURUŞ KURAMI UMUDU

1970’li yıllarla birlikte düşünsel bir alan ve politik bir hareket olarak gelişen ekofeminizm, kadınlar ve doğa üzerinde kurulan egemenlik arasında bulunduğu düşünülen sistematik ilişki üzerine odaklanır. İnsan merkezcilik, diğer egemenlik biçimlerini beslemesi ve devamlılığını desteklemesi dolayısıyla kadınlar üzerinde kurulan egemenliğin mahiyetine ışık tutacağı için, söz konusu egemenlik ağının bir bileşeni olarak analiz dâhiline alınır ve mücadele edilmesi gereken bir kategori haline gelir. Bu bağlamda ekofeminizm, toplumsal cinsiyet, sınıf, ırk, etnisite, cinsel yönelim/tercih gibi çözümlemelerden beslenen feminizm kavrayışına diğer bir çözümleme olan doğayı da katarak genişletilmiş bir tahakküm eleştirisi; dolayısıyla diğer yeryüzü ötekilerini de kapsamayı hedefleyen bir özgürlük tahayyülü sunar.

Ekolojist olarak nitelendirilebilecek belki de en önemli eser olan Sessiz Bahar’ın 1962 yılında, bir kadın, Rachel Carson tarafından yazılmış olmasına karşın, ekolojik sorunların feminizmin konusu haline gelmesi, ancak 1970’lerin sonlarında mümkün olabilmektedir. Barış hareketi, emek hareketi, çevre ve

hayvan özgürlüğü hareketi ve kadın sağlığı tartışmaları gibi toplumsal hareketlerden beslenen ekofeminizm, bir kavram olarak, ilk kez Françoise d'Eaubonne tarafından, kadınların ekolojik sorunların çözümündeki potansiyelini vurgulamak için ortaya atılmıştır. Ardından gelen tartışmalar, konferanslar ve yayınlarla birlikte, etkisini sosyal teori üzerinde de göstermeye başlayan ekofeminizm, dünyanın farklı yerlerinden yükselen kadın eylemleriyle politik bir harekete dönüşmüştür: Kadınlar, İsveç'te, herbisitlerin ormanlarda kullanımı protesto ettiler. Hindistan'da, Chipco Hareketi olarak anılan eylemlerle ağaçların kesilmesini, onlara sarılarak engellemeye çalıştılar. Amerika'da, yükselen kanser vakalarıyla ilişkili olduğu düşünülen uranyum madenciliğini protesto ettiler. Kenya'da, Yeşil Kuşak Hareketi olarak anılan eylemlerde, çölleşmeyi engellemek için milyonlarca ağaç diktiler. İngiltere'de, nükleer santral yapımına karşı Greenham Üssü'nde seneler süren kamp kurma eyleminde bulundular. Japonya'da, yiyecekler üzerindeki olumsuz etkileri sebebiyle tarımda kimyasal kullanımına karşı çıktılar. Almanya'da, nükleer enerji santrallerine karşı örgütlenen Whyl Hareketi içerisinde önemli roller oynadılar. Türkiye'de, binlerce ağacın kesilmesine sebep olacak Yeşil Yol Projesi'nin yapılmasına karşı direndiler.

Geleneksel kaynaklar gözden geçirildiğinde, kadınların kültür alanından dışlanıp doğa alanı ile ilişkilendirilmelerinin onlar üzerinde üstünlük kurmanın başlıca araçlarından biri olarak kullanıldığını görüyoruz. Kadınlar duygusallık, empati, fedakarlık, ihtimam, işbirliği, şefkat ve sezgi gibi özelliklere sahip oldukları varsayımından hareketle doğa alanı ile ilişkilendirilirler. Bu özellikler, doğal olana bağımlılığa, içgüdülere ve edilgenliğe; dolayısıyla insan öznelliğine karşıt bir edime işaret eder. Kadınların söz konusu niteliklere sahip oldukları varsayımı toplumsal cinsiyete dayalı işbölümünün, diğer bir deyişle, kadınların yeniden üretim faaliyetleri ile özdeşleştirilmelerinin de “doğal” bir mahiyete bürünmesine sebep olur.

Batı'da kadınların kamusal alandaki varoluşlarının özel alandaki “görevlerini” yerine getirmeleri ile ilişkili olduğunu ve genellikle söz konusu “görevler” ile

bağlantılı olduğu düşünölen alanlarda çalıştıklarını göz önünde bulundurduğumuzda, kadın ve doğa ilişkisinin geçmişte kaldığını iddia edebilmek güçleşir. Bu durumu, Üçüncü Dünya ölkelerinde yaşayan kadınların toplumsal konumları ile ilişkilendirmenin de mümkün olduğu söylenebilir. Batılı güçlerin “çıkarlarını” yansıtan politikaların yeryüzüne uygulanmasını ifade eden küreselleşme politikaları dâhilinde gerçekleştirilen ailelere ait tarım alanlarının özelleştirilmesi, monoköltür üretime geçiş, tohumlar üzerindeki patent uygulamaları ve genetiğı değıştirilmiş organizma üretimi ile kadınların tarım bilgisi gasp edilerek, geçimlik ekonomideki payları gözden düşürölmektedir. Her iki örneğın ortak paydası, egemen Batı költürünün, kadın emeğini arka plana iterek “görünmez” kılma amacında yatar.

Kadınların neden doğa ile ilişkilendirildikleri ve bu ilişkinin neden “olumsuz” bir içerik barındırdığı sorusu, düalist düşünme biçiminin ve onun hiyerarşik yapısının sorgusunu beraberinde getirir.

Düalist düşünme biçimi, toplumsal gerçekliğın iki yönünü temsil ettiğı düşünölen kategorileri birbirinden süreklilik ya da örtüşmeye işaret eden bir ilişkiselliğe mahal vermeyecek şekilde ayırır: Ruh/beden, insan/hayvan, akıl/duygu, költür/doğa, erkek/kadın. Karşıtlıkların süreğenliğı, kutupların homojen bir bütönlük olarak düşünölmesiyle sağlanır. Örneğın, cinsiyetler arası ayrımın sürekliliğının sağlanabilmesi için iki ayrı kategorinin bir mıknaatı görevi gören genelleştirilmiş özellikler üzerinden tanımlanması gerekir. Böylelikle gerçeklik iki ayrı merkez çevresinde totalize edilir, sabitlenir ve dondurulur. Bu anlayış, yalnızca karşıtlıklar dizisi oluşturmakla kalmaz. Karşıtlıkların normativiteye “uygun olma” ya da “uygun olmama” üzerinden kurulması, ikilikler arasında hiyerarşik bir ilişkiye sebep olur. Normativiteye “uygun olma” hiyerarşik olarak “yukarıda” bulunmanın, normativiteye “uygun olmama” ise, hiyerarşik olarak “aşağıda” bulunmanın işareti olarak kabul edilir.

Batı kültür ve değerlerinin insanın doğadan kopuşunu olumlayan düşünceler bağlamında kurulduğu söylenebilir. Bu çerçevede insanlığın “ilerleme” ölçütü, insanın onun doğaya bağımlılığını çağrıştıran “zorunluluklarından” uzaklaşmaya başlamasıyla ilintilidir. Doğrusal bir sürece tekabül eden bu uzaklaşma, normatif insan kimliğine dair verili kabul edilen atıflar ve insanın doğaya yönelik algısındaki dönüşüm ile mümkün olabilmiştir. Normatif insan kimliği, kendisini söz konusu ikilikler-karşıtlıklar dizisi sayesinde dışarıda bıraktıklarıyla çizilen sınırlardan itibaren tanımlar. Buna göre normatif insan kimliği ve oluşturduğu kültür alanı akıl ve düşünme kabiliyeti üzerinden kodlanır. Bu kodlama, modernitenin rasyonalite varsayımını oluşturur: İnsanı insan yapan değerler doğa ile tam bir karşıtlık barındırır; normatif insan kimliği sınırlarının dışında bırakılan duygular ve beden gibi kavramlar ise akıl-dışı alana dâhil edilir. Bu anlayış hiçbir sürekliliğe ve ortaklaştırıcı ya da dönüştürücü ilişkiselliğe mahal vermeyecek bir karşıtlıklar, ikilikler dizisi oluşturmakla kalmaz, aynı zamanda ikiliğin bir tarafını “üstün” değerlerden mahrum olarak kurgulayarak hiyerarşiye dayalı bir kavrayışa zemin hazırlar. Mahrumiyet varsayımı, mahrum olan üzerinde kurulan egemenliğe meşruiyet zemini sağlamak için kullanılır.

Kutsal, dişil, bütünsel ve canlı bir “organik kozmos” olarak görülen doğa, bilimin yükselişiyle, bir mekanizma olarak algılanmaya başlanmıştır. Algıdaki bu dönüşümle, doğa ile uyum içinde yaşayabilmek için gerekli görülen anlama ve öğrenme kaygısının yerini ona egemen olmayı sağlayabilecek bilgiyi elde etme çabası almıştır. Buna göre doğa “kullanıcısının” yönlendirmesine tâbi bir mekanizmadır; söz konusu yönlendirmenin yönlendirenin amaçları ve çıkarlarından bağımsız düşünülemeyeceği göz önünde bulundurulursa, doğa insan açısından işlevsel kılınabilecek bir nesne haline gelir. Dolayısıyla insan ve doğa ilişkisinde insana biçilen yeni rol, onun yalnızca benliğini doğadan radikal bir biçimde ayırması değil, onun üzerinde egemenlik kurabilmesi ile ilintilidir. Bu çerçeveden bakıldığında, ekolojik yıkımın üstesinden gelinebilmesinin, normatif insan kimliğinin sorunsallaştırılması ve insanın

doğa ile kurduğu ilişkinin bu bağlamda tartışmaya açılması ile mümkün olabileceği söylenebilir. Bu noktada, çevrecilik ve ekolojist düşünce arasında ayırım yapmak gerekir.

20. Yüzyıl'ın ikinci yarısından itibaren, ormansızlaşma, çölleşme, iklim değişikliği, zehirli atıklar, biyoçeşitlilik krizi gibi konular sosyal teorinin konusu haline gelmiş; bu sorunların sebepleri ve insanlığın bu sorunlar karşısında alması gereken önlemlerin ne olabileceği gibi konular tartışılmaya başlanmıştır. Çevreci düşünce, normatif insan kimliğini ve insanın doğa ile bu temelde kurduğu ilişkiyi verili kabul ettiği için, “çevre sorunlarını” yine insanlık üzerindeki muhtemel etkileri bağlamında tartışılmaya değer görür. Ekolojist düşünce ise, “insan nedir?” “insanı diğer varlıklardan farklı kılan nedir?” ve “insan ve doğa arasındaki ilişkinin mahiyeti nedir?” gibi soruları yeniden sorarak, modernitenin insan merkezci karakterinin üstesinden gelmeye çalışır ve ekolojik problemlerin sonuçları, insan olmayan varlıklar üzerindeki etkileri dışlanmadan değerlendirir.

Sosyal teori, insan kavramı üzerine yapılabilecek ontolojik sorgulamayı felsefenin alanına devrettiği ve odağını büyük ölçüde insanlar arası ilişkiler üzerinden kurduğu için, söz konusu sorgulamalara, ekolojist düşünce belirene dek, hayvan refahı ya da haklarını savunan düşünceler dışında rastlamak güçtür. Derin ekoloji ve toplumsal ekoloji, normatif insan kavramını ve insana doğa ile ilikisinde biçilen rolü hem toplum hem de doğa lehine tartışmaya açarak bu boşluğun doldurulmasında önemli bir rol üstlenir. Her iki düşünsel alan için de, en önemli eleştiri odaklarından biri, insan merkezcilik olgusudur. İnsan merkezcilik, çağlar boyu süregelen gücünü, insanın doğadan herhangi bir ilişkiselliğe mahal vermeyecek biçimde ayrı ve hiyerarşik olarak üstün olduğu varsayımından alır. Dolayısıyla tartışma, insanın, doğa ile hiyerarşi barındırmayan bir ilişkisellik içerisinde konumlandırılması amacı başlar. Ancak her iki düşünsel alan da bunu, farklı ve devam eden tartışmalarla şekillenmekte olan yollarla yaparlar. Derin ekoloji, insanın doğanın parçalarından yalnızca biri olduğunu savunur ve insana, doğa ile bağıını

hatırlatacak ve bu bağı güçlendirecek bir benlik geliştirmesi önerilir. Toplumsal ekoloji ise, toplumun, organik evrimin, kendi özgüllüğü olan bir safhası olarak yeniden kavramsallaştırılması gereğine işaret eder. İnsanın ve oluşturduğu toplumun evrimsel süreç içerisindeki özgüllüğüne yönelik vurgu, insanın doğanın parçalarından herhangi biri olduğunu kabul eden derin ekolojinin eleştirisidir. Toplumsal ekolojistler, ekolojik yıkımın üstesinden gelinmesinde, organik evrimdeki yönelimi bilebilecek ve bu eğilim doğrultusunda etik sorumluluk geliştirebilecek insana önemli bir rol yüklerler. Öyle ki, doğanın kendini yeniden gerçekleştirebilmesinin imkânı, yeni bir toplum algısı oluşturulması umuduna bağlanır.

Derin ve toplumsal ekolojinin, bahsedilen boşluğu doldurma yönündeki çalışmaları, insan kavramının ve insanın doğa ile kurduğu ilişkinin sorgusunun sosyal teoriye basitçe dâhil edilmesinden fazlasıdır. Her iki düşünsel alan da, insanın doğa ile kurduğu ilişkinin, insanlar arası ilişkiler ile bağlantılı olduğunu savunur. Bu ilişkilerin birbirlerini etkileme sebepleri, derecesi ve yönü konusunda önemli ayrışmalar bulunsa da, doğanın sosyal teorisinin konusu kabul edilmesi, insanın doğa ile kurduğu ilişkinin, toplumsal farklılıkların ve bu farklılıklara atfedilen anlamın anlaşılmasına ışık tutacak bir konu haline getirilmesi anlamına gelir.

Derin ekoloji ve toplumsal ekoloji, ekofeminizme önemli birer düşünsel yol açmıştır. Ekofeministler, insan merkeziliğin eleştirisinin yanı sıra, derin ekolojinin yeni bir bilinç geliştirme kaygısını ve toplumsal ekolojinin toplumsal dönüşüm vurgusunu farklı yönlerden paylaştıkları gibi, sonraları önemli tartışmalara zemin hazırlayacak eleştiriler de sunmuşlardır.

Ekofeministlere göre, normatif insan kimliğini ve insanın doğaya yönelik bakışını büyük ölçüde belirleyen kültür/doğa ikiliği, ruh/beden, erkek/kadın, kamusal/özel gibi diğer ikilikler ile bağlantılıdır; öyle ki, onlarla ilişkisel bir ağ oluşturur. İnsan ve doğa ayrımı, yalnızca insan-dışı varlıkları değil, çeşitli insan gruplarını ve insan hayatının doğal olanı çağrıştıran veçhelerini de

kapsayan çoklu bir dışlama ve denetleme alanı yaratır. İkiliklerin ilişkisel kurulumu, kadınların doğa ile kurdukları ilişkinin, erkeklerin doğa ile kurdukları ilişkiden farklılaşmasına sebep olur: Kadın kavramı doğadan ayrılığı ya da doğaya üstünlüğü üzerinden değil, doğa ile ilişkilendirilmesi üzerinden kurulur. Bu çerçevede ekofeministler, ekolojist düşünceyi insan/doğa ikiliğinin erkek/kadın ikiliğinden bağımsız değerlendiremeyeceği iddiasıyla eleştirerek, söz konusu ayırımıda üstün konumda bulunan normatif insan kimliğinin cinsiyetçi doğasını ortaya çıkarmaya çalışırlar. Dolayısıyla, insanı doğadan radikal biçimde ayıran ve onu doğaya üstün varsayan ikiliğin eleştirisi, insanı insan yaptığı düşünülen ideallerin erkeklikle bağdaştırılan ideallerle olan ilişkisi dikkate alındığında anlamlıdır; aksi takdirde normatif insan kimliğinin doğa ile olan ilişkisine dair bir yaklaşım olmaktan ileri gidemez. Ekofeministlere göre, doğa ile soyut bir özdeşleşme ya da doğaya yönelik etik sorumluluk geliştirme gibi evrensel ilkeler yerine, benzer dinamiklerle ikincilleştirilme ve özellikle Üçüncü Dünya ülkeleri özelinde karşımıza çıkan ekolojik yıkımdan görece fazla etkilenme gibi yaşamın içerisinde edindikleri deneyimler ile kadınlar, ekolojik sorunların üstesinden gelinebilmesinde önemli rol oynayacaklardır.

Bu nokta, ekofeministlerin, kadınlar ve doğa arasında olduğu düşünülen ilişkiye yüklenen “olumsuz” anlamı verili kabul eden “feminizmlere” yönelttikleri eleştirilere bağlanır. Feminist düşüncede önemli kabul edilen düşünürler bu anlamı verili kabul ettikleri için, kadın ve doğa arasında olduğu düşünülen ilişkiyi kadınların özgürleşmesinde aşılması gereken bir engel olarak görürler. Ekofeministlere göre, söz konusu düşünürler “insan” kavramı altında erkekler ile eşitlenme amacı güderken, “insan” kavramının erkekliğe atfedilen idealler ve doğaya üstünlük varsayımı dolayısıyla kurulduğunu göz ardı ederler. “İnsan” kavramını sorgulamadan, bu kavram altında erkekler ile eşitlenme amacı gütmek, erkekliğe ve kültür alanına üstün, kadınlara ve doğaya aşağı değer atfeden hâkim değerler sisteminin sorunsallaştırılmadan kabul edilmesi anlamına gelir.

Bu eleştiri üzerinden ekofeministler, kadınlara atfedilen özelliklere ve doğaya “olumsuz” anlam yükleyen hakim değerler sistemine karşı çıkarlar. Bunu verili kabul etmek, diğer bir deyişle, “egemenin” alanında kendine yer açma amacı gütmek yerine, onun sağlayabileceği muhtemel avantajları reddeder ve kadınlara atfedilen ve doğa ile ilişkilendirilmelerine sebep olan özellikler üzerine yeniden düşünülmesi gerektiğini ifade ederler. Dolayısıyla, “ekolojiye duyarlı feminizm”den daha çok, radikal ve eleştirel bir duruşa işaret eden ekofeminizm, bir yönüyle, derin ekoloji ve sosyal ekoloji gibi, normatif insan kavramını ve insanın doğa ile kurduğu ilişkiyi sorunsallaştırarak moderniteye meydan okuyan; fakat insan merkezçiliğin cinsiyetçilik ile olan ilişkisini, dolayısıyla kadın deneyimini göz ardı eden ekoloji hareketinin; bir diğer yönüyle, cinsiyetçiliğin insan merkezçilik ile olan ilişkisini görmezden gelen, dolayısıyla ekolojik sorunlara duyarsız kalan feminizmlerin eleştirisini içerir.

Ekofeminizmin düşünsel ve eylemsel temellerinin atılmasında önemli payları bulunan kültürel ekofeministler, kültür alanına dahil olmak yerine, kültür alanına dahil olabilmenin koşullarına olumlu, bu alandan dışlanmanın sebeplerine olumsuz değer atfeden algıyı reddederler. Olumlama yolu ile söz konusu değerler sistemini alaşağı ederler. Bu bağlamda, bir yandan, duygusallık, empati, fedakarlık, ihtimam, şefkat ve sezgi gibi kadınlara atfedilen özellikler ve doğa alanı ile ilişkilendirilme olumlanırken, diğer yandan, erkeklere ve kültür alanına atfedilen idealler hem insanlar arası hem de doğa ile ilişkiler bağlamında yıkıcı olduğu gerekçesiyle dışlanır ya da reddedilir. Kültürel ekofeministlere göre, hakim kültürün değerler sistemi ile mücadele etmek ve ona alternatif oluşturabilmek için kadınlar, “doğa ana”ya karşı saldırıya geçen kültür alanına ve bu alanın erkek egemen değerlerine karşı, kadınsı değerlerle mücadele etmelidir. Böylelikle hakim değerler sisteminde “güçsüzlük,” erkeklerle “insan” kavramı altında eşitlenmeyi amaçlayan feministlerce “engel” olarak tanımlanan şey, cinsiyetçi ve insan merkezci olmayan bir yaşam için harekete geçirici ve özgürleştirici bir güç kaynağı olacaktır.

Kültürel ekofeminizm, düalist düşünme biçimini değerler hiyerarşisi yaratması bakımından eleştirir ve bu hiyerarşiyi kırmının kadınlar ve doğa üzerinde kurulan tahakkümün üstesinden gelmek için yeterli olduğunu savunur. Toplumsal kategorilerin yalnızca betimleyici bir sınıflandırma değil, bir değer ifadesi olarak kullanıldığının keşfi, ister istemez, hiyerarşik olarak “aşağıda” konumlandırılana olumlu değer yüklemeyi beraberinde getirir. Ancak bununla yetinmek, bazı teorik ve pratik sınırlılıklara yol açar. Düalist düşünme biçimi açısından söz konusu olan, yalnızca kadınlara ve doğaya atfedilen özelliklerin “aşağı” değerde görülmesi değil, kadın ve doğa kavramlarının bu özellikler bağlamında kurulmuş olmasıdır. Dolayısıyla olumlama, öz atfı ve bu özün genellenmesi üzerinden kurulan kadınlık tanımı sorunsallaştırılmadan kabul edilmesi anlamına gelir ve böylelikle kadınlar arası farklılıklara alan tanınmaz. Kültürel ekofeministler, öte yandan, olumlamanın toplumsal gerçeklik içerisinde nasıl sonuçlanabileceğini göz önünde bulundurmazlar ve olumlama, ironik bir biçimde, kadınların emeklerini “değersiz”, doğal “kaynakları” maliyetsiz sayan kapitalist sistemin sömürü kapasitesini artırmasına sebep olabilir.

Her iki eleştiri de, düalist düşünme biçiminin sınırlarının ötesine geçebilen bir ekofeminizm anlayışının önemine işaret eder. Feminist duruş kuramı, kültürel ekofeminizmin bu bağlamda yeniden yorumlanabilmesi açısından önemli bir yerde durur.

Feminist duruş kuramı, modern nesnellik anlayışına eleştirel yaklaşır. Bu anlayış, gerçekliğin bilgisinin, tarafsızca, dolayısıyla öznellikten bağımsız olarak oluşturulabileceği varsayımına dayanır. Bu varsayımdan hareketle, öznel argümanların, bilgi üretim sürecine zarar vereceği iddia edilir. Feminist duruş kuramı ise, sosyal gerçekliğin yorumsal, diğer bir deyişle, konumsal doğasına odaklanır. Buna göre toplumsal konumlar, cinsiyetçilik, sınıf eşitsizliği, ırkçılık ve heteroseksizm gibi analitik olarak ayrı olduğu düşünülen baskı biçimlerinin karşılıklı inşa süreçleri dolayımıyla kurulurlar. Dolayısıyla, homojen bir bütünlük değildir ve herhangi bir temele indirgenemezler. Farklı

toplumsal cinsiyet, sınıf, ırk, etnisite ve cinsel yönelime sahip toplumsal gruplar, farklı deneyimlere sahiptirler ve farklı deneyimler farklı bilme biçimlerini beraberinde getirir. Dolayısıyla, bir toplumsal konum olarak “kadın,” örneğin, yalnızca erkeklerin onları kültür alanından dışlaması üzerinden tanımlanamaz hale gelir. Feminist duruş kuramcılarına göre, bilginin konumsal doğası, tarafsız olduğu için genellenebilir olduğu iddiasında olan her bilginin dışlayıcı olma ve muhatabını yanlış temsil etme potansiyeli taşıdığını, dolayısıyla nesnel olmaktan da bir o kadar uzaklaşacağını gösterir.

Feminist duruş kuramı, daha tarafsız ve güvenilir bilgiye ulaşılabilmesi için, farklı toplumsal konumlar tarafından üretilen bilginin ortaya çıkarılabilmesinin önemini vurgular. Farklılıkların önemine yapılan vurgu, feminist duruş kuramının postmodernizmden farklılığının ifade edilmesi gereğini beraberinde getirir. Feminist duruş kuramcılarına göre, farklılıklar, farklı bilme biçimlerini beraberinde getirir. Fakat söz konusu bilme biçimleri, birbirleri ile eşdeğer görülmez. Gücü elinde bulunduran gruplar, kendi çıkarlarını yansıtan ve bu çıkarların karşılık bulmasını sağlayan bilginin sürekliliğini korumak amacıyla, onu genelleme eğilimindedirler. Genelleme eğilimi, daha önce de bahsedildiği gibi, bilginin dışlayıcı olma ve yanlış temsil etme tehlikesini barındırır. Oysa dışlanan gruplar, gerçeklik varsayımına daha eleştirel yaklaşabilme potansiyeli taşıdıklarından, farklı bir yere sahiptirler. Bu durum, aynı zamanda, her toplumsal konumun, bir duruşa işaret etmeyebileceğini gösterir. Duruşu mümkün kılan, tecrübenin güç ilişkileri ile olan bağlantılarının fark edilmesidir. Bu farkındalık ile birlikte, örneğin, dışlanan bir grup olarak kadınlar, toplumsal gerçekliğe dair bilginin cinsiyetçi bakış açısından oluşturulan ve kendilerini içermeyen varsayımlara dayandığını anlarlar ve bu varsayımları eleştirel bir değerlendirmeye tabi tutarak toplumsal dönüşümü mümkün kılarlar.

Feminist duruş kuramının, farklılığın karşıt –farklılıklara öz atfı ve bu atıfların genellenmesi üzerinden kurulumunun ötesine geçebilmek amacıyla, farklı toplumsal konumlardan kadınların yaşam deneyimlerine odaklanması, bu

noktada önem kazanır. Bir toplumsal farklılık olarak kadınlığı, bir öz ve bu öze dair özellikleri genelleyen bir soyutlama yerine, konumsal bağlamda açıklamak, farklılık kavramının bağlamını genişletir ve kadınlar arası farklılıklara alan tanır. Bu açıdan bakıldığında, duygusallık, empati, fedakârlık, ihtimam, şefkat ve sezgi gibi kadınlar ile ilişkilendirilen özellikleri olumsuzlayıp reddetme ya da olaylayıp üstlenme karşıtlığı çözülmeye başlar. Bu, erkek/kadın ve kültür/doğa ikiliklerinin kadınların yaşamlarındaki muhtemel etkilerini yadsımak anlamına gelmez, ancak kadın olmanın kendisinin kadınlara atfedilen özellikleri taşımanın ve doğa ile olumlu bir ilişkisellik içerisinde bulunmanın garantisi olduğu varsayımını sorunsallaştırır.

Bu nokta, kültürel ekofeministlerin, kadınların onlara atfedilen özellikleri taşımaları ya da doğa ile görece yakın veya olumlu bir ilişki içerisinde olmaları dolayısıyla ekolojik sorunların çözümüne öncülük edecekleri yönündeki varsayımını da tartışmaya açar. Feminist duruş kuramcılarına göre, kadın olmanın kendisi ile cinsiyetçilik karşısında konum almak arasında kendinden menkul bir bağlantı yoktur. Bu açıdan bakıldığında, ekofeminist bir duruş, kadınların, deneyimlerinin cinsiyetçilik ve insan merkezilik arasındaki ilişki ile bağlantılarının fark edilmesi ve bu bağlantıların eleştirel bir değerlendirmeye tabi tutulması ile mümkün hale gelir. Dolayısıyla kadınların ekolojik sorunların üstesinden gelinmesindeki payları, önemini, doğrudan söz konusu özelliklere sahip olmaları ya da doğa ile görece yakın veya olumlu bir ilişki içerisinde bulunmalarından değil, bu sorunların dinamiklerine yönelik eleştirel bir yaklaşım geliştirmedeki görece avantajlı konumlarından alır.

Kadın kategorisini ve kadınların doğa ile ilişkilerini konumsal bir kurulum olarak görmek, özcü ve genellemeci varsayımların ötesinde bir ekofeminizm için önemli bir yol olarak görülebilir. Öte yandan, kadınlara, cinsiyetçi ve insan merkezci toplumsal düzenin nasıl işlediğine dair daha tarafsız, güvenilir ve eleştirel bilgi sağlama potansiyeli tanınması dolayısıyla, olumlamanın ötesine geçen ve toplumsal dönüşümü hedefleyen bir ekofeminizm yorumunu mümkün kılar.

Ekofeminist bir dönüşümün, değersizleştirilip dışlanmış olana olumlu bir değer yüklemekle yetinmeksizin nasıl gerçekleştirilebileceği sorusu, hakim değerler sisteminde yüceltilen özelliklerin sorunsallaştırılması gereğini beraberinde getirir. Kültürel ekofeminizm, kadınlar ve doğa üzerinde kurulan egemenliğin meşrulaştırılmasında hayati önemi bulunan rasyonalitenin yeniden kavramsallaştırılabilir olduğunu göz ardı eder. Fakat insan merkeziliğin bir tahakküm biçimi olarak duruş kuramına dahil edilmesi, bir yandan, doğaya yönelik bilginin tarafsızca oluşturulmuş olmadığının, normatif insan kimliğine dair varsayımlara dayandığının ve doğaya yönelik tutumların bu varsayımlar ile olan bağlantılarının keşfine kapı aralarken; diğer yandan, insan olmayan varlıklara dair daha tarafsız ve güvenilir bilginin insan merkeziliğin üstesinden gelinmesindeki önemine işaret eder. Böylelikle feminist duruş kuramında, özcülük ve evrenselcilikle karşılaştırıldığında görece az sorunsallaştırıldığı fark edilen rasyonalite kavramına dair yeni bir tartışma alanı yaratılabilir.

Rasyonalitenin yeniden kavramsallaştırılması gereğinden hareket eden tartışmaların görece az oluşu, tez çalışmamdaki bu tartışmaya dair sınırlılığın nedenlerinden biri olarak sayılabilir. Ancak bu durum, öte yandan, söz konusu eksikliğin giderilmesi açısından bir öneri olarak da kabul edilebilir. Bu bağlamda, doğa ile görece yakın bir ilişki içerisinde bulunan yerel toplumların bilgisinin ortaya çıkarılması çabasının bu tartışma açısından önemini vurgulama gereği duyuyorum.

Üçüncü Dünya ülkelerinde uygulanan küresel ekonomi politikalarının bir sonucu olarak tohumlar tektipleştirilerek yenilenemez hale getirildiği için tohum, tohum olma özelliğini kaybetmiştir. Dahası, bu tohumların ekileceği ve üretimin yapılacağı bölgelerin ekolojik şartları dikkate alınmadan hareket edildiği için, yüksek oranda su, gübre ve pestisit harcanır. Doğanın üretkenliğini değersizleştiren küresel ekonomi politikalarına karşı çıkarak ekofeminizmin politik bir hareket olarak gelişmesinde önemli payları bulunan Üçüncü Dünya ülkelerinde yaşayan kadınların deneyimleri, bu konu

bağlamında önem taşır. Bu bölgelerde yaşayan ve hane bireylerinin ihtiyaçlarının karşılanmasından sorumlu olan kadınların toprak ile kurdukları ilişki yalnızca yetiştirilen ürünlerin tüketim için toplanmasını değil, bu ürünlerin çeşitliliğinin ve devamlılığının kadınlar arasında nesilden nesile aktarılan tarım bilgisinin kılavuzluğunda korunmasını da içerir. Homojenleştirme, indirgeme ve soyutlama yerine deneyim üzerinden kurulan fakat büyük ölçüde tehdit altında olan bu karşılıklı ilişki, insanın özgül varoluşunun karşıtlık ve hiyerarşi üzerinden kurulmadığı, herhangi bir varlığın gereksinimlerinin merkeze alınmadığı ve insan eylemlerinin sonuçlarının tüm varlıkların yaşam hakları göz önünde bulundurularak değerlendirildiği bir yaşam algısının oluşturulmasında yol gösterici olma umudunu taşır.

APPENDIX B: TEZ İZİN FORMU / THESIS PERMISSION FORM

ENSTİTÜ

Fen Bilimleri Enstitüsü

☐

Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü

☒

Uygulamalı Matematik Enstitüsü

☐

Enformatik Enstitüsü

☐

Deniz Bilimleri Enstitüsü

☐

YAZARIN

Soyadı : Çetinkaya

Adı : Tuğçe

Bölümü : Toplumsal Cinsiyet ve Kadın Çalışmaları Anabilim Dalı

TEZİN ADI (İngilizce): Thinking Gender, Nature and Power Together: A Hope for Standpoint Ecofeminism

TEZİN TÜRÜ: Yüksek Lisans

☒

Doktora

☐

1. Tezin tamamı dünya çapında erişime açılacaktır.
2. Tez iki yıl süreyle erişime kapalı olacaktır.
3. Tez altı ay süreyle erişime kapalı olacaktır.

☐☐☒

** Enstitü Yönetim Kurulu kararının basılı kopyası tezle birlikte kütüphaneye teslim edilecektir.*

Yazarın imzası:

Tarih: