

Call for an Integration of Femininity and Masculinity: **Towards a Creation of an Ecological Future**

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Introduction

Three questions have bothered me for a long time, and those questions motivated me to do this research. The questions are:

Regarding the economy: Something is definitely wrong and unjust. But why?

Regarding environmental destruction: Why have we still not resolved this problem despite all the efforts we have made over decades?

Regarding gender: Why are women's voices not being heard or valued?

I now understand that the root cause of these three problems is the same: the lack of femininity. A review of the consciousness of the industrial society from the perspective of femininity and masculinity indicates that it is extremely biased towards masculinity. The lack of femininity also appears as the lack of the perspective of life. This masculine economy without the life perspective has been causing the problems we face today.

The ancient Chinese philosophy of Yin and Yang teaches that the dynamic interaction of Yin, or femininity, with Yang, or masculinity, is the nature of life, the ecosystem, and the entire universe. And harmonious integration of the two is the way towards prosperity. Thus, what we need now is to resurrect femininity and integrate it with masculinity. In particular, the consciousness of capitalism, which has created the industrial society, must be changed.

Then what should the integrated economy look like, and how can it be created? Unfortunately, there is hardly any research on this matter. In today's presentation, I will first discuss the masculine nature of capitalism and how it is related to environmental destruction and women's subordination. Then I will explore the integrated economy theoretically and through actual cases. Finally, the vital role of women in creating the integrated economy will be discussed.

1. Meanings of Femininity and Masculinity

A prominent Jungian psychologist, Hayao Kawai, said that dichotomy is the method that humanity created to understand the one reality of two opposite forces/values, and femininity-masculinity is the most successful one. There are many mythoi throughout the

world, in which the creation of the world and the cosmological principle are narrated as a marriage of a female deity and a male deity¹. In general, femininity stands for “soft” values and the regenerative principle of the Earth, and masculinity for “hard” values and the force which actively works on the Earth.

It was the I Ching that taught that everything in this universe is the manifestation of the dynamic interplay of the two opposite but complementary forces, Yin and Yang. Fritjof Capra, who pointed out the similarities between modern physics and the teachings of Yin and Yang, refers to Joseph Needham’s interpretation of “wu wei 無為” and explains that Yin is “feminine ecological consciousness which tries to harmonize with nature,” and Yang is “masculine self-assertive consciousness².” The ecological consciousness produces responsive, consolidating and cooperative activities, and the self-assertive consciousness produces aggressive, expansive, and competitive activities. Furthermore, Capra considers it feasible to connect the two complementary modes of mind, “the intuitive” and “the rational”, to “Yin” and “Yang” respectively. So he adds the characteristics of intuition such as synthesizing, holistic, and non-linear to Yin, and those of rationality such as linear, focused, analytic, and quantitative to Yang.

In agreement with Capra, I will use his interpretations in addition to the classical understandings of Yin and Yang.

2. Capitalism as Hyper-Masculine and Non-Life Economy

2.1 Economic Growth: The Main Cause of Environmental Destruction

In 1992, the United Nations named “unsustainable production and consumption” as one of the major causes of environmental destruction³. It was agreed to divert from the economic growth paradigm which is based on mass production, mass consumption, and mass disposal. However, even today, almost every country is aiming at economic growth. Countries which need to fulfil basic material needs may be excused, but why should the countries which already have more than enough? It is because the size of the economy determines the power in world politics and economy. The source of economic power is usually science and technology. The country which develops and merchandizes a new front-line technology will win supremacy over the world. A fierce competition is underway to be the winner. The engine which pushes this economy forward encompasses values like “expansion,” “hegemony,” “power,” “efficiency,” and “competition.” These are “masculine” values, or Yang. On the other hand, “feminine” values, or Yin, such as “compassion,” “empathy,” and “mutual prosperity” have been excluded as they do not bring any good to the economy under the jungle law. Thus, the extreme imbalance towards masculine values is the reason for today’s ecological crisis. Philosopher

and Catholic-Christian theologian Joe Holland calls the consciousness of the Western Modern and the industrial society “hyper-masculine.”

2.2 Hyper-Masculine Western Modern and Capitalism

Capitalism is the product of the Western Modern consciousness, which included the hierarchy-dualism which had previously existed.

The Western Modern, which started around the 16th century, was the era when the masculine consciousness played a major role. For example, the process of Scientific Revolution which Carolyn Merchant, a philosopher and historian of science, called “the death of nature,” was a very masculine project. The Scientific Revolution turned the organic and life-full character of nature into a machine, using the deductive method which was the function of masculine rationales such as “discrimination” and “categorization⁴,” but it did not incorporate the feminine perspective of “wholeness.” Together with Rene Descartes’s mind-body dualism, science became focused only on the material realm of the reality and constructed the mechanistic cosmology. As Francis Bacon envisaged, nature, which was symbolized as a woman, has become subject to man’s control and manipulation⁵. Correspondingly, the Enlightenment movement was the endeavor to pursue “rationality” and “self-reliance,” which are both masculine values. According to Holland, the concepts of “freedom” and “equality” also stem from the atomistic-mechanical cosmology; that is, “the universe is an aggregation of random movements of atoms.”

Capitalism had absorbed all these masculine values in its theory. Trying to be “scientific,” a theory of capitalism formulated the functions of economy by applying unrealistic mechanical presuppositions about the market and human activities. For example, its central concept, “a free market,” is an intervention-free market where everyone acts in accordance with his own will based on access to the same level of information and opportunity. However, there is no such market. Its economic agent is like a robot human called “homo economicus” which always acts rationally to pursue its maximum utility. Furthermore, people and land are reduced to labor force and rent, and sold at the market as commodities. Utilities are measured solely by quantifiable means such as money and materials, and the utilities like happiness and satisfaction, which cannot be quantified or universalized, are eliminated. Thus, human economic activities become disconnected from nature, which means that nature is just a place to extract natural resources and to dump wastes.

Yoshiro Tamanoi, an economist and the founder of the “Economics of Living Systems,” criticized such a mechanical and industrial basis for capitalism and its resulting alienation from nature and people’s livelihood. He claimed that the economy should be embedded within the ecological circuit⁶.

Since the late 20th century, capitalism has strengthened its masculinity in the form of

neo-liberal globalization together with the non-life science of artificial Intelligence and genetic engineering.

2.3 Capitalism and Women

It was eco-feminist scholars like Barbara Duden and Maria Mies, who revealed that formation of capitalism was the process of driving women away from important roles in society and the economy.

Eco-feminist theorist Starhawk believes that there is a strong connection between the storm of witch-hunting and the rise of male professionals in the 15th to 17th centuries. She describes how the knowledge of herbs and healing had fallen into the hands of male doctors after the extinguishment of women who were physicians and apothecaries in a village. The persecution of women who were playing a central role in unifying a peasant community, and the resulting fear of each other, caused fragmentation of the community. The peasants whose lives were already threatened by the Enclosure movement, started to desert the village and flew into the city, and in so doing, they contributed to the formation of capitalism as labor.

During the Industrial Revolution, women began to be confined to the house and were ordered to concentrate on “regenerating the labor force,” meaning delivering new workers and taking care of husbands. Thus, sexual division of labor was formulated, imposing on men production work outside the house, and on women, consumption and care inside the house. Subsequently, women and their work at home became of no value and were ranked beneath men and their work. As Tamanoi and Mies criticize, women and their work dealing with life matters became excluded from the theory⁷ and reality of capitalism, together with nature, which also fosters lives.

3. Limitations of The Masculine Economy

Until now, countries have claimed that environmental problems can be solved by technological innovations. Economic growth also is said to be possible by selling the new technology; therefore, both can be achieved. The Green New Deal of the Obama Administration and the “green economy” are examples. However, technological innovation has not been effective enough to improve the situation at a global level. The effect of new technologies has been overwhelmed by the expansion of the economy and population growth⁸. Needless to say, it is important to replace the existing facilities with more energy-efficient ones. However, as long as the replacement is done on the linear track of production, consumption, and disposal, it will only result in the same old routine of digging up natural resources and dumping wastes. The power game for supremacy will not change, either. Such schemes remain in the

hyper-masculine framework, and that is why the schemes have been failing.

Thanks to the feminism movement, more and more women are joining the business field. However, economic policy which lacks the perception of femininity and masculinity regards women solely as a labor force. For example, Prime Minister Abe of Japan encourages more women's employment by saying that he expects women to contribute to the economy by applying their women's perspective. What he means, however, is that he wants women to boost consumption for the sake of economic growth. And women also believe that working in business equally with men is women's liberation. Consequently, they try to accept the masculine rules and customs and strengthen their own masculinity in order to be successful. However, the result is not always happy for most of the women⁹. What is worse is that the market economy continues to expand, and the masculine economy is reinforced by women's participation.

4. Integrated Economy of Femininity and Masculinity

4.1 Femininity-Masculinity and Gender

Indeed, men have made the hyper-masculine economy. Then must it be women who resurrect femininity?

There have been heated debates as to whether or not there are differences in the way of thinking and the set of values between men and women. The answer seems to have been provided by the recent findings in brain science, neuroscience, and genetic psychology, which affirm the existence of differences. According to Susan Pinker, a developmental psychologist, men are more competitive in mathematics, space grasping ability, overlooking capability and concentration, and they opt to use competitive and offensive behaviors in order to consolidate their positions. On the other hand, women are more competitive in linguistic abilities, width of interest, compassion, care about vulnerable people, and they opt to avoid competition. What make those differences are hormones and brain functions. As more research is done, more gender differences will be scientifically discovered or confirmed. What is interesting is that these scientific findings confirm a good level of correlation between the characteristics of men and the characteristics that have been understood as masculine, and vice versa. This indicates that women have more feminine qualities than men.

However, it has also been discovered that these differences represent tendencies, and that every human being has both feminine characteristics and masculine ones. The degree to which each manifests depends on the person and/or the life experience.

These scientific findings indicate that not only can women play a big role in the resurrection of femininity, but men can also, by releasing their own femininity which is within

them. Both men and women should be liberated from the consciousness of traditional sexual stereotypes and customs which were defined by the patriarchy and the hierarchy-dualism.

4.2 Theoretical Vision of The Integrated Economy – “A Self-Reliant Community”

“A Self-Reliant Community” is the most important concept in the search for a sustainable economy. Not only Tamanoi, but also a French economist and advocate of the degrowth theory, Serge Latouche views the sustainable economy as a network of small self-reliant local economies. As the ecosystem is different from place to place, the economy which must be embedded in nature and society can achieve this only at a local level. This is a feminine vision which tries to identify itself with nature. “A Self-Reliant Community” is one in which people who share the same natural environment and culture try to make their livelihood by using resources available in the community with political autonomy. This shows a masculine consciousness of “self-Independence.” Thus “A Self-Reliant Community” can be considered an integrated economy of femininity and masculinity.

Furthermore, Latouche points out that such an economy resembles the women’s economy seen in a traditional society which is not affected by modernization. If so, it is easy to imagine how important women’s role will be in a future integrated economy.

4.3 Actual Cases Which are Considered the Integrated Economy

4.3.1 “Michi-no-Eki” Roadside Station (Japan)

Michi-no-Eki is the system of rest houses located on the open roads throughout Japan, equipped with restaurants and souvenir shops selling local products. Its best-selling products are fresh vegetables just collected in the morning and home-made processed food. Many of the foods are organic or grown with reduced amounts of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. They are supplied by female farmers, and many people come for “grandma’s taste.” The reason why the suppliers are women is that Michi-no-Eki was formerly a small farmer’s market or farm stand at which women sold some spare vegetables that they grew for their own family. The story of fresh, safe, tasty, and inexpensive food and vegetables spread by word of mouth, which attracted many people to the farmer’s market. Consequently, the local government set aside a budget to formalize the market as a station to promote local products. This became a very successful scheme involving both men and women. Now there are 1,154 Michi-no-Eki all over Japan selling a total of 250 billion yen, or 2.3 billion US Dollars.

Women are doing more than supplying the products to Michi-no-Eki. Through chatting with woman buyers, they obtain feedback about the products and what buyers want, and they use the information for the next production. Tasty home-grown food, direct and pleasant

communication between suppliers and buyers, being grounded in the region...This exemplifies the case where women's values and special qualifications are fostered by masculine qualifications of scaling-up and organization.

4.3.2 Ethical Fashion

Ethical fashion is the new movement initiated in France in 2004. Its concept is the same as that of fair trade, that is, to improve the way products are made in the third world countries in terms of human rights and environmental protection. Behind this is the fact that the makers are forced to work at a below-subsistence level of wages, and the environment is contaminated by the toxic substances discharged from the factory. Previously, there was so-called "fair trade fashion" but its design and functionality were limited. Ethical fashion has overcome this weakness by obtaining the participation of well-known fashion designers and major fashion brands which support the concept.

This movement aims not only to change the method of production but also to change consumers' behavior. As a result, ethical fashion has gained awareness among young people in particular, and some brands have opened stores even within major department stores. Ethical fashion brands are usually small in size, but the number of such brands is increasing. And those who lead this movement are predominantly women. Out of 15 ethical fashion brands in Japan in 2015, 14 were run by women. Most of them hold higher education degrees from university and above and have had working experience in business. Some joined after having discarded shining careers in banks and in big corporations. This can be viewed as a business which started with the feminine consciousness that wished for "fair fashion for humanity and the earth," and is expanding horizontally, led by the women who have nurtured the masculinity of "self-development." And now many male designers and consumers are joining this movement.

Conclusion

The perspectives of femininity and masculinity reveal a new direction towards an ecological future. Both men and women need to be aware of the importance of femininity and work together to resurrect it towards integration with masculinity.

The opportunity that women have in this project is immense. In fact, this project will not succeed without the active participation and leadership of women. Women's possibility is seen in the economy they make. Though I could introduce only two cases today, it is important to note that women's economy respects nature and life, is rooted in a region, and seeks co-prosperity instead of domination. As Latouche indicates, it can be a model of the sustainable economy. We need to determine how women's economy can be integrated with

masculinity, or whether is it already integrated. Likewise, feminine economy made by men should be researched and compared with women's economy. This study will also provide important insights.

Notes

- ¹ The examples are Shiva and Shakti in India, Izanagi and Izanami in Japan, and Barr and Anatu in the eastern Mediterranean region.
- ² UN Conference on Environment and Development. (1992). *Agenda 21*.
- ³ A biochemist and the authority of Chinese science history, Joseph Needham, interprets the meaning of “wu wei 無為” in Taoism as “refraining from the action contrary to nature.” Then he translates Lao Tzu’s statement: “By nonaction everything can be done” as “If one refrains from acting contrary to nature, or from going against the grain of things, one is in harmony with Tao and thus one’s actions will be successful.” From this, Capra understands that there are two types of human activity: activity in harmony with nature, and activity against the natural flow of things (Capra, 1982, p.37).
- ⁴ According to Hayao Kawai, “severance” is a typical function of masculinity. (Kawai, 1976, p.10). Capra also writes that “Rational thinking belongs to the realm of the intellect, whose function it is to discriminate, measure, and categorize.” “Therefore, rational knowledge tends to be fragmented” (Capra, 1982, p.38).
- ⁵ As Bacon wrote in his book “*Novum Organum*,” the knowledge of nature is the power to control and command nature. Using Bacon’s words, Merchant explains “His approach to experimentation is one in which nature is constrained by the “violence of impediments” and is made new by “art and the hand of man.” (Merchant, 2008, p.731)
- ⁶ While modern economics only deals with market phenomena and/or interprets all economic transactions as market ones, Tamanoi sheds light on the substantive meaning of the economy, which includes various types of non-market transactions. His vision covered not merely the market system or the market mechanism but the substantive economy as a whole, benignly embedded in the ecological environment. (Maruyama, 2006, p.73-74)
- ⁷ A Philosopher and Roman Catholic priest Ivan Illich discovered the unpaid labor existing outside the market activities but makes wage labor in the market possible. Illich named it “shadow work,” and its biggest example is household work. Shadow work is excluded from the theory of capitalism as it is not a part of the “formal economy,” i.e. market economy.
- ⁸ IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change). (2013-2014). *5th Assessment Report*.
- ⁹ Various studies show that women at the workplace encounter higher levels of stress than men, which result in negative health outcomes. Examples of such studies are:
Indiana University. (2015). *Women in mostly male workplaces exhibit psychological stress response*. Retrieved from EurekaAlert website.
https://www.eurekaalert.org/pub_releases/2015-08/iu-wim082215.php
Shimozeki, C. (2008). *Hataraku josei no kenkou to sutoresu no youin* [Health and the causes of the stress for working women][PDF file]. Retrieved August 13, 2019, from <http://group.dai-ichi-life.co.jp/dlri/ldi/report/rp0801.pdf>

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