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Course of Political Philosophy

Feminism and Ecology: Two parallel struggles and a necessary dialogue

Rethinking political models in the Anthropocene

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Introduction

In this thesis, we will explore the link between Feminist and ecological ideologies and struggles, exploring the concept of intersectionality of struggles and the common denominator that these two struggles have. We will first explore the link between patriarchy and capitalism, and the way the second one was born out of the first one. This will then allow us to understand the responsibility of such an economical system within the actual climate change contest of the Anthropocene. Such imbalance between patriarchal responsibility in the overexploitation of natural resources and exposure of women to the consequences of this act will make us question the role of women in preserving the environment, understanding how and why they seem both more victims of ecosystems collapsing and prompted to defend them. This will lead us to the concept of ecofeminism, which we will explore in the duality of the different school of thoughts that constitute it. Ecofeminist perspectives will give us a new take on how to address the ecosocial problems that we are already facing and will increasingly have to deal with in the next decades that are the result, probably of the structural model that has ruled since nowadays in which women are being excluded from the political decisional sphere.

PART 1 : TWO STRUGGLES AND A COMMON DENOMINATOR

Chapter 1 - Climate change and patriarchal responsibility

1.1 The challenge of climate change characterizing the anthropocene

The National Geographic society describes the Anthropocene as an “unofficial unit of geologic time, used to describe the most recent period in Earth’s history when human activity started to have a significant impact on the planet’s climate and ecosystems.”

In the middle of this hot, rainy and very climatologically eventful August, the new report of the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) Working Group 1 was published, depicting a quite alarming situation. This report is the largest update of the state of scientific knowledge about climate since the creation of the panel. It combines multiple lines of evidence from paleoclimatology, observations, process understanding and global, as well as regional climate simulations.

It was published in a context of extreme climatic events all over the world, (we remember of this summer's Greece wildfires that followed a historic heatwave for the country, registering temperatures going up to 47,1 degrees celsius, as well as the ones in Turkey, Siberia and Spain, or the floods in Germany and Belgium in July, to name a few) reminding us that the tipping point towards unprecedented situations is already underway. It underlines - once again - the need for a radical and urgent decarbonization of our societies, our modes of production and our lifestyles, in order to avoid reaching irreversible tipping points.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change was established in 1988 to provide comprehensive assessments of the state of scientific, technical and socio-economic knowledge about climate change, its causes, potential impacts and coping strategies. These assessments are provided to governments and "decision makers" to develop policies and guidelines, and serve as a basis for negotiations at the COPs (Conferences of the Parties).

It is composed of three working groups: Group I works on the physical basis of climate and analyzes past, present and future climates. It establishes different possible scenarios according to the greenhouse gas emissions emitted by humanity. Group II works on the vulnerability of human societies, ecosystems and socio-economic systems to climate drift, the consequences of climate change, and adaptation options. Group III studies climate change mitigation, assessment of methods to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and removal of greenhouse gas from the atmosphere. The Working Group I report is thus the first part of the IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report. The Group II report is scheduled before the end of this month, and the Group III report for the next one. This Group I report is the result of an analysis of 14,000 scientific publications by 234 authors from 65 countries, who reviewed more than 78,000 comments.

The forecasts are not good. Here are some quotes we can read from the report:

"The rate of increase during the industrial era in radiative forcing from increased quantities of carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide is unprecedented in the last 10,000 years. The radiative forcing of carbon dioxide increased by 20% between 1995 and 2005, the largest change in any decade in at least 2000 years."

"Eleven of the last twelve years (1995-2006) are amongst the twelve warmest years since surface temperature records began in 850. The new value for the average rate of warming over the last 100 years (1906-2005) is therefore greater than the similar value calculated at

the time of the Third Report for the period 1901-2000. The average rate of warming over the last 50 years has almost doubled compared to the last 100 years.”

Here are the main points that come out from the report:

1. There is no question that human influence has warmed the atmosphere, oceans and land. Rapid and widespread changes have occurred in the atmosphere, oceans, biosphere, and cryosphere (i.e., the Earth's frozen regions, glaciers, ice caps, ice seas, icebergs, pack ice, as well as permafrost and seasonally frozen ground).
2. 100% of global warming is due to human activities. This is now an unequivocal fact. A positive radiative forcing (the difference between the radiative power received and the radiative power emitted by a climate system) tends to warm the system (more energy received than emitted), while a negative radiative forcing cools it (more energy lost than received).
3. The magnitude of recent changes in the overall climate system and the current state of many aspects of the climate system are unprecedented, over several thousand years.
4. For the past three millennia, sea levels have never risen as rapidly as they have since 1900.
5. Since the publication of the 1st IPCC report in 1990, 1000 billion tons of CO₂ have been emitted. This is almost half of our emissions since the beginning of the entire industrial era.
6. Human activity has warmed the climate at an unprecedented rate for at least 2000 years. Recent climate change is widespread, rapid and intensifying. The last 10 years alone have been 1.1°C warmer than the whole fifty years between 1850 and 1900.
7. Human-induced climate change is already affecting many extreme weather and climate events in all regions of the world. We can see evidence of this in events such as heat waves, heavy precipitation, droughts and tropical cyclones. Most importantly, their attribution to human influence has been growing.
8. Under scenarios of increasing CO₂ emissions, oceanic and terrestrial carbon sinks will be less effective in slowing the accumulation of CO₂ in the atmosphere.
9. In all emissions scenarios (the IPCC draws five possible scenarios) (except the lowest, SSP1-1.9), we will exceed the global warming threshold of +1.5°C in the near future (between 2021 and 2040) and remain above +1.5°C until the end of the century, causing consequential changes in the ecosystemic equilibrium.

10. The glaciers in the mountains and at the poles are doomed to melt for decades or even centuries to come, while the release of carbon from the permafrost by thawing, considered over a period of more than 1000 years, is irreversible.
11. In order to limit global warming, strong, rapid and sustainable actions are needed to reduce CO₂ and methane emissions, as well as other greenhouse gas.
12. Limiting global warming to +1.5°C will no longer be possible without an immediate and large-scale decrease in GHG emissions (see the different scenarios).
13. Many changes due to past and future greenhouse gas emissions are irreversible for centuries or even millennia, including changes in the oceans, ice caps, and global sea level. However, some changes can be slowed and some stopped by limiting global warming.

1.2 Patriarcal responsibility in this climate crisis

But how did we get there? Could men be essentially responsible for climate change? If this statement sounds like a reductive shortcut, it is however possible to affirm that the climate crisis was caused by an economic system based on growth and constant exploitation, an omnipresent principle in patriarchy and capitalism. However, this economic system was set up and still is maintained by men (political leaders are mostly men, as are the leaders of the most powerful lobbies and industries). As seen above in the IPCC report, there is no more doubt that “100% of global warming is due to human activities”: These activities being fruit of the economic system our society has been evolving in, which is capitalism.

Moreover, as Jeanne Burgart Goutal reminds us in her interview for France Culture, men have a bigger ecological footprint than women: "In rich countries, men have much more means, consume 25% more electricity than women, use cars more and eat more meat than women". The main reason for this is their higher salaries compared to women.

“Patriarchy has played a vital role in this environmental degradation in support of capitalism through the diminution of the value of what is stereotypically perceived as feminine (i.e., compassion, gentleness, empathy, humility). While also increasing the value of what is stereotypically perceived as masculine (i.e., aggression, dominance, independence, assertiveness). In doing so, traits that are essential for connecting with nature, caring for it, and living in harmony with its diverse species were disassociated from leadership and came to be a threat to modern-day masculinity.” says Daibes.

Chapter 2 - Women are more exposed to climate change

2.1 Evidences and datas

According to a report by the European Parliament, women make up 80% of refugees and displaced persons, and have a mortality rate up to 5 times higher than men in natural disaster situations. For example, during the 2005 Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, 80% of those killed were women. During the Kobe earthquake in Japan, women's mortality was 50% higher than men's. During the 2003 heat wave in France, women's mortality was 20% higher than men's.

According to a United Nations report, women are up to 14 times more affected than men by the climate crisis. This observation is the result of a set of economic, cultural and social factors, which place women in a much more vulnerable position than men towards climate change. The main factors of vulnerability mentioned in the UN report are the following:

"Women represent a large percentage of poor communities that depend on local natural resources for their livelihoods

[... They lack full and free access to environmental goods and services, and have little participation in decision-making and are excluded from environmental management projects.

They are therefore less able to cope with climate change.

[In extreme weather conditions, such as droughts and floods, they tend to work more to secure their livelihoods, leaving less time for training and education, skills development or income generation. Their lack of access to resources and decision-making processes combined with limited mobility forces them to live in places where they are disproportionately affected by climate change.

[In many societies, cultural norms and family responsibilities prevent women from migrating, seeking refuge in other places, or seeking employment when disaster strikes.

[...] In many developing countries, inequalities exist in many areas, such as human rights, political and economic rights, land rights, housing conditions, violence, education and health. Climate change will be an additional stressor that increases their vulnerability. In addition, conflict is known to promote domestic violence, sexual intimidation, human trafficking and rape."

No one is immune to the disastrous consequences of climate change, and the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance could double by 2030. (According to data from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 235 million people have needed or will need aid this year). This is not a ranking of who suffers most from the violent natural responses to human aggression. However, marginalized and vulnerable groups such as women, who make up the majority of the poor and depend on natural resources for their livelihoods, are particularly vulnerable.

A report from the UNFPA (The United Nations Population Fund) highlights that climate change could be responsible for leading to greater gender-based violence: Women and girls, who bear the majority of the responsibility for collecting water and firewood, must travel greater distances in their search for these resources as they get always more scarce. When populations are displaced by climate change (such as drought in Somalia and Angola for example, which displaced thousands of people), women and girls are more likely to experience gender-based violence in refugee camps. Again, as they search for ways to maintain their homes, they travel to unfamiliar places, increasing their chances of vulnerability. UNFPA has found that trafficking and sexual exploitation have increased after cyclones and typhoons in the Asia-Pacific region. So did domestic violence during drought in West Africa, tropical storms in Latin America and other extreme weather events in the Arab States region. According to the UNDP, (United Nations Development Programme) rates of domestic violence, sexual abuse and female genital mutilation also increased during Uganda's long periods of drought. Violence against women increased in Pakistan after floods and in Bangladesh after cyclones. This report also states that climate change is proven to be contributing in the rise of child marriage rate, explaining that, as extreme weather destroys livelihoods and exacerbates poverty, families are more prompted to marry off their daughters as they represent a financial burden they cannot support, to get the "bride price" in exchange, or because they believe their child will be given the possibility of a material comfort they are not able to provide. Whatever the reason might be, increases in early marriage have been seen in climate-affected countries such as Malawi, India, the Philippines, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, and Mozambique, among others. It also highlights research indicating that "a one-degree Celsius increase in temperature the week before childbirth is correlated with a 6% increase in stillbirths, which translates into about 4 additional stillbirths per 10,000 births." These studies still need further investigation, but the data suggest a causal link between extreme heat and adverse pregnancy outcomes, as well as for other difficult

maternal and neonatal events: For example, vector-borne diseases such as malaria and dengue fever have been linked to miscarriages, premature births, and anemia. Rising temperatures lengthen the active seasons for mosquitoes, which spread these diseases, especially in humid environments that facilitate their proliferation. Climate change would also expand the spread of diseases such as the Zika virus, which can cause severe birth defects such as microcephaly (Babies being born with abnormally small head size due to a brain defect). Climate change could also be a disrupting factor for sexual and reproductive health and would contribute to limit access to contraception: As the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated, emergencies cause health resources to be reallocated to combat the latest threat, penalizing services deemed less essential. Climate change emergencies will become more frequent, potentially making sexual and reproductive health and rights services the first to be curtailed. Even if these services continue, displaced women and girls often lose access to them, which can lead to more unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections. The use of birth control per example requires geographical stability in order to be monitored by a doctor regularly and on the long term. This access can also be disrupted by other events, as seen in 2019 during Cyclone Idai hitting Malawi: "Many areas in Mangochi District were swallowed by the waters," says Treazer Masauli, senior health surveillance assistant. "We had to use a helicopter to reach areas that were not accessible by road to provide sexual and reproductive health services, such as condom distribution, whether for family planning or HIV and STI prevention, as well as peer education or services for people with HIV." In Mozambique, more than 20,000 women of childbearing age risked unwanted pregnancies when they lost access to contraception after last January's Cyclone Eloise. When Hurricanes Iota and Eta hit Honduras in 2020, an estimated 180,000 women of reproductive age lost access to family planning. Crop failures due to climate change can also impact sexual and reproductive health. One study found that after shocks such as food insecurity, women in Tanzania working in agriculture resorted to paid sex to survive, leading to increased rates of HIV/AIDS infection.

2.2 Case study: In Kenya, drought proves to be an obstacle in eliminating female genital mutilation (UNFPA report).

There are two rainy seasons in Kenya: the long one in March, April and May, and the shorter one in October, November and December. The past three rainy seasons have not lived up to their promise, and it looks like the next one is set to be no different. In some parts of the country, the severe drought, which is affecting more than 2.8 million people, including more than 730,000 women of childbearing age, has been declared a national disaster.

In Kenya, shepherd and herder families are constantly on the move to find water and pasture in order to keep their livestock alive. Displacement caused by natural and man-made disasters makes women and girls more susceptible to gender-based violence and harmful practices as well, such as female genital mutilation: We have seen in the previous section that climate change had an impact on children marriage rates as poverty increases, and femal mutilation being largely correlated to forced marriage, their rates are increasing simultaneously.

Local groups formed by the community-based organization I-Rep Foundation, a UNFPA partner, have reported a sharp increase in the practice of Female genital mutilation, as girls leave school to join their “climate-made-nomadic” families. "In times of drought, women and girls are the most affected, as they queue day and night to fetch water," says I-Rep Foundation Director Domitila Chesang. "Girls may also be married off in exchange for a dowry, which helps the family survive the drought. And to do that, in many african cultures they must first undergo genital mutilation." Of the 23 drought-affected countries (out of 47 in Kenya), 14 are considered high-prevalence areas for Female Genital Mutilation, with rates as high as 97.5 percent - compared to a national average rate of 21 percent. I-Rep Foundation is training additional local monitoring groups for genital mutilation prevention and management, and working with survivors as well as community and religious leaders to enable girls to continue their schooling despite displacement from their families. "We have started to advocate for mobile schools, adapted to the lifestyle of herding families, so that girls are not deprived of education," explains Ms. Chesang. "If they spend their time studying, the risk of being subjected to genital mutilation is reduced."

Although genital mutilation has been banned in Kenya since 2011, these harmful practices continue. According to a UNFPA report, 813,159 Kenyan girls are likely to have undergone

mutilation between 2015 and 2030. In some drought-affected farming and livestock communities, genital mutilation prevalence remains high, particularly among Somali (94 percent), Samburu (86 percent), Kisii (84 percent), and Maasai (78 percent) communities. Average prevalence is higher among women living in rural areas (25.9%) than among those living in urban areas (13.8%).

Girls whose families depend on the land for survival are more affected than others by the prolonged drought - their health cracks like the shrivelled earth, and the elimination of female genital mutilation seems as distant as the next rainfall.

Chapter 3 - The concept of the two parallel struggles

Women are, in general, more exposed and vulnerable in this society. Therefore, as seen before, they are also more exposed and vulnerable to climate change, amongst other things (women are also more exposed to crimes - see femicides). And the reason why they are in a constant position of vulnerability and precarity and therefore more victim than men is because we live in a patriarchal society. Here can be drawn a parallelism between two forms of oppression: The oppression of nature and the oppression of women. They have a common denominator: Patriarchy. We may have always believed that the ecological and feminist movements have no apparent correlation, yet closer examination reveals that they are intrinsically linked in a variety of ways. Founded on the premise that all forms of oppression are interconnected, (see the intersectionality concept developed by Angela Davis) the concept of ecofeminism, which we will later describe and define, attempts to establish a connection between environmental degradation and the oppression of the feminine (in animal as well as in human form). This connection stems from a common root of domination: the patriarchal-capitalist structure. As Marie Kirschen states in her book “Herstory” it is “The idea that the domination of women and the destruction of nature have the same origin: patriarchy and capitalism, intrinsically linked”. Feminism and environmentalism are intertwined. Only by coordinating these two struggles will we be able to eradicate gender inequality and encounter a solution to the ecological crisis that we are experiencing. Social matters are essential to grasp when considering environmental crises in all its complexity. A fair, inclusive society is crucial to avert climate catastrophe. Women play a big role in response to climate change because of their knowledge of and leadership in sustainable resource management and leading sustainable practices in the home and community, as we

will see in the next chapter. This parallelism highlights the need to strengthen climate action by promoting gender equality and vice versa.

PART 2 : FROM THIS COMMON OPPRESSION EMERGING ECOFEMINISM

Chapter 1 - Women taking more action to protect nature and biodiversity

1.1 introduction to the chapter

There is evidence of women being the initiators and leaders of most of the ecological and ecosocial movements. "Of course, many men are also fierce campaigners against capitalist destruction, organising mass movements to defend the forests and land, like Chico Mendes in the Amazon and Ken Saro-Wiwa in the Niger Delta, who were both tragically murdered for their activism. However, the most well-known environmental activists today are undoubtedly women: Vanessa Nakate and Greta Thunberg, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Naomi Klein, and Vandana Shiva. Here in Ireland, Maura Harrington helped to lead the Shell to Sea campaign and today the most well known radical environmental activist is arguably Saoirse McHugh." writes the journalist Jess Spear, in her article "Women and nature: towards an ecosocialist feminism".

Being the first victims of many ecological disasters, women are often also the first ones to fight against the destruction of living environments. "We, women, are gathering because life is on the brink of collapse and this is intolerable for us. We want to know what anger, what fear there is in these men who can only be satisfied with destruction, what coldness and ambition animate them": these are the words published by anti-nuclear activists during an action carried out in front of the Pentagon in Washington, on November 17, 1980. Forty-two years later, things haven't really changed. The destruction of ecosystems continues and women remain the first victims of its consequences, as well as the first fighters to preserve these threatened ecosystems: Women, finding themselves in the front line of these consequences, also find themselves to be on the frontline to fight against extractivism, deforestation, pollution or nuclear power.

1.2 - The fight against deforestation

The green belt of Kenya

Planting trees to fight against deforestation and poverty. This idea was launched in 1977 in Kenya by Wangari Muta Maathai. This woman, a biologist and political activist, wanted to help women who traditionally collect wood to prepare meals. Because of deforestation, they had to travel ever greater distances. Wangari Muta Maathai launched large-scale plantations of indigenous species and fruit trees, creating a virtuous circle: these trees stabilized and enriched the soil, making the crops less vulnerable. Since the beginning of the operation, more than fifty-one million trees have been planted and more than thirty thousand women have been trained in agroforestry or beekeeping. Wangari Muta Maathai's commitment was rewarded with the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004.

The Chipko Movement in India

In the 1970s, women in the Garhwal region of northern India opposed commercial logging of their forests. Their tactic: wrap their arms around the trees to prevent cutting. Among them, Vandana Shiva, who became a famous ecofeminist activist who fought against the construction of dams and the introduction of GMOs in her country, which was also awarded the Alternative Nobel Prize in 1993.

Preserving the Alaskan forest

The Tongass Forest in Alaska is the largest national forest in the United States. It is also home to the Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian indigenous communities who depend on it for their livelihood. But for decades, this land has been ravaged by logging and industrial development. End of 2020, the Trump administration decided to end the protection this forest enjoyed in favor of the timber industry, whilst local communities were completely left out of the decision-making process. Many women took positions and created delegations to protest against this event. One of their delegations went to Washington to expose the dramatic consequences of this decision in front of Congress. The fight keeps going on, and they are notably supported by the association Wecan which also works to save the Amazon forest in Brazil and Ecuador, and which is mainly composed of women as well.

Gold miners, dams and bioethanol in Brazil

An ecocide is taking place in Brazil against the indigenous peoples. For years, murders, rapes, kidnappings and tortures have been multiplying, ordered by industrialists who have no

limits to monopolize the lands of these populations. Several women have decided to act. In the state of Mato Grosso do Sul, Valdelice Veron has become the spokesperson for the Guarani-Kaiowá people. She is fighting against the ethanol production industry, of which Brazil is the world's largest exporter. In the state of Pará, Alessandra Korap, the leader of the Munduruku people is the main coordinator of the Indigena Pariri association. She fought against the construction of a hydroelectric dam on the Tapajos River, which was canceled. She received the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award in 2020. Finally, several female tribal leaders of the Kayapo people are fighting to preserve the Rio Xingu River from dam construction and pollution by gold miners. While their struggle has been made famous by the cacique Raoni, many women have become pillars of the struggle, such as Tuire, who has been at the forefront of protests against illegal logging and mining, or Ngreikamoro in the village of Aukre, who is trying to unite all the villages to better fight together

The ravages of palm oil in Indonesia

On the island of Sulawesi, in northern Indonesia, activist Eva Bande has been fighting since 2011 against the installation of a palm oil company on farmland. Faced with the expropriation of farmers, she organized protests before being arrested with twenty-three farmers. After four years in prison, she was pardoned and continues her fight. Still in Indonesia, the NGO, Yayasan HAKA, is also attacking palm oil. Launched by the activist Farwiza Farhan, it tries to protect the ecosystem of Sumatra. She has launched a legal action against the concessionaire of an illegal plantation. The concessionaire was fined twenty-six million dollars, setting an important legal precedent.

The fight against dams in Honduras

Berta Caceres is a Honduran activist who has worked for more than 20 years to defend the rights of the 400,000 Lenca Indians. She co-founded the Citizen Council of Indigenous Peoples' Organizations of Honduras (COPINH). Since 2006, she has fought against the construction of the Agua Zarca hydroelectric dam on the Rio Gualcarque, which threatened to deprive hundreds of inhabitants of the community of Rio Blanco of water. Her commitment was recognized with the 2015 Goldman Environmental Prize. She was murdered the following year.

1.3 - Anti-nuclear struggles

Women's Pentagon Actions in the United States

They demanded equal rights, an end to military and nuclear actions. In November 1980, nearly two thousand women marched in Washington, D.C., in front of the Pentagon, which they considered to be "the workplace of imperial power. More than a demonstration, this mobilization was an artistic performance. The women first built a cemetery on the lawn in front of the building to commemorate the victims of the war. They then surrounded the building, some dressed as witches to cast spells. They finally blocked some entrances with woven thread while chanting, holding up giant effigies of witches. This movement marked the birth of ecofeminism in the United States.

Greenham Common in England

It was a nineteen-year anti-nuclear struggle. In 1981, women organized a protest camp against the installation of nuclear missiles on the Royal Air Force base of Greenham Common, in England. Nearly forty thousand women participated in these actions, which were symbolic, festive and artistic. For example, they danced on the silo planned to receive the missiles.

Plogoff in Brittany

In 1974, the French government launched a vast program to build nuclear power plants. Among the sites targeted: Plogoff at the tip of Brittany's Finistère region. The struggle was quickly organized and the women played a decisive role in the victory. Every day, they stayed for hours in front of the mobile guards, trying to discourage them and blocking the access roads. During the confrontations, they also stayed in the front row. Their struggle resulted in a victory, described in the film *Plogoff, pierres contre des fusils*

Nuclear waste at Bure

It was the first non-mixed feminist anti-nuclear rally in France. In 2019, hundreds of people gathered in Bure, in the Meuse, to fight against the future site of nuclear waste burial. A return to the roots of the ecofeminist movement that recalls the place of women in the anti-nuclear struggle.

1.4 - Fighting against the oil industry

The Dakota Access pipeline in the United States

This is a 1,825 kilometer long pipeline that crosses the territories of indigenous nations, including the Standing Rock Indian Reservation. This pipeline has destroyed sites of great historical, religious and cultural importance for these people. Despite strong opposition, particularly from women, construction was completed. Among the women who have raised the alarm is Kandi Mossett, who has been denouncing for years the consequences of this rush to extract black gold in the Dakotas, which is leading to an increase in cancer. Other fighters, Madonna Thunder Hawk and her daughter Macy have also fought against oil pipelines in Dakota.

Ogoni women against the Shell oil company in Nigeria

The Ogoni are an indigenous ethnic group living in the Niger Delta, an oil-rich land coveted by multinational corporations. For years, the oil company Shell has exploited the resources, resulting in the expropriation of these people. Oil and gas leaks have permanently polluted their agricultural land. In 1993, more than 300,000 Ogoni people, including women, protested against this environmental devastation. The government's response was violent, but Shell decided to leave their territory.

Against the oil industry in Ecuador

Since the early 2000s, environmental activists from the Mujeres Amazonicas (Amazonian Women) collective have been protesting against the plundering of their territory by oil, mining and logging companies. In particular, they are fighting against the Argentinean oil company CGC, which has devastated the forest of the indigenous Kichwa people of Saryaku. With the help of Amnesty, the Kichwas took the Ecuadorian government to the Inter-American Court and won. The government was found guilty of violating their right to physical integrity. However, this decision has still not been implemented, and activists leading the struggle, such as Patricia Gualinga and Nina Gualinga, continue to receive death threats and suffer intimidation.

In Bolivia against the exploitation of hydrocarbons

Tariquía is the most important national wildlife reserve in southern Bolivia. In 2015, the Bolivian state decided to allow hydrocarbon exploitation in this protected area, threatening the fauna, flora, water resources and way of life of local communities. The struggle against

this project was initiated by women from the local indigenous communities, who denounce a total lack of consultation and the disastrous consequences on the environment.

1.5 - General struggles for the climate

Elders for climate protection

Launched in 2016 in Switzerland, this association now has eighteen hundred women over the age of sixty-four. They filed an appeal demanding that the Swiss federal authorities take the necessary measures to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement by 2030. The case was dismissed in May 2020, but they have decided to take it to the European Court of Human Rights.

Climate marches

In the spring of 2020, millions of young people marched in the streets for the climate. At the head of these marches: young women. One thinks of course of the famous Swedish woman Greta Thunberg. But she was not the only one. Ayakha Melithafa in South Africa, Natasha Mwansa in Zambia, Autumn Peltier in Canada, Melati Wijsen in Indonesia or Anuna De Wever and Adélaïde Charlier in Belgium: on all continents, these young women took in hand the organization of these mobilizations which allowed the politicization of the youth on the climatic questions.

1.6 Statistics during elections and within political parties

In developed countries, it appears that women are more invested in the environmental cause as well, as shown by their electoral choices. If we look at the statistics of the votes of french people in the last european elections, 17% of french women voted for the green party, whereas only 9% of men did. In Germany, the Green Party (Grüne) is the one with the highest percentage of women, with women representing 41% of the party members, whereas representing only 36.4% of the members in the Left party, 32,8% in the SPD party, 26,5% in the CDU, 21,6% in the FDP, 21,3% in the CSU, and 17,8% in the AfD. (datas published by Statista research department, october 28, 2021).

“From 1979 to 2019, the presence of female MEPs has continued to increase with every election. We expect that this increase will continue, albeit we do not know the speed of the increase. For example, a continuation of the far-right populist wave will likely slow down the increase in women’s representation. In contrast, a further strengthening of progressive parties,

such as the Green ones, will likely strengthen women's presence. Our findings suggest that the contrasting type of parties do not only advocate different policies but also trigger a different composition – in terms of the presence of men and women – of the European legislature.” writes Stockemer as a conclusion to his research for his article “Political Party Characteristics and Women's Representation: The Case of the European Parliament”

Chapter 2 - Ecofeminism(s) : A duality

2.1 Definition and historical background of ecofeminism

We have seen that women are both more exposed and taking more action towards climate changes's consequences. Here are two schools of thought that open themselves, as to why women are more involved in protecting nature more than men: The non essentialist ecofeminists advocating that it is only the consequence of them being more exposed to climate change consequences, as seen in the second chapter, not because of their biological nature. And the so-called “ essentialist” ecofeminists, that draw a link between women's capacity to create life by giving birth and their major sensibility to the destruction of nature.

The term of ecofeminism appeared in France in 1974 and was coined by Françoise d'Eaubonne, feminist and ecologist, in her essay “*Le féminisme ou la mort*”. It was developed in a context of growing ecological awareness, since two years earlier the Meadows Report had been published: For the first time, the limits of economic growth and exponential demography were highlighted, following a marxist critique of capitalism. As for the political and societal context, the years following the May 68 revolution saw the institutionalization of feminist thought, which was organized politically for the first time in France with the creation of the Women's Liberation Movement (MLF), an autonomous and non-mixed feminist movement created by Jacqueline Feldman and Anne Zelinsky, within which the patriarchal society was questioned, and was claimed the free disposition of the women's body. The time had also matured for the flowering of utopian communities where other ways of living together were being experimented with, whether it be Women's Land, autonomous and mixed “*eco-lieux*”, or agricultural cooperatives.

Ecofeminism is now part of concrete struggles, progressively mutating to form a movement of great diversity, both nationally and internationally, with, for example, the Women for Life

and Earth movement in the United States and the United Kingdom, Wangari Maathai's Green Belt movement in Kenya, the Women's Land movement in the United States and Europe, or the fight against deforestation by the Chipko women in India, that we have explored in the previous chapters.

Karen J. Warren, an American philosopher, was one of the first authors to propose a general definition of ecofeminism in 1997 in her book *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature*. She argues that there are "important links between the oppression of women and the oppression of nature...and that feminist theory and practice must "include an ecological perspective" just as "solutions to ecological problems must include a feminist perspective.

Since the 1970s, many other thinkers and authors have sought to conceptualize ecofeminism, which now occupies a place of its own in the recent Dictionary of Feminism (2017), in which Jeanne Burgart Goutal explains that "there are both material and conceptual links between women's domination and the domination of nature.

During a conference organized by the REFEDD on May 4, 2021, Jeanne Burgart Goutal specified that beyond the nebula of thoughts and political actions with its various theorizations, struggles and mobilizations since the 70s, ecofeminism is not an abstract concept. It is a movement of great diversity, but with the central common point of rejecting a pure and hard juxtaposition of feminism and ecology. On the contrary, ecofeminism is situated at the junction, at the hinge between these two terms. It is a question of thinking, of analyzing the articulations between domination of women and domination of nature, but also the other forms of oppression that ecofeminism takes into account. Finally, it is a question of thinking of the different forms of domination of race, class, gender and nature not as isolated phenomena, having no relationship with each other, but as aspects of the same system which rests on the inter-reinforcement of these forms of domination. This position excludes feminist struggles that could have a negative impact on the environment, or that would exploit individuals. On the contrary, ecofeminism is situated in an ecological approach, in the sense of taking into account the different forms of oppression and relations of domination.

2.2 “Essentialist” ecofeminists : right critics?

Is it possible to think about how processes of domination can be exercised jointly on women and on nature without assigning femininity to an intangible essence? Associating women with nature may seem like an essentialization that would impede their emancipation. But it can also allow us to reverse our gaze and, at the time of the ecological crises that we are going through, to question the alleged evidence according to which the wrenching away from nature would be a necessary prerequisite to any liberation. However, this way of associating women and nature seems suspicious to some. Would women be, by nature, more inclined to take care of the environment? Would they be more natural than men? The mistrust is particularly strong in a country like France, where it is readily asserted that nature does not exist and where the feminist tradition is rather universalist (women are men like the others) and constructivist: "one is not born a woman, one becomes one". This tradition can only be hostile to a differentialism which would lend a particular nature to women. Nature is thus not a resource for the women, it is on the contrary the trap which is tended to them: the women are naturalized to be better dominated.

It is the culture that links oppression and destruction that must be changed, why should it be a question of nature? Is it not enough to reintegrate women into humanity, that of equal rights? This is what the critique of naturalization usually leads to, whether it is sexism or racism. But once those who had been excluded have been included, the barrier between humanity and nature, far from diminishing, is reinforced: once it is recognized that women, or blacks, are human beings like the others, we no longer care about the animals or nature to which they were assimilated. It is this division that sets humans apart from the rest of nature that ecofeminists reject.

This is because, as Emilie Hache has very clearly shown, we must distinguish between naturalization and nature[6]. Naturalization is not nature, and the critique of naturalization does not put an end to the question of nature. "One father, one mother, two children" (boy and girl if possible, in that order): the promoters of the "Manif pour tous" defend the dominant social model of the family, heterosexual and monogamous, and claim it to be natural. This is typically a naturalization that subordinates women, destined to motherhood, to men, while excluding, still in the name of nature, any other type of relationship between men and women, posed as deviant.

However, it is precisely what refused the lesbians who formed a community living of agriculture, in Oregon: why would they be excluded from the nature? Why would conservative naturalization forever cast them into a purely social artificiality? By forming a separate community of women, they were directly attacking the macho image of the rural West. Why couldn't they claim to be natural?

Reclaim: this is the motto of the ecofeminist reappropriation of nature adopted by the American movements. Of nature rather. For "reclaim" does not consist so much in opposing one nature (organic) to another (mechanical) as in exploring forms of association between women and nature that are not caught in the logic of domination.

It is a question of reoccupying the denounced or excluded positions by rediscovering new possibilities there. We speak then of the reversal of stigma or of strategic essentialism. This is the way Mona Chollet proceeds in *Sorcières*. The unconquerable power of women. From the accusations against witches, she draws a portrait that is the negative of the woman as the patriarchal power wishes it: these witches that are burned are old women, who did not want to have children, live alone, and seem to harbor powers that frighten men.

To turn the stigma around, to see oneself as a witch, is to accept that one is not necessarily beautiful, desirable, submissive, devoted only to one's family, it is not to pose as a victim, but to discover what resists domination, independence and power: all this strength that patriarchal and capitalist repression has not managed to overcome, and that women can reappropriate by living themselves, at least imaginary, as witches.

In the United States, neo-pagan feminist cults have developed in the cult of the Goddess, women have claimed to be witches (as in the Wicca movement). Starhawk, one of their most famous instigators, sees this as a way for women to rediscover their power: it is the connection between a women's emancipation movement and a goddess-based spiritual tradition that gives women "the right to be strong, powerful and even dangerous.

Reclaiming nature in this way is not just about reversing dualism, putting nature and women in the place of men and their culture, it is about moving the lines of division. By reversing the stigma, ecofeminists discover that they can no longer consider themselves apart from nature, that nature cannot be excluded from a reconfiguration that is not given in advance and must

make room for the social as well as the natural. Turning the negative association between women and nature leads to making it an object of claim and political struggle that potentially concerns everyone.

These powerful women, in fact, do not seek to exercise power, but to develop their capacities in relation to each other. Starhawk distinguishes between what she calls "power-over" - the power of all relations of domination - and "power-within", which is not linked to relations of force, but to the capacities to feel, to make choices, to decide and to act.

To fight against domination is to get rid of power-over (and of the objective of exercising power in the place of others) and to make the power-within grow by passing from the individual to the collective. Power-of-in and empowerment go hand in hand, because it is only collectively, in the encounter with others, humans and non-humans, plants, soil, sun, animals..., by inserting oneself in the energy and life flows that animate nature that one can gain in power.

If we agree to follow the writings of ecofeminists up to this point, without pinning down phrases to label them as essentialism, we will realize that the starting situation is turned upside down: it is not so much women who claim to be natural, but men who, in the dualistic vision that is that of their power, refuse to be natural.

It is the men who make up humanity (of which they are the eminent representatives) in the capacity to tear itself away from nature, to be of cause of itself, and not engendered. The dualistic vision tends to concentrate all the confrontation between men and women on the question of begetting, on the capacity to "give life", claimed by the mothers, devalued by the fathers who will impose that it is the male who makes the filiation and thus take back the power on life.

To admit that men, like women, are part of nature, is to defuse the quarrel. A woman does not need to be a mother to be linked to the vital flows, a man is not excluded because he does not carry babies in his belly. "Make kin not babies", advises the historian of science Donna Haraway, thus inciting us to leave behind a human exception that admits kinship only between humans, within the same filiation, in order to cultivate the kinship that binds us to all those whom Aldo Leopold called our "fellow travelers in the Odyssey of evolution".

The ecofeminist movements do not separate the defense of nature from that of women. "We do not defend nature, we are nature defending itself": this slogan suits them, but it is not reserved for women alone, as the successful struggle of Notre-Dame-des-Landes - which claimed it - shows.

2.3 Non essentialist ecofeminists : Women oppressed by their own "nature"?

In an interview with France Culture devoted to ecofeminism, Isabelle Cambourakis, an independent researcher on ecology and feminism, explains that for a long time the link between women and nature has been denied by feminists opposing the essentialization and the constant naturalization of women. The so-called "nature" of women has in fact served to justify their inferior position in patriarchal society, to lock them into social roles, functions and obligations from which they find it difficult to escape. The duty to be a mother, the attribution of certain qualities such as sensitivity, instinct, benevolence, maternal feeling, gentleness, are all beliefs created by the patriarchal culture in order to ensure men's access to positions of power. However, there is not a "female nature". In the words of Simone de Beauvoir "one is not born a woman, one becomes one". The attribution of these "natural" prerequisites is the fruit of the patriarchal value system built for centuries and relayed in all the institutions (religion, school, family...) which play a key role in the socialization of the individuals and, consequently, in the construction of their social imagination.

Thus, some feminists have wished to remove from their discourse this "nature" which has been used as an argument to essentialize them and hinder their freedoms. On the contrary, the ecofeminists tried to reappropriate this "natural" discourse and to reconcile in some way feminism and Nature: instead of being used to essentialize the social functions, to justify a position of subordination, to "biologize" the bodies, the Nature is here to be understood as the unique link that the women maintain with the natural world, with the Earth. Here Nature is to be understood as the environment, the elements, the natural forces and not as the biological. From these bases, the ecofeminists wished to revive forms of knowledge and forms of attachment to the natural environment, which historically were torn from them. It is not by chance that ecofeminism emerged in the 1970s, in the midst of a social revolution and a challenge to the social functions assigned to women in society. However, if ecofeminists have reconciled women and nature, this does not mean that any danger of essentialization has been

eliminated. This new link advocated by ecofeminists between women and living beings could serve once again to essentialize women and to disempower men in the face of the need to act against the climate crisis. Women would carry more of the mental burden of the climate crisis, since it would be in the "feminine nature" to pay attention to the environment and thus to save the planet.

Conclusion

The autonomization of the economy, which we associate with modernity and which globalization has extended to the whole world, is based on the separation between economic and domestic life (separation between production and reproduction) and on the capacity of the economy to produce its own conditions of reproduction, by detaching itself from its associated environment: This is the condition of its universalization. But this autonomy, often proclaimed, is largely illusory: If closely examined, it comes rather as an occultation. If the economy is able to claim its productivity and efficiency, and capacity to generate financial surpluses, it is not only through mechanisms of appropriation of surplus labor internal to the economic sphere, it is also because of the double dependence of the economic sphere on withdrawals from nature (and on a whole contribution of natural processes to the perpetuation of productive activities) and on the family (labor power can only function in production systems because it is maintained and reproduced by unpaid and unaccounted domestic labor) is not taken into consideration. If these deductions were taken into account, the illusion of surplus value as a material surplus would disappear: there would only be exchanges in a world where nothing is lost and nothing is created. The injustice of the unequal distribution of income (wages, prices, profits) would be all the more obvious, since in fact nothing is created.

It is this double dependence that ecofeminism brings to light. Women, and especially women in the global south, where the separation between production and reproduction has not been pushed as far as in the Northern sphere of the globe, and where they are in charge of a significant part of agricultural activities, are at the strategic points where the split between production and reproduction can be overcome. This split affects them both in nature within nature (the biology of reproduction) and in nature outside nature (the link between ecology and economy). We can explain this by saying that women are in charge of life (their own, as well as that of their loved ones) and that this leads them to invest in environmental issues more than men. In this thesis, we explored the possibility of exposing these movements to an

essentialist naturalization of life, understanding, thus, how this can be a reversed perspective to turn a weapon of oppression into a new tool of emancipation. By making us see the invisible, the dependence that hides the affirmation of our independence, ecofeminism, in the multiplicity of its practices, invites us to return to the common root of ecology and ecology, the oikos, the dwelling.

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