

Hultman & Pulé, "Ecological Masculinities: Theoretical Foundations and Practical Guidance"

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Book Review

Hultman, Martin and Paul M. Pulé. *Ecological Masculinities: Theoretical Foundations and Practical Guidance*. Routledge, 2018.

Is it masculine to dominate Nature? Is it feminine to care for the environment? Is it humanly to exert atrocities towards the other-than-human beings? Martin Hultman and Paul M. Pulé seek to explore the answers in their *Ecological Masculinities: Theoretical Foundations and Practical Guidance* which is a significant contribution towards the understanding of the correlation between men, masculinities and earth. The authors have carried out research on the societal presentation of masculinity and its impact on the environment in the cultural contexts of Sweden and Australia, where they were born and brought up. They have discerned a deep connection between environmental degradation and male domination. They proclaim that “climate change denialism epitomises white male effect” (22). In the context of patriarchal negligence of environment and nature, the principal aim of the book is “to help usher in a deep green future” (26).

The book consists of three sections, namely: Conceptual foundations, Four streams, and Ecological masculinities: an emerging conversation. Section One, comprising two chapters, briefly introduces the topic and organization of the book. Hultman and Pulé posit that “masculinities are structural, personal and unavoidably plural” (18). They present the significant issue of the conditioning of men in a malestream society: that society projects men to be emotionally empty, logically sound, and prone to exert power. The authors argue that traditional masculine conditioning “isolates and prepares boys to become human ‘doings’ (a.k.a. men as performers) in a way that distances men from their human ‘being-ness’ (40). Such social conditioning subsequently leads to male domination. The authors broach the concept of industrial/breadwinner masculinities which are associated with men engaged in profit-making through industrial works. Such masculinities are responsible for environmental injustices as they deny the harms taking place in and on nature. Contrarily, ecomodern masculinities are prevalent among men who take leadership roles in local, regional, and international environmental policy reform. However, ecological modernization has failed “because it has implemented inverted priorities, adhering to anthropocentric ideals of moderating human impacts on communities and Earth” (47). Criticizing both, the industrial/breadwinner masculinities and ecomodern masculinities, the authors discover them to be exacerbating “social inequities and environmental challenges” (50). Both forms of masculinities have failed to protect and preserve all life forms on this planet. Instead, they carry forward the legacy of malestream norms. Hence, the authors seek to project a third category of masculinities that “accelerates a shift towards heightened levels of care for the global commons” (51). This category has been named “ecological masculinities” (51).

by the authors. This type of masculinity, according to the authors, is more socially and environmentally connected than the industrial/breadwinner and ecomodern masculinities.

Section Two explores the range of existing views about men and masculinities in masculinities politics over four chapters. Chapter Three successfully exposes “the ways that male domination consolidates privilege, wealth, power and control over the means of production, women, non-binary/genderqueer people, as well as otherised men” (92) by introducing a plethora of studies ranging from profeminism to decolonization, from Christian dogmatic and environmental traditions to men’s mythopoetry and nature myth-making, and from gender equity to men’s rights groups. The authors reason that the references to Nature and Earthcare are secondary to the agendas that each of the positionalities holds dear. After a detailed survey on the various strands of masculinities politics, the authors turn towards the praxes which have discussed human-nature relationship at greater length. These concepts are namely: deep ecology, ecological feminism, and feminist care theory.

Chapter Four is all about understanding deep ecology from the perspective of ecological masculinities. The authors acknowledge that deep ecology has successfully instilled a new sense of nature in the mind of western people. However, deep ecology has failed to address the concept of ecological masculinities. The authors contend that “[i]n accentuating empathy, care and acknowledging the intrinsic value for all life, Næssian deep ecology effectively leapt over the gender question” (119). Instead, the authors turn towards ecological feminism and its associated ecofeminist practices to discover the treatment of masculinities issues in the context of nature/environment.

Chapter Five discusses ecological feminism, which is vocal about the oppression of women and the earth by men under the influence of masculinities. The authors contend that ecofeminists have deprived men and masculinities from “roles as ecofeminist allies and compatriots in support of a deep green future” (154) by focusing solely on the destructiveness of “hegemonic masculinities and its supporting structures” (154). The possibility of offering care by men has been largely ignored by the ecological feminism. From here the authors turn towards feminist care theory to discuss the treatment of men and masculinities there.

In Chapter Six, the authors express the view that hegemonic masculinities prohibit men to offer care to others. They contend that “male domination places expectations on men to fight with each other and the world in a struggle for supremacy” (177). Whenever men express care, their masculinity gets questioned by society. The authors argue that society encourages in men an instrumental care for families, communities and certain elements of their lives. This type of care is missing in men’s attitude to nature. Consequently, many modern Western men fail to assume social or environmental responsibility. The priorities of financial gain and social status has made men blind to the ecological consequences of their actions. The authors deplore the fact that men

are raised since childhood as “‘human doings’ rather than ‘human beings’” (180). Men need to grow softer, kinder, warmer and more caring to become fuller human beings and to feel that they are integral parts of this living planet.

The third section, comprising two chapters, upholds the ways for converting masculine hegemonisation to masculine ecologisation. In Chapter Seven, the authors contend that the choices of consumerist culture in western industrialized civilization have considerable impact on the “health and fecundity of both human and other-than-human life on Earth” (189). Hence, the authors demand a new possibility based on ecological awareness, gender equity, and caring. The previous chapters have adequately pointed to the key role played by men and masculinities in fostering social and environmental problems. Taking cue from these existing theories and praxes and discovering the gaps in them, the authors seek to formulate a new theory for “the benefit of all life” (190). However, this theory, according to the authors, is not absolutely innovative. Rather, they have been influenced by a plethora of ideas and a legion of theorists. The authors seek to project them to be a part of the “growing community of thinkers and actors who are seeking alternatives to masculine hegemonisation” (215).

In Chapter Eight, the authors argue that the previous thinkers have failed to provide “a comprehensive, conceptually rigorous or practically applicable ecologised masculinities theory” (231). They have kept themselves aloof from discussing the probable ways of applying masculine ecologisation in the daily lives of common people especially of male members. In order to bridge that gap, the authors offer the “ADAM-n model” (231). This model, according to the authors, can work as an alternative to masculine hegemonisation. The term “ADAM-n” intends to subvert the gendered norms portrayed by Christianity. The purpose of this model is “the transformation of masculinities (and men’s lives in particular) towards ecologisation” (231). The model is framed around five precepts, namely: Awareness, Deconstruction, Amendment, Modification, and New Masculinities. The authors offer an in-depth discussion on the five precepts one by one. By awareness the authors suggest prioritising “a willingness to look at an issue from as many sides as is possible in keeping your capacities for critical analysis engaged” (232). Men in society tend to become oppressors due to a lack of self-awareness. They are under the constant social compulsion to see themselves in power positions and gradually learn to isolate from the society. The precept of deconstruction is “a call to detect the ways that global, regional and local markets shape systems, communities and your own life” (234). It is supposed to question and analyze the impacts of malestream domination. The self-awareness and self-analysis invariably lead to amendment, the third precept as offered by the authors. Men are repeatedly found to be perpetrators of physical, sexual or emotional violence. According to them “[m]aking amends for the perpetration of violence and doing the work to prevent it from happening in the first place are vital steps in the masculine journey towards ecologisation” (236). The fifth precept of “ADAM-n model” is modification which the authors suggest is “a willingness to embrace new social

structures, behaviours and levels of emotional awareness” (237). It is the cultivation of and engaging in “thoughts, beliefs actions that support social and/or environmental justice” (237). The “n” in “ADAM-n model” suggests plurality of new masculinities which are supposed to emerge from the process of masculine ecologisation. This new type masculinity, the authors hope, would be able to subvert the hegemonic masculinity and celebrate “broader, deeper and wider care” (240). The authors wish new kinds of “Adam” to orient themselves in the “direction of a life of service” (240). They seek men to focus on four elements unique to each person, namely zeal, superpower, hurts and wish as their guiding principles in selecting vocation. Such type of chosen vocation is expected to provide fulfillment to a human being and can lend a positive impact on the global commons.

Hultman and Pulé have designed the five precepts of “ADAM-n model” to encourage men to engage in action not in mere thoughts. The precepts of “ADAM-n model” are expected to enable men to transcend from the limits of masculinities and the illusions of supremacy to the infinite possibilities of human being and care for the universe. This transcendence is required for the betterment of the society and for the empowerment of the self as well. This book assists readers in this transcendence by presenting theoretical precepts and practical guidance. Hence, the book can be of immense help for the critics of environmental studies and masculinity studies as well as of laymen who can use it as self-help book.

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