

Dissertation Title: McFague's Perspective of Nature  
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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of my dissertation is to examine McFague's thinking on nature and to propose a model that may contribute to the better understanding of this thinking. I began my investigation by examining the understanding of nature in each period of time. This development reflects how man in each period looked at nature as such. However, the emphasis will be placed on the perspective of McFague on nature.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the age of Enlightenment, scientific and social progress had a great impact on the thinkers at that time. Mechanistic materialism, rationality, and scientific reductionism became the ideological cornerstones of this thinking. Human intellect and will were used to master and manage chaotic nature. This kind of worldview treated nature as a machine in the service of humankind. As a result, human and non-human nature are objectified, and valued only in utilitarian instrumental terms rather than for any intrinsic or spiritual value.

This mechanistic worldview has led to an extreme formulation of the spirit/matter dualism. This dualism separates the realm of mind from the realm of matter. It allowed man to treat matter as dead and completely separate from himself. It also encouraged man to see the material world as a multitude of different objects, assembled into a huge machine.

Moreover, it made man the source of all truth and the center of the world. It encouraged man to set himself up as one who constitutes himself. In short dualism considers nature as an object for the use or pleasure of those who were dominated by the reason category. It also promotes a denial of dependency, hyperseparation, and incorporation and results instrumentalism that allows the use of the other as a means to serve one's purpose.

According to McFague's view, this kind of thinking forms a knowledge-base that leads to the understanding of self and the world in terms of "subject" and "object" in the modern world. She further argued that this kind of thinking deceives the sight of man and makes man lose awareness of the sense of interdependence as well as making him refuse to acknowledge difference, and eventuating in an objectifying, controlling-gaze.

McFague proposes the subject-subjects model as alternative, based on the sense of touch and issuing in the "loving eye" knowledge of others that recognizes them as subjects in their own worlds, demanding our respect and calling for our care.

McFague believes that this subject-subjects model results in a more humane and healthy practice: treating the others, whether they are human being or the natural world as subject rather than as object. She claims that the reflection of this understanding model is to begin with the understanding of oneself, a self that is ecological and relational, a self

that can not exist apart from others—not an abstract, rationalistic sense of Descartes' self but a concrete and embodied sense.

From this point of view, our relation to the world depends on how we see the world, whether with an arrogant eye or loving eye. In the subject-subjects model, the self can not treat nature as a means. Hence the self recognizes nature as an end-in-itself. This kind of attitude in the self provides a sense of respect toward nature and thus brings the self to treat nature with respect.

In application to Christian practice, McFague suggests that a Christian spirituality of nature should be based on a subject-subjects model of being, knowing, and doing in place of the subject-object model of western culture. She believes that Christians should love nature as subject to subject as well.

I personally believe that if we can shift our worldview from the attitude of domination and control of nature to the one of respect and care, our approach to the use of nature will change too and thus create a sustainable development for our present world.