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Image by Geoffrey Holland

## **Planetary Duty Is a Feminist Construct**

**Geoffrey Holland**

Have you noticed?

We humans can be very destructive. For the longest time, where nature is concerned, we've been takers rather than givers. We've become very efficient at ripping up the landscape and stripping the life from our oceans. On top of that, we produce massive quantities of every kind of trash and waste, much of it toxic to life.

The mindless way we defile our planet is pretty much the same way we've treated women all through written history. Planetary exploitation and misogyny are entrenched in the same, deeply flawed cultural construct. That would be male dominance. The world we know has been shaped pretty much entirely by men.

I grew up going to church school on Sundays. The Bible says a man's role is to dominate the land, and nature, and all the animals, and by the way, also women. The Bible tells us that women are inferior to men, and cannot be trusted by men, and that, on penalty of death, they must be submissive to men. Scriptures of other major religions, including the Torah and the Koran are also rooted in male dominance.

On a global scale, men have been shaping the human culture, oppressing women, and exploiting the environment for thousands of years. Our success as a species has come in spite of male dominance, not because of it. There is no denying that's how history has played out. No one knows how it might have gone if women had been given an equal place with men, as they seem to have had before recorded history, during several hundred thousand years of stone age evolution<sup>1</sup>. I suspect, if women had shared equally in shaping history, it might have been a lot less cruel and bloody. We can only guess at how an equal place for women over the past 2,000 years might have changed the course of human events.

Now, in the early part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we can apply a lot of scholarship and understanding of life on Earth to our ominous projections about the future. What we know is very unsettling. I'm from the baby boomer generation. When I was born, there were about 2.5 billion humans on Earth. From our beginnings as a distinct species, it took hundreds of thousands of years to get to 2.5 billion. Since then, just in my lifetime, our numbers have tripled to more than 7.6 billion. We are still adding about 75 million to our numbers annually...another billion every thirteen years. Every one of those additional humans needs food, water, and shelter to survive. But the Earth hasn't gotten any bigger.

It comes down to this: we humans are now dangerously outstripping our planet's ability to provide. For the first time in all of history, we face the possibility of global, civilizational collapse. This is not fake news. The evidence is overwhelming. It is everywhere, and is easily seen.

Our destructive ways have put us on an apocalyptic path.

We must mend our ways. We must work for a world that is life-affirming and sustainable.

We must become the change we wish for.

We are at a crossroads as consequential as the one that separates prehistoric humans from who we are now. Job one for humanity at this moment is to preserve, protect, and revitalize the biosphere we all depend on. The Earth is the only home we have ever known. Shouldn't each of us be prioritizing our duty to our planet?

Some of our leaders are preparing humans to go to Mars. The hell with Mars. It's 49 million miles from here. It doesn't have a breathable atmosphere. Doesn't it make sense to secure humanity's future here on Earth first?

Shouldn't we humans focus on finding a worthy course into the future? Shouldn't we all be working for the living generations to come? That is how our legacy can be life affirming and sustainable. The wise course looks first to nature for inspiration.

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<sup>1</sup> Devlin, H. (14 May 2015). [Early men and women were equal, say scientists](#). *The Guardian*.

Biologist Janine Benyus, author of the book, [\*Biomimicry\*](#), suggests these principles as a guide to how nature works...

1. Nature runs on sunlight
2. Nature uses only the energy it needs
3. Nature fits form to function
4. Nature recycles everything
5. Nature rewards cooperation
6. Nature banks on diversity
7. Nature demands local expertise
8. Nature curbs excesses within
9. Nature taps the power of limits

Making our human civilization work sustainably within our planet's ability to provide requires that we embrace these principles in shaping our course into the future.

My loyalty is to the human species and to life on Earth in general. I am a human being, who just happens to be male. Men and women are different in some ways, but our human needs are the same. We all depend on our Earth for life. There is no other place for us. Every human has an obligation to take care of the only home we know. I reject Biblical pronouncements that originated from the minds of men, all of whom lived 2,000 years ago. Their world view has no relevance to life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Instead, I am turning to feminist ideals to inform a world view grounded in the principles of nature.

Nurturing is a particularly feminist ideal. It's a concept born out of nature. Every one of us came out of a mother's womb. Women are directly connected to the rhythms of life. Women are our bridge to living in harmony with nature.

Living within our Earth's ability to provide starts with gender equality. Half of humanity is female. Women are not inferior to men. They are entitled to an equal place at the table with men. Shaping a future that is worthy of our species requires that women have an equal part in the process. A level, transparent playing field offers the best chance of elevating thoughtful, inspiring leaders, without regard to whether they are male, female, or transgender.

Jane Goodall, one of our most revered planetary citizens, has said, "You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make."

We all have an obligation. Every one of us must step up and embrace our planetary duty. It starts with celebrating our human connection with nature, by elevating women to an equal place in all we do.

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