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# *Ecofeminism and an ethic of care: Developing an eco-jurisprudence*

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This article looks into the damaging effect of the disintegrated relationship between humanity and nature. The current relationship we have with nature is hierarchal and fragmented because it is rooted in a culture of separation created by a 'masculine' modernity. The patriarchal values of rationality and power have othered the natural environment and women. In order to prevent irreparable ecological destruction, we need to change the relationship between humanity and nature to one that is ecologically responsive. I examine how ecofeminist literature enables us to challenge the hierarchical structure created by dualisms thereby uprooting the current patriarchal oppressive system. It reveals how an ethic of care approach can transcend the modern patriarchal structures that have promoted dominion over nature and contextually and narratively recreate the human and nature relationship. The value of this research lies in the fact that central to an ethic of care is the respect and care for all earthly beings, an ethic which listens to, and is responsive to the diversity of all 'environmental voices'

**Keywords:** ethic of care, ecofeminist, modernity, dualism, nature

## 1. Introduction

In order to protect the earth from irreparable ecological destruction we need to change the relationship we have with the natural world from one which is hierarchal and fragmented to one which is ecologically responsive. The current relationship we have with nature is hierarchical and fragmented because it is rooted in a culture of separation created by a masculinist modernity. Modernity is a culture where science and technology are positioned as the epitome of reason, in contrast with pre-modernity, which was centred around nature, myth and religion. This culture of separation divides the world into a set of opposites. These sets of opposites are known as dualisms (Plumwood 1991: 10). In this article I look at how the human/nature relationship has taken on a dualistic character (Plumwood 1991: 10). I trace the belief that man is separate from, and the controllers of, nature back to the rise of modernity. It was during this time that scientific experimentation was at the forefront of the era led by a 'masculine' way of thinking of the world (Bordo 1986: 441). Cartesian dualistic objectivism was one of the leading philosophies at the time and laid the groundwork for the instrumental value of nature (Singer 2002: 200). Humanity denied (and continues to deny) any connection to nature. Patriarchy uses psychological tools, which can be seen as having masculine characteristics, such as a certain kind of rationality to entrench man's position as not only outside of but also as controllers of nature. 'Masculine' thought dominated, suppressed and subdued any connection humanity has with the natural or the feminine. As a result, hyper-separations were created between human/nature and the masculine/feminine (Plumwood 1991: 10). Immanuel Kant gave ethical and moral theories a masculine identity by aligning these theories with a certain kind of rationality. Reason is used as a masculine tool to separate and dominate women and nature from itself. This masculine-orientated modernity has shaped the current relationship humans have with nature. This relationship, as a result, has taken on a dualistic form, defining man as separate and opposite to nature.

In the second part of this article I look at how ecofeminist theory identifies dualisms as horizontal relationships between parties that have a hierarchical nature (Adams & Gruen 2014: 1). Ecofeminism and an ethic of care can challenge the patriarchal system and the dualistic relationships which it creates. Carol Adams looks at how oppression of women and nature are interconnected and the fact that speciesism is gendered (Adams 2007: 202). The oppressive human/nature relationship is one of the main causes of the destruction of the environment. In order to remove the fragmented and hierarchical nature of the relationship, ecofeminist authors call for an understanding of the relationship as one based on an ecological interconnectedness between humanity and nature. Humanity is not separate from and controllers of nature but actually interconnected with,

bound by and intertwined in the laws of nature. Human life must cease to be about the domination of nature; rather we must develop a new relationship based on ecological responsiveness (Donovan 1990: 369). The relationship has to change from one which is dualistic in nature to one which is grounded in the ability to care.

## 2. Human/Nature Dualistic Relationship

Man's dominion over nature can be traced back to the rise of modernity (the age of Enlightenment). It was during this time that scientific experimentation, and the use of animals in this, was at the forefront of the development of a modern society, endorsed by a 'masculine' rationalist paradigm (Singer 2002: 198). The rise of modernity also led to the division of labour and the rise of capitalism (Donovan 1990: 362). This was the basis for the private and public sphere division: on the one hand, the private sphere defined woman's place at home and on the other the public sphere as the space wherein men work and endure the struggle for survival (Donovan 1990: 362). This resulted in the a distinction between reason and emotion: reason is seen as a masculine characteristic needed for the survival of men and emotion a feminine characteristic kept within the confines of the home (Donovan 1990: 362).

The period of the Renaissance brought with it the rise of humanist thought, which by no means meant humanitarianism or acting humanely (Singer 2002: 198). Humanist thought was the view that humans are the centre of the universe (the development of anthropocentrism) (Singer 2002: 198). Cartesian dualistic objectivism<sup>1</sup> developed by René Descartes was one of the leading philosophies at the time, laying the groundwork for the instrumental use and ultimately the exploitation of nature (Singer 2002: 200). Men deny any connection to nature by using a certain kind of rationality as a psychological tool to entrench their position as not only outside of but also as controllers of nature. Patriarchy is rooted in the belief that man is separate from and superior to nature because of man's ability to

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1 Nature has no value other than instrumental value to further the interests of a modern human society. According to Cartesian objectivism animals for example do not have an immortal soul nor are they conscious, they are seen as mere machines (automata) feeling no pain or pleasure. The result of which is that humans are free of any moral responsibility when killing or harming animals; it can be done without any negative consequences. Cartesian objectivism endorsed the exploitation of animals by means of experimentation, vivisection and instrumental use. Experimentation and dissections of animals were a widespread practice at this time, and to make matters worse there were no control measures or anaesthetics, so causing pain to animals was part and parcel of the era (Singer 2002:200).

be rational. Man has 'othered' the natural environment through these masculine tools. Humanity sees this position of being outside of nature as advantageous as it provides a vantage point from which man can be the "masters of nature" (Plumwood 1991: 10). This mind-set in terms of which humans regard themselves as 'separate from and controllers of nature' has created a dichotomy between 'us' as humanity on the one hand and nature as 'it' on the other. A masculinist modernity in the modern era, epitomised by masculine qualities of rationality and power, has shaped the current relationship that humans have with nature.

Susan Bordo says that the Cartesian philosophical paradigm is the ultimate masculinisation of thought and that it is a reaction against feminine thought (Donovan 1990: 364). In terms of this theory, the "organic female earth" becomes a mechanical entity which is not alive; the only way of understanding 'it' is through the objectification of 'it' (Donovan 1990: 364). Bordo, in her article *The Cartesian masculinity of thought*, says that modern scientific thought "crystalized masculinist modes of thinking" (Bordo 1986: 441). Modernity created a specific form of consciousness as scientific and in creating this consciousness it has disposed of all that is feminine within it (Bordo 1986: 441). The Cartesian project was rooted in the total separation from the natural and the feminine (Bordo 1986: 451). The feminine becomes the 'other' and from this position, mastery and domination become a possibility (Bordo 1986: 452). The organic ties which once existed between man and nature are now negatively reimagined in terms of man as the engineer of the separation (Bordo 1986: 452). She becomes 'it' and 'it' can now be understood not through a sympathetic lens but by the objectification of 'it' (Bordo 1986: 452). This thinking has shaped the current relationship humans have with nature. The relationship, as a result, has taken on a dualistic form, defining man as separate from and opposite to nature. I identify this oppressive relationship as one of the main causes of the destruction of the environment. The instrumental use of nature by society has been a result of this 'separate from nature' mind-set, thus this mind-set needs to be addressed in order to limit its damaging effects (Plumwood 1991: 10).

Modernity can be said to be inherently anthropocentric because it 'others' the natural environment. Modern anthropocentrism treats any difference from humanity as inferior, which leads to the subordination of all parties who are seen as part of nature (Plumwood 2006: 504). Nature is thought of as the collection of whoever is more primitive than man; included in this category are women who are seen as less developed than their male counterparts (Plumwood 2006: 503). Progress is then seen as the control of the barbaric non-rational state of nature by the rational male (Plumwood 2006: 503). Val Plumwood calls this "rational colonisation" as she attempts to show that it is a prominent feature of Western modernity (Plumwood 2006: 503). It relies on this power imbalance and need

of masculinity to dominate (Plumwood 2006: 504). Plumwood makes reference to “the difference imperative” in terms of which all that is important in being human has to be regarded as opposite to and completely different from nature (Plumwood 1991: 10). This creates a dichotomy between humans on the one hand and nature on the other (Plumwood 1991: 10). This human vs nature (expressed as human/nature) dichotomy is known as a dualism (Plumwood 1991: 10). Modern ‘masculine’ thinking entrenches power relations as dualisms which include, for example, human/nature, masculine/feminine, and rationality/emotion (Plumwood 1991: 6). Similarities can be drawn from the human/nature dualism to other dualisms, for example, that of the masculine/feminine, humanity is whatever is not natural and this view extends to the feminine too; humanity is whatever is not feminine, which shows a masculinist tendency (Plumwood 1991: 11). The characteristics which are attributed to humans are rationality and the ability to be autonomous, which are not shared with nature (Plumwood 1991: 10). It is an anthropocentric culture which reaffirms the human’s position as outside of and distant from nature (Plumwood 1991: 10).

Ecofeminist literature shows us that each of these dualisms have two things in common. Firstly it represents an unequal relationship; one side of the dualisms is always seen as more valuable than the other (Kheel 2007: 40). Secondly, it is the fact that the valued half is always the masculine form, directly or by association (Kheel 2007: 40). This is why the human/nature dualism can be called a hyper-separation, which means that it extends way past the mere dichotomy but is rooted in the fact that the dominant entity (humanity considered as man-kind) is completely opposite to the subordinate entity (nature) (Plumwood 2006: 504). The human/nature dichotomy is maintained through the rejection and total denial of the similarities between humans and animals (Plumwood 1991: 10). There are no shared similarities but only sharp distinctions between what makes us humans versus them as animals (Plumwood 1991: 10). Dualistic power relationships divide the world into sets of opposites (Kheel 2007: 39). It is the Western, modern, masculinist view of the world that has led to a dualistic relationship with nature, endorsed by the rationalist epistemological paradigm (Plumwood 1991: 10). The root of the dualistic way of thinking can be traced back to a mechanistic view promoted by modern science (Kheel 2007: 40).

In *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant writes that “we are always to treat humanity, both in [our] own person and in the person of every other, always as an end, never as a means merely” (Kant 1964: 76). This means that humanity has a direct duty to act in a moral manner towards other rational humans beings. Humanity, however, only has an indirect duty to act in a moral manner towards non-rational animals (Kant 1997: 212). Kant puts forward that animals do not, in and of themselves, exist as ends as they have no self-consciousness therefore

man does not have a direct duty to act in a morally relevant manner towards animals but merely in an indirect one (Kant 1997: 212). Animals are considered means to an end, that end is human beings (Kant 1997: 212). There is an indirect moral duty toward animals because Kant recognises that human behaviour towards animals is analogous of behaviour between humans (Kant 1997: 212). This means behaving in a harmful manner towards animals is only relevant to the extent that this behaviour will harden one's treatment to one's own kind, human beings (Kant 1997: 212). This is known as the "formula of ends in itself" (Kant 1964: 76). The only reason why we would have a duty to animals is that it translated into an indirect duty to humanity (Kant 1997: 213). In terms of this indirect duty it would be acceptable to, for example, experiment on animals because they are animals, and exploit natural resources because nature has a merely instrumental value to humanity, though harming an animal should not be a sport as it could translate to cruelty between humans. Kant says, "He who is cruel to animals becomes hard also in his dealings with men" (Kant 1997: 213).

Plumwood writes that the formula of ends in itself highlights the ego of this interpretation of morality, seeing humanity as the centre (anthropocentric) (Plumwood 1991: 6). This understanding of morality can be seen as being distant from emotion while aligning itself with the realm of a certain kind of rationality (Plumwood 1991: 4). A Kantian formula of ends in itself is situated within the field of rationality, which is a separate entity from emotion, kindness or caring (Plumwood 1991: 4). This draws strongly on the reason/emotion dichotomy (Plumwood 1991: 5). Women and animals have been classed as non-rational by the masculinist rational definition of the 'self' (Plumwood also refers to this as rational egoism) (Plumwood 1991: 6). And as a result the feminine, emotion, the body of the woman and nature have been denied value, thus seen as inferior and given instrumental status (Plumwood 1991: 6). The supremacy afforded to this understanding of reason by a patriarchal society is one of the core reasons why Western modernity can be seen as having an anthropocentric character (Plumwood 1991: 6). Plumwood says that the dichotomy between care (kindness) and morality is a false one (Plumwood 1991: 7). The capacity to care, to experience empathy and understanding of the sensitivity of a situation is part of our moral compass (Plumwood 1991: 7).

JM Coetzee's book *The Lives of Animals* (1999) is a short novel based on the fictional main character Elisabeth Costello. In this story, Costello, an Australian writer of ground-breaking feminist fiction, is invited to give a lecture to literature students (Coetzee 1999: 12). Costello elects to lecture on the rights of animals. In the story, Costello has very strong opinions regarding the way in which humanity treats animals, so much so that her son asserts that her opinions go as far as to be 'propaganda' against cruelty to animals (Coetzee 1999: 14). After reading this

novel one seems to wonder whether Elisabeth Costello is JM Coetzee's alter ego in that they share the same sentiments towards cruelty to animals. Costello makes the following observations with regards to the masculinist theory of rationality: According to the writings of St Thomas of Aquinas, rationality comes from God, therefore because humans were created in the image of God, humans themselves are inherently rational; Plato said that the universe is based on rationality and through the understanding of reason we can come to an understanding of how the universe works (Coetzee 1999: 24). Reason and the universe are therefore seen as the same being (Coetzee 1999: 25). Costello says that nature is seen as property, humanity is seen as god-like, and that by extension of Plato's theory non-rational beings do not have an understanding of the universe but follow its rules blindly, unlike rational humanity (Coetzee 1999: 25). Costello cannot agree with any of these standpoints (Coetzee 1999: 24). Costello says:

Both reason and several decades of life experience tell me that reason is neither a being of the universe nor the being of god. On the contrary it looks suspiciously like the being of human thought; worse than that, like the being of one tendency of human thought. Reason is the being of a certain spectrum of human thinking. And if this is so why should I bow to reason (Coetzee 1999: 24).

I agree with Costello's perspective of rationality as a product of the human mind. It would make sense that this understanding of rationality as a product of the human brain would in turn also be a product of speciesism.<sup>2</sup>

### 3. An Ecologically Responsive Relationship Based on Ecofeminism and an Ethic of Care

The hyper-separation between humankind and nature has contributed to the view that humans are separate from and controllers of nature when actually the truth of the matter is that humans are part of, bound by and intertwined with the laws of nature (Plumwood 1991: 10). Ecofeminism aims to promote healthy relationships with nature rooted in the value of care to remove the patriarchal

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2 Peter Singer argues that the belief that humans are more valuable than animals, and that they should not fall into our moral concern, due only to the fact that animals and humans are classified into different species, is a prejudice. This prejudice is known as speciesism. The fact that humans believe that the human species, is more valuable than the animal species operates in the same way that a racist believes their race is superior or sexists believe that their gender is superior. Bringing an end to speciesism, cannot be achieved by blindly accept that all beings are equal in every sense but to allow similar beings of any species to have a similar right to and quality of life (Singer2002: 8 & 9).

legacy of domination (Adams & Gruen 2014: 1). The dualistic relationship endorses the oppression of nature through its inherently hierarchical nature by contrasting the dominant 'man' versus inferior 'other'. Feminist care tradition plays an important role in challenging dualistic thinking by addressing not only the human/nature dualism but also the reason/emotion dualistic relationship by focusing on affective connections of empathy and caring, showing how these connections have a cognitive 'feminine' rational component (Adams & Gruen 2014: 3). Ecofeminism provides us with the tools to challenge a dualistic world view because it considers how to develop a responsive relationship with nature which allows the voice of animals and plants to be heard. It is my aim to show that it is imperative that the relationship we have with nature changes, from one rooted within a dualistic paradigm, seeing humanity and nature as separate and as opposites, to one based on the realisation that we are not separate from but actually interconnected with the laws of nature. A new relationship must take on a human within nature identity.

Ecofeminist literature looks at *inter alia* sexism, heteronormativity, racism, colonialism and the relationships they have with speciesism and how all these elements intersect to endorse a speciesist society (Adams & Gruen 2014: 1). It identifies that one of the biggest problems in environmental discourses is the othering of women and of animals and how this has contributed to the destruction of the environment as a whole (Adams & Gruen 2014: 1). It exposes the intersectionality between these oppressive practices and thus in turn how damaging it is to separate these issues from each other (Adams & Gruen 2014: 1). Adams shows that speciesism is gendered, this is why I look to ecofeminism and an ethic of care to transcend the oppressive patriarchal hierarchies, institutions and cultures which are promoted by a masculinist view of rationality, and which result in the destruction of nature (Adams 2007: 202).

Rosemary Ruether says that domination of women and of nature are made on two interconnecting levels; on the one hand a cultural-symbolic level and on the other a socio-economic one (Adams & Gruen 2014: 11). The cultural-symbolic level defines the woman as closer to nature by assimilating the body and sexuality of women with the earth as being weak and "sin-prone" in direct comparison to the masculine identity assimilated to sovereign power (Adams & Gruen 2014: 11). The socio-economic level explores masculine domination and exploitation of the female body and female labour directly interconnected with the utilisation of nature through the exploitation of water, animals and land (Adams & Gruen 2014: 11). Revealing this shows how both women and nature have been inferiorised and as a result, have functioned as the sub-structure on which the continuation of the domination of women and nature is justified (Adams & Gruen 2014: 11). This domination appears to be natural and inevitable but has actually only come



about through the unfettered exploitation of women and nature resulting in a constant cycle of the inferiorisation of women and of non-human nature in order to continue to exploit them (Adams & Gruen 2014: 12).

Josephine Donovan says that masculinist thought is engulfed in the concept of conquest and this is why a dualistic relationship will never manifest as mutual affirmation of both parties because of the masculinist need to conquer the foreign subject (Donovan 1990: 369). Donovan quotes Ruether, who says, "the project of human life must cease to be seen as one of domination of nature, rather we have to find a new language of ecological responsiveness, a reciprocity between consciousness and the world systems in which we live and move and have our being" (Donovan 1990: 369). In addressing the 'masculine' culture of domination, Donovan suggests the development of the relationship from one which is dualistic to an ecologically responsive relationship, in order to discourage the patriarchal view of nature and women as a disobedient 'other' in need of control (Donovan 1990: 369). The fragmented and dualistic character of the human/nature relationship has greatly contributed to the degradation of the environment. An ethic of care approach can assist in changing the relationship from one rooted in a culture of separation to one that recognises that humanity is interconnected to nature and that we therefore need a relationship based on an ecological responsiveness. An ethic of care approach can transcend the current oppressive system because it aims to recreate our relationship with nature. Adams and Gruen start their edited collection on ecofeminism with a quote from Kheel who says:

Re-specting nature literally involves 'looking again'. We cannot attend to the quality of relations that we engage in unless we know the details that surround our actions and relations. If ecofeminists are sincere in their desire to live in a world of peace and nonviolence for all living beings, we must help each other through the painstaking process of piecing together the fragmented world view that we have inherited. But the pieces cannot simply be patched together. What is needed is a reweaving of all the old stories and narratives into a multifaceted tapestry. (Adams & Gruen 2014: 1).

In her book *In a Different Voice*, Gilligan speaks about what an ethic of care means (Gilligan 1982: 63). She says that an ethic of care is grounded in the development of relationships which understand the importance of everyone having a voice, beings listened to carefully and heard with care and respect (Gilligan 1982: 63). This voice must be allowed to speak in its own way and in its own right. It highlights the need for a responsive relationship. An ethic of care takes nature into consideration in the mists of an anthropocentric society, ultimately trying to abolish a patriarchal system. This theory goes into the

root of caring for nature in the way that a mother (human and animal) cares for her child, which involves listening to nature, paying emotional attention to it and caring about what the plants, soil, water and animals have to say (as a horizontal relationship, not a vertical one) (Donovan 1990: 375). It involves a shift from theorising about it to directly listening to nature (Donovan 1990: 375). This ethic of care approach requires humanity to move away from thinking about our relationship with nature as an unequal power relationship towards thinking of it as an ecologically responsive one (Donovan 1990: 375). It speaks to the re-understanding of rationality as encompassing of feminine values, a contextual value, transcending its use as a tool to endorse dualistic relationships. Gilligan's ethic of care is rooted in a "mode of thinking that is contextual and narrative rather than formal and abstract" (Donovan 1990: 374). An ethic of care identifies morality as a physiological response to how we experience ourselves in relation to others (Donovan 1990: 374). The origin of morality lies in the relationships we have with others. This emphasises the need for attentiveness and responsiveness in our relationship with nature. One cannot have morality without first having sympathy, the attentiveness to know when someone needs help, says Donovan (Donovan 2007: 199).

Plumwood suggests that when developing a solution to the current global ecological crisis we need not look to further technology and science to create new more sustainable solutions, rather the solution lies at a cognitive level (Plumwood 2002: 3). We have to develop an environmental culture (Plumwood specifically uses the word 'culture' to emphasise how complex the challenge is and how deeply the challenge to the dualistic relationships has to go) that recognises the full value of humanity within the entire biosphere so that we can make informed decisions (Plumwood 2002: 3). This new environmental culture must replace the current understanding of reason as a masculine tool of domination, which laid the foundation for the human/nature and reason/emotion dualism to exist, to an understanding of reason as encompassing of feminine values (Plumwood 2002: 4). Domination of nature must cease in favour of a new ecological consciousness, taking the organic nature of the natural environment into consideration (Donovan 1990: 369). This means that one must be aware of the fact that nature is not mechanical (as endorsed by the Cartesian dualistic objectivism) but is a living being which has a life energy that is host to a whole community of life forms (Donovan 1990: 369). An ethic of care is grounded in relationships built on responsiveness, care and respect which will contribute to a feminist reconstruction of the current relationship that humans have with the natural world (Donovan 1990: 375). Consciousness should never be seen as bequeathed solely on humans but rather as part of the "biomorphic spirit" inherent in all beings of the earth (Donovan 1990: 369). Paula Gunn Allen

writes that nature is not blind and mechanical but rather is organic, alive and aware, it is a “seamless web” connecting all life on earth (Donovan 1990: 370). Gunn Allen proposes that we have to move away from the dualistic relationships which are linear and hierarchical relationships to a more relational one (Donovan 1990: 370). A feminine model of ecological responsiveness is focused on the preservation of life, which is contingent on understanding that all beings are interconnected. Donovan proposes an environmental ethic which demands the respect for all earthly beings, an ethic which listens to, and has respect for the diversity of all “environmental voices” (Donovan 1990: 374). This environmental ethic may be criticised for being too vague to be effective but the point is not to lay out an exact step-by-step guide but rather to develop a new epistemology (Donovan 1990: 374).

Donovan suggests developing an ethic of care relationship through a direct dialogue with nature (Donovan 2007: 362). How do we achieve this? Adams suggests that we start by allowing nature’s stories to be part of the narrative (Donovan 2007: 362). This can be achieved through improved practices of attentiveness which will include a development of the skills which accompany care (Donovan 2007: 363). Alison Jaggar says that these skills include “openness, receptivity, empathy, sensitivity and imagination” (Donovan 2007: 364). This can only be achieved through the rejection of the modern scientific voice which “speaks with general and abstract authority” (Donovan 2007: 365). Donovan says that the only way that the relationship with nature can be repaired is if humanity no longer imposes its voice on to nature (Donovan 2007: 365). The relationship must cease to be one of conquest of the other, but rather what Ruether calls “the conversation of two subjects” (Donovan 2007: 365). This involves the recognition that nature has its own voice, which both needs to be heard and with which we encourage all to enter into conversation.

#### 4. Conclusion

In this article, I traced man’s dominion of nature back to the rise of modernity and the Enlightenment. Scientific experimentation, vivisection and the instrumental use of nature were at the forefront of this era. The masculine and anthropocentric nature of modernity led to men denying any connection to nature, using masculinist psychological tools such as a certain kind of rationality and power to entrench their position as not only outside of but also controllers of nature. Modernity has its roots in an objectification of nature and a separation of the human from nature. This caused the human/nature relationship to take on a dualistic form. Modernity created a culture of separation between masculine/feminine and human/nature and the reason/emotion. These power relationships

are hierarchical in nature causing a dominant/subservient and superior/inferior nature to the relationships. I also looked into the fact that the supremacy afforded to this kind of rationality by a patriarchal society is the reason why modernity can be seen as anthropocentric in nature. The sexist nature of this understanding of reason is not a by-product from the oppression of women and nature but it is the use of this kind of rationality as a tool of oppression which has legitimised its power (Bailey 2007: 346). This article is a call to rethink humanity's relationship with the environment. This entails the rethinking of ways of doing, being and seeing, produced by a history of habit and societal indoctrination. It is the rethinking of entire value systems acquired through a history of habit. Ecofeminist literature calls for the human and nature relationship to be cognisant of the ecological interconnectedness between us. Interconnectedness discredits the theory that man is separate from nature and thus entitled to dominion over nature (Plumwood 1991: 13). It rejects anthropocentrism and denies human dominion over nature in favour of a harmonious relationship which takes the organic nature of the earth into consideration (Behrens 2011: 33). An ethic of care calls for a relationship grounded in and recognises the importance of everyone having a voice, being listened to carefully and actually being heard. Environmental voices should be allowed to speak within their own right and on their own terms. From this point we can start to reconceptualise the human and nature relationship, developing an environmental culture based on an ecological responsiveness.

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