The Developing Socialist Ecofeminist Perspective of Rosa Luxemburg

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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Muncie, Indiana

May 1995

Expected date of graduation: May 6, 1995
An organic world view as described by Carolyn Merchant defines the earth, stars, and planets as a living organisms. The earth is seen as a nurturing, benevolent female who gives life and motion to its inhabitants. It has circulatory, reproductive, respiratory, and elimination systems. For example, earthquakes and volcanoes are related to the earth's elimination system and precious metals are considered to be the "offspring" of the marriage between the earth and the sun, with mines being the birth canal.

Those who subscribed to the organic world view had a great reverence for what they considered to be the Earth Mother. When things were taken from the earth it was of necessity and tribute was paid. According to Merchant:

The image of the earth as a living organism and nurturing mother served as a cultural constraint restricting the actions of human beings. One does not readily slay a mother, dig into her entrails for gold, or mutilate her body. As long as the earth was conceptualized as alive and sensitive, it could be considered a breach of human ethical behavior to carry out destructive acts against it.

Such a value system was practiced for hundreds of years by American Indian tribes and ancient cultures of the east and west, but was not destined to remain dominant.

The years between 1500 and 1700, saw a transformation take place which replaced the organic world view with the mechanistic world view. The scientific revolution gave people an alternate idea
of how the world operated. New scientific discovery seemed to rebuke former beliefs about the Earth Mother. It was found that matter is made of atoms, the sun is really the center of the solar system, and bodies obey the law of inertia. Merchant wrote:

The removal of animistic, organic assumptions about the cosmos constituted the death of nature—the most far-reaching effect of the scientific revolution. Because nature was now viewed as a system of dead, inert particles moved by external rather than inherent forces, the mechanical framework itself could legitimate the manipulation of nature. Moreover, as a conceptual framework, the mechanical order had associated with it a framework of values based on power, fully compatible with the directions taken by commercial capitalism.

The mechanistic world view prevails to this day, though not completely unchallenged. The organic world view has remained an important underlying tension to the mechanistic view and has surfaced throughout the years in variations including Romanticism, American transcendentalism, the German Nature philosophers, and the Karl Marx's early philosophy. Another variation can be seen in today's ecofeminists.

According to Starhawk:

The primary insight of ecofeminism is that all issues of oppression are interconnected, that to understand how to heal and liberate our world, we must look at the relationships between the various systems by which power is constructed. In an ecofeminist vision, there is no such thing as a struggle for women's right separate from a struggle to repair the living systems of the earth that sustain life or a struggle for equality along lines of race, culture, economics, ancestry, religion, sexual orientation, or physical
With this definition of ecofeminism, it may be said that although she never said so implicitly, nor could she have since this is new terminology, Rosa Luxemburg worked toward a socialist ecofeminist perspective. From her lifelong involvement in the socialist movement and her belief in government ownership of the means of production, it is apparent that Luxemburg was indeed a socialist.

What is not so obvious is that she also had the characteristics of an ecofeminist. Luxemburg, like ecofeminists, was unable to differentiate issues of oppression concerning the proletariat, women, nature, and colonized countries. One indication of the ecofeminist perspective of interrelatedness is found in the fact that Luxemburg often said that if she had not been born in a time of social upheaval she would have liked to have been a biologist. Luxemburg clearly saw no difference between the issues of domination and only chose to take up the cause of socialism because she thought a socialist revolution would be the most feasible way to bring an end to issues of oppression.

Her works provide hard evidence that she was unable to separate issues of oppression, and as a true ecofeminist, related all of these issues together in her mind. Through her letters about nature to Sophie Liebknecht and the numerous comparisons of nature to
humans in her political writings, a strong case is built for Luxemburg's being someone who believed in ecological principles and saw the interconnectedness of all life. Because of her unconventional relationship with her lover, Leo Jogiches, her response to the "Woman Question", and writings on feminism, it may also be argued that she was a feminist and saw women as being oppressed in her culture. Her writings on the proletariat and imperialism show a deep understanding of domination and align themselves with an ecofeminist perspective as well.

The conditions of Luxemburg's early life set the stage for her developing socialist ecofeminist perspective. Rosa Luxemburg was born on March 5, 1871 in Zamosc, Poland and moved with her family to Warsaw when she was three. At this time, Poland was being ruled by the harsh absolutism and despotism of the Russian regime which made conditions very rough on the people. Life was even more difficult for Polish Jews because they were seen as social outcasts. Jews were restricted by special laws, forced to live in ghettos, and were restricted from most professions. Luxemburg's family was Jewish. The adversity Luxemburg faced as a member of a persecuted religious group no doubt influenced her personality and probably served to make her all the more compassionate.

In Polish schools "Russianisation" attempts were made to
encourage the young Polish to become more like their rulers. It was hoped that this program would reduce the chances of Polish insurrection. At the school Rosa Luxemburg attended and in many others, Russianisation attempts were strongly opposed. High schools became hotbeds of political conspiracy and often led to student involvement in the socialist party. Luxemburg, whose political views were certainly influenced by this environment of domination, was one who became active in socialism.

In 1899, the police in Warsaw became aware of Luxemburg's involvement in revolutionary circles. Threatened with imprisonment or banishment to Siberia, Luxemburg and her comrades decided it would be best for her to leave the country and study abroad. After immigrating to Switzerland, Luxemburg attended the University of Zurich where she first studied natural science and mathematics, but then turned to political science. She quickly became involved in the working class movement in Zurich. It was there in Zurich's political emigre circles that Luxemburg met her lifelong companion and friend, Leo Jogiches.

There is no doubt that Luxemburg's early life conditions influenced the course of her life and her work and made her the sensitive person she was. Luxemburg faced many obstacles in her
life because of her religion, gender, political viewpoints, and physical handicap (She walked with a limp as a result of a childhood bone disease). Perhaps because of these obstacles, Luxemburg is depicted as a fighter by her biographer, Paul Frolich, who said:

She was always ready to take up the cause of the suffering and the oppressed; she felt doubly every blow that fell on others. The deepest sympathy with all those who were humiliated or wronged was the mainspring of her active life and was vibrant in her every word, even her loftiest theoretical abstraction.\(^\text{17}\)

Her logic and sympathy went beyond humankind and extended to all other things oppressed. Among these she identified nature. Luxemburg felt a strong connection to nature, as evidenced by her early interest in natural science at the University of Zurich and her unrealized desire to become a natural scientist.

Though she did not pursue a scientific career, this area retained an interest for her and she referred to her thwarted scientific career several times with a tinge of regret. She would lament in times of frustration that she should have stuck to botany because plants respond to the environment and natural laws than people do.\(^\text{18}\) She also said that she felt more at home in nature than at party conventions.\(^\text{19}\) This no doubt had something to do with the fact that she faced sexism with in the German Social Democratic Party (SPD). On another occasion she mentioned that she had one sole longing, not activity in politics, but to go around in spring fields gathering flowers
and classifying and entering them in her book.\textsuperscript{20}

Luxemburg wrote profusely about nature. Her letters to Sophie Liebknecht from Wronke and Breslau prisons, where she was incarcerated for her political activities, are overflowing with passages about nature. During her stay in prison, she indulged her love of nature and went into the detailed cataloging of a collector. She spent hours walking in the prison garden, sitting under trees, and observing the birds and all other forms of life.\textsuperscript{21}

But hers was not just a casual, romantic interest in nature. She wrote: "For my part, however, my interest in organic nature is almost morbid in its intensity."\textsuperscript{22} This quote shows the depth of her feeling for nature. She took this theme even further in the following quote: "I suppose I must be out of sorts to feel everything so deeply. Sometimes, however, it seems to me that I am not really a human being at all, but like a bird or a beast in human form."\textsuperscript{23} This quote is a strong defense for Luxemburg's having an ecofeminist perspective. Not only does she relate issues between the different species, but she feels such a strong connection that she actually feels that she is an animal at times.

She goes on to write:

But my innermost personality belongs more to my tomtits than to the comrades. This is not because, like so many spiritually bankrupt politicians, I seek refuge and find repose in nature. Far
from it, in nature at every turn I see so much cruelty that I suffer greatly.24

This statement is very significant. It, too, shows how Luxemburg was able to transcend her own species and sympathize with other creatures. She displays here the ecofeminist perspective of relating or connecting life at all levels. Her advanced formal operational thought allows her to compare the suffering of different beings and have feeling for them all. She knows the suffering of the proletariat as she knows the suffering found in nature such as the inhumane treatment of animals. She is truly passionate about life in all forms.

Many examples of Luxemburg's ecofeminist perspective can be found in her works. A strong example of this perspective on found in the following quote on songbirds in a letter to Sophie Liebknecht:

Yesterday I was reading about the reasons for the disappearance of song birds in Germany. The spread of scientific forestry, horticulture, and agriculture, have cut them off from their nesting places and their food supply. More and more, with modern methods, we are doing away with hollow trees, wastelands, brushwood, fallen leaves. I felt sore at heart. I was not thinking so much about the loss of pleasure for human beings, but I was so much distressed at the idea of the stealthy and inexorable destruction of these defenseless little creatures that the tears came into my eyes. I was reminded of a book I read in Zurich, in which Professor Sieber describes the dying out of the Redskins in North America. Just like the birds, they have been gradually driven from their hunting grounds by civilized men.25

This quote displays the ecofeminist perspective of connecting all
forms of oppression. In her mind she saw as identical the problems of the songbirds and the Native Americans. While many people do not view the suffering of non-human life as important as that of humans, Luxemburg is deeply pained by both, which shows her holistic thinking.

Unfortunately, Luxemburg's observation on the declining number of songbirds continues to be a problem today. Stephen Nash documents the tragedy that is occurring today in many songbird species that spent some of their time in the United States in his article, "The Songbird Connection". 26

A study by the North American Breeding Bird Survey showed that there were declines of six to 78 per cent among a score of bird species between the years 1978 and 1987 alone. 27

There are several apparent reasons for this dramatic decrease in numbers. Many species that spend summers in the United States seem to be threatened by the deforestation of their winter habitats in Latin America. Forest fragmentation in the U.S. is also a problem because of cowbirds, a parasitic species which lives on the edges of forests. Cowbirds lower songbird populations by laying their eggs in songbird nests, sometimes destroying the songbird eggs. Even if no eggs are destroyed, hatchling cowbirds have developmental advantages over newly hatched songbird. A study conducted in Lake
Shelbyville, Illinois showed that cowbirds had parasitized 80 percent of the nests of all other species. 28

Grassroots efforts and some government regulation are being used to help stave off extinction. 29 Ecofeminists, not seeing difference between human and animal suffering, might well wonder why this tremendous decline in songbird numbers has received such little publicity and action. They might also wonder what the plight of the songbird means for humans since in the web of life smaller species are quick indicators of the state of the environment.

The case for Luxemburg having an ecofeminist perspective is further strengthened by her writings. She shows her immense compassion for all forms of life when she tells Sophie Liebknecht about a great peacock butterfly which had worn itself out fluttering against the window pane in the prison bathroom. She wrote:

Directly I noticed it, I dressed myself, trembling with impatience, climbed up to the window and took it cautiously in my hand. It had ceased to move, and I thought it must be dead. But I took it to my own room and put it on the outside window sill, to see if it would revive. There was again a gentle fluttering for a little, but after that the insect did not move. I laid a few flowers in front of its antennae, so that it might have something to eat. 30

The butterfly revived and was able to fly off.

The fact that Luxemburg made a special attempt to help this suffering creature that most others would barely have noticed, let
alone nursed back to health, is indicative of her philosophy of interconnectedness. She could not stand to see anything, not even insects, suffer.

She gives another example of this philosophy in her quote on the poor treatment of buffaloes that, as spoils of an imperialistic war, were used as beasts of burden by her German captors. The buffaloes were treated very severely by the driver and were made to haul unbearable loads of goods into the prison.31 The one that was bleeding had an expression on its black face and in its soft black eyes like that of a weeping child—one that has been severely thrashed and does not know why, nor how to escape from the torment of ill-treatment. I stood in front of the team; the beast looked at me; the tears welled from my own eyes. The suffering of a dearly loved brother could hardly have moved me more profoundly than I was moved by my impotence in face of this mute agony.32

This again shows her philosophy of interconnectedness. The phrase which compares a brother to the buffalo is especially poignant and indicative of her thinking.

A final example shows Luxemburg's ecofeminist inability to separate issues of suffering and desire to help those oppressed:

Take the following episode, which I shall never forget. Last spring I was returning from a country walk when, in the quiet empty road, I noticed a small dark patch on the ground. Leaning forward I witnessed a voiceless tragedy. A large beetle was lying on its back and waving its legs helplessly, while a crowd of little ants were swarming round it and eating it alive! I was horror stricken, so I took my pocket handkerchief and began to flick the little brutes away. They were so bold and stubborn that it took me
some time, and when at length I had freed the poor wretch of a
beetle and had carried it to a safe distance on the grass, two of its
legs had already been gnawed off...³³

Luxemburg's political writings are also filled with comparisons of
nature and humans. This further proves her inability to separate
issues of dominance. Comparisons of animals and plants to humans
were easy for her to make since she saw all life as interrelated and
issues of oppression the same for nature and people.

In her work, "Against Capital Punishment", she defended
convicted proletariats and argued that they should not receive harsh
punishment for petty crimes, especially when the real criminals, war
profiteers, escaped with no penalty.³⁴ She made the statement that:

The justice of the bourgeois classes had again been like a net,
which allowed the voracious sharks to escape, while the little
sardines were caught. The profiteers who have realized millions
during the war have been acquitted or let off with ridiculous
penalties. The little thieves, men and women, have been
punished with sentences of Draconian severity.³⁵

The image of this quote is powerful and shows an ecofeminist
perspective by relating the proletariat to sardines. She clearly saw
the issues of powerless people being trapped in an unfair criminal
justice system over which they had no control and fish being trapped
in a net as being identical in nature. Both were issues of oppression.

In a similar vein, Luxemburg directly links flowers to the
proletariat and bourgouise in another letter to Sophie Liebknecht.
Her descriptions of the flowers give much insight as to her feelings on the social classes. Her preference for the simple, common dandelion over the more ornate orchid is indicative of her political views. She said:

"Their slender grace and their fantastic, almost unnatural forms make them seem to me over-refined and decadent. They produce on me the impression of a dainty marquise of the powder-and-patch period.

The admiration I feel for them has to encounter an internal resistance, and is attended with a certain uneasiness, for by disposition I am antagonistic to everything decadent and perverse. A common dandelion gives me far more pleasure. It has so much sunshine in its colour; like me it expands gratefully in the sun, and furls its petals shyly at the least shade."

It is interesting that while musing over plants in a letter to a friend that Luxemburg would go into such a detailed analysis of what the flowers represented to her. The fact that she did this is one more indication that she was an ecofeminist thinker and saw all forms of life as connected.

A final example of Luxemburg using nature comparisons in her political writings is found in her handbill entitled "Dog Politics" in which she compared Marxist revisionists to dogs. The handbill, written in defense of her colleague Karl Liebknecht, shows Luxemburg's anger at the changes taking place in the German Social Democratic Party. Some party leaders such as Karl Kautsky and Eduard Bernstein had revisionist ideas and were working toward and
evolutionary parliamentary form of socialism. Luxemburg thought this was a betrayal to Marx's dialectic since it aimed at immediate goals such as improvements in the living condition of the proletariat and let the ultimate socialist goals fall by the wayside. These revisionists were showing a willingness to work under the capitalist system and in so doing, in her opinion, were abandoning the original concept of ending the exploitation of the proletariat under the capitalist system. She criticizes this turn of direction in the party in the following quote:

A dog is someone who licks the boots of the master who has dealt him kicks for decades.
A dog is someone who gaily wags his tail in the muzzle of martial law and looks straight into the eyes of the lords of the military dictatorship while softly whining for mercy.
A dog is someone who barks raucously at a man in his absence, even a man in fetters, and thereby acts as a retriever for whoever is in power at the time.
A dog is someone who, at his government's command, abjures, slobbers, and tramples down into the muck the whole history of his party and everything it has held sacred for a generation.

Luxemburg powerfully uses the image of a dog in describing members of her own party in this quote. Though she is sharply critical of the dog or revisionists, she interestingly still show sympathy and pity for them.

It has been shown through analysis of quotes that Luxemburg makes a connection between the domination of humans and that of
nature. Her logic in this area seems to be consistent in that she is an advocate for victims. She sees a connection between the subordination of animals by their human captors and humans dominating other humans.

The theme of human domination of animals seems to be reoccurring throughout history. One example of the domination of animals by men is the story of the "Great Cat Massacre."\(^{41}\) In this instance the workers of a French print shop in the 1730s are angry because of their deplorable living conditions. They were given scraps of food from their master's table to eat and sometimes the cook would sell these scraps and give the workers rotten cat food that the cats themselves would not eat. The workers felt that the cats were being given better treatment by their master than they were.\(^{42}\)

The workers decided to play a prank on the master by sneaking onto his bedroom roof and crying like a cat all night long for several nights in a row. The master, who had not been able to sleep during those nights, ordered the workers to get rid of the cats, which he held responsible for the commotion. The workers did not simply destroy the cats, but made a grotesque display of the killings in bitter protest of the preferential treatment the cats were given. The cats were bludgeoned or trapped and a mock trial was enacted by
the men in which the cats were found guilty and hung. The master and mistress witnessed part of this scene and were horrified. The workers, on the other hand, found it hysterical. In this case cats were tortured by men as a symbol of their own oppression.

The theme of animal oppression at the hands of humans remains alive today. Contemporary ecofeminists struggle with many issues in the modern world. Some choose to become vegetarians because they feel eating meat exploits animals and the land. Circuses and zoos are sometimes boycotted by ecofeminists who see these things as oppressors of animals. Using products that have been tested on animals is also an issue that ecofeminists must consider.

In addition to having ecological principals and being able to connect issues of oppression, Luxemburg may also be considered a feminist. She lived in a time period in which the "Woman Question" was being asked. This question arose with the industrial revolution and formed because of the changing roles of family members. Before the industrial revolution, most families worked together at home as a unit of production. Women were highly valued under this system because they possessed important skills which the men did not possess. Men's and women's labor was differentiated and each sex played an important role.

With industrialization, the unit of production moved outside
of the home. In some instances entire families had to work in factories to earn enough money for survival. If the family had enough children working and could afford it, they often chose to keep the mother at home tending to the domestic sphere, but her place there was no longer as highly valued. Industrialization made women's former roles such as cloth producer and seamstress obsolete by producing quality goods much more cheaply and quickly than could be done by hand.⁴⁵

The crux of the "Woman Question" then was what were women who were excluded from the men's working world and whose traditional skills were no longer valued, to do? Many of the women of Luxemburg's generation became severely depressed at this lack of focus in their lives. Jane Addams and Margaret Sanger both suffered from melancholy as a result of women's restricted roles during this time period. Fortunately Luxemburg and these women were able to overcome the "Woman Question" and to contribute to society.⁴⁶

Luxemburg faced this situation as she did all other situations of domination. She did not focus on women's rights specifically, because, as an ecofeminist, she saw all issues of domination as interrelated. She felt that capitalism was the cause of male chauvinism and patriarchy and that a socialist revolution was the way to could change things.⁴⁷ It was Luxemburg's policy to ignore
instances in which she was discriminated against in the SPD, just as she had always ignored the oppression she faced as a Jew. Most likely she did this because she wanted her political ideas to be taken seriously. She did not feel that her sex or religion had any bearing on her political goals and ideas.

Although she chose in the male-dominated SPD to ignore issues of sexism, this did not mean that she did not recognize it or that she agreed with it. In her personal and non-SPD settings, Luxemburg was an advocate for women's rights. She blatantly admitted her position as a feminist in a letter to Luise Kautsky. She wrote, "Are you coming for the women's conference? Just imagine, I have become a feminist!"48

Luxemburg's long-term relationship with Leo Jogiches is an excellent proof of her belief in the equality of men and women. Their relationship was one of equals with each respecting the other very highly. This type of relationship between a man and a woman was very unusual for the time period. Luxemburg's friend and colleague Clara Zetkin said of Jogiches,"He was one of those very masculine personalities-an extremely rare phenomenon these days-who can tolerate a great female personality in loyal and happy comradeship, without feeling her growth and development to be fetters on his own ego."49
Their relationship was also unconventional for the time period in the fact that they were lovers for many years but never got married or set up housekeeping together. Their relationship was based for years on letters and occasional visits, for most of their years together were not even spent in the same city.\textsuperscript{50}

Luxemburg and Jogiches were both intensely devoted to the socialism. They worked as a team for the socialist cause very effectively. Luxemburg sent her political works to Jogiches to be edited before she published them.\textsuperscript{51} He also helped her in organizational matters up until the 1905 revolution in Poland when she decided his opinions on organizational matters were no longer sacrosanct.\textsuperscript{52}

This collaborative working effort was unusual for the time as is the fact that Luxemburg gained more attention and prestige than her male partner. When Luxemburg moved to Berlin and got involved with the SPD, Jogiches stayed behind and remained, for the most part, out of the limelight. As Luxemburg's confidence and prestige in socialist circles increased, more tension seemed to develop in her relationship with Jogiches.\textsuperscript{53} Luxemburg's more prestigious position could likely be part of the reason for her ultimate split from Jogiches.

Though Luxemburg was esteemed in the party she did encounter sexism. When she went to Germany, the leading center of Social
Democracy to work with the SPD, she was already a theoretician, activist, and editor of a Polish socialist paper. She was given a position as editor of a socialist newspaper and although she had previous experience, the male members of the party refused to grant her all the powers which had been granted to her male predecessor. Luxemburg ultimately resigned from this position with in a few months.

Another example of the sexism she faced occurred during the 1905 revolution in Poland which was then under the shackles of the tsarist empire. Luxemburg was anxious to go to Poland and be a part of history in the making and join her Jogiches and the other activists. Her German colleagues and even Jogiches did not want her to return to Poland during such tumultuous times. The issue of sexism was no longer hidden, but was blatantly directed toward her as she was continuously told that she faced more risks as a woman than did the male revolutionary emigres who were returning to Poland. Luxemburg's feminist perspective in further established by the fact that these types of arguments did not stop her and only insured her going.

Luxemburg also faced sexism in the fact that the SPD at first tried to limit her work to the "Woman Question." It was blatantly
sexist of the men of the party to assume that since Luxemburg was a woman she should be the one to study the role of women. She acted oblivious to the "Woman Question" because she refused to be pigeonholed into working just on it. She chose to work on the totality of the revolutionary goal and it was ultimately her classic work on revisionism that got her her standing in the party.60

The fact that she refused to be pigeonholed within the movement reinforces her position as an ecofeminist. She saw the interconnectedness of the domination all around her by men over women, nature, those of different religious groups, those of colonized countries, and the proletariat, but chose to focus on the entire socialist revolution as the means to end domination.

The sexism of the SPD members also surfaced behind Luxemburg’s back. As a woman in opposition to the orthodox party leadership, she was attacked more sharply than any male opponents were.61 When Luxemburg published and pamphlet on the Morocco crisis that angered some of her revisionist colleagues, Victor Adler wrote to August Bebel in a letter dated 5 August 1910:

The poisonous bitch will yet do a lot of damage, all the more because she is as clever as a monkey (blitsgescheit) while on the other hand her sense of responsibility is totally lacking and her only motive is an almost perverse desire for self-justification...62

Bebel replied to Adler: "With all the wretched female's squirts of
poison I wouldn't have the party without her."

It is very interesting to notice that Adler chose to describe Luxemburg as a monkey. Adler, as a man in a powerful party position is attacking both women and monkeys in the same sentence. This fits very well with the ecofeminist theme in that both women and animals are dominated by man. Luxemburg was oppressed as a woman in the SDP, as monkeys are dominated by men under the capitalist system in which imperialist greed for raw materials results in the destruction of the monkey's habitat. Some ecofeminists would also argue that monkeys are oppressed by men when they are taken from their natural habitats and made to live in zoos or to perform in circuses. Some believe that medical experimentation on monkeys is also a form of speciesist oppression.

Luxemburg's work dealing specifically with women also gives valuable evidence of her feminism. Luxemburg was brought together with Clara Zetkin, the acknowledged founder of women's liberation as a working class mass movement, over the fight against revisionism.65 She collaborated with the autonomous socialist women's movement of which Zetkin was in charge. "Die Gleichheit" (Equality), the Social Democratic women's paper was edited by Zetkin and Luxemburg frequently contributed articles.66

Luxemburg believed that socialism would bring the mental
rebirth of the proletariat woman since education and intelligence have become necessary for women in the economic mechanism.\textsuperscript{67}

Already by 1912, over 150,000 women belonged to German unions. As an advocate for women's involvement in the party she stressed the importance of women getting the vote. She felt that the reason bourgeois society abhorred and feared women's suffrage was that the female proletariat would advance the proletariat class struggle immensely.\textsuperscript{68} In a speech on female suffrage she said:

Women's suffrage is a horror and abomination for the present capitalist state because behind it stands millions of women who would strengthen the enemy within, i.e., revolutionary Social Democracy. If it were a matter of bourgeois ladies voting, the capitalist state could expect nothing but effective support for the reaction. Most of those bourgeois women who act like lionesses in the struggle against 'male prerogatives' would trot like docile lambs in the camp of conservative and clerical reaction if they had suffrage.\textsuperscript{69}

The usage of animal metaphors again appears in one of her political works. Interestingly, her quote turned out to be accurate in that women in America did tend to vote like their husbands after first being given suffrage.

In the same speech she also said: "Germany's present lack of rights for women is only one link in the chain of the reaction that Shackles the people's lives."\textsuperscript{70} This clearly shows her connected thinking. She realized that many other types of domination existed
and kept people down.

True to her ecofeminist form, she also connected the issue of women's political emancipation to the SPD specifically. In 1902 she wrote an article for the Leipziger Volkszeitung which said:

...with the political emancipation of women a strong fresh wind must also blow into its (Social Democracy's ) political and spiritual life, dispelling the suffocating atmosphere of the present philistine family life which unmistakably rubs off on our party members, too, the workers as well as the leaders. 71

This quote unmistakably shows that Luxemburg clearly did realize the sexist oppression in the party. She was sensitive to oppression in all levels.

Luxemburg's feelings on imperialism also work toward the views of today's socialist ecofeminists. Luxemburg identified Japan's attack on China in 1895 as imperialism even before this term was coined72. The invasion of China led to the scramble for colonies. With European intrusion into Asia and Africa, clearly a new stage of capitalist development, imperialism, had begun. 73

Luxemburg exhibited a flash of genius by identifying imperialism as the global shift in the world order.74 Imperialism and the global shift in power became the basis for her greatest theoretical work, Accumulation of Capital.75 In this work, Luxemburg linked Marx's idea of the ultimate failure of capitalist countries using non-
capitalists to the problem of capitalist accumulation and this is the
great accomplishment of her chief work. Marx stressed the fact
that capitalist intrusion into non-capitalist lands during times of
economic crisis was one of the most effective ways of overcoming the
period of hardship. Marx thought that capitalism would inevitably
perish when all places had been colonized and there was no longer
any possibility of further extending the market. However, he
theorized with ideal conditions including the proposition of a
completely capitalist society. Rosa Luxemburg proved, without
relying on Marx, that capitalism could not exist unless the possibility
of expansion were available.

Luxemburg was against imperialism as a socialist because it was
a function of advanced capitalism and she was also against it for
humanitarian reasons. She was strongly opposed to the subjugation
of weaker countries by more powerful ones. Her position relates to
the ecofeminist perspective expressed by Smohalla of the Columbian
Basin tribes of Indians: "You ask me to cut grass and make hay and
sell it, and be rich like the white men! But how dare I cut off my
mother's hair?"

A good example of Luxemburg's anti-imperialist stance is found
in her position on the Morocco incident. When the Germans arrived
in Morocco in 1911 with intentions of making it a colony, Luxemburg
was outraged at this act of imperial capitalism. She was outraged, too at the lack of a forceful response from the increasingly revisionist SPD, which she felt was too concerned with getting votes in the next election. The following quote, a reaction to the SPD line on the Morocco incident, illustrates this position very well. In addition to stating that the incident was a result of Germany's thirst for world power and militarism, she said:

Let us add that in the whole of the leaflet there is not one word about the native inhabitants of the colonies, not a word about their rights, interests, and sufferings because of international policy. The leaflet repeatedly speaks of 'England's splendid colonial policy' without mentioning the periodic famine and spread of typhoid in India, extermination of the Australian aborigines, and the hippopotamus-hide lash on the backs of the Egyptian fellah.

Clearly on the issue of imperialism Luxemburg has an ecofeminist perspective. She is outraged with the lack of consideration shown to colonized people both by imperialistic countries and her own party. She is able to relate to colonized peoples and empathizes with their sufferings. She obviously loathes the way in which capitalism oppressed people through imperialism.

She is even more vehemently opposed to imperialism in her work, "To the Proletariat Of All Lands" which appeared in "Die Rote Fahne" on 25 November 1918, in which she criticizes imperialism as a cause of World War One:

Imperialism of all countries does not know the meaning of an
'agreement'. It knows only one right; capital profit; only one language: the sword; only one method: force. And if imperialism in all countries, in yours as well as in ours, speaks of the 'League of Nations', 'disarmament', 'rights of the small nations', 'self-determination', this is only the rulers' usual mendacious claptrap, designed to lull the proletariat's vigilance. 81

She goes on to say in the same work, "Europe has been ruined by this heinous genocide. Twelve million corpses litter the horrible scenes of imperialist crimes. The Flower of youth and the people's manhood have been mowed down." 82 Again in this condemnation of imperialism, Luxemburg uses the language of nature.

The comparison of the imperialist slaughter to flowers being mowed down is very powerful. This is another proof of her ecofeminist perspective because it shows she related sufferings of people to those of nature and because it shows how she hated imperialism as a form of oppression.

She uses another nature reference in the work when she said, "That which the ruling classes are preparing as peace and justice is only a new work of brutal violence from out of which the Hydra of oppression, hate and bloody new wars raises its thousand heads." 83

In speaking of the conditions of prisoners in her work "Against Capital Punishment", Luxemburg mentions the "victims of the imperialistic war which pushed distress and misery to the very limit of intolerant virtue, victims of that frightful butchery of men which
let loose all the vilest instincts."84 She is, once again, displaying a deep empathy for life and exhibiting an ecofeminist perspective in relating to this suffering even though she is not an actual victim of it.

With imperialist oppression of people also came oppression of the environment and nature as industry demanded ever increasing amounts of natural resources. Luxemburg touches on this theme in her before mentioned quote about the deplorable treatment of buffaloes as spoils of an imperialistic war. She, however, did not live long enough to witness the full-fledged disastrous implications imposed on nature by imperial capitalism, and more generally, the long term effects of a change from an organic world view to a mechanistic perspective.

Today's ecofeminists and the world as a whole face a myriad of complicated, urgent problems such as deforestation of important forest and rain forest land, depletion of the ozone layer of the atmosphere, pollution of the sea and sky, extinction of species through destruction of habitat, and poisoning of the water table and foods through the application of chemical pesticides.

It is often women of lesser-developed counties who are hurt most directly by these problems. An example of this tragedy can be found in the exploitation of Malaysian women in the chocolate industry.85 It is mostly women who work in the chocolate industry
in Malaysia, spraying the cocoa trees with pesticides banned elsewhere in the world and harvesting the pesticide laced cocoa beans. These women do not even earn enough money to ever be able to purchase chocolate and are often plagued by illnesses including nosebleeds, coughing, vomiting, and cancer.86

Developments such as this have sparked strong reaction in recent years. With works such as Aldo Leopold's A Sand County Almanac and Rachel Carson's Silent Spring and the activities of those such as John Brower of the Sierra Club and Friends of the Earth and Petra Kelly of the German Green Party, much attention has been called to the destruction of the environment.

Ecofeminism, which as Starhawk said, views all issues of oppression as interrelated, has developed as a perspective out of this growing awareness of the oppression of the environment.87 Though Rosa Luxemburg lived before this term was coined, it can be said that she worked toward this perspective because her works are filled with proof that she saw all issues of domination and oppression as interrelated.

Luxemburg saw the oppression of animals to be just as horrible as the oppression of man, as evidenced by her aforementioned quote relating songbirds to Native Americans. She also worked as a feminist and clearly saw men's domination of women as wrong and
inherent to the capitalist system. Within the confines of the male dominated SPD she ignored the sexism that she faced in order to work toward the socialist revolution, that she believed would remedy issues of oppression, including the related oppression of the proletariat. Since the goals of socialism, in having the government control the means of production, are for everyone to enjoy a respectable standard of living and not for the few to become wealthy, the oppressive practice of imperialism would be discarded as well in Luxemburg's mind. Clearly Rosa Luxemburg saw all issues of oppression as interconnected and she saw socialism as the remedy of oppression.

She truly felt that the oppression knew no sex, species, race or social class. Because of the strong connections Luxemburg made in issues of dominance, it may be said that Rosa Luxemburg worked toward an ecofeminist perspective.


Endnotes


2. Ibid.


4. Ibid.


12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.


24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.


27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.


32. Ibid.


35. Ibid.


39. Ibid.


42. Ibid.

43. Ibid.


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70. Ibid.


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74. Ibid.

75. Ibid.


77. Ibid.


80. Ibid.


82. Ibid.

83. Ibid.


86. Ibid.