

CAN AFRICANA WOMEN TRULY EMBRACE ECOLOGICAL FEMINISM?

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Abstract

My starting point in this essay is that, if it can be ascertained that there is something called Black African feminism (which represents the interests of some Black African women) as claimed by feminists and other like-minded African women, then the existence of Black African ecological feminism should be a matter of deduction. In this essay, I interrogate this position using Karen Warren's version of ecological feminism which holds that there are important historical and conceptual connections between the domination of women in society and the domination of nature. This interrogation also prompts me to trace the history of traditional feminism with a view to showing that while, in the West, there could be important connections – historical, symbolic and theoretical – between the oppression of women and the cruel treatment of nature, the same cannot be said of Africa, especially sub-Saharan Africa where nature is owned or guarded by the spirit world. Using the Africana womanist perspective and the deductive method in philosophy, I argue that traditional feminism together with Warren's ecological feminism completely ignore the experiences and aspirations of Black African women, thereby ruling out the possibility of the existence – in the truest sense – of both Black African feminism and Black African ecological feminism.

Keywords: Ecological feminism, Feminism, Oppression, Patriarchal Conceptual Framework, Deductive Logic, Validity, Africana Womanism

Introduction

There are different forms of ecological feminism with all of them agreeing that there are important connections between the oppression of women and the ill-treatment of non-human animals by humans. My task in this essay is to reflect on Warren's defense of ecological feminism as contained in her classic essay entitled: "The Power and Promise of Ecological Feminism" with a view to establishing whether this theory is transferrable to sub-Saharan Africa. In this essay, Warren begins by making the observation that there are important connections between the domination of women and the domination of nature. Warren links this connection with what she calls the *Oppressive Patriarchal*

Conceptual Framework which, according to her, looks down upon women the same way it looks down upon non-human creatures. Using the African Womanist theory conceptualized by Clenora Hudson-Weems and the method of deduction in philosophy, I argue that while the discourse on feminism has received world wide acclaim and while feminists have raised genuine concerns about how they are oppressed by their male counterparts, I find it difficult to apply or transpose the idea of feminism, let alone ecological feminism to Africa since the history of feminism, and by extension ecological feminism precludes the values and experiences of women of African descent. As a result of this charge and given the spiritual character of African environments, I argue that there is no correlation between the oppression of women and the ill-treatment of nature in Africa. In the final analysis, this reasoning automatically allows me to draw the conclusion that: “No Black African women are ecological feminists.” Below, I outline and explain the deductive method in philosophy which I use partly to dismiss both African feminism and the idea of African ecological feminism.

The Deductive Method in Philosophy

The deductive method in Philosophy stipulates that the conclusion of an argument must necessarily follow from its premises (COPI 1994, 54). Thus, when the reasoning in a deductive argument is correct, that argument becomes *valid*; when the reasoning in a deductive argument is incorrect, that argument becomes *invalid* (1994, 56). In every deductive argument, either the premises succeed in providing conclusive grounds for the truth of the conclusion, or they do not succeed. If they do, the argument becomes valid and sound. If they don't, the argument may remain valid but unsound. So, *validity* has to do with the formal or syntactic relational aspect of the premises and conclusion in an argument, while *soundness* has to do with the semantic aspect of the premises and conclusion in an argument. But in all cases, validity is a pre-condition for soundness, that is to say, an argument cannot be sound without being valid.

The three examples below show how valid and sound arguments are structured, with argument **A** representing a valid argument and argument **B** and **C** representing sound arguments:

A

1. All Black African feminists are unmarried Women
 2. All unmarried women are Ecological feminists
- Therefore, all Ecological feminists are Black African feminists

B

1. All Feminists are White supremacists

2. No White supremacists are Black African women
Therefore, No Black African women are feminists

Note that if we take the conclusion of argument **B** above to be the premise of argument **C**, below, we can draw the conclusion: “No Black African women are Ecological feminists” as illustrated by argument **C** below:

C

1. No Black African women are feminists
Therefore, No Black African women are Ecological feminists

Notice that the conclusion of argument **A**, “All ecological feminists are Black African women,” follows from premises 1 and 2. This makes the argument valid. But in deductive inferences, validity does not always translate to soundness or truthfulness. Thus, while argument **A** is valid, it is not sound because it is not true that “All Black African feminists are unmarried women,” or that “All unmarried women are ecological feminists.” The conclusion drawn from these two premises is also not true, that is, “All ecological feminists are Black African women.” Having said this, it is important to note that argument **B** is valid and sound in the following ways: In my view and judging from the nature and character of feminism which I shall outline later in this essay, it is true that “All feminists are White supremacists.” It is also true that “No Black African women are White supremacists.” The conclusion – “No Black African women are feminists” – which is drawn from two premises above is also true in my view.

I also take argument **C**, which is a development of argument **B** to be an example of a valid and sound argument. In my view, if the premise “No Black African women are feminists” is based on a truism, then the conclusion “No Black African women are ecological feminists” should immediately follow. Note that arguments **A** and **B** are mediate inferences as the conclusion is drawn from two premises but argument **C** is an immediate inference as the conclusion is drawn from one premise. In the rest of the essay, I outline and explain the premises that lead to the conclusion that “No Black African women are feminists” and “No Black African women are ecological feminists” as represented by arguments **B** and **C**. To kick start this important debate, I now present Warren’s ecological feminism.

Warren’s presentation of Ecological Feminism

According to Warren, *ecological feminism* is the position that there are important connections—historical, symbolic and theoretical—between the domination of women and the domination of nature (WARREN 1990, 342). Warren argues that because the conceptual connections between the dual dominations of women and nature are located in an *Oppressive Patriarchal Conceptual Framework*

characterized by the logic of domination, (1) traditional feminism must expand feminism to include ecological feminism (2) ecological feminism must provide a framework for developing a distinctively feminist environmental ethic (1990, 342).

But how are these *Oppressive Patriarchal Conceptual Frameworks* to be explained by ecological feminists? Warren begins by defining and explaining Conceptual frameworks in general before defining and explaining *Oppressive Patriarchal Conceptual Frameworks*. For Warren, a *Conceptual Framework* is a set of basic beliefs, values, attitudes and assumptions which shape and reflect how one views oneself and one's own world (1990, 342). It is a socially constructed lens through which we perceive ourselves and others. It is affected by such factors as gender, race, class, age, nationality and religious background (1990, 342). Lynn White observes that:

What people do about their ecology depends on what they think about themselves in relation to things around them. Human ecology is deeply conditioned by beliefs about our nature and destiny – that is, by religion. (WHITE 1967, Web. N. P.)

The above position by White, sets us right into the philosophical discourse of *Oppressive Conceptual Frameworks* which Warren defines as frameworks that explain, justify and maintain relationships of domination and subordination (WARREN 1990, 342). When an *Oppressive Conceptual Framework* is patriarchal, it explains, justifies and maintains the subordination of women by men (1990, 342).

For Warren, there are three significant features of *Oppressive Patriarchal Conceptual Frameworks*, namely: 1. Value-hierarchical thinking, which is a kind of thinking that places higher value, status or prestige on what is “up” rather than on what is “down.” 2. Value dualisms, that is, disjunctive pairs in which the disjuncts are seen as oppositional (rather than as complementary) and exclusive (rather than as inclusive) and which place higher value or status to that which has historically been identified as “mind,” “reason” and “male” than to that which has historically been identified as “body,” “emotion” and “female.” 3. The logic of domination, that is, a structure of argumentation which leads to a justification of subordination (1990, 342).

For Warren, this third feature of *Oppressive Patriarchal Conceptual Frameworks* is the most significant. The logic of domination is not just a logical structure. It also involves a substantive value system, since an ethical premise is needed to permit or sanction the “just” subordination of that which is subordinate (1990, 342). This justification typically is given on grounds of some alleged characteristic (for example, rationality) which the dominant (for

example, men) have and the subordinate (for example, women) lack (1990, 342). Warren argues that contrary to what many feminists and eco-feminists have said or suggested, there may be nothing inherently problematic about “hierarchal thinking” or even “value-hierarchical thinking” in contexts other than contexts of oppression (1990, 342).

Warren argues that hierarchal thinking is important in daily living for classifying data, comparing information and organizing material (1990, 342). Even “value-hierarchical thinking” can be quite acceptable in certain contexts. For Warren, the problem is not simply that value-hierarchal thinking and value dualisms are used, but the way in which each has been used in *Oppressive Conceptual Frameworks* to establish inferiority and justify subordination (1990, 342). It is the logic of domination coupled with value hierarchal thinking and value dualisms, which justify subordination (1990, 342).

For Warren, what is explanatorily basic, then, about the nature of *Oppressive Conceptual Frameworks* is the logic of domination and that the logic of domination is explanatorily basic is important for at least three reasons: First, without the logic of domination, a description of similarities and differences would be just that – a description of similarities and differences (1990, 342). Consider the claim, “Humans are different from rocks in that humans can radically and consciously re-shape the communities in which they live; humans are similar to plants and rocks in that they are both members of the ecological community” (1990, 342).

Even if humans are better than plants and rocks with respect to the conscious ability of humans to radically transform communities, one does not thereby get any morally relevant distinction between humans and non-humans, or an argument for the dominance of plants and rocks by humans (1990, 342). To get these conclusions, one need to add at least two powerful assumptions; namely, (A2) and (A4) in argument A below:

(A1) Humans do, and plants and rocks do not, have the capacity to consciously and radically change the community in which they live.

(A2) Whatever has the capacity to consciously and radically change the community in which it lives is morally superior to whatever lacks this capacity.

(A3) Thus, humans are morally superior to plants and rocks

(A4) For any X and Y, if X is morally superior to Y, then X is morally justified in subordinating Y.

(A5) Thus, humans are morally justified in subordinating plants and rocks (1990, 342).

Without the two assumptions that humans are morally superior to (at least some) non-humans, (A2), and that superiority justifies subordination, (A4), all one has is some difference between humans and some non-humans (1990, 342). This is true even if that difference is given in terms of superiority. Thus, it is the logic of domination, (A4), which is the bottom line in ecological feminist discussions of oppression (1990, 342).

Second, ecological feminists argue that, at least in Western societies, the *Oppressive Conceptual Framework* which sanctions the twin dominations of women and nature is patriarchal, one characterized by all three features of an *Oppressive Conceptual Framework* (1990, 342). Many ecological feminists claim that, historically, within at least the dominant Western culture, a patriarchal framework has sanctioned the following argument:

(B1) Women are identified with nature and the realm of the physical; men are identified with the “human” and the realm of the mental.

(B2) Whatever is identified with nature and the realm of the physical is inferior to (below) whatever is identified with the human and the realm of the mental; or, conversely, the latter is superior (above) to the former.

(B3) Thus, women are inferior to (below) men; or, conversely, men are superior to (above) women.

(B4) For any X and Y, if X is superior to Y, then X is justified in subordinating Y.

(B5) Thus, men are justified in subordinating women (1990, 342).

Having outlined and explained Warren’s ecological feminism, I now try to establish and explain the premises that will lead to the conclusions that “No Black African women are feminists” and “No Black African Women are Ecological feminists.” I do this in two ways: First, I trace the history of feminism with a view to establish whether or not Africana women are part of the project of feminism, and second, I then try to find out if the idea of ecological feminism is all encompassing, that is, is it cross-cultural to the effect that it can also address the concerns of Africana women?

A Brief History of Feminism

The true history of feminism, its origin and participants reveal its blatant racist background, thereby establishing its incompatibility with Africana women (that is, continental African women and those in the Diaspora) (WEEMS 1993, 18). Feminism, earlier called the Woman’s Suffrage Movement (WSM), started when

a group of liberal white women, whose concerns then were for the abolition of slavery and equal rights for all people regardless of race, class and sex, dominated the scene on the national level during the early to middle century (1993, 18). At the time of the civil war in America, such leaders as Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton held the universalist philosophy on the natural rights of women (both white and black) to full citizenship, which included the right to vote.

However, in 1870, the fifteenth Amendment to the constitution of the United States of America ratified the voting rights of African men leaving women, White women, in particular and their desire for the same rights unaddressed (1993, 342). Middle class White women were naturally disappointed, for they had assumed that their efforts toward securing full citizenship for African people would ultimately benefit them, too, in their desire for full citizenship, as voting citizens (1993, 18). The result was a racist reaction to the amendment and to Africans in particular (1993, 18). In 1890, the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) was founded by northern White women...epitomizing the growing race chauvinism of the late nineteenth century (1993, 18).

The organization, which brought together the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) and the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA) departed from Susan B Anthony's original women suffrage posture (1993, 18). They asserted that the vote for women should be utilized chiefly by middle class White women, who could aid their husbands in preserving the virtues of the Republic from the threat of unqualified and biological inferiors (African men) who with the power of the vote, could gain a political foothold in the American system (1993, 18). This is how feminism was born.

Note of course, that African women were not even part of the equation and never became part of the equation in the minds of these White women. This raises a lot of eye brows for those African women who, today, claim to be feminists. They face hard questions such as: On what basis do they justify feminism? How can they claim to own an idea that is foreign to them? Aren't they championing the White women's interests? These hard questions and many others only help to complicate the puzzle for African women who claim to be feminists when in actual fact feminism excluded them right from the onset.

Critical Remarks

Having looked at this brief history of feminism, it is important to answer two critical questions: What is feminism? Who is a feminist? To begin with, *feminism*, a term conceptualized and adopted by White women involves an agenda that was designed to meet the needs and demands of that particular group (1993, 19). For this reason, it is quite plausible for white women to identify with

feminism and the feminist movement (1993, 18). Although this definition of feminism automatically excludes Black African women or Africana women, later on feminism expanded to include White men who were also interested in seeing women being treated equally.

In fact, elsewhere I argue that the emphasis on feminists as male or female is important because it is wrong to assume that only white women can be feminists since being a feminist or a non-feminist is not a biological construct but a way in which one look at life (MANGENA 2011, 118). The emergency of homosexual practices in the West also meant that those men who assumed the role of “wives” also had to identify with feminism and to fight for the liberation of women from the yoke of patriarchy. So, in proper terminology, a *feminist* is someone [male or female] who believes that men and women are inherently equal in all respects relevant to how they should be treated (BARCALOW 1994, 95).

Judging from the way the history of feminism is presented above, it is probably clear that in her definition of feminism, Barcalow fell short of saying that a feminist was someone [white male or female] who believes that White men and women were inherently equal in all respects relevant to how they should be treated. If feminism is a Western concept as demonstrated above, then why are there designations such as *Black feminism* or *African feminism*? Don't they point or attest to the fact that feminism can be cross-cultural?

In my response to the questions above, I argue that those women who have adopted feminism and named it either *Black feminism* or *African feminism* either do not know the history of feminism or ignore this history to deliberately mislead other Africana women for selfish reasons. This is so because the objectives of, for instance, Black Feminism are not any different from those of traditional feminism. In fact, Black feminism is simply an imitation of traditional feminism. Weems (1993, 35) captures this point succinctly when she says:

Black feminism is some Africana women's futile attempt to fit into the constructs of an established White female paradigm. At best, Black feminism may relate to sexual discrimination outside of the Africana community, but cannot claim to resolve the critical problems within it which are influenced by racism and classism.

Despite variations in the source of their daily struggles (That is, Black/African or White Women), they both blame patriarchy for their inferior positions in society. For instance, while feminists in the West have focused on issues of reproduction and sexuality; the so-called African feminists have attached importance to heterosexuality, issues of motherhood as well as bread and butter issues, culture and power (1993, 38). However, both feminists in the West and the so-called

African feminists blame patriarchy for marginalizing them. But what is more worrying is that African feminists do not have a thorough-bred African theory to justify their claims. Instead, they use Western feminism as their template as well and they justify this use by arguing that feminism can be re-defined to suit the needs of Africana women.

My challenge with this thinking is that, it gives the impression that Africana people cannot invent and defend anything of their own but they can only discover and modify other people's ideas or theories. This is fortunately not true as Africana people are capable of inventing and defending their own ideas or theories. For instance, Africanas have successfully invented and defended the theory of *hunhu*, *ubuntu* or *botho* (as is the case with Southern Africa), *omundu* (as is the case with some countries in East Africa), *Umunna* and *Okra* (as is the case with some countries in West Africa, for instance, Nigeria and Ghana respectively) and *Ma'at* (as is the case with some countries in North Africa, for example, Egypt). These are theories that define Africa's ethical, metaphysical and epistemological thought. The theories attach importance to the value of group belonging and collective responsibility sub-summed under communalism. The theory proceeds by noting that the importance or value of any person can only be expressed through that person's contribution to the betterment of the group. A *hunhu* or *ubuntu* theory says, *munhu munhu muvanhu* or *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* (a person is a person through other persons). A *hunhu* or *ubuntu* theory does not create gender binaries as is the case with feminism which divides people based on biology and sexuality. It prefers to focus on roles and responsibilities of men and women which roles point to the fact that men and women work together for the betterment of their communities. Thus, *hunhu* or *ubuntu* is a world view...and a way of life for the African (MANGENA 2012, 11).

It is from such African moral theories as *hunhu* or *ubuntu* that Africana women like Weems have successfully invented and defended *Africana womanism* in the face of stiff resistance from the so-called Black feminists or African feminists whose main agenda is Western. By definition, *Africana womanism* is an ideology created and designed for all women of Africana descent and it is grounded in African culture, and therefore, it necessarily focuses on the unique experiences, struggles, needs and desires of African women (WEEMS 1993, 22). As Weems maintains, *Africana womanism* sits well with the cultures of sub-Saharan Africa because of its emphasis on the centrality of self-definition, self-naming and the place of the family or community (1993: 22). Weems remarks, thus:

Africana womanism emerged from the acknowledgement of a long standing authentic agenda for that group of women of African descent

who needed only to be properly named and officially defined according to their own unique historical and cultural matrix, one that would reflect the co-existence of a man and a woman in a concerted struggle for the survival of their entire family/community. (WEEMS 2007, 289)

The above paragraph shows that Africana womanism puts the interests of men and women, their families or communities ahead of the interests of individual men and individual women as is the case with feminism, including ecological feminism. Thus, any Africana woman who embraces feminism is most likely to be isolated by her peers at one end and vilified by those people whose ideas or theories she wants to embrace at the other end.

So, the problem with discovering and modifying theories and concepts like feminism to suit particular cultures like those of Africa are that an African (man or woman) cannot wholly own such theories and concepts making it difficult for him or her to fully identify with the theory. In most cases, the one who discovers the theory or idea cannot claim to belong to the inner circle of those who invented it— he or she remains cast as *the other*. It is like somebody who gatecrashes a wedding party and suddenly wants to control the wedding proceedings or wants to sit at the high table with the newly-weds.

The point I am putting across is that as a result of colonialism, some Africana women adopted the feminist discourse by white colonialists while others did not. Those who adopted feminism are the ones who today call themselves Black or African feminists and those who declined to associate themselves with feminism are today called Africana womanists. The latter decided to define their experiences and challenges in the context of their experiences, traditions and cultures. In other words, they did not look elsewhere for answers to their challenges. To this end, Weems (1993, 34) notes, thus:

Too many Blacks have taken the theoretical framework of “feminism” and have tried to make it fit their particular circumstances. Rather than create their own paradigm and name and define themselves, some Africana women, scholars in particular, have been persuaded by white feminists to adopt or adapt to the White concept and terminology of feminism. The real benefit of the amalgamation of Black feminism and White feminism goes to White feminists who can increase their power base by expanding their scope with the convenient consensus that sexism is their commonality and primary concern.

Patricia Hill Collins (1996, 11) highlights what she considers to be drawbacks to buying into a feminist ideology that is outside of one’s culture (1996, 11). First, she points out that gender works with racism to maintain oppression (1996, 11). Second, she argues that an acceptance of feminism by Africana women translates

into the rejection of Africana men, given the theoretical underpinnings of the movement (1996, 12). Remember at its formative stages, feminism was meant to challenge the American constitution which had given Africana men voting rights ahead of White women.

Any attempt by women of Africana descent to accept feminism leaving men alone to fight against racism and classicism will leave men vulnerable. Third, feminism is based on individualism rather than communalism and yet Africans are communal by orientation. Besides, communalism is a life style and value more akin to African Americans and continental Africans and their ancestry than individualism (1996, 12). As I mentioned earlier, this lifestyle and value is sub-summed under *hunhu* or *ubuntu* or *botho* (in Southern Africa), *omundu* (in some parts of East Africa), *ma'at* (in Egypt) and *Okra* (in Ghana) among others.

Those Africana women who have embraced feminism have done so for two reasons, (1) feminism's theoretical and methodological legitimacy in the academy and their desire to remain a legitimate part of the academic community, and (2) the absence of a suitable framework for their individual needs as Africana women (WEEMS 1993, 16). Collins (1996, 16) thinks that feminism cannot be a viable methodology for Black women. In particular, she challenges the acceptance of the concept of feminism *ipso facto* by Black women arguing that some of the characteristics of feminism are in conflict with the moral ethos of an oppressed people whose past is marred by the collective actions of the oppressor group (COLLINS 1996, 16).

In her full scale attack on feminism and by extension, African feminism; Filomina Chioma Steady argues that the designation *African feminism* is problematic as it naturally suggests an alignment with feminism, a concept that has been alien to the plight of Africana women from its inception (STEADY cited in WEEMS 1993, 17). This is particularly the case in reference to racism and classicism which are prevailing obstacles in the lives of Africana people. Steady puts it thus:

Regardless of one's position, the implications of the feminist movement for the black woman are complex... Several factors set the black woman apart as having a different order of priorities. She is oppressed not simply because of her sex but ostensibly because of her race, and for the majority, essentially because of their class. Women belong to different socio-economic groups and do not represent a universal category. Because the majority of black women are poor, there is likely to be some alienation from the middle class aspect of the women's movement which perceives feminism as an attack on men rather than on a system which thrives on inequality. (1993, 17)

What I can discern from the above paragraph by Steady is that by virtue of having a different order of priorities compared to those of White women, black women cannot be feminists. For instance, Black women are still fighting poverty, race and class and this is different from White women who overcame these evils a long time ago. Hence, feminism and more specifically, Black feminism or African feminism is extremely problematic as labels for the true Africana woman (WEEMS 1993, 16).

Is Ecological Feminism applicable in Africa, and among Africana women in the Diaspora?

To begin with, the history of feminism as presented above seems to show no connections between the oppression of women of Africana descent and the ill-treatment of nature. This is so because this history does not recognize the existence and contribution of Africana women in the feminist discourse in the first place. As noted above, feminism as a political movement that was meant to address the concerns of White women whose rights to vote were not respected. Later on, it spread to other spheres of life but its main thrust was to advance the interests of the White women. Thus, it was and still remains a project by and for White women even today. If this history is anything to go by, then it follows that ecological feminism is also a White women's project, for the simple reason that it is a type of feminism that seeks to link the oppression of women with the ill-treatment of nature.

While many academics uncritically adopt feminism, most Africana women, in general do not identify with the concept in its entirety and thus cannot see themselves as feminists (1993, 15). This also means that the conceptual connections between the dual dominations of women and nature as put by Warren are only cultural and not cross-cultural. That is, they only apply to Warren's context and not the context of Africa. For instance, traditional feminism cannot expand to include ecological feminism in sub-Saharan Africa since feminism by its nature is only a White women's project restricted to Western cultures. On the basis of this critique, a conclusion can be drawn from this premise that *–No Black African women are Ecological feminists.*

It is also not possible for ecological feminism to develop a distinctively feminist environmental ethic that can be applied across cultures given that most Africans do not identify with the concept of feminism because of its history and scope. In fact, most Africana women identify with Womanism and not Feminism. By extension, this also means that Africana women cannot identify with ecological feminism. It was easier for White women like Warren to coin the phrase *Ecological feminism* but this cannot be applied to sub-Saharan Africa in the sense that the genesis of the word "womanism" shows that there is no correlation between women's oppression at the hands of men and the ill-

treatment of nature. In her definition of womanism, Weems (1993, 21) observes that:

The term “woman,” and by extension “womanism,” is far more appropriate than female (“feminism”) because of one major distinction—only a female of the human race can be a woman. “Female,” on the other hand, can refer to a member of the animal or plant kingdom as well as to a member of the human race.

As the above paragraph shows, it is easier for feminists to talk of ecological feminism, than it is for Africana womanists to talk about the same without distorting African social and environmental realities and experiences given—as shown above—that the word “feminist” comes from the word “female” which applies to both human beings and animals or plants and yet as Weems put it above, womanism refers only to a female of the human race. Thinkers like White also believe that although the idea of conceptual frameworks cannot be ruled out in Western Europe, the only link or connection that exists is that between men and nature.

For White, this relationship is brought to bear by the advent of Science and Technology. Science and Technology—hitherto quite separate activities, joined to give mankind powers which, to judge by many of the ecologic effects, are out of control (WHITE 1967, Web. N. P.). This led men to conclude that they were superior to nature, contemptuous of it, willing to use it to their slightest whim (WHITE 1967, Web. N. P.). No attempt is made to look at the connection between men and women. This also means that Warren’s idea of *Oppressive Conceptual Frameworks* when pitched against this position is found wanting. Warren’s *Oppressive Conceptual Frameworks* are also found wanting in that they are out of sync with African social and environmental realities.

In sub-Saharan Africa, the environment is owned by the ancestral spirits. In Shona culture, in particular, these ancestral spirits are referred to as *varidzi ve masango* (custodians of the environment and its content). This means that human beings (men and women) have no control over the behavior of the environment to warrant a comparison between the oppression of women and the ill-treatment of the environment. It is also critical to note that in sub-Saharan Africa, men and women are victims of racism and classicism which means that there is no such thing as value-hierarchical thinking as men do not look at themselves as being of higher status or prestige than women. They consider women to be their equal partners in their fight against racism and classicism. Against this background, Joyce Ladner (cited in WEEMS 1993, 21) notes that “Black women do not perceive their enemy to be black men, but

rather the enemy is considered to be oppressive forces in the larger society which subjugate black men, women and children”.

The above arguments do not only eliminate value hierarchal thinking but the other two features of *Oppressive Conceptual Frameworks* as well, that is, value dualisms and the logic of domination which divides people based on both socially constructed characteristics and biological characteristics such as “reason and emotion” as well as “male and female” respectively. I argue that in sub-Saharan Africa such binaries do not exist as the emphasis is not on whether men are more rational than women or women are more emotional than men as is the case with Warren’s value dualisms and the logic of domination.

The emphasis is on how intellectual assets like “reason” and “emotion” can be used for the betterment of the community. These assets appeal at the community level than at individual level. Hence, we talk of communal/group rationality rather than individual rationality (MANGENA 2012, 10). In this kind of set up no one [male or female] can dominate the other. In fact, a man (the male category) can play the role of a mother to his sister’s children in the event that the biological mother is dead or absent and all mothers are women (the female category).

Conversely, a woman (the female category) can play the role of a father to her brother’s children in the event that the biological father has passed on and fathers are men (the male category) (MANGENA and MUHWATI 2013) What does this mean logically speaking? It probably means that if the argument I am presenting is pointing to the fact that feminism is out of sync with African realities/experiences, it follows necessarily that ecological feminism which is best explained by the three features of *Oppressive Conceptual Frameworks* discussed above is also out of sync with African realities/ experiences. Thus, the conclusion—*No Black African women are ecological feminists*—would follow with necessity.

Conclusion

This essay was an attempt to establish whether or not a conclusion can be drawn to the effect that there is something called African ecological feminism. The essay progressed through the use of Africana womanism as a theory and the deductive method in philosophy to draw its warranted conclusions. The argument was put thus, if it can be ascertained that there is something called Black or African feminism, then that there is African ecological feminism should be a matter of deduction. The essay began by presenting Warren’s ecological feminism before looking at the history of feminism and showing that this history precludes the values, experiences and aspirations of Africana women. By deduction, this automatically meant that the designations Black or African feminism were not conceivable as the suffix ‘feminism’ was and still is a foreign

concept. On the basis of this understanding, it was, therefore, easier to draw the conclusion: “No Black African women are ecological feminists.”

Relevant Literature

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