

Environmental Ethics 2015/16

Dr. David J. Gunkel

Week 6

Objective

This week we are going to deal with ecofeminism. As you know from the course introduction, ecofeminism is a particular form of ecological philosophy that developed in the mid-1970s. Ecofeminism perceives connections between the historical oppression and domination of women with the subjugation and exploitation of the environment, and they therefore seek not only to diagnose this common problem but to develop shared solutions to this type of patriarchal domination. Although different ecofeminists share this basic philosophical idea and effort, particular forms of ecofeminism exhibit a wide variety of approaches, theories, and practices. As a result, it might be more accurate to speak of “ecofeminisms” (in the plural) as opposed to “ecofeminism” as a singular thing. This week’s reading attempts to reconcile the political/philosophical efforts of ecofeminisms with the sciences of ecology. It develops a rather complex argument that demonstrates how ecological feminism and the science of ecology are engaged in a complementary and mutually supportive project.

Readings

Karen Warren & Jim Cheney, *Ecological Feminism & Ecosystem Ecology*

Questions

- 1) This essay attempts to reconcile the efforts of ecofeminism with the sciences of ecology. Why? What is the reason for this effort? What is at stake in this reconciliation? Why do you think the authors find this to be an important and necessary task? In other words, what basic assumptions, existing problems, or underlying ideology motivates this essay and explains its strategy?
- 2) In the process of drawing out and developing connections between ecofeminism and the ecological sciences, the authors utilize a method they identify as “hierarchy theory” but prefer to call “observation set theory.” What is “hierarchy theory?” And why do Warren and Cheney prefer, for what they claim are “important feminist reasons,” the term “observation set theory?” What philosophical opportunities does this new term provide that is not available with the term “hierarchy theory?”