LIBERALISM AND AMERICAN FEMINISM:
THEORETICAL AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis takes issue with the common tendency of feminist theorists to equate "liberal" and "bourgeois" feminism. It sets out general liberal philosophic principles, and then examines mainstream American feminist ideas, showing that these ideas sometimes—though by no means always—fall outside the boundaries of liberal principles, strictly construed. Three different periods of American feminism are examined: the antebellum era, the Progressive era, and the post-1960 period. Antebellum feminism had its roots in American revolutionary principles, romanticism, and evangelicalism. Feminism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century included a number of features which can be summarized as "maternal"—the argument for various reforms rested on women's supposed moral superiority and maternal sensibilities. Modern mainstream feminism since the nineteen sixties has often drawn on ideas derived from radical feminism. This thesis stresses the complexity both of liberalism and of American feminism, and argues that a number of the features discussed shade off into illiberalism. The final chapter offers some critical comments on mainstream feminism in the light of liberal philosophic principles.

Abstract

Examiners:

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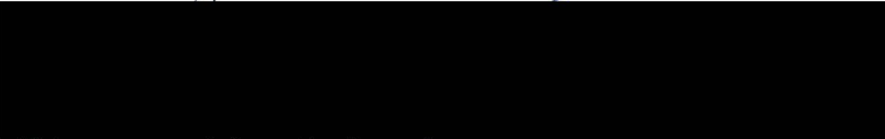

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Chapter One

I Introduction

What is liberal feminism? Judging by the radical and socialist feminist literature, there would not seem to be anything problematic in the question. Liberal feminism is based on individual rights, and is exemplified by American mainstream feminism. Writers may add that nineteenth century feminism had some "conservative" overtones, and point out that mainstream feminism has moved to the left since the 1960s. Still, for radical and socialist feminists, the essential line is between pro-capitalist, "bourgeois" feminism and anti-capitalist feminism. Differences among radical, Marxist, and "socialist" feminists—the latter advocating various amalgams of radical and Marxist-feminist ideas—are the subject of numerous debates,[1] but different strands of "bourgeois" feminism seldom receive detailed attention in radical and socialist feminist theory.

This thesis takes a different approach. It insists, first, that liberalism is far more complex than it is usually portrayed in feminist literature, and second, that past and present American mainstream feminism displays a number of features that a liberal would be wary of. Among the latter are a distaste for conventional politics, a distrust of individualism, an extreme readiness to use state intervention, an intolerance of opposition, and (most ironically) a stereotyped conception of womanhood. Of course, there is much in American mainstream feminism that is liberal, but the fact that certain features shade off into illiberalism should not be overlooked by either liberal or non-liberal feminists.

The impetus for writing this thesis came from a sense of dissatisfaction with the ways that liberal feminism has been treated in the literature. It is next to impossible to explore tensions within liberal feminism as long as it remains a common practice to spend a few paragraphs denouncing liberal feminism, and then get on to the real business—devoting the rest of a book or article to subtle points of socialist or radical feminist theory. However, even more lengthy attention to "liberal" feminism is not necessarily any guarantee that the complexities of liberal philosophic concerns will be addressed. "Liberal feminism" is often used as a catch-all for any feminism which does not meet the technical criteria for socialist or radical feminism, thus leaving unexplored the possibility that "bourgeois" feminism is not necessarily liberal.[2] Other times, liberalism will be defined as "possessive individualism."[3] This is a distorted characterization of liberalism at best and a quick way of trying to discredit liberalism—and liberal feminism. Finally, some suggest that "true feminism" or "fully developed feminism" must be socialist or radical;[4] this, too, puts liberal feminism out of the running a priori.

It is easy to find evidence of the profoundly anti-liberal climate of academic feminist political and philosophic theory. Critics seldom cite anyone other than C.B. Macpherson on the meaning of the liberal tradition, which is roughly comparable to relying on a liberal or conservative as the sole source for an interpretation of Marxism. Janet Radcliffe Richards' The Sceptical Feminist came out in 1980 and presents the most sustained argument for one form of liberal feminism since John Stuart Mill's The Subjection of Women. Richards' book has not even been reviewed in such

major feminist journals as Signs, Women's Studies, or Feminist Studies, although it received favourable reviews in The Philosophical Quarterly, Philosophy, and The Times Literary Supplement.[5] Even Judith Hughes' and Mary Midgley's Women's Choices (1983), which offers a more conventional left-liberal approach (or social democratic approach, depending on where one wishes to draw the boundary), has received little attention. Meanwhile, articles are published which reach the predictable conclusion, as one critic put it, that "Poor Mr. Mill's problem, it seems, was that he was not a Marxist,"[6] and textbooks on women's studies ask such stilted questions as:

> Why is freedom in the sense of freedom from governmental interference so insufficient for the liberation of women?

and:

> Why have feminists so often looked to socialism for ideas on what a feminist economic program would be like?[7]

Such questions do not lead to an open-minded comparison of forms of feminism.

Zillah Eisenstein's The Radical Future of Liberal Feminism (1981) is another case in point. The aim of the book is to convert mainstream feminists to her hybrid of semi-Marxist and radical feminism.[8] The connecting thread is supposedly that all feminism is rooted in liberalism, but that one needs to distinguish between "individualism"—the liberal ideal—and "individuality"—the socialist feminist objective: that is, the valuable kernel of liberalism can only develop properly when transformed into socialist feminism. Eisenstein starts by describing liberalism as "individualist and patriarchal in structure and ideology" and feminism as "sexually egalitarian and collectivist,"[9] thereby making her entire argument, that liberal feminism is intrinsically flawed, tautological.

At times her discussion appears to be little more than an elaborate exercise in illustrating the obvious: that liberal feminists are not socialists.

When it comes to definitions, although Eisenstein does give a brief account of general liberal principles, she also says that "liberal feminism can best be understood as what Betty Friedan calls 'mainstream feminism'"[10] and neglects to compare mainstream feminism with liberal principles, except insofar as she looks for radical feminist influences on mainstream feminism. To further complicate matters, Eisenstein's chapter on Locke rests squarely on C.B. Macpherson's possessive individualist interpretation. In short, despite references to liberal philosophic principles, Eisenstein tends to label anyone who is not a socialist or radical feminist a "liberal" feminist, with the meaning of "liberal" shifting about in different contexts.[11]

The Radical Future of Liberal Feminism is, at present, the only book-length assessment of philosophic liberal feminism. That it should have been highly praised in the feminist press[12] in itself says something about an academic atmosphere which is less than sensitive to the nuances of liberalism. A liberal feminist is not a woolly-minded would-be socialist feminist who only needs a bit more enlightenment; a liberal feminist is someone with a distinct political philosophy.

One might reply to such accounts of liberal feminism by citing a standard list of liberal objections to Marxism, and pointing out the applicability of such objections to radical and socialist feminism. However, it would be a rather tedious exercise to rehearse the basic liberal vs. Marxist arguments yet again. It will be more useful to sketch in liberal philosophic concerns, and then to document the complexity of American

mainstream feminism. This will not only show that many socialist and radical feminist accounts of liberalism and mainstream feminism are overly simplistic, but it opens up mainstream feminism to a liberal critique. That brings in a second theme: it is not only radical and socialist feminists who have cause to be dissatisfied with mainstream feminist arguments; a liberal might also be dissatisfied with some of the arguments, albeit for different reasons.

This thesis will point out some problems with mainstream feminism as seen from a liberal perspective, but it does not undertake to develop liberal feminist theory further. That liberal feminism is capable of further development (without attempting to transmute it into semi-Marxist socialism, as Zillah Eisenstein does) has been hinted at by Elaine Spitz,[13] and illustrated in different ways by British authors Janet Radcliffe Richards, and Mary Midgley and Judith Hughes. The general arguments of neoliberals in the United States also present possibilities. However, this thesis makes only brief reference to these departures from orthodox American mainstream feminism. Instead, it illustrates that, if one starts with a framework of basic liberal principles and then examines the actual content of American mainstream feminism, it becomes clear that there are both liberal and non-liberal strands in American mainstream feminism. These strands are significant from a liberal philosophic and political perspective, but they do not even show up as non-liberal if one uses the terms "liberal" and "bourgeois" feminism interchangeably.

The bulk of this chapter will be devoted to a discussion of liberal principles, with a shorter section on how liberal feminism is derived from

basic liberal principles. There will also be a brief discussion of definitions of feminism. The second chapter has three main parts. First, John Stuart Mill's main feminist ideas are outlined, as the clearest example of classical liberal feminism. Then, elements of antebellum American feminism are described. These include American revolutionary principles, evangelicalism, and romanticism. Finally, late nineteenth and early twentieth century feminist ideas are described, with particular attention to elitism and "maternal feminist" themes. The third chapter takes up the subject of mainstream American feminism since the 1960s, pointing out its theoretical eclecticism and the influence of radical feminism. The fourth chapter offers comments on a number of aspects of past and present American mainstream feminism, starting with certain historical considerations, and then moving on to more directly political concerns.

II Aspects of Liberalism

The term "liberal" means different things to different people, both in everyday speech and in academic discourse. Here the term will be used to refer to the Anglo-American philosophic tradition associated most prominently with John Locke, John Stuart Mill, and, in the twentieth century, Isaiah Berlin. There are obviously great differences in a tradition that spans two continents and has been evolving for three hundred years; and it does not help that what might be called the liberal style runs more to writing essays on diverse subjects than to coherent system-building.[14] Still, it is possible to outline in a general way the major premises and principles of liberalism.

Phillip Abbott has described the central idea of liberalism as "individuals pursuing freely-chosen life plans."[15] He adds two significant corollaries: the plurality of forms of the good life; and, partly in consequence of that, the permanent potential for conflict in human society. The belief that there are many paths to self-fulfillment makes liberals reject any doctrine—of the left or right—that suggests there is one true way of life that all people ought to follow. Liberals also accept that diverse paths will not automatically harmonize with or complement each other, so procedures for peaceful conflict resolution play a major role in liberal thinking about a good society. To the extent that self-fulfillment and peaceful conflict resolution are stressed, liberalism can be considered an optimistic doctrine; on the other hand, the belief that some conflict is an intrinsic feature of human society can give a pessimistic, anti-utopian cast to liberal thought.

Central concepts of liberalism are "freedom," "equality," and "rights." The question of how to define freedom is one of the most controversial matters in political theory. For the liberal, however, the root idea is non-interference.

> The fundamental sense of freedom is freedom from chains, from imprisonment, from enslavement by others. The rest is extension of this sense, or else metaphor.[16]

"The rest" includes "positive liberty" doctrines which define freedom in terms of self-realization. These doctrines, though invoked by some liberals, generally invite suspicion. Some say that one is only truly free to the extent that one is not stopped by "internal blocks" such as a weak will or false values from pursuing the right ends, and becoming what one

ought to be. But, who gets to define the right ends, and how much coercion is acceptable in getting the unenlightened to do what they should do, or unconsciously want to do? The standard liberal position is one that identifies freedom with what Berlin calls "negative liberty"—non-interference.

The quest for "positive liberty" usually means using the state to provide the conditions necessary to self-realization and/or the meaningful exercise of negative liberty. The "conditions" may include both material goods, as in the idea of a "welfare net," and "education," to instill the "proper" attitudes, personality traits, and moral values in people. State action in this regard makes liberals uneasy. Isaiah Berlin's concern was that doctrines of "self-realization" get twisted into justifications for a self-proclaimed moral and intellectual elite forcing their ideas on an unwilling populace. In his view, reference to "positive liberty" obscures the fact that the actions called for may directly violate "negative liberty," and that there is a "slippery slope" from self-realization to coerced conformity.

It is important to emphasize that liberals are not necessarily opposed to state intervention. What Berlin and others object to is obscuring its costs. The tendency to expand the term "liberty" to include the conditions for its effective use, so that, for instance, any increase in the standard of living is considered an increase in liberty, is to lose sight of what freedom involves.

> Nothing is gained by a confusion of terms. To avoid glaring inequality or widespread misery I am ready to sacrifice some or all, of my freedom: I may do so willingly and freely; but it is freedom that I am giving up.... I should be guilt-stricken, and rightly so, if I were not, in some circumstances,

> ready to make this sacrifice. But a sacrifice is not an increase in what is being sacrificed, namely freedom, however great the moral need or the compensation for it. Everything is what it is: liberty is liberty, not equality or fairness or justice or culture, or human happiness or a quiet conscience.[17]

The liberal concept of equality can be dealt with more quickly. Equality is seen as an abstract moral quality ("all men are created equal"), which entitles people to certain kinds of treatment, or rights. These are, roughly, political and civil rights, equal job and educational opportunities, and equal treatment under the law. This view of equality definitely does not encompass a commitment to levelling economic differences or securing "equality of condition." (Some liberals would limit the range of economic differences as one means of preventing the build up of concentrations of power, but that is a separate issue.[18]) In addition, it is important to distinguish between the modern liberal moral commitment to provide a welfare floor or national minimum standard of living for all members of society as a good in itself, and the advocacy of such policies as a first step in levelling economic differences.[19]

It should be noted that, for liberals, equality of opportunity does not imply equality of results. People differ in talents, fields of interest, social background, dedication, ambition, and luck. Ideally, equality of opportunity gives a person a chance to find a job which suits him or her, and gives access to jobs on the basis of merit, as opposed to sex, class, race, or the right connections. It does not imply that everyone will get to the top, or that all positions will be equally rewarded. The difference between equality of opportunity and equality of results in a certain statistical sense is also important. Simply put, if the test for equality

of opportunity is that the percentage of minority group members in every job category mirrors their percentage in the overall population, then equality of opportunity has been collapsed into equality of result, and the focus has shifted from the individual to the group.[20]

In most versions of liberalism, individual rights to life, liberty, and property (and sometimes, the pursuit of happiness) provide a framework within which a person can plan her life. In utilitarian versions of liberalism, natural or individual rights are disavowed, but something like the standard list of rights is often defended on utilitarian grounds, as in John Stuart Mill's On Liberty. As a result, the conventional view that individual rights are central to the liberal tradition will be accepted here, despite the fact that some utilitarians argued against the concept of natural rights.

All political theory rests on some view of human nature. Liberals emphasize the diversity of individual natures. People are thought to differ widely in such things as temperament, talents, and values. However, certain features of human nature stand out. Human beings are potentially rational, self-interest is a major motivating force in people's actions, people have a sense of fellow feeling or sympathy which serves as at least a partial counterweight to self-interest, personal conscience is important, and people have a capacity and urge for self-development, often explicitly moral development. Liberals believe that it is right and natural for people to want to make their own choices about their lives. Making one's own choices is supposed to encourage a sense of responsibility and develop a person's reasoning skills; people are thought to have a more intimate knowledge of

their own circumstances and preferences than anyone else, and therefore to be (in some respects at least) in a better position to make their own decisions; and making a decision for oneself is supposed to be intrinsically satisfying, apart from possible tangible benefits.

However, the liberal belief that, in general, people will try to further their own interests results in a profoundly distrustful attitude towards power. For liberals, power always needs to be limited in scope and carefully controlled because it is always possible that a powerholder will pursue his or her own good at the expense of those with less power. At the same time, it seems futile to try to abolish power altogether because it is so often in people's interests to try to gain it. In the liberal view, the best that can be done is to set up legitimate, observable, limited channels of authority, and to try to ensure that people abide by the rules.

Another liberal strategy is to try to put self-interest to work as an organizing principle of society, rather than trying to eliminate it completely as a motivating force in human affairs. Thus, one argument for private enterprise is that it leads to higher productivity and more innovations than socialized production does, to the benefit of both producers and consumers. (The other major liberal argument for private enterprise has to do with concentrations of power. Government ownership of the economy gives the state too much control over the lives of its citizens.) Within government, the theory of checks and balances, exemplified in the American constitution, gives various office holders a stake in preventing one another from expanding their power. Finally, in society at large, a multiplicity of private associations may, among other things, check and

balance each other's influence on the government, and give the individual a resource base to draw on in cases of conflict with powerholders.

The above discussion touches on a significant aspect of liberal beliefs about the nature of society. In contrast to outlooks which see government and the economy as two sides of the same coin, and claim that capital exercises control over cultural ideas and private life, liberals argue that government and the economy are separate things, that private life retains some autonomy, and that cultural ideas are in no simple sense determined by capital. (This is not to say that those with economic power do not wield considerable influence over the government and mass media.) Where some see society as a monolithic system of power, of capitalism, or patriarchy, or capitalist patriarchy, the liberal sees social pluralism, and emphasizes the diversity of social institutions. Thus, the liberal might speak of politics—not conceived as a system of oppression; the economy—noting that businesses vary widely in size and type of ownership, from large corporations, to family-owned small businesses, to co-operatives; the family—including non-traditional forms; churches; and various sorts of recreational, philanthropic, and cultural organizations. Equally important, what to the holistically-inclined observer may look like fragmentation of an individual's life is to the liberal evidence of diverse sources of self-fulfillment which do not have to be taken as one package. At the same time, where the holistically-inclined observer may see the diversity as an unwelcome source of social disunity and conflict, the liberal sees multiple sources of self-development and of power as crucial features of a good society.[21]

Liberal views of government are crucial to this thesis. One of the

most radical ideas of early liberals, now commonplace, was that government should rest on the consent of the governed. The idea of the social contract was meant to convey that government should be founded on consent, and that government should serve the interests of the whole people rather than inflicting widespread hardship and oppression for the benefit of the elite. The linking premise was that rational people would not consent to a government that seriously harmed their interests.[22]

Giovanni Sartori has called constitutional government the distinctive contribution of liberalism to political thought.[23] The root idea of constitutional government is "government by rules, not men," or more explicitly, that potential powerholders agree to abide by certain rules regarding the assumption of power, allowable actions while in power, and the time to leave office. The idea of the social contract is part of the background here. Also important is the idea of a loyal opposition: that it is possible to oppose the views of those in power without committing treason against the state, and that opponents should have a chance to gain power in free elections.[24]

Turning to day-to-day politics, liberals assume that people will frequently attempt to get governments to further their private interests, and day-to-day politics in a liberal state is likely to include a sizable component of pragmatic compromises and trade-offs. On the other hand, liberals recognize the need for public-spiritedness,[25] and call on people to rise above considerations of self-interest, for instance, to provide help for the needy, to pursue a morally justified but economically disadvantageous foreign policy, or to provide funds to support cultural institutions which

could not otherwise survive. Of course, the choice is not always between self-interest and altruism. A policy may be both morally praiseworthy and in the interests of a large number of people, for instance, government medical insurance and pension plans.

Ideally, the government takes various concerns into account. It notes criticism of proposed policies from a range of sources, such as opposition parties, the general public, interest groups, the media, and possibly commission reports and academic research, and tries to reach a decision which will deal with a problem effectively and with as few harmful side-effects as possible. Difficulties arise not only because in the real world what is politically practical may fall short of ideals (for reasons ranging from the need to placate powerful groups, to sheer lack of knowledge as to how to solve a problem, to lack of finances), but also because, as Isaiah Berlin pointed out, there is no guarantee that all good things are compatible. It is perfectly conceivable that two or more groups may have legitimate but partially or totally incompatible claims. Often, the best that can be done is to attempt to find a compromise, knowing that no group will be completely satisfied with the result.

Liberals have also argued that government has (or should have) an educative role, as legislative debates and hearings and government-commissioned reports bring issues to public attention.[26] In addition, government publications may directly provide information for the public. Finally, participation in politics is sometimes seen as a potential source of self-development, at least when a person devotes serious attention to thinking about public issues, or gets actively involved in politics.[27] Still, while

liberals do make reference to the more idealistic aspects of politics, the overall tone of liberal politics tends to be instrumental or pragmatic. It does not appeal to those who believe that politics should be based entirely on altruistic concern for the public interest (something which they find amazingly easy to identify), or to those who see the state as some kind of moral force, or the soul of the people incarnate.

Reason, or rationality, plays a major role in the liberal outlook, in several different aspects. Politically, the idea of enlightened self-interest—that people are capable of looking beyond their short-range interests to pursue some broader, longer-range goal—helps bridge the gap between self-interest and the public interest. A person can recognize the need for trade-offs and compromises, and the need to obey particular rules which may run counter to some of their interests, but are necessary to maintain a generally beneficial social framework.

Another way of looking at reason is to contrast it to either violence or emotional appeals as ways of solving problems or attaining social unity. From the liberal viewpoint, exemplified by John Locke, violence is not an acceptable way of dealing with problems except in truly desperate situations where powerholders seriously and persistently harm the public. As for emotional appeals, the difficulty is two-fold. First, such appeals can easily get out of hand as people get carried away in the heat of the moment. Sectarian hatreds are easily stirred up; they are not so easily healed. Second, emotional reactions are highly individual, and this can often result in stalemated arguments, where each side rests their case on emotions that others do not share. Reason is seen as a way of getting past individual

subjective reactions, on to the common ground of logic and evidence which any rational person would have to accept. (Of course, people may still have different values, and hence different preferences and priorities, but at least reason provides some common ground for discussion.) Reason may also serve to calm the debate somewhat, by getting people to think in terms of enlightened self-interest, and by cutting inflated rhetoric down to size with questions such as "What evidence do you have to support that contention?"

The brief reference to logic and rules of evidence hints at a cluster of liberal beliefs related to the fact/value distinction, a reason/emotion dualism, and a particular type of scientific method, resting on empirical experiments and a belief that there are such things as objective facts. This is not the place to get into a discussion of epistemological views associated with (but not exclusive to) liberalism, or whether other aspects of liberalism are separable from these views,[28] but it is necessary to mention liberal epistemology because it has come under attack from some non-liberal feminists.

Reason plays another role in the liberal outlook, as well:

> Liberalism as an ideal of civilization holds that discrimination must be made between better and worse. And the openness of a liberal culture to the new and different, its thirst for diversity and singularity in experience, presupposes the existence of a capacity to judge, to sift, to weigh evidence, and, in the end, to resist the meretricious. The logical condition for liberal pluralism is a belief in the supremacy of critical method. Otherwise, liberalism has no bounds and therefore no definition even of itself.[29]

That brings us to liberal views on morality. Several contemporary defenders of liberalism—not to mention opponents—have argued that what is central to liberalism is value-neutrality.[30] Leaving aside the familiar paradox that to proclaim no values is in itself to state a value preference,

this is a rather strange way to define a tradition which starts out with Locke defending freedom and toleration because an individual's immortal soul is at stake in how he conducts his life,[31] and moves on to Mill's famous—not to say notorious—statement that:

> It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied. And if the fool, or the pig, are of a different opinion, it is because they only know their own side of the comparison.[32]

Freedom of choice is a central value for Locke and Mill; they do not claim that all choices are equally worthwhile.

William Galston has argued that a justification for a liberal order would contain the following elements: social peace, rule of law, recognition of diversity, tendency towards inclusiveness (extending rights and privileges to all citizens), minimum decency (as against government brutality and poverty), affluence, scope for individual development, approximate justice, openness to truth, and respect for privacy.[33] He goes on to state that a liberal theory of virtue would rest on:

> the traits of character that an individual must possess if they are to uphold liberal institutions and to pursue their good within these institutions.[34]

Finally, he says that:

> But the error of critics such as Kristol and Habermas is perfectly understandable. In characterizing liberalism as morally empty, they are only taking contemporary defenders of liberalism at their word. If liberal society were merely a machine for the production and distribution of bountiful means to arbitrary ends, if it were fully detached from the promotion of excellence and the recognition of merit, if it wholly denied the responsibility of individuals for their own fate, if it truly taught that there are no moral limits to human activity, but only the restraints of selfish prudence, then the critics of liberalism would have an

> irresistible case.... But this is neither the truth of liberal society, clearly viewed, nor of liberal theory, properly conceived.[35]

A proper view of liberalism would give weight to the humanitarian goals pursued by liberals over the years, to the idea of personal conscience, and to such virtues as tolerance and compassion. It would highlight the liberal belief in the power of education to promote gradual, peaceful and yet deep reforms, and it would connect the strong aversion of liberals to violent change with the liberal respect for the individual. Life is a prerequisite to liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

If this description seems to have placed considerable emphasis on the moral aspects of liberalism, it is because, as a reviewer of Eldon J. Eisenach's <u>Two Worlds of Liberalism: Religion and Politics in Hobbes, Locke, and Mill</u>, put it:

> [For Eisenach], one-sided critics first impoverish liberalism (by paring it down to its least alluring part), and then accuse it of being poor.[36]

This is especially true of many socialist and radical feminist critics of liberalism and liberal feminism, who—although they may have a certain respect for "bourgeois rights"—nonetheless portray materialistic self-interest as the core of liberalism, and portray liberal individualism as so anti-social to be virtually incompatible with any sense of community.

It is true that liberals are somewhat wary of rhetoric about "the common good," but the reason for this is that such rhetoric has so often been used as the excuse for either a small elite to oppress a majority, or a majority to oppress a minority. It is also true that liberals are more inclined to limit the claims of the community upon the individual than

advocates of other political theories are, but that does not mean that liberals admit no claims at all. Indeed, liberals would not pay so much attention to finding means of containing and resolving conflicts if they did not think that it was important to maintain communities. In this connection, one needs to keep in mind a whole range of institutions and attitudes, from constitutional government, to the provision of various kinds of mediating services, to praise for the virtue of tolerance, to encouraging diverse activities to flourish, thereby increasing the possibilities that if a person finds one route to self-fulfillment blocked he or she will find another open. (However, as these examples indicate, liberals take a distinctive view of community, objecting in principle to authoritarian means of imposing social unity, and believing that those who think that under the right conditions there would not be any serious conflicts among members of a community are naively utopian.[37])

As for liberalism being "anti-social," that claim overlooks the importance of voluntary associations in liberal thought. Construing "associations" broadly, these include marriage, friendships, informal social circles, formal philanthropic, cultural, and recreational organizations, churches, political parties, co-operatives, and work-related organizations.[38] Limited obligations to an overarching community allow other forms of community to flourish.[39]

III Defining Feminism

Before turning to the question of how liberal feminism grows out of basic liberal principles, a prior question arises. What is feminism? So far, no one definition has become the standard. Definitions that specify

a belief that women are men's equals exclude "foremothers" who claimed only that women were less inferior than men said they were, and ought to be allowed to develop whatever talents they did have. Definitions which include a statement about "woman's nature," either similar to men in most respects or different from men in most respects, exclude those who do not adopt the same position. Finally, some definitions are blatantly partisan, framed so that only adherents of one political program can qualify as "genuine" or full-fledged feminists.

For purposes of this thesis, the intent is to define feminism broadly, in order to encompass both early and modern advocates of improving the status of women. The Oxford English Dictionary gives a definition well-suited to this purpose:

> the opinions and principles of the advocates of the extended recognition of the achievements and claims of women.[40]

Radical feminists might object that this definition does not go nearly far enough—their aim is to overthrow patriarchy, and that means changing the social, economic, political, and moral ordering of the entire world. However, a definition which specified those aims would cut off adherents of other branches of feminism. The definition given here includes at least the minimum goals of all branches of feminism, whatever else they may choose to add.

This thesis is concerned with differences between liberal and non-liberal feminism, so it may be helpful to briefly discuss terminology. "Mainstream feminism" has been used here for what is variously called "reformist," "moderate," "equal rights," "middle-class," "women's rights," and "bourgeois" feminism. These terms are often used interchangeably with

"liberal feminism," but one of the main points of this thesis is that mainstream feminism includes some non-liberal elements. Here, the term "liberal feminism" or "liberal feminism, strictly construed," refers to feminism which is clearly in keeping with liberal philosophic principles: that is, "liberal feminism" is a subcategory of mainstream feminism, not an equivalent term. What "mainstream feminism" excludes is clear-cut: socialist and radical feminism. Precisely where to draw the line between left liberalism and democratic socialism is somewhat problematic, but when authors call for the abolition of private property, they have stepped beyond the boundaries of liberalism.

The term "radical feminist" technically refers to someone who believes that patriarchy is the primary form of oppression, with "primary" meaning both "deepest" and "historically the first." This is in contrast to traditional Marxist feminism, which held that class oppression was primary and sexual oppression an outgrowth of it, which would be resolved—or would resolve itself—after class society had been abolished. "Socialist feminism" often refers to a particular type of feminist theory which began to emerge in the mid-seventies, among feminists who thought that Marxist theory did not give enough weight to "patriarchy" and that radical feminism did not give enough weight to capitalism as sources of oppression, and who sought to create a theory which would take into account the workings and interrelationships of both forms of oppression.[41] (This takeover of the generic term "socialist" can be somewhat confusing because there are also mixed-economy "welfare state" socialist feminists, as well as socialist feminists who show greater hostility toward capitalism than conventional welfare state socialists,

but who do not accept the various hybrids of Marxist and radical feminist views.[42] In this thesis, "socialist feminism" will refer to the various hybrids of Marxism and radical feminism, unless otherwise stated.)

IV Liberal Feminism

William Galston listed "social inclusiveness" as one feature of a liberal good society. In the case of liberal feminists, this has meant arguing that equal rights and opportunities should be extended to women. This principle derives from Enlightenment natural rights ideas. The Marquis de Condorcet put the basic argument succinctly in 1790:

> Now the rights of men result simply from the fact that they are sentient beings, capable of acquiring moral ideas and of reasoning concerning these ideas. Women, having these same qualities, must necessarily possess equal rights. Either no individual of the human species has true rights, or all have the same. And he who votes against the rights of another, of whatever religion, color, or sex, has thereby abjured his own.[43]

The difficulty of convincing opponents that women did indeed have "these same qualities" should not be underestimated. Feminists were faced with over two thousand years of philosophy and religion which asserted that women were naturally less rational and morally weaker than men.

The references to moral ideas and reasoning in the above quotation are significant. Mary Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, written in 1792, linked reason, virtue, and education. She argued that true morality rested on a reasoned understanding of moral principles. Women (or more accurately, middle and upper class girls) instead of being taught solid reasoning and useful household skills, were taught frivolous social accomplishments and superficial obedience to social mores for the sake of

their reputations. It was then said that women were by nature morally weaker, less rational, and in general less capable than men. Wollstonecraft argued that a solid, useful education would improve women's minds—a good in itself—and make them better companions to their husbands, better mothers, and better at running a household. She also argued that women should be taught job skills so that they could be self-supporting if necessary.[44] The dual emphasis on education as a means both to self development and to carrying out one's duties, was common in later feminist thought.

Earlier thinkers also helped lay the groundwork. One can go back as far as the writings of Descartes, whose argument that customs should be examined in the light of reason, and their usefulness evaluated, could be applied to analyses of woman's place. Mary Astell, an early British feminist, explicitly acknowledged the influence of Descartes on her thinking.[45] Customs which supposedly protected and benefitted women, from the type of education they received to marital property laws, often left women helpless and dependent.

What is sometimes called Lockean environmentalism was another important influence. Leaving aside the technical epistemological arguments, what filtered through at the popular level was the idea that many of the supposedly innate, stereotypically feminine characteristics attributed to women were in fact the result of the way girls were brought up.[46] Consequently, many of the defects in women's characters that moralists and satirists complained of could be overcome if women were brought up differently. One effect of this was to put opponents on the defensive: given their own premise that women's characters needed improving, how could they oppose educational

measures that would help the situation? This particular argument became less applicable as the nineteenth century wore on and feminists proclaimed that women were innately more moral than men (and hence less in need of character correction), but the broader argument that women had untapped potentials continued to be used. Narrow definitions of woman's sphere and woman's nature kept women from developing their talents.

Lockean social contract ideas also had implications for feminism. If patriarchal ideas about government could be challenged in regard to the public sphere, could not patriarchal ideas about the organization of marriage and family life also be challenged? Locke himself went some way towards challenging traditional views of marriage, hinting that marriage should be viewed as a secular contract rather than a divinely-ordained institution, suggesting limitations on a husband's authority over a wife, and stressing the mutual affection and joint interests of husband and wife.[47] Later feminists, of course, went much farther than Locke in rejecting Biblically-sanctioned patriarchal views of woman's place, either reinterpreting the relevant scriptural passages to weaken their force, or rejecting Biblical authority altogether.[48]

The other (and more familiar) use feminists made of social contract ideas was straightforward: if government was supposed to be by the consent of the governed, on what grounds could women be denied the vote? The American Revolutionary slogan "no taxation without representation" was also popular with American feminists, who occasionally either refused to pay taxes, or sent in letters of protests with their tax payments.[49]

The question "on what grounds could women be denied the vote?" was not

entirely rhetorical. We cannot examine the whole range of anti-feminist arguments, but one theme must be highlighted. The issue that feminists ran up against repeatedly was whether women should be treated as individuals or whether women should be assumed to be wives and mothers, with predetermined social roles based on their place in the family. One of the chief arguments against giving women the vote was that husband and wife were one, and that a wife was represented through her husband. A wife could not have interests separate from those of her husband. However, it was also argued that giving women the vote would introduce bitter political quarrels into the family—which suggests that interests might diverge after all. What is striking about the second argument is the assumption that a wife should forego her interests—and rights—if they clashed with family harmony.

The issue of whether women should be defined primarily as individuals, or as family members, came up in other contexts as well. For instance, the justification for paying women lower wages than men doing the same jobs was that women were only helping to support their families, whereas men were the main family breadwinners. Feminists argued in vain for a long time that not all women were married, and that some married women were the sole breadwinners in a family. Protective labour legislation was largely premissed on the assumption that all women were mothers or potential mothers, and that mothers needed limitations placed on their hours and conditions of employment both for their own good and the good of the race.[50] Feminists who argued that harmful working practices should be banned for both sexes, and/or that women should be allowed to decide for themselves as individuals what working conditions were acceptable to them, met with little sympathy even in reform

circles in the early part of the twentieth century. (In fact, feminists themselves were divided in their attitudes towards protective legislation.[51]) In the field of education, there were debates over whether women students should have to take an easier courseload, to protect the strength of future mothers, and over whether male and female students should follow the same curriculum, or whether female students should have to take home economics courses.[52] Even in recent years, much of the opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment has been premissed on the belief that it poses a threat to the family.[53]

There are other aspects of liberal feminism: but enough has been said to give some idea of how liberal feminists adapted liberal ideas to feminist ends. Later chapters will fill in more details.

V Conclusion

This chapter has taken issue with both radical and socialist feminist accounts of liberalism, and their accounts of mainstream feminism. The second and third chapters will illustrate the complexity of mainstream feminism, and the fourth chapter will offer some reflections on past and present mainstream feminism as seen from a philosophic liberal perspective. The chief points will be that "liberal" and "bourgeois" feminism are not equivalent, and that liberalism is not infinitely expandable. Liberal principles do set boundaries to liberal feminism.

One obstacle encountered at various times in writing this thesis was lack of research on relevant topics. For instance, there is as yet no published full-length study of Mill's The Subjection of Women,[54] nor have the essays on it that have appeared in recent years been collected into an

anthology, and so far there is no Millean equivalent to the various Marxist/socialist/radical feminist debates about what parts of the original arguments are still valid, what needs to be modified, and in what ways things should be modified. When even Mill receives such limited attention in feminist circles, it is scarcely surprising that other aspects of liberal feminism have seldom been dealt with in-depth. Because of the limited research available, comments have often been phrased in a tentative manner here.

A few final points are in order before proceeding. A broad overview necessarily leaves out many details of the sub-topics dealt with. Extensive footnotes have been used to help compensate for this, but obviously there is much more that could be said on any number of points. It might be asked, "then why not avoid the problem by doing a more specialized, detailed treatment of a few of the sub-topics?" The answer to that is simply that it is impossible to illustrate the diverse elements within mainstream feminism, and to discuss their significance for liberal feminism, without spelling out what those elements are. Finally, at times it might seem that this thesis ranges rather far from conventional political topics. Like Sherlock Holmes' dog that did not bark in the night, the very lack of sustained attention to conventional political concerns in American mainstream feminism is significant.

Chapter One

Footnotes

[1] See, for instance, some of the essays in Zillah Eisenstein, ed. Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism (New York: Longman, 1981) and Lydia Sargent, ed., Women and Revolution: A Discussion of the Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism (Boston: South End Press, 1981).

[2] See, for example, the broad usage of "liberal feminism" in Alison M. Jaggar and Paula Rothenberg Struhl, eds., Feminist Frameworks: Alternative Theoretical Accounts of the Relations Between Women and Men (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1978); Linda Gordon using "liberal" and "bourgeois" feminism interchangeably in Woman's Body, Woman's Right: A Social History of Birth Control in America (London: Penguin, 1977), and Barbara Sinclair Deckard using "liberal" and "women's rights" feminism interchangeably in The Women's Movement: Political, Socioeconomic, and Psychological Issues, 3rd ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1983).

[3] See, for instance, Kathy E. Ferguson, Self, Society, and Womankind: The Dialectic of Liberation (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980). Interestingly, although in the actual text of the book she describes liberalism in terms of possessive individualism, in a footnote she says "As the ideas of T.H. Green, L.T. Hobhouse, and the later J.S. Mill indicate, the liberal tradition is a varied one, and not all of its members are equally guilty of the bourgeois vices." (p. 176) Given the fact that she does not claim Mill is a possessive individualist, and that he is the primary exponent of philosophic liberal feminism, it is not clear why she should characterize liberal feminism as possessive individualist. Another example is Lorenne M.G. Clark, "Women and Locke: Who Owns the Apples in the Garden of Eden?" in Clark and Lynda Lange, eds. The Sexism of Social and Political Theory (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), pp. 16-40. Critiques of Macpherson's theory itself include Sir Isaiah Berlin, "Hobbes, Locke, and Professor Macpherson," Political Quarterly, Vol. 35, No. 4 (Oct.-Dec. 1964), pp. 444-468, Alan Ryan, "Locke and the Dictatorship of the Bourgeoisie," Political Studies, Vol. 13, No. 2 (June 1965), pp. 219-230, and various writings by John Dunn.

[4] For instance, in Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), Mary Daly denies the legitimacy of other forms of feminism in no uncertain terms.

[5] For reviews of The Sceptical Feminist, see Antony Flew, The Philosophical Quarterly, Vol. 31, No. 125 (Oct. 1981), p. 380, Lynne M. Broughton, Philosophy, Vol. 58 (March 1983), pp. 259-263, and Don

Locke, The Times Literary Supplement, Dec. 26, 1980, p. 1455.

[6]George Feaver, "Comment: Overcoming His-story? Ms. Hughes Treatment of Mr. Mill," Canadian Journal of Political Science, Vol. 7, No. 3 (Sept. 1979), p. 546. The article he is referring to is "The Reality versus the Ideal: J.S. Mill's Treatment of Women, Workers, and Private Property," by Patricia Hughes, pp. 523-542, of the same issue.

[7]The Hunter College Women's Studies Collective, Women's Realities, Women's Choices: An Introduction to Women's Studies (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 89. A more neutral way to phrase the first question would be "is freedom from governmental interference sufficient for the liberation of women, and if not, what solutions to the problem of the liberation of women do different forms of feminism propose?" The second question comes close to implying that the majority of American feminists have been socialists, which is far from the case. To be more neutral, the question should have had an added clause such as "and what are the strengths and weaknesses of socialist economics as the solution to feminist problems?"

[8]Aside from attempting to convert liberals, Eisenstein says the other aim of the book is to make radical and socialist feminists more aware of (a) the liberal roots of feminism, and (b) the valuable parts of liberalism.

[9]Zillah Eisenstein, The Radical Future of Liberal Feminism (New York: Longman, 1981), p. 3.

[10]Ibid., p. 4.

[11]Zillah Eisenstein has since written another book called Feminism and Sexual Equality: Crisis in Liberal America (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984), which, among other things, renews her critique of mainstream feminism, but her waivering definitions of "liberalism" continue.

[12]The fact that these journals chose to include reviews of a book attacking liberal feminism, while not reviewing Richards' book, which draws on certain liberal principles, may in itself be significant.

[13]Elaine Spitz, "On Shanley, 'Marital Slavery and Friendship'," Political Theory, Vol. 10, No. 3 (Aug. 1982), pp. 461-468.

[14]Charles Frankel, "Does Liberalism Have a Future?" in The Relevance of Liberalism, ed. by the staff, Research Institute on International Change (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1978), makes roughly this point. See p. 113.

[15]Philip Abbott, Furious Fancies: American Political Thought in the Post-Liberal Era (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980), p. 14. Abbott gives quotations from Locke, Mill, Kant, and Jefferson to illustrate this point.

[16]Isaiah Berlin, "Introduction" in Berlin, Four Essays on Liberty (London: Oxford University Press, reprinted 1977), p. lvi.

[17]Ibid., Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," p. 125.

[18]For instance, see David Spitz, "Liberalism and Conservatism," in his The Real World of Liberalism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 35.

[19]Marc R. Plattner, "The Welfare State vs. The Redistributive State," The Public Interest, No. 55 (Spring 1979), p. 29.

[20]See Onora O'Neill, "How Do We Know When Opportunities Are Equal?" in Jane English, ed., Sex Equality (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1977), pp. 143-154, and more controversially, neoconservative Thomas Sowell's arguments in his Civil Rights: Rhetoric or Reality? (New York: William Morrow, 1984).

[21]David Spitz is a useful source on some of these points, as are Isaiah Berlin and Charles Frankel.

[22]Early liberals did not in fact demand that all the people give consent, but the logic of the argument leads in this direction.

[23]Giovanni Sartori, "Liberalism in Retrospect," in The Relevance of Liberalism, p. 6.

[24]On the significance of the idea of a loyal opposition, see Kenneth Minogue, Alien Powers: The Pure Theory of Ideology (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1985), p. 36.

[25]This point is all too seldom acknowledged by feminist critics, who seem to think that self-interest, and self-interest in the most narrow, materialistic sense at that, is the only motive liberals would allow in politics. Mill's Considerations on Representative Government makes clear the need for public-spiritedness.

[26]On the educative role of government, see Dennis F. Thompson, John Stuart Mill and Representative Government (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976).

[27]When writers like Mill or T.H. Green talked about the self-developmental possibilities of politics, they did not mean casually filling in a ballot once every few years.

[28]Thomas A. Spragens, Jr., The Irony of Liberal Reason (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), discusses the relationship between liberal epistemology and liberal moral and social values. He suggests that it is possible to modify liberal epistemological views while retaining many liberal values. Radical and socialist feminist critiques do not allow for the possibility of such modifications of liberalism.

[29]Frankel, pp. 107-108.

[30]Bruce A. Ackerman, Social Justice in the Liberal State (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), and Ronald Dworkin, Taking Rights Seriously (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), are the most prominent exponents of certain kinds of neutrality.

[31]John Dunn's interpretation of Locke emphasizes the influence of religion on his social and political thought. See John Dunn, The Political Thought of John Locke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), or, more briefly, pp. 36-40 of Dunn's Western Political Theory in the Face of the Future (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

[32]John Stuart Mill, "Utilitarianism," in Utilitarianism, On Liberty and Considerations on Representative Government, H.B. Acton, ed. (Toronto: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1980), p. 9.

[33]William Galston, "Defending Liberalism," American Political Science Review, Vol. 76, No. 3 (Sept. 1982), p. 628.

[34]Ibid., p. 629.

[35]Ibid.

[36]Patrick Riley, review of Two World of Liberalism: Religion and Politics in Hobbes, Locke and Mill by Eldon J. Eisenbach, Political Theory, Vol. 10, No. 2 (May 1982), pp. 324-327.

[37]The chief reason for the two views is that "utopians" think that most conflicts are caused by competition for scarce resources, and consequently that under conditions of properly distributed material abundance, major conflicts would disappear. Liberals, on the other hand, think that there are multiple sources of conflict, and that some things are naturally and unavoidably scarce. See Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr., The Spirit of Liberalism (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 22.

[38]In recent years it has largely been neoconservatives (who in some cases are traditional liberals) rather than left liberals who have stressed the importance of voluntary associations in liberal or "democratic capitalist" societies. See, for instance, Michael Novak, The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism (New York: An American Enterprise Institute/Simon and Schuster Publication, 1982).

[39]Not that "lesser communities" will be entirely nonexistent even in dictatorships, but they will have far less autonomy. Rousseau is one major political theorist who spelled out that any "partial community" that stood between the individual and the whole community was a threat to social unity in his form of democracy.

[40]Quoted from Sarah Slavin Shramm, Plow Women Rather Than Reapers: An Intellectual History of Feminism in the United States (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1979), p. 5.

[41]For descriptions of various forms of feminism, see Alison Jaggar, "Political Philosophies of Women's Liberation," pp. 258-264, in Sharon Bishop and Marjorie Weinzweig, eds., Philosophy and Women (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc., 1979).

[42]For instance, Jean Bethke Elshtain is highly critical of radical feminism, Marxist feminism, and various combinations of the two (and liberal feminism as well). See Part Two of her Public Man, Private Woman: Women in Social and Political Thought (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981).

[43]Condorcet, "On the Admission of Women to the Rights of Citizenship," in Condorcet: Selected Writings, Keith Michael Baker, ed. (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1976), p. 92.

[44]Though not necessarily by any direct influence of Wollstonecraft. At least some American feminists—Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Margaret Fuller, for instance—were familiar with A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, but the author's unorthodox personal life made her less than popular during the Victorian era. In addition, although Wollstonecraft's book was initially a success, its popularity was not long-lasting.

[45]Two useful sources on Astell are Hilda L. Smith, Reason's Disciples: Seventeenth-Century English Feminists (Chicago: University of Illinois, 1982), and Joan K. Kinnaird, "Mary Astell: Inspired by Ideas," in Dale Spender, ed., Feminist Theorists: Three Centuries of Women's Intellectual Traditions (London: The Women's Press, 1983), pp. 28-39.

[46]See Sheryl O'Donnell, "Mr. Locke and the Ladies: The Indelible Words on the Tabula Rasa," in Roseann Runte, ed., Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture, Vol. 8 (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979), pp. 151-164.

[47]See Melissa A. Butler, "Early Liberal Roots of Feminism: John Locke and the Attack on Patriarchy," American Political Science Review, Vol. 72, No. 1 (March 1978), pp. 135-150, and Mary Lyndon Shanley, "Marriage Contract and Social Contract in Seventeenth Century English Political Thought," The Western Political Quarterly, Vol. 32, No. 1 (March 1979), pp. 79-81.

[48]Chapter Two briefly discusses how many nineteenth century feminists sought to reinterpret Biblical scriptures to make them supportive of women's rights, rather than rejecting Biblical authority altogether.

[49]Blanche Glassman Hersh, The Slavery of Sex: Feminist-Abolitionists in America (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978), p. 195.

[50]Carl M. Degler, At Odds: Women and the Family in America from the Revolution to the Present (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 402-405.

[51]For details on the split in American feminism in the 1920s over protective legislation, see Susan D. Becker, The Origins of the Equal Rights Amendment: American Feminism Between the Wars (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981).

[52]Sheila M. Rothman, Woman's Proper Place: A History of Changing Ideals and Practices, 1870 to the Present (New York: Basic Books, 1978) is a useful source on debates over women attending college. She stresses the lengths that universities went to in order to show that university life did not harm the health of female students.

[53]See, for instance, Pamela Johnston Conover and Virginia Gray, Feminism and the New Right: Conflict over the American Family (New York: Praeger, 1983).

[54]Unpublished theses which discuss Mill's feminism do exist, but they are not readily accessible, compared to books.

Chapter Two

I Introduction

At first glance it might appear that mainstream nineteenth and early twentieth century feminism was liberal, pure and simple. Women were asking for equal rights, weren't they? In reality, the issues were more complex. Feminists did not restrict their demands to equal rights; they used a mixture of rationales to advance their claims; and there were shifts in the main feminist arguments as time went by. There were also differences among mainstream feminists over which demands had primacy, what tactics to use, and how uncompromising to be.[1]

The focus of this chapter will be on major feminist ideas and demands, rather than on the history of feminist organizations, biographies of leaders, or accounts of specific reform campaigns. For purposes of this thesis, John Stuart Mill has been taken as the chief examplar of classical liberal feminism; his views will be sketched in before turning to American feminist thought. The discussion of American feminism is divided into two main sections: antebellum feminism, and late nineteenth and early twentieth century feminism. Important elements of the feminism that emerged in the 1830sup until the time of the Civil War include liberal and especially American revolutionary ideals, evangelicalism, and romanticism. (There is some overlap among these, but they have been dealt with separately for the sake of clarity.) There is also a slight Owenite and Fourierist socialist influence. The reform mood in America quickly paled after the Civil War, and feminism went through a time of transition. The feminism which emerged in the 1890s through to 1920 was quite different in character,

being more conservative, more focused on the single issue of getting the vote, and more elitist. Less attention was given to voting as a natural right, and more attention was given to the good that women could do for society if they had the vote. Aspects of the suffrage era which will be highlighted here include: liberal arguments, elitist arguments, ideas about moral superiority and motherhood, and the notion of state as housekeeper. Since the vote was often treated as an enabling device to further a wide range of reforms, few of which were directly related to women's rights, the types of reforms advocated by feminists have been briefly described.

It might be suggested that since liberalism itself underwent great changes during the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, that it is only to be expected that there would be changes in liberal feminism. To some extent this is true, but the changes that took place in American mainstream feminism cannot adequately be characterized as simply part of a shift to a more state interventionist form of liberalism, and even at the beginning, American mainstream feminism was not simply liberal.

II Classical Liberal Feminism: John Stuart Mill

John Stuart Mill's The Subjection of Women is generally considered the definitive statement of classical liberal feminist principles. The arguments in the essay reinforce and expand on briefer comments on women in On Liberty, The Principles of Political Economy, and Considerations on Representative Government, and fit in with the general arguments of Utilitarianism. By placing his arguments about women in a larger context, Mill achieves a philosophic depth and comprehensivness seldom found in nineteenth

century feminist works. (Most works were much more activist in orientation, and might typically include a few brief references to the principles of natural rights and the need for women to protect their interests, lists of grievances, and illustrative stories "about the hardships of several individual women" which showed the need for reform.)

The Subjection of Women was written in 1861, and first published in 1869.[2] The book opened with the ringing declaration that:

> The principle which regulates the existing social relation between the two sexes—the legal subordination of one sex to the other—is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; and that it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality, admitting no power or privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other.[3]

This statement certainly provides strong evidence for the prevailing view that liberal feminists are only interested in laws, and naively think that such legalistic solutions will solve problems which run much deeper. The statement is, however, less than an accurate description of what Mill went on to talk about. Mill did indeed criticize laws, but he saw the laws as expressions of social values, and it is these values which were at the root of his attack. For instance, at one point in his discussion of inequality in marriage, and barriers to women in education and employment, he said that:

> I believe that their disabilities elsewhere are only clung to in order to maintain their subordination in domestic life; because the generality of the male sex cannot yet tolerate the idea of living with an equal.[4]

Mill began by discussing the difficulties of getting a fair hearing on a subject where people's minds were already made up, and where they had

a personal stake in maintaining their opinions. He pointed out that where people could not answer reasoned arguments they were likely to fall back on the belief that customs would not have lasted so long if they were not good, and that there were deeper truths that reason could not touch.

His response was to argue that the longevity of the system of sexual inequality was no proof of its superiority because no other system had ever been tried. Moving from the specific to the general, he explained that:

> It arose simply from the fact that from the very earliest twilight of human society, every woman (owing to the value attached to her by men, combined with her inferiority in muscular strength) was found in a state of bondage to some man. Laws and systems of polities always begin by recognizing the relations they find already existing between individuals. They convert what was a mere physical fact into a legal right, giving it the sanction of society.[5]

How had such an anachronistic state of affairs survived into a modern society where liberty, justice, and equality were supposed to be the governing principles? In part, the barbaric origins of inequality in marriage had been forgotten, and the more harsh laws glossed over with chivalrous rhetoric. In addition, most men were better than the laws which officially governed their relationships with women, and consequently many women did not feel the full force of the law. But there was another side to the story: the socialization of women, and barriers to their protesting.

Mill pointed out that:

> Men do not want solely the obedience of women, they want their sentiments....and they turned the whole force of education to effect their purpose. All women were brought up from the very earliest years in the belief that their ideal of character is the very opposite of men: not self-will, and government by self-control, but submission, and yielding to the control of others.[6]

Barriers to protesting included the fact that wives were dependent on

their husbands, and therefore had to be wary of giving offense, and the fact that wives lived in much closer contact with their husbands than with other women, making it difficult for women to combine their actions.[7]

Mill went on to argue that because women had always been found in societies with men (and vice versa) and because women had always been socially subordinate to men, it was impossible to know what women's natures would be like if women were allowed to develop freely. Only under conditions of equality where women were not forced to behave as men wished them to in order to get a living would it be possible to tell what women's natures would really be like.

Mill did not claim that there were no innate differences between the sexes. He claimed that it was impossible for anyone to know for sure. Drawing on his broader views on psychology, he added that most people underestimated the power of external influences on character formation. Put somewhat differently, he felt that in nature vs. nurture controversies, the methodological presumption should be that differences were due to nurture, unless it could be proven otherwise. Next, he made a brief survey of views of "woman's nature"[8] in different historical periods and in different countries, to show that what was usually taken to be woman's nature in Victorian England was not a universal constant.

All this led to the claim that there was no reason for anyone to pronounce on woman's nature by definitional fiat, or to say what women should or should not be allowed to do:

> For, according to all the principles involved in modern society, the question rests with women themselves—to be decided by their own experience, and by the use of their faculties. There

> are no means of finding what either one person or many can do, but by trying—and no means by which any one can discover for them what it is for their happiness to do or leave undone.[9]

Despite all this, Mill did actually speculate on what women's characters might be like, and came to fairly traditional conclusions, such as that the evidence available suggested that on average women might be more intuitive than men, and good at practical details, while on average men might be more logical and good at abstract thought; but he also emphasized the tentative nature of his speculations, and that there was a wide range of character traits in both sexes.[10] Furthermore, it would be unjust to judge an individual on the basis of stereotypes about the sex as a whole.

Mill's arguments about jobs and education flowed from his arguments about women's nature, and the liberal principle of judging people on the basis of individual merit rather than supposed group characteristics. Put succinctly, his argument was that if it was against women's nature to do something, then legal barriers were superfluous; if not, then such barriers were unjust. Barriers harmed both the individual who was kept from exercising their talents, and society at large, which was deprived of the benefit of their talents.[11]

Mill made the case for equal educational and job opportunities more forcefully than many other liberal feminists, but the basic line of argument was a very familiar one. His case for granting women political rights was a little more uncommon. He avoided direct appeals to natural rights. He concentrated on arguing that women needed to vote for self-protection, and tangentially referred to the developmental effects of seriously thinking about and participating in politics (a subject which he takes up in more

detail in Considerations on Representative Government).

More unusually, he argued that the indirect influence which women often had on politics seldom operated for the public interest. Women, being trained to care only for their family's interests, tended to encourage men to take popular stands which could lead to preferments, and to discourage men from taking unpopular but principled stands which might damage a family's social standing or finances. Granting women political rights would encourage them to think more broadly about public affairs, and the fact that their influence would be open and limited would tend to make them act in a more responsible, public-spirited manner.[12] It was far more common in feminist circles to argue that women's indirect influence in politics was beneficial, and that it would be even more beneficial if women had a direct say in politics instead of being limited to encouraging their husbands to do the right thing.

Mill did not treat the public and private spheres as totally separate. Aside from his comments on women's indirect political influence, Mill commented on the family as a school of tyranny. He argued that someone who was habituated to relationships of command and obedience in private life would find it hard to treat people as equals in the public sphere.

Leaving aside the argument that authoritarian habits of mind could be transferred from family life to the public sphere, Mill presented a wide-ranging critique of marriage in Victorian society, including attacks on unjust marital property laws, and on the lax enforcement of what laws did exist to protect women against domestic violence. However, the keynote of his discussion was that marriage should be based on friendship between

equals.[13] He spoke warmly of a relationship where:

> there exists that best kind of equality, similarity of powers and capacities with reciprocal superiority in them—so that each can enjoy the luxury of looking up to the other, and can have alternately the pleasure of leading and being led in the path of development.... I maintain that this, and this only is the ideal of marriage.[14]

While Mill's views on the moral ideal of marriage were unorthodox by conservative standards, his views on the division of labour in marriage were fairly conventional. He insisted that job opportunities should be open to women, and that every woman ought to be capable of earning a living if need be. However, he also argued that:

> Like a man when he chooses a profession, so, when a woman marries, it may in general be understood that she makes choices of the management of a household, and the bringing up of a family, as the first call upon her exertions during as many years of her life as may be required for the purpose; and that she renounces, not all other objects and occupations, but all that are not consistent with the requirements of this.[15]

He did add that "the utmost latitude ought to exist for the adaptation of general rules to individual suitabilities,"[16] but it is clear that he thought that most married women would prefer to stay home rather than go out to work. However, the reasoning behind this attitude was not, in the first instance, a desire to restrict opportunities for women, but a belief that most women worked hard enough as it was, without being burdened with additional labour outside the home.[17] (Mill did not foresee the possibility of men and women sharing household responsibilities and conditions of employment becoming more flexible.[18])

This discussion of Mill's views has illustrated how he made use of general liberal principles, ranging from his depiction of unequal laws as

outdated holdovers from the days when might made right (thus making the emancipation of women part of the general progress of humankind), to his primarily environmentalist account of character formation, to his arguments for equal educational and job opportunities for both the good of the individual and society, to his insistence that women needed the vote to protect their own interests, on to his ideal of marriage as friendship between equals. Yet for all this, the liberal nature of Mill's views comes across most strongly in his comments on women and freedom:

> After the primary necessities of food and raiment, freedom is the strongest want of human nature.[19]
>
> ...There is no subject on which there is a greater habitual difference of judgment between a man judging for himself, and the same man judging for other people. When he hears others complaining that they are not allowed freedom of action—that their own will has not sufficient influence in the regulation of their affairs—his inclination is to ask, what are their grievances? what positive damage do they sustain? and in what respect they consider their affairs to be mismanaged? and if they fail to make out, in answer to these questions, what appears to him a sufficient case, he turns a deaf ear, and regards their complaint as the fanciful querulousness of people whom nothing reasonable will satisfy. But he has a quite different standard of judgment when he is deciding for himself.[20]

III Antebellum American Mainstream Feminism

Historians have pointed out traces of feminism in American women's charitable activities in the early 1800s,[21] but it was not until the 1830s that the beginnings of a feminist movement began to emerge clearly,[22] and it was not until 1848 that the first women's rights convention was held.[23] For purposes of this thesis, influences on American feminism have been categorized as follows: liberal and specifically American revolutionary ideals; evangelicalism; romanticism and transcendentalism; and (as a minor

element) socialism. Naturally, individual feminists differed in how much they were influenced by these (partly overlapping) streams of thought.

It should be noted that historians differ somewhat in their accounts of antebellum feminism. Most accounts focus on the women's rights movement *per se*, but it is sometimes argued that women who set up their own charitable and moral reform associations should also be considered feminists insofar as they extended woman's sphere, showed that women had greater capabilities than many people thought, developed a sense of pride in womanhood, and were often trying specifically to help other women.[24] The opposition they encountered from some males (who thought they should either stay home, or work in auxiliaries to organizations run by men), led them to defend women's right to move outside the home in order to carry out what they saw as their Christian duty to help those in need, and to organize their activities as they thought best. Such women primarily used what are here called "evangelical" arguments. Seeing the problems of needy women often led moral reform feminists to advocate better education and job opportunities for women, but most such women stopped short of endorsing what they saw as a "radical" women's rights movement.[25] Given broad definitions of feminism (for instance, the one in the first chapter of this thesis) such women can be considered feminists, but it is a fairly limited and conservative type of feminism, aimed at allowing women to better carry out traditional "feminine" duties.

The remainder of the discussion will focus on the ideas of those feminists who were explicitly committed to women's rights. The demands of these women and men included better educational opportunities, access to more jobs, changes in laws on marital property and guardianship of

children, and most radically, the right to vote. They were often involved with health and dress reform, arguing for women doctors and more comfortable and practical clothing for women. In addition, at the early women's rights conventions, considerable time was spent discussing religious questions, as feminists sought support for women's rights in the Bible, and argued that women should be allowed to become ministers.[26] Feminists occasionally came out publicly in favour of easier divorce (particularly where a husband was a habitual drunkard),[27] and in private, at least some feminists advocated that a wife should not have to submit to her husband's sexual demands unless she wished. However, "self-ownership" was generally not publicly discussed in mainstream feminist circles.[28] Many advocates of women's rights also approved of the work of the more conservative reformers, and favoured temperance and efforts to stamp out prostitution, along with traditional female charitable and missionary concerns. Most of the prominent advocates of women's rights had a background in the abolitionist movement,[29] and the peace movement of the day also included a number of feminists.[30]

The fact that many leading feminists were associated with the Garrisonian branch of the abolitionist movement is significant. William Lloyd Garrison viewed politics as corrupt, and attempts to find a politically negotiated solution to the slavery problem as too slow, and involving compromise with sin. He favoured "moral suasion," to try to convert Northerners to his view, and to put pressure on Southerners to see the sinfulness of their ways and bring an end to slavery. Garrison himself was a "Christian anarchist" and pacifist who did not believe that any government with a standing army was legitimate.[31] Garrisonian abolitionists did not

necessarily endorse all his views, but his anti-political attitudes had an impact on the antebellum feminist movement, which concentrated on trying to convert the public through moral suasion, rather than on setting up organizations which could act as a pressure group to lobby for women's demands. (Feminists did often petition legislatures, but had no permanent organizational structure until after the Civil War.[32]) One of the most important early feminists, Lucretia Mott, made a statement to the effect that even though she felt that women should have the vote as a matter of principle, she personally had no desire to get involved in politics in its present corrupt state.[33] In addition, it was involvement in the abolitionist movement that led some feminists to see parallels between black slavery and "the slavery of sex."[34] Finally, at the practical level, feminists often gained their first experience at public speaking, at organizing petition and fund drives, and at writing and editing materials, in the abolitionist movement.[35] The opposition they encountered along the way for stepping beyond the bounds of "woman's proper sphere" was a consciousness-raising experience which led people like Sarah Grimke to demand that women be allowed to decide for themselves what activities it was proper for women to undertake.[36] With this historical background in mind, it is time to turn to the main influences on mainstream feminist thought in this period.

a) <u>Liberalism</u>:

Blanche Glassman Hersh has written that the central concern of antebellum feminists was the "right of woman to define her own sphere."[37] They challenged narrow, rigid, conceptions of woman's nature and woman's

sphere, but did not completely disavow them. Hersh describes their ideal as "overlapping spheres:"

> As human beings, the rights and responsibilities of women and men were the same, and their spheres identical; both had obligations to the total society, including family and community. Only in their more narrow roles did some differentiation of spheres occur; because of divinely ordered duties and talents, woman's special function was to nurture and preserve the family, and man's to labour in the world outside.[38]

Feminists also wanted to provide greater flexibility in social roles; for instance, less pressure should be put on women to marry, and a range of jobs should be open to unmarried women to allow them to be economically independent.

The demand that women, rather than men, define woman's place was in keeping with the liberal ideal of people choosing their own pursuits (even if some of the pursuits chosen were traditional ones). The argument that women were entitled to natural rights as human beings was also liberal. In addition, even if feminists did sometimes wax sentimental about women's natural dedication to hearth, home, and motherhood, they also challenged narrow stereotypes of woman's nature and woman's place. First, they argued that such traits as passivity, helpless dependence, and intellectual weakness were not desirable in anyone. Second, they pointed out that not all women were mothers, and not all mothers had young children at home. (To some degree, the nineteenth century feminist solution to the childcare/out-of-the-home work dilemma was to suggest that women would become more active in public affairs as they got older.[39]) Finally, they pointed out that women were <u>individuals</u> of varying temperaments and talents, and were not all alike.

The actual demands of feminists were often liberal ones, such as better education, access to a wider range of jobs, the vote, and various legal changes to reflect the new ideal of marital equality. The strategy of cutting through chivalrous rhetoric about the glories of woman's sphere, to examine the actual legal position of wives and the ways in which social conventions put women at a disadvantage, was typical of the liberal insistence on analyzing the practical effects of social customs, instead of assuming the benevolence of traditions. The tactic of examining historical and cross-cultural views of woman's nature and woman's place was also typical of liberalism—it provided documentation to back up claims that women had greater and more diverse capacities than people thought. In addition, when opponents pointed to the lesser achievements of women, feminists pointed to the inferior education that girls received, and to the prejudice that women encountered.

The use of American revolutionary ideas was straightforward. The slogan "no taxation without representation" was regularly invoked, as were references to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" and all men being created equal (with feminists interpreting "man" as "humankind"). A good example of this type of argument is:

> How can she be said to have a right to life, who has never consented to the laws which may deprive her of it? who is steadily refused a trial by her peers, who has no voice in the election of judges? How can she be said to have a right to liberty, whose person, if not yet in custody, almost inevitably becomes so on her maturity, who does not own her own earnings, who can make no valid contract, and is taxed without representation? How can that person be said to possess either the right or the reality of happiness, who is deprived of the custody of her own person, of the guardianship of her children, of the right to devise or share her property? The

> government is tyrannical which leaves a single citizen in this predicament. What is to be said of a government which enforces it upon half its subjects?[40]

It would be possible to cite numerous other examples of feminists making use of liberal arguments, but there would be little point in doing so. It is other strands of antebellum feminist thought that need more attention.

b) Evangelicalism/religious arguments:

The evangelical impulse involved a missionary zeal to convert sinners and morally transform society. Evangelicalism can be associated with conservative doctrines of restoring or increasing respect for traditional values, but it could also be used to demand radical changes in the status quo to bring society into line with various interpretations of Christian principles. Moral reformers were in many respects conservative; abolitionists were radicals demanding that the South adopt a whole new way of life.

A particularly important aspect of antebellum evangelical Protestantism was the doctrine of perfectionism. Briefly, where traditional Christianity had stressed the innate depravity of human nature, perfectionists argued that moral perfection, or at least very great moral improvement was possible within both individuals and society before the Second Coming.[41] Since great improvement was both possible and much needed, good Christians had a strong duty to help bring it about. This religious impulse underlay many antebellum reforms, and gave a millenial tone to much reform rhetoric—the aim was not so much to achieve modest reforms in particular social

institutions as to transform morally society as a whole. At times this zeal could lead to intolerance of those whose conduct was seen as sinful, and impatience with political methods of dealing with problems.

Another factor which needs to be taken into account is a major change in the way woman's nature was characterized. Traditional Christianity had predominantly portrayed women as the morally weaker sex, but in the nineteenth century, it became increasingly common to describe women as morally superior to men, and to use this as a justification for women taking an interest in social, moral, and political issues. As the natural guardians of morality, women had a duty to see that Christian values were upheld throughout society, not just in the private sphere.[42] It should be noted that this doctrine was not necessarily associated with women's rights. In fact, the "altruism" of the more conservative charitable and moral reform workers was sometimes contrasted with the "selfish" demands of advocates of women's rights.[43] (As will be seen, as the century wore on, feminists increasingly handled this problem by arguing that women wanted the vote better to carry out altruistic reforms.)

The religious case for women's rights made use of both Evangelical Protestant and Quaker-derived religious ideas. These included: the idea of individual conscience (or Quaker "inner light") which could be taken to imply that women should make up their own minds about moral and social issues, including woman's proper place; the idea of the need to perform good works, which required an enlargement of woman's sphere; and the idea that "soul has no sex," or that both men and women were morally responsible beings whose Christian duties transcended sexual distinctions and

conventional notions of woman's proper sphere.

Sarah Grimke elaborated on these themes in her Letters on the Equality of the Sexes, making particular use of the phrase "in Christ there is no male or female" and pointing out that God did not issue separate lists of commandments to men and women. In addition, she argued that the parts of the Bible which enjoined women's submission to men were either directions to specific churches, not intended for general use; or the result of faulty translations made by biased male translators; or were anachronisms, understandable in their historical context, but not applicable in the present more enlightened state of society. God made both men and women rational and morally accountable beings, and the over all spirit of the Bible, as exemplified by the Golden Rule, was supportive of women's rights. (Would men like to be deprived of their rights?) The book was published in 1837, and one frequently finds later feminists using Grimke's arguments.[44]

Evangelical attitudes coloured the women's rights movement in several ways: an emphasis on moral suasion to convince people that women were men's equals, rather than concentrating on reforming institutions; a belief that social transformation would accompany the moral transformation of individuals; the use of religious appeals based on the Golden Rule to establish women's rights; and, for the participants, a sense of inner certainty that they were in the right, which helped them to withstand the harsh criticism that they were subjected to.[45] Evangelicalism also tended to cast the opposition in the role of sinners.

c) Romanticism and Transcendentalism:

Romanticism, and its American variant of Transcendentalism, were also a major influence on antebellum feminism. Among the key concepts of Transcendentalism were a secular form of perfectionism; a belief that there was a rational order and harmony to the cosmos; a glorification of emotion and intuition as the means of discovering truth (as opposed to reason); an anti-institutional bias (because it was held that institutions cramped the individual); and a Kantian, rather than Lockean view of the mind.[46] The Transcendentalists were very strong individualists, but their emphasis on intuition as the route to truth, and self-development as part of a rather mystical harmony of the cosmos owe more to German romanticism than to Lockean liberalism.

Several aspects of Transcendentalism and romanticism were especially attractive to American feminists. First, the Transcendentalist praise of intuition, emotion, harmony, spirituality, and the artistic appealed to many women because these were "female" qualities that had often been denigrated in the United States.[47] Second, the emphasis that Transcendentalists placed on self-development could be applied to women, and the many restrictions on women's activities pointed out as barriers to growth. Third, Transcendentalists spoke warmly of independence, and feminists could point out that women's lack of education and job opportunities made it difficult for a single woman to achieve economic independence, and that if a woman married, marriage placed wives in a position of legal subservience to their husbands instead of treating them as equal partners.[48]

The woman most responsible for bringing Transcendentalist themes

and rhetoric to American feminism was Margaret Fuller. Her Woman in the Nineteenth Century (1844) was the most important work, and the only full-length philosophical consideration of feminism, by an American woman prior to the Civil War.[49] The book covered a wide range of topics, but the keynote was that women should be given scope for many-sided self-development, for its own sake.

> Too much is said of women being better educated, that they may become better companions and mothers for *men*. They should be fit for such companionship.... But a being of infinite scope must not be treated with a view to any one relation. Give the soul free course.... The intellect no more than the sense of hearing, is to be cultivated merely that Woman may be a more valuable companion to Man, but because the Power who gave a power, by its mere existence signifies that it must be brought to perfection.[50]

Fuller also discussed the subject of woman's nature at length and ambiguously. At times she stressed that masculine and feminine qualities were found, to some degree, in both sexes. However, for the most part, she not only argued for a "separate natures" position, but treated "the great dualism" of masculine and feminine as part of the ultimate harmony of the cosmos. She argued that the male element had been predominant throughout history, but that the time had come that further progress required that the feminine element play a larger role, or even lead the way. Fuller herself stressed that both sides of the great dualism were equally valuable, but her argument could easily be tilted into one for the moral superiority of women, and the need for women to rescue public affairs from male materialism and aggression.

d) Utopian socialism:

This thesis is concerned with mainstream rather than socialist feminism, but it is worth noting that some mainstream feminists sympathized with certain Fourierist and Owenite ideas. Margaret Fuller praised Fourier for recognizing that women, like men, needed to engage in kinds of labour that would further self-development, and that women had diverse temperaments suiting them to diverse kinds of labour, just as men did.[51] Elizabeth Cady Stanton, feeling isolated and overworked, commented favourably on the idea of co-operative housework.[52] In addition, Owenite writings on birth control may have been one source for feminist ideas on "self-ownership," although such ideas were also current outside socialist circles.[53] However, even in the relatively radical days before the Civil War, most "respectable" feminists preferred to avoid association with "atheistical, free love" doctrines of Owenite socialists such as Fanny Wright, the first woman to give public lectures in the United States.[54]

IV Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Feminism (The Suffragist or Maternal Feminist Era)

Historians vary in how much weight they give to various influences on antebellum feminism, but generally speaking they agree that towards the end of the nineteenth century there was a marked shift away from earlier natural rights justifications (which had been predominant in antebellum feminism), to types of arguments which Aileen Kraditor has grouped together as "expediency" arguments.[55] Canadian historians have sometimes used the term "maternal" feminism to capture some of these same elements.[56] Here the arguments have been categorized otherwise, highlighting elitism;

justifications relating to moral superiority and motherhood; and the concept of the state as housekeeper. However, a brief historical account of what happened to feminism after the Civil War is in order before turning to these arguments.

During the Civil War, American feminists generally devoted themselves to the Union war effort. They hoped that their patriotism and hard work would be rewarded with the vote. However, that did not happen. Most abolitionists concentrated on getting rights for black males. One small and relatively radical group of feminists refused to work for any measures that did not include women's rights, while the larger and more conservative group favoured working for any extension of rights. These circumstances precipitated a split in the women's movement which lasted up until 1890 (though other policy and personality differences were involved as well).

The controversy also had another impact on Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the leader of the smaller faction. She had previously used individual rights arguments and praised male support, but she quickly turned to racist arguments, claiming it was an insult for "Sambo" to be given the vote when Anglo-Saxon women were not, and her rhetoric became increasingly anti-male—women had been betrayed once by their erstwhile abolitionist allies and now knew they could count only on themselves in the future.[58] A longer-range impact was to break the close link between black suffrage and woman suffrage natural rights ideals. The feminist movement went into a lull in the 1870s and 1880s, and by the time it revived in the 1890s, a new generation of feminists (and some of the old ones), frequently and openly used racist and elitist arguments. (Such arguments had not been

entirely absent before the Civil War, but the predominant theme had been that all human beings were worthy of individual rights.) Another outcome of the post-Civil War controversies was to focus attention on the vote. What had been called the woman's rights movement began to be called the woman suffrage movement.

Other changes took place after the Civil War. After high hopes for the moral reformation of American society during the early days of Reconstruction, disillusion set in. Romanticism and transcendentalist optimism were no longer in fashion, and reformers had to deal with a growing conservatism. Reformers themselves, not being immune to the spirit of the times, often became more conservative. This was reflected in a change in American feminism, where many feminists sought to confine women's rights agitation to respectable causes, primarily the vote, but also support for higher education, widening of job opportunities, and changes in marital property laws. Most mainstream feminists shunned such controversial issues as divorce, criticisms of the role of Christianity in keeping women subservient, and "self-ownership," issues which had been present in antebellum feminism, though treated with caution and not the major issues even then. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who continued to espouse the more controversial causes, found herself increasingly isolated from the mainstream feminist movement, despite the fact that she was, for a time, the nominal leader of the National American Woman Suffrage Association.[59]

There were several main types of argument or contributory streams to late nineteenth and early twentieth century feminism. They are, fortunately, quite straightforward, and can be described fairly quickly.

a) Liberal arguments:

Feminists did continue to use traditional individual rights and "no taxation without representation" pleas. Since these have already been described, and they did not change greatly during this time, they will not be repeated here. However, it should be noted that while previously the vote had only been one of a range of liberal concerns, it now became almost the sole focus of attention. The broad liberal concern with laws, social customs, and stereotypes which placed restrictions on women's activities was much less in evidence. In fact, feminists began to play up stereotypes.

b) Elitist arguments:

A second type of argument was expedient in the worse sense of the term—opportunistic and elitist appeals to the prejudice of Northerners concerned about immigration and Southern whites concerned about black suffrage. It was, for instance, pointed out that the combined votes of native-born white men and women would outweigh the votes of immigrants (depicted as ignorant, often drunken slum-dwellers under the control of corrupt political machines) and blacks (depicted as an inferior race).[60] As an example of such rhetoric, which also includes overtones of female superiority over men in general, here is an excerpt from a speech by Olympia Brown:

> We enfranchise the saloon and the poorhouse, the irresponsible classes. We disfranchise the home, the church, the school. We make the daughters of America subject to the serfs and slaves from the old world.... The aristocracies of the old world are based upon noble birth, superior qualifications, merit in some form.... America alone presents the spectacle of an

> aristocracy of pantaloons. We are the first people to try the experiment of enfranchising ignorance, drunkenness, and all forms of vice, and subordinating intelligence, patriotism, religion. Such an experiment must fail.... The only hope of the nation is in the enfranchisement of woman.[61]

The anti-democratic overtones of that speech—praise for aristocracies and lack of faith in the common people—are also significant. Brown, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and others even called for an educational qualification which would enfranchise middle-class white women ("responsible voters") and disenfranchise "the ignorant." This attitude was a sharp break from proclaiming that voting was an inalienable individual right.

c) <u>Moral superiority and motherhood</u>:

Antebellum feminists had devoted considerable energy to fighting stereotypes of women as frail, over-emotional, irrational, naturally dependent beings. They did sometimes appeal to sentimental stereotypes of motherhood and women as moral guardians, but on the whole, they claimed that sex differences were not as extensive as commonly thought.[62] Women were not so different from men that they were incapable of going to university or holding a wide range of jobs or understanding public affairs. In addition, possible sex differences were irrelevant to the question of rights, because rights belonged to all human beings, even if "the fact of maternity" meant that there would be considerable difference in the daily activities of most women and men.

When antebellum feminists argued against stereotypes, they were fighting an uphill battle. The "woman as moral guardian" theme which had been one element of antebellum feminism became much more pronounced after

the Civil War. Later feminists, instead of challenging sexual stereotypes, agreed that the more flattering traditional stereotypes about women were true. However, they went on, it was precisely because women did have special qualities that their influence was needed in public affairs. Frances Willard, leader of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), argued that it was because women were mothers and were devoted to their homes that they needed to take steps to ensure that the family was protected, and that society was infused with family values. Instead of talking about the vote as a natural right, she called it "the home protection ballot."[63]

Margaret Fuller had argued that differences between the sexes complemented each other, and that both sets of qualities were equally valuable. Later feminists frequently said that that was their position, but their rhetoric often belied that claim. Female and male qualities were not so much "complementary" as antagonistic and diametrically opposed. The motherly qualities argument stressed that women had an intuitive and compassionate understanding of children, and by extension, of all the weak, the needy, and the helpless. The closely related moral superiority theme portrayed women as altruistic, compassionate, peaceful, morally pure, and cooperative-minded, while men were hard-hearted, selfish, aggressive, materialistic, and easily corruptible. Given this perspective, female influence in public affairs was necessary for the establishment of a good society (or to save civilization).[64]

d) Government as housekeeper:

A fourth major argument for granting women the vote—that modern government was housekeeping in a larger scale—came to the fore in

progressivism.[65] Historians disagree over whether progressivism should be seen as an American version of European social democracy, or the British "New Liberalism," or an essentially conservative attempt to preserve the traditional WASP ascendancy in the face of urbanization, industrialization, and immigration.[66] In any case, progressives did support state intervention as a means of solving large-scale social problems, and in some ways the movement can be seen as a successor to the earlier evangelical reforms. Although more secular in tone, it was highly moralistic. It differed, however, in taking an institutional approach to reform, rather than stressing individual changes of heart as the key to a better world.

It was Jane Addams who popularized the "government as housekeeping" or "social housekeeping" argument.[67] In the old days, governments were concerned with war, finance, and justice—traditional male concerns. However, by the late nineteenth century, government had taken on responsibilities which were housekeeping writ large. These included such things as milk inspection, garbage collection, and the provision of proper drainage and street lighting. Governments were also filling the role of the traditional lady of the manor, providing education and care for the sick and the needy. All of these were traditional women's concerns. When women asked for the vote, they were not taking on a new role, they were following their old role out into the public sphere, as part of an adaptation to life in an urban industrial society. Just as the individual household required both a father/ provider and a mother/housekeeper, the "social household" required the contributions of both women and men if all its concerns were to be properly attended to. The emphasis in Addam's own argument was on the practical,

day-to-day experiences of women, who could tell first-hand when food had not been adequately inspected, when garbage was not collected often enough, and so forth, but the public housekeeping argument tended to merge with moral superiority and maternal sensibility arguments. One simply had to point out that hard-hearted, corrupt male politicians refused to provide adequate services which compassionate, altruistic, virtuous women would unhesitatingly provide if they had the power.

For purposes of this thesis, it is necessary to look only briefly at the types of reforms pursued by feminists from the 1890s through to 1920. What is striking about the reforms is that, while many of them were badly needed at the time, strictly speaking, they had very little to do with women's rights. One historian has gone so far as to refer to the later suffrage movement as little more than a "ladies' auxiliary to the progressive movement."[68]

As mentioned above, many of the reforms came under the category of public housekeeping. These included pure food and drug laws, better drainage, street cleaning, and sometimes public ownership of utilities. Other reforms were "child-centred." These included curfews, provision of kindergartens and playgrounds, separation of juvenile offenders from adult prisoners, and the provision of foster homes to replace orphanages (so that children could be raised in a family atmosphere).[69] Mothers' (or widows') pensions can also be considered a child-centred reform insofar as the aim was to insure that children were not neglected because their mothers had to go out to work. So great was the emphasis on women needing the vote to ensure the passage of reforms for the good of children, that Sheila Rothman has

written that "the vote was a triumph for organized motherhood, not for individual rights."[70]

The third area of concern was moral reforms. These ranged from temperance, to the closing of brothels, to the banning of prizefights, to censorship of books and movies, to raising the age of consent, to enacting and enforcing stiffer penalties for sex crimes, to laws enforcing Sunday closings of businesses and recreational facilities.[71] A central feature of many of these reforms was a willingness to use the state to enforce conservative, WASP, female, middle-class values, and an intolerance of opposition (disagreement being considered tantamount to endorsing sin). It is worth noting that John Stuart Mill had opposed both prohibition and Sabbatarian (Sunday closing) laws.[72]

A fourth area of concern was with the character of politics itself. An underlying theme of "maternal" feminism was the rejection of "male" party politics, which was seen as governed by self-interest and corruption. It is scarcely putting it too strongly to say that maternal feminists looked on politics as an arena in the battle between good and evil. Given that evangelistic perspective, the give-and-take compromises of everyday, "male," interest group politics were necessarily suspect. Feminists often favoured reforms which would minimize the room to maneuver of politicians (the referendum, plebiscite, and recall)[73] and they were often prominent in the non-partisan movements in Western states. Beyond their lists of specific reforms, the deeper aim of maternal feminists was to "moralize" politics, by infusing it with what they thought of as "female values."

Against this background, the vote gradually took on an almost magical

significance. Once granted, reforms would be enacted, and society would be transformed. Little attention was paid to the potential problem of keeping reformers mobilized once the vote was granted, nor were difficulties in enforcing moralistic legislation anticipated. The belief that "after the vote" things would more or less automatically fall into place, and that society would be transformed, was more characteristic of the evangelistic temper than of the liberal sense of the pragmatic uses and ultimate limitations of politics. Not surprisingly, disillusion set in when enfranchised women fell short of sainthood.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that there was considerably more to American feminism than liberal arguments that women be granted their rights. The section on Mill illustrated how his arguments about women drew on his larger philosophic perspective.[74] The section on antebellum feminism described romantic/transcendentalist and evangelical influences. Neither of these were necessarily anti-liberal, but they did introduce certain tensions into American feminist thought. Romanticism stressed intuition, following one's impulses, and not compromising in one's activities, whereas traditional British liberalism had stressed reason and moderation. Furthermore, the optimism and anti-institutionalism of American romantics meant that they paid little attention to the need for conflict resolution procedures in society. Finally, transcendentalism gave something of an abstract character to some feminist rhetoric, as in the writings of Margaret Fuller.

Evangelicalism was also significant. What might be called "the evangelical temper" often influenced advocates of women's rights, but the

program of evangelical reforms was not necessarily connected to women's rights, beyond the argument that woman's sphere needed to be enlarged enough to allow women to carry out properly their Christian and womanly duties. This was a relatively limited challenge to stereotypes about woman's nature and woman's place, and the actual reforms advocated were not necessarily liberal ones. For instance, moral reformers were trying to restrict people's activities to ones that met the reformers' personal standards for upright conduct. It is, in fact, quite possible for evangelical beliefs about one correct way of life to conflict with liberal, "freedom of choice" ideals, and for evangelical stereotypes about woman's nature to conflict with liberal, "women as individual" ideals. Many reforms could be justified on either religious grounds of "the Golden Rule" or by appeals to individual rights. In addition, feminists were optimistic enough to think that if women's sphere were widened, that women would freely make the "proper" choices. For these reasons, potential conflicts were obscured, but there is a tension there, nevertheless.[75]

In the later suffrage era, liberal arguments for granting women the vote continued to be used, but racist and elitist arguments which flatly contradicted natural rights ideals were common. The evangelical tradition was brought forward with a much sharper emphasis on female moral superiority and motherly sensibilities, as opposed to the Christian duties of reformers of both sexes. "Government as housekeeping" arguments became a feminist justification for a wide range of reforms. In short, feminism in both the antebellum and suffragist eras involved a number of different, and at times conflicting, themes.

Chapter Two

Footnotes

[1]Olive Banks, Faces of Feminism: A Study of Feminism as a Social Movement (Oxford: Martin Robinson, 1981), is a useful comparative study of past and present American and British feminism. She discusses three feminist traditions: equal rights, evangelical, and socialist. Nancy Woloch, Women and the American Experience (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984) is also good, especially her chapter "Feminism and suffrage, 1860-1920," pp. 325-358. Her "Suggested readings and sources" are especially helpful. Woloch's book covers the colonial era to the present. Catherine Clinton, The Other Civil War: American Women in the Nineteenth Century (New York: Hill and Wang, 1984) has an excellent Bibliographic Essay on the various topics she covers. See pp. 203-232.

[2]Mill delayed publication until he felt the time was right. Even so, it was the only one of his books that his publisher ever lost money on. Alan Ryan, J.S. Mill (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1974), p. 125.

[3]John Stuart Mill, "The subjection of women," in Alice Rossi, ed., John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill: Essays on Sex Equality (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1970), p. 125.

[4]Ibid., p. 181.

[5]Ibid., pp. 130-131.

[6]Ibid., p. 141.

[7]Ibid., pp. 136-137.

[8]In the nineteenth and early twentieth century it was common to use the singular "woman's" in such phrases as "woman's rights" and "woman's sphere." For the sake of continuity with later chapters, I have used the modern "women's rights" throughout, except in quotations. However, I have used "woman's nature" and "woman's place" to emphasize that one ideal applied to every woman. Compare "woman's nature" to "women's natures."

[9]Ibid., p. 154.

[10]For comments on the speculativeness of his conclusions, see p. 200; on the diverse traits of women authors, see p. 207.

[11]Ibid., p. 144.

[12]Ibid., p. 165, pp. 226-228.

[13]For a detailed discussion of this aspect of Mill's essay, see Mary Lyndon Shanley's "Marital Slavery and Friendship: John Stuart Mill's The Subjection of Women." Political Theory, Vol. 9, No. 2 (May 1981), pp. 229-247, and "On Shanley, 'Marital Slavery and Friendship'" by Elaine Spitz, Political Theory, Vol. 10, No. 3 (August 1982), pp. 461-468.

[14]Mill, ibid., p. 235; see also p. 233.

[15]Ibid., p. 179.

[16]Ibid.

[17]Ibid., p. 178.

[18]Mill has been much criticized on this score by modern feminists, but his views were no different than those of the vast majority of nineteenth century feminists. See Shanley and Spitz, above.

[19]Mill, ibid., p. 236.

[20]Ibid., pp. 236-237.

[21]See Keith E. Melder, Beginnings of Sisterhood: The American Woman's Rights Movement, 1800-1850 (New York: Schocken Books, 1977).

[22]For two differing accounts, see Blanche Glassman Hersh, The Slavery of Sex: Feminist-Abolitionists in America (Urbana, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1978), and Barbara J. Berg, The Remembered Gate: Origins of Feminism, the Woman and the City, 1800-1960 (New York: Oxford University

Press, 1978), which discusses the kind of feminism which emerged from charitable and moral reform work.

[23]There are numerous accounts of the Seneca Falls Convention. For good brief accounts see Melder, pp. 145-148, and Hersh, pp. 56-58.

[24]Berg makes these arguments.

[25]Hersh, p. 4.

[26]See the accounts of early conventions in Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage, eds., The History of Woman Suffrage, 1848-1861 (New York: Arno and the New York Times, 1969), originally published in 1881, Vol. 1, pp. 379-383 and pp. 532-540.

[27]Jane Rendall, The Origins of Modern Feminism: Women in Britain, France and the United States, 1780-1860 (London: Macmillan, 1985), p. 306, points out that divorce was the most controversial issue in the antebellum feminist movement, and the one that most clearly confronted women's destiny within marriage. On drunkenness as a ground for divorce, see Hersh, p. 65.

[28]See Hersh, p. 66, for an account of the cautiousness of feminists about airing the question of "a woman's right to herself" in public.

[29]Hersh makes this very clear.

[30]See Ronald G. Walters, American Reformers, 1815-1860 (New York: Hill & Wang, 1978), for comments on the connection: "There was a common conviction in antislavery, feminism, and pacificism.... All expressed a belief that the world should be ruled by God's law, not force, and that people could act morally of their own free will," p. 120.

[31]Alice Felt Tyler, Freedom's Ferment: Phases of American Social History from the Colonial Period to the Outbreak of the Civil War (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1962), originally published in 1944, pp. 412-414.

[32]Hersh, p. 60.

[33]See Otelia Cromwell, Lucretia Mott (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard

University Press, 1958), p. 150.

[34]See Hersh, pp. 194-200.

[35]Though not always. As Barbara J. Berg makes clear, some women gained skills and self-confidence in charitable and moral reform organizations.

[36]See Chapter One of Hersh for more information on how (some) women in the abolitionist movement became increasingly feminist.

[37]Hersh, p. 189.

[38]Hersh, p. 204.

[39]Hersh, p. 213.

[40]Caroline H. Dall, The College, the Market and the Court: or Woman's Relation to Education, Labor, and Law (New York: Arno, 1972), originally published in 1867, p. 358. Although published after the Civil War, the book derives from lectures given before then.

[41]Walters, p. 28.

[42]See Melder, p. 53.

[43]More generally, for a controversial account of changes in nineteenth century American Protestantism, see Ann Douglas, The Feminization of American Culture (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977).

[44]Hersh covers many of these points .

[45]Hersh, p. 33, and pp. 151-152.

[46]Marie Mitchell Olesen Urbanski, Margaret Fuller's Woman in the Nineteenth Century: A Literary Study of Form and Content, of Sources and

Influence (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980), p. 98. Despite the "literary study" in the subtitle, this book contains a useful discussion of the philosophic background to transcendentalism, and also includes a section contrasting the Enlightenment feminism of Mary Wollstonecraft with the transcendentalist feminism of Fuller (pp. 47-55).

[47]Susan Phinney Conrad, Perish the Thought: Intellectual Women in Romantic America, 1830-1860 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 10. This book is the most useful source on the influence of romanticism on feminist and non-feminist women alike in the antebellum years.

[48]Throughout the nineteenth century, feminists commonly handled the issue of a wife's economic dependence on her husband by arguing that since both her "indoor" work and his "outdoor" work were necessary to maintain a household, that a wife was morally entitled to a share in her husband's earnings. For a particularly clear statement of this view see Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Women and the Alphabet: A Series of Essays (New York: Arno, 1972), originally published in 1881, p. 145.

[49]The best study of Fuller is the one by Urbanski, but Conrad also has an interesting chapter on Fuller.

[50]Margaret Fuller Ossoli, Woman in the Nineteenth Century and Kindred Papers Relating to the Sphere, Condition, and Duties of Woman, Arthur B. Fuller, ed. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), pp. 95-96. This edition was originally published in 1874.

[51]For Fuller's views on Fourier, see Urbanski, pp. 57-63.

[52]Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "Reminiscences," in Gail Parker, ed., The Oven Birds: American Women on Womanhood, 1820-1920 (New York: Anchor Books, 1972), pp. 252-254.

[53]Carl Degler's At Odds: Women and the Family in America from the Revolution to the Present (New York: Basic Books, 1980) includes information on nineteenth century American attitudes towards birth control.

[54]Wright first lectured in the United States in 1828. For more information on her, see Celia Morris Eckhardt, Fanny Wright: Rebel in America (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984).

[55]By "justice" arguments Kraditor meant arguments "based on the principle of 'the consent of the governed,' the natural equality of all human beings, and other ways of setting forth the belief that women ought to have political equality because justice required it," while "expediency" refers to arguments "that claim that woman suffrage would benefit society." Aileen S. Kraditor, The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), pp. 44-45. Some historians, including Blanche Glassman Hersh, argue that Kraditor has overdrawn the distinction, because expediency arguments were common in feminism before the 1890s, but the argument that expediency arguments were predominant in the suffrage era still holds.

[56]For a discussion of the term "maternal feminism" see Linda Kealey, ed., A Not Unreasonable Claim: Women and Reform in Canada, 1880s-1920s (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1979), pp. 7-9. This term focuses attention on moral superiority/motherhood arguments, rather than elitist/racist ones.

[57]Elizabeth Griffith, In Her Own Right: The Life of Elizabeth Cady Stanton (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 134.

[58]Ibid., p. 155.

[59]Ibid., p. xv.

[60]Aileen S. Kraditor, pp. 103-131.

[61]Olympia Brown, in Dana Greene, ed., Suffrage and Religious Principle: Speeches and Writings of Olympia Brown (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1983), p. 111.

[62]Hersh, pp. 206-208.

[63]Ruth Bordin, Woman and Temperance: The Quest for Power and Purity, 1873-1900 (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981), p. 58.

[64]William Leach, True Love and Perfect Union: The Feminist Reform of Sex and Society (New York: Basic Books, 1980), p. 502. See also the Elizabeth Cady Stanton quotation on p. 147.

[65]Frances Willard of the WCTU had talked about needing the vote to protect the home, and wanting to make the world "home-like" somewhat earlier, but the emphasis on reforming social structures was stronger in the Progressive era. See Sheila M. Rothman, Woman's Proper Place (New York: Basic Books, 1978), chapters 2 and 3, for changing attitudes toward reform.

[66]Blaine Brownell, "Interpretations of Twentieth-Century Urban Progressive Reform," in David R. Colburn and George E. Pozzetta, eds. Reform and Reformers in the Progressive Era (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1983), pp. 2-23 is a helpful historiographical survey.

[67]Jane Addams, Newer Ideals of Peace (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1911). Addams was one feminist who tried to combat anti-immigrant attitudes.

[68]Gail Parker, ed. The Oven Birds, "Introduction," p. 10.

[69]Rothman, p. 105.

[70]Ibid., p. 127.

[71]The best background source on moral reforms is David J. Pivar, Purity Crusade: Sexuality, Morality and Social Control, 1868-1900 (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1978). See also Sheila M. Rothman, and William L. O'Neill, Everyone Was Brave: The Rise and Fall of Feminism in America (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1969).

[72]Olive Banks, Faces of Feminism: A Study of Feminism, p. 84.

[73]Alan P. Grimes, The Puritan Ethic and Woman Suffrage (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 119. See also p. 134.

[74]Rise B. Axelrod, "Argument and Strategy in Mill's The Subjection of Women," The Victorian Newsletter, No. 46 (Fall, 1974), pp. 10-14, draws connections between Mill's arguments about women and his other works.

[75]On conflicts between "equal rights" and "evangelical" perspectives, see Olive Banks.

Chapter Three

I Introduction

The previous chapter sought to establish that nineteenth and early twentieth century feminism were not entirely liberal. This chapter will seek to establish the same thing for modern American mainstream feminism. As before, the emphasis will be on broad themes, rather than specific lists of policies, biographies of leaders, or histories of organizations. Influences to be discussed here include: activism, liberalism, hyper-individualism and existentialism, theories of social conditioning, state interventionism, anti-commercialism, expressivism, the androgynous ideal, radical feminism, and "female values." Some of these categories overlap, and some are closely related: the division is somewhat arbitrary and is only intended to highlight certain things. Overall, these categories suggest the eclecticism and vague leftism of much mainstream feminist thought. Radical feminists are also correct in saying that some of the issues raised in recent radical and mainstream feminist thought do not readily fit into standard ideological categories. Obviously, the numerous topics raised here cannot be discussed in depth. It should be especially noted that the discussion of radical feminism is restricted to ideas that have influenced mainstream feminist thought and is not intended to be a mini-history of radical feminism as a whole.

II Aspects of Mainstream Feminist Thought

a) The Activist Orientation:

While radical and socialist feminists have engaged in elaborate theory-

building about capitalist patriarchy, mainstream feminists have tended to focus on pragmatic actions to solve immediate problems, and to write "popular" works designed to persuade the general public to support mainstream feminist reforms. There are, of course, many mainstream feminist academics who apply social science theories to the condition of women,[1] but a much larger number of mainstream feminists are primarily activists who have concentrated on pursuing reform, rather than setting out philosophic visions of the good society.

Two aspects of this activist orientation are worth further attention. First, justifications for demands have frequently been non-ideological, and could best be characterized as based on pragmatic humanitarianism. Seeing people in need, reformers have taken concrete steps to do something about it: for instance, founding shelters for battered wives or demanding higher payments for single mothers on welfare. Many reforms undertaken for humanitarian reasons are compatible with liberalism, but that does not mean they were undertaken for distinctively liberal reasons.

Second, at the risk of stating the obvious, most mainstream feminists have not been political philosophers, and have not worried overmuch about the philosophic fine points of such concepts as "equality" or "freedom." Take, for instance, Betty Friedan's comment on the founding of NOW (The National Organization for Women):

> The crux of the ideology and the actions was simply the concept of "equality" and the value of the individual: dignity, self-fulfillment, self-determination—which seem like no ideology because they are simply the values of the American Revolution (of all human revolutions basically) applied to women. "Equality" is the basic word: it cut through the confusion of the symposia and the talk, the psychological claptrap, the mystique, and

> exposed the apologetic token half-solutions which were all that women had been offered, or had even dared to demand, up until now.[2]

At the common sense level, it is clear what Friedan means, but such an all-purpose usage of the term "equality" does have its dangers. When the concept is left so nebulous, it makes it hard to detect slippage from liberal to non-liberal goals.

b) Liberal Values:

Liberal values have played an important role in recent mainstream feminism. A clear-cut example of liberal ideas at work lay in parallels between the civil rights movement and the women's movement, attempting to work within the system to get anti-discrimination legislation passed, putting pressure on government agencies for enforcement, and launching lawsuits against recalcitrant employers. Not only were the tactics used standard liberal ones, but the goal—bringing about equal opportunity—was a standard liberal one.

Another liberal value that mainstream feminists have made use of is respect for privacy. The central reason the United States Supreme Court gave for legalizing abortion was privacy (not, incidentally, "a woman's right to control her own body"), and the same rationale was one of the arguments used for legalizing contraceptives. Feminists also argued against discrimination against lesbians on the grounds that one's sexual preference is a personal matter.[3]

Another liberal value that feminists have emphasized is autonomy. The concern that women understand financial matters, learn to do "handyman"

things around the house, that they have good educations, and that they be capable of economic independence are all connected with the idea that women should not be helplessly dependent on men. The concept of "a woman's right to control her own body" shows a concern for autonomy in a different context.[4]

Finally, another liberal concept which surfaced in a number of contexts was the idea that women should be treated as individuals, instead of being judged on the basis of stereotypes. Feminists used this argument to open up non-traditional jobs to women, and to challenge various discriminatory laws which, for instance, forbid women from being executors of estates or forbid them to enter various sporting events, such as marathons. Feminists challenged sex-segregated high school programs which forced girls to take home economics, and boys to take "shop." They objected to guidance materials which channeled girls into only "sex appropriate" jobs. More generally, feminists criticized the mass media for stereotyped portrayals of women, and began producing alternative materials.

It would be possible to go on at much greater length about liberal aspects of recent mainstream feminism, but it is not necessary. The argument in this chapter is not that mainstream feminism is entirely devoid of liberal elements; the claim is that there is more to recent mainstream feminism than liberalism.

c) Hyper-Individualism and Existentialism:

Yet another influence on feminism, especially in the late 1960s, was a sort of hyper-individualism which was found in both mainstream and radical feminism. British authors Mary Midgley and Judith Hughes refer to it as

"Nietzchean" and note the influence of existentialism, as well.[5] Among some feminists there was a strong reaction against being either emotionally or financially dependent on a man, and at the same time, a taking up of the "male" ideal of the self-sufficient, lone hero. Commitment was seen as a barrier to autonomy and self-development. In a related view, family life was seen as a zero-sum game, where the interests of the wife and mother were in conflict with the interests of the other family members. The "family life as a zero-sum game" idea was new, and stands in sharp contrast to nineteenth century mainstream feminist ideals of mutual interdependence and marriage to the right person as a potential source of self-development for both partners.[6] To the extent that this hyper-individualism can be called liberal, it owes more to Hobbes than to Locke or Mill.

To mention Nietzche or existentialism is not to suggest that millions of American women went out and read the collected works of Nietzche or Jean-Paul Sartre. It is only to suggest that feminists drew on influences which had filtered into the popular culture, and to put a name to the ultimate source of those influences. In the case of existentialism, however, there was an explicitly feminist work that people could draw on. Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex influenced works as diverse as radical feminist Shulamith Firestone's The Dialectics of Sex, and mainstream feminist Elizabeth Janeway's Man's World, Woman's Place: A Study in Social Mythology.

Although de Beauvoir's book was complex, American feminists seemed to pick up on three main themes. Most straightforwardly, de Beauvoir was one of a number of sources for critiques of Freudian views of "woman's nature." Second, de Beauvoir, using the terminology of "immanence" and

"transcendence," in effect suggested that the hyper-individualistic "male" ideal was what women should aspire to. In particular, she seemed to disparage the "animal function" of bearing young to continue the race, and to glorify the creation of "artifacts" and ideas which transcended the biological cycle of life.[7]

A third aspect of de Beauvoir's thought which was influential was her concept of "woman as other." The concept was Hegelian, and involved several ideas: men had defined themselves as the absolute human type, and defined women as relative to them, and different and inferior. Men were Subjects, wanting mastery and independence; women were passive Objects. Men project onto women the qualities they want women to have, and women have allowed this to happen for complex psychological, biological, and economic reasons. Men, however, feel ambiguous about woman-as-object because although they want mastery, they also long for stimulating and alluring companions, and passive and dependent women lack these qualities. In addition, women, as conscious beings, also long to be Subjects themselves.[8]

The crucial point about "the other" for American feminists was that "woman's nature" was a myth imposed on women by men. Men ignored the qualities common to men and women when they defined "woman's nature;" and on close examination the distinctive qualities attributed to women turned out to be ones which were highly convenient for men. Women, for instance, were supposed to enjoy serving men, like to be dependent, and prefer to avoid the rigours of thinking for themselves. Women were also supposed to be happy to undertake the routine work of childcare and running a household, leaving the more adventurous, exciting, or intellectually

stimulating work to men. Against this background, both radical and mainstream feminists in the late sixties were often suspicious of arguments that there were many significant innate psychological differences between the sexes. By the mid-seventies feminists were reacting against the devaluation of traditional female qualities and activities found in much sixties-style feminism and looking much more positively on "female values." The influence of Nietzchean individualism and existentialism on all forms of feminism has lessened perceptibly in recent years, but it was a major influence in the late sixties, and it helped set the image of feminism in the minds of members of the general public.

d) Behaviorism/Social Conditioning:

Liberalism has always stressed the influence of the environment on character formation. Behaviorism took this idea to extremes, claiming that people were entirely the creatures of their social conditioning.[9] When one took a liberal predisposition to attribute sex differences to environmental influences, behaviorism, existentialist suspicion of "woman's nature," and the Marxist idea of false consciousness, it was possible to argue that women in general had been socially conditioned, and that some women had seen through their conditioning. Feminists tried to play down the elitist implications of the enlightened few raising the consciousness of the conditioned many, whose values were portrayed as not merely different, but "inauthentic;" but the implication was there.

e) State Interventionism/Democratic Socialism:

Both left liberalism and democratic socialism allow considerable scope for government regulation of society and the provision of social services.

Some forms of state intervention may violate liberal principles, but in other cases the boundary between left liberalism and mild forms of socialism is blurred. Perhaps one difference lies in attitudes toward state intervention: the traditional liberal would prefer to find solutions to social problems which did not involve state intervention if possible, and fall back on state action as a last resort, mindful of the fact that the cumulative effect of adding to government programs can be detrimental to personal liberty and economically harmful to society as a whole, and that government programs have limitations. Governments cannot create utopias.

With this in mind, it is significant that one commentator has summarized mainstream feminism as follows:

> Feminist leaders incorporated their sentiments into a coherent ideology, which defined sex discrimination as women's problem, held the government responsible for ending this unfair treatment, and offered a plan of action to ease women's burdens.[10]

However, to say that feminists held the state responsible for solving the problem of sex discrimination does not fully capture the extent of feminist demands on the state to do everything from funding universal daycare, to withholding funds from school boards that wished to buy textbooks which did not meet feminist criteria for non-sexism, to insisting not merely that equal opportunity laws be adopted but that educational institutions and businesses submit affirmative action plans to the state if they wished to qualify for government contracts.[11] Even "independent projects" sometimes relied on state grants and subsidies.

One rather caustic commentary on the National Women's Conference at Houston in 1977 pointed out that:

> Aside from advocating passage of the Equal Rights Amendment, something that would directly prohibit restrictions on

> liberty, most of what the news weeklies called the "hot issues" were those that, if enacted, would bring the government into the lives of women in a pervasive way.[12]

It might well be argued that many of the issues addressed at Houston were serious problems, and that sometimes state intervention is needed to solve problems. Nonetheless, there is some justice to the argument that the effect of many of the demands would be to substitute dependence on the state for dependence on an individual man, or "government in the role of Mr. Right."[13]

Increased provision of various social services may well be justified by liberal principles, but some state interventionist measures demanded by mainstream feminists are clearly a departure from traditional liberal principles. Three examples are affirmative action, censorship, and "equal pay for work of equal value." There is a vast literature on all three issues, and limitations of space prevent even a cursory examination of the major arguments for and against each. However, each one involves a shift from an important traditional liberal principle. Affirmative action, when it extends to official or unofficial quotas, replaces equal opportunity on the basis of individual merit with membership in an ascriptive group as a legitimate criterion for hiring someone.[14] Censorship of pornography violates the liberal principle of freedom of speech.[15] "Equal pay for work of equal value" substitutes the judgment of some kind of committee for market wage-setting mechanisms,[16] and leads to state intervention in the economy insofar as courts would end up adjudicating disputed claims and overseeing the resulting settlements.

Liberalism is a complex doctrine, and one which takes into account the possibility of clashing principles, and the need to deal with a reality

that falls short of ideals. It is conceivable that a person might come up with liberal reasons for suspending the principles in question in order to bring about some great good, but it is at least questionable whether many of the advocates of the policy changes listed have in fact used liberal arguments, and have established that the good to be achieved outweighs the potential harmful side-effects. Very basic principles are at stake.

At the very least, one must insist on definitional clarity. Affirmative action may well be necessary to bring about what William Galston calls "social inclusiveness"—widening the range of activities effectively opened to women[17]—but, still, quotas based on group membership are different in kind from, and clash with, laws that demand that a job applicant be judged solely on the basis of individual merit. They are not merely a stronger version of the same type of law. Similarly, "equal pay for work of equal value" rests on the principle that people ought to be paid according to (a subjective judgment of) the intrinsic worth of their jobs as compared to other jobs, and not in accordance with the rules of supply and demand. It cannot legitimately be considered simply an extension of the idea of paying equal wages to men and women doing the same job, just because the aim in both cases is said to be fairness to women. And if it is argued that pornography should be banned because it causes harm to others—a class of acts which can be restricted under liberal principles—it needs to be made clear that "harm to others" is being defined in terms quite different than John Stuart Mill's.[18]

As was said at the beginning of this section, liberalism does allow

considerable scope for state intervention to regulate society and provide social services. However, the philosophical reader who goes through mainstream feminist writings of the sixties and seventies cannot but be struck by the almost complete lack of attention to such traditional liberal concerns as the need to avoid too much concentration of power in a government,[19] or the possible difficulties of financing various proposals, or the need to do the educative groundwork so that when legislation is passed it is not too far outside the broad social consensus.[20]

Betty Friedan's The Second Stage, published in 1981, took the pragmatic view that, realistically speaking, further major expansions of social programs were simply not on the American political agenda for the 1980s. She argued, among other things, that feminists should rediscover the American tradition of mutual aid through voluntary associations, or risk political irrelevance and practical ineffectiveness while waiting for big government to solve problems. She also argued that feminists should take a more positive attitude toward the family.[21] The book received a mixed reception.

f) Anti-business Attitudes:

Mainstream feminism displayed an ambivalent attitude towards business. On the one hand, the NOW statement of aims had said that the organization's purpose was:

> to take action to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, exercising all the privileges and responsibilities thereof in a truly equal partnership with men.[22]

This meant, among other things, giving women equal employment opportunities. The aim was not to get a few token women appointed to

corporation and government boards, but widespread progress. Still, one would think that feminists would be pleased when increasing numbers of women made use of new opportunities, and began to "make it to the top." This was sometimes the case, as numerous accounts celebrating "the first woman to..." make clear. However, there were also stories asking, "Is this what we fought for?"

Various people have pointed out that many reform-minded intellectuals and activists in the 1960s had an anti-commercial bias.[23] They were hostile to big business on grounds ranging from its supposed acquisitive and technocratic ethic, to its supposed corrupting influence on politics, to its general lack of social conscience. This bias was also present in mainstream feminism, and turned into clear-cut opposition to capitalism in radical and socialist reminism. As early as 1963, Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique argued that big business and advertising had deliberately foisted "the feminine mystique" on American society in order to be able to sell more products to women.[24] More generally, her critique of the lifestyle of the suburban housewife has been called a parallel to 1950s writings on "the man in the grey flannel suit."[25] Since then, feminists have attacked business for various forms of discrimination against women and for being unresponsive to the needs of women who work outside the home. The mass media have come under particularly strong attacks for perpetuating sexist stereotypes. Business pleas that changes took time, or that regulations were expensive and unwieldy, met with little sympathy.

g) Expressivism:

Another element of mainstream feminism was what is sometimes called

"expressivism." Characteristics of expressivism include placing a high value on emotion, intuition, and spontaneity, and an emphasis on self-development, and "authenticity,"—being in touch with one's "real self." Underlying this is the implicit belief that one's natural, undistorted, uncorrupted impulses will be good, and will be in harmony with the impulses of others. Another aspect of expressivism is opposition to hierarchies in social arrangements, and a preference for co-operative, egalitarian arrangements with a minimum of rules, and thus a minimum of barriers to personal growth.[26] The expressivist outlook has clear affinities with nineteenth century romanticism and transcendentalism.

Expressivism played a much greater role in radical feminism than in mainstream feminism, but even so, one can see its influence in mainstream feminist complaints that the role of housewife-mother was too restrictive to allow for self-fulfillment; that even mainstream feminist organizations should be run along participatory democratic rather than hierarchical lines; and that business and government were too technocratic and needed to be "humanized" with expressivist values. A general impatience with having to work through institutional mechanisms and a dislike of having to negotiate demands in order to accomplish things in the political arena (thus compromising one's principles and "authenticity") also reflect expressivist values.

The broad philosophic doctrine of expressivism is associated with doctrines of positive liberty. Mainstream feminists sometimes used rhetoric of women being socially conditioned into stereotypical feminine roles, and hence "unfree" and in need of consciousness-raising. However, while

mainstream feminists often talked about social conditioning, it was more often radical and socialist feminists who explicitly linked the ideas of patriarchal oppression and "false consciousness," in order to explain why more women did not seek "liberation." The implications of this will be taken up in the next chapter.

h) The Androgynous Ideal:

The core idea of androgyny is that all human beings have what we think of as "masculine" and "feminine" elements to their personalities, but that sexual stereotyping prevents men from developing or using "feminine" qualities, and prevents women from developing or using "masculine" qualities. Beyond this core idea, definitions of androgyny vary considerably.[27]

Milder versions of the concept drew on three liberal ideas. First, such advocates of androgyny made use of liberal environmentalism to suggest that many, supposedly innate, sexually stereotyped traits were in fact the result of socialization; second, they argued that stereotyping prevented people from developing or expressing their full self-potential; and third, they said that not only was this situation harmful to people as individuals, but that society as a whole was harmed by, for instance, women who might have been brilliant medical researchers going into "more feminine" fields instead. In this form, androgyny was not much more than a plea for liberal individuality, and the ways suggested for bringing about a more androgynous society were in line with liberal ideals of widening options. Actions suggested included persuading the media to show men and women in non-traditional roles, using non-sexist educational materials and avoiding channelling students automatically into "sex-appropriate" careers, and

increasing the availability of daycare and jobs with flexible or limited hours in order to make it easier for men and women alike to participate in both childcare and jobs outside the home.

In practice, however, things were seldom that simple. Advocates of androgyny often wavered between the claim that if it were not for sexual stereotyping, everyone would be androgynous, and the quite different claim that if it were not for sexual stereotyping, then people would exhibit a much broader range of characteristics, in which case one would expect some men and women to be androgynous, and some members of both sexes to be predominantly "masculine" and others to be "feminine."[28] In addition, sometimes androgyny would be described in quite scientific terms, with long lists of personality traits, and people rated on androgyny scales,[29] while other times it was treated as a moral ideal of how people ought to be. When people praised androgyny, it was not a combination of stereotypical female deviousness and male ruthlessness that they had in mind. Furthermore, sometimes people talked about androgyny in terms of personalities, in which case one might, for instance, have full-time housewives who were androgynous, while other times people talked about androgyny in terms of social customs and social structures, so that, for instance, in an androgynous society it would be the norm for all parents to participate in childcare part-time, and to work outside the home part-time. Finally, although androgyny was, on the face of it, a claim about the range of personality traits and abilities found in men and women, these traits included what in earlier times would have been called "virtues," and at times amounted to a plea for everyone to develop all the good qualities and none of the bad qualities

heretofore associated with one sex or the other. This was close to calling for the moral transformation of humanity as the solution to social problems.

From the liberal perspective, there are several things which are striking about the literature. First, although mainstream feminists often said they favoured androgyny as diversity, in practice they sometimes described non-androgynous people in such unflattering terms as to suggest they were setting up one ideal personality type that everyone should aspire to. Second, the issue of coercion was virtually never confronted in discussions of how to get from a largely non-androgynous present to an androgynous future.[30] Third, while liberal feminists were traditionally skeptical of conservative claims about the vast extent of psychological sex differences, they held that possible differences were a matter for scientific investigation. Advocates of androgyny occasionally came close to treating it as a matter of principle that there were no significant innate psychological differences between the sexes.

Beginning in the early seventies, feminists began to be more critical of androgyny. There were a number of grounds given, but primarily the argument was that there might be some important psychological sex differences after all, and that women should be proud of, and build on "female values."[31] That topic will be discussed shortly.

i) Radical Feminism:

Radical feminism had a major impact on mainstream feminism. It was radical feminists who first made abortion, rape, sexual preference, sexual harassment, and censorship of pornography into major issues, and they provided some of the background ideas behind "equal pay for work of equal value."[32] Radical feminist rhetoric also had an impact on mainstream

feminism, as it became common to talk of "oppression" rather than "discrimination," and "liberation" rather than "equal rights." Concepts originally formulated by radical feminists have also made their way into the mainstream. "Patriarchy" is one; the distinction between (non-violent) erotica and (coercive) pornography[33] is another.

Radical feminism has been mentioned at various points already. Hyper-individualism and expressivism had an influence on various aspects of American society in the 1960s. It is not always clear to what extent mainstream feminism absorbed views from the general social climate, and to what extent it was specifically radical feminist versions of general influences that had an impact on mainstream feminism. In other cases, radical and mainstream feminists were working with quite different versions of nominally similar concepts. For instance, when mainstream feminists talked about their ideal of "the androgynous society," they did not mean a non-capitalist, communalistic society, as some radical feminists did.

Only a small number of radical feminist concepts will be discussed here to illustrate radical feminist influences on mainstream feminism. This should not be taken to imply that they were the only such influential ideas.

Radical feminism sprang from the New Left,[34] and radical feminists took ideals of participatory democracy very seriously. This was partly a matter of principle, but it was also reinforced first-hand by women's treatment at the hands of all too many New Left men. When radical feminists set up their own groups they went to great lengths to insure that everyone had a chance to take part in discussions and decision-making, and that

tasks would be rotated. Hierarchy, authority, and elitism were to be avoided at all costs.[35] Mainstream feminism did not go as far as radical feminism in disavowing all structure and authority, but, especially in the early years, it went farther in that direction than many traditional American reform organizations. Mainstream feminists often speak in terms of "facilitators" and "co-ordinators" rather than "leaders" or "chairwomen."

Another radical feminist concept which played a role in mainstream feminism was "sisterhood." Roughly speaking, this meant that women had common interests and should display solidarity, but such a prosaic definition does not capture the idealistic and communalistic spirit that "sisterhood" was supposed to invoke. Radical and mainstream feminists both used the concept to get members to put aside differences and work together on various projects, notably abortion reform, or the 1970 New York march. "Sisterhood" was also a way of appealing to non-feminist women, to gain their support.

The concept of sisterhood ran into trouble from several directions. Differences between mainstream and radical feminists meant they sometimes disagreed over both tactics and goals, and did not necessarily want to work together.[36] Black, lesbian, and working-class feminists, and feminists outside the U.S. argued that the concept obscured their distinctive problems and priorities, and conflicts between their goals and those of middle-class, white, heterosexual feminists, under a "false universalism."[37] Meanwhile, anti-feminist groups challenged the right of any kind of feminist to speak for <u>all</u> women. Phyllis Schlafly's success in mobilizing women against the ERA and the high profile of women in the anti-abortion movement were sore blows to sisterhood. Despite these problems, the rhetoric of sisterhood

continues to be used.

The radical feminist parallel between social class oppression and sexual oppression, and the associated concept of "sexual exploitation" also had an impact on mainstream feminism. It opened up a range of issues far different than demands for legal equality and better educational and job opportunities. It focused attention on issues such as women as sex objects in advertising, pornography, rape, and sexual harassment. The concept of sexual exploitation also changed the tenor of mainstream feminism somewhat. Betty Friedan and others had emphasized that men were fellow victims of the feminine mystique and would benefit from sexual equality because they would no longer have to carry the whole economic burden for a family, and the emotional burden of being the only source of meaning in a woman's life. And, of course, society would benefit from doubling the talent available. Radical feminist claims suggested that men benefitted in numerous ways from the economic, emotional, and sexual exploitation of women. Bluntly put: men were the enemy.[38] In the case of radical feminists the lesson drawn was either that women could only rely on themselves to bring about sexual equality (though help from enlightened males might be welcomed in the meantime, provided they did not try to take over); or, if men were considered beyond redemption,[39] that women should have as little to do with them as possible.

Even if radical and socialist feminists explained that what they were saying was that it was the system of patriarchy or capitalist patriarchy that was at fault and they were not attacking individual males, there was no denying that to most people they sounded anti-male. Mainstream feminists

sometimes cautioned them that it was no more fair to lump all men together as male chauvinists than to engage in stereotyping all women.[40] However, anti-male rhetoric did become more prominent in mainstream feminist oratory. At a deeper level, the idea of sexual exploitation made mainstream feminists more aware that problems went far deeper than needing to put equal opportunity laws on the books and making daycare available.

Another aspect of radical feminism which had an influence on mainstream feminism was radical feminist views on the public/private split. The slogan "the personal is political" meant different things in different contexts, but two meanings stand out. First, when women got together in consciousness-raising groups, it became apparent that what they had thought of as unique, personal problems were often problems that other women in the group had also experienced. Those common experiences then became the basis for generalizations about the way women had been treated.[41] Once problems were identified in terms of social patterns, it became possible to analyze ways of dealing with them politically. A second meaning hinged on defining the public sphere, including both politics and the economic sphere in this formulation, as a system of power with the elite dominating the powerless in subtle as well as direct ways, as in the concept of "capitalist hegemony." It was then argued that exactly the same type of exploitative relationship existed in private life, even if the way women were taught to think about marriage obscured the true nature of what was going on.[42]

This way of looking at the private sphere was in sharp contrast to traditional liberalism, which tended to treat the public and private spheres (and their subdivisions) as separate and operating on different principles,

none of which could be characterized as all-pervasive or based on one-sided power. The result of this new outlook was "the politicization of private life," as marriage was analyzed in terms of the economic, sexual, and emotional exploitation of women, and myths about woman's nature that made it seem natural. More concretely, it was pointed out that marriage laws often operated to the disadvantage of the wife; that the principle of the state not interfering in the private sphere was in itself a political stance; that domestic violence should be treated far more seriously than it had been in the past; and that wives often worked far longer hours than their husbands. Casual words and actions were subject to ideological scrutiny, and there was sometimes a tendency to read political meanings into personal disagreements, and to attach great symbolic significance to what non-feminists considered to be relatively trivial matters. Mainstream feminists did not necessarily accept the whole radical feminist analysis that lay behind the slogan "the personal is political" but they did become much more sharply critical of marriage.

j) Female Values/Motherhood:

Advocates of androgyny theoretically held that "masculine" and "feminine" qualities were both valuable when moderated and balanced against each other. For instance, male aggressiveness toned down was legitimate self-assertion, and logic and intuition complemented each other. However, from the first, there was a tendency to tilt the balance in the favour of "female" qualities. Males held power, and it was "male" materialism, aggressiveness, and cold calculation that were responsible for war, imperialism, pollution, and a technocratic rather than humanistic outlook

on domestic politics. By the mid-seventies, the androgynous ideal began to fade, and was replaced by an emphasis on "female values" as the proper organizing principles of society, and the ideal qualities that both sexes should aspire to.[43]

Along with the resurgence of "female values" has come an increasingly positive view of motherhood. This occurred within both radical and mainstream feminism. One result of this is that feminists are giving increasing attention to questions of how to handle the demands of both family life and careers. While abortion and the ERA were the main issues in the 1970s, feminists have begun to focus more attention on the need for daycare (which had been a demand, but not such a high priority demand[44]), parental leaves, and flexible job hours.

Finally, some radical and socialist feminists have begun producing epistemological arguments that the process of becoming a mother (or even having the potential to become one) makes women see life in holistic, connected terms, and develop intuitive sensibilities which stand in sharp contrast to typical "male" rationalistic, dualistic, pseudo-objective, "linear" philosophies.[45] In short, they have come up with a novel argument against dualism, and liberalism, which they take to be an archetypical dualistic and rationalistic philosophy.

The recent attention to the "gender gap" on political issues is also worth noting, not so much for the differences found in male and female opinions on political issues, as for the fact that feminists have chosen to stress ten or twenty percentage point differences in male and female opinions, rather than eighty to ninety percent agreement.[46] In addition,

the common feminist tendency to confound the categories of "feminist" and "woman" surfaced. For instance, women are traditionally, stereotypically, more peace-loving than men, so that reluctance to endorse vast military spending is not a specifically feminist position.[47] And as political scientists have pointed out, there is a difference between a voter agreeing or disagreeing with a candidate's stand on a particular issue, and a voter making that issue the decisive consideration in deciding whom to vote for.[48]

III Conclusion

What are the characteristics of modern mainstream feminism? To recap briefly, the themes or elements set out here were: an activist orientation, liberal influences, hyper-individualism and existentialism, behaviorism/social conditioning, state interventionism/democratic socialism, anti-business attitudes, expressivism, the androgynous ideal, radical feminism, and female values/motherhood. Obviously, the label "liberal" is not adequate for such a diverse and at times contradictory group of characteristics, but what can one say about mainstream feminism?

To begin with, mainstream feminism has been eclectic. Sometimes liberal arguments are used, sometimes radical feminist concepts are invoked, sometimes appeals are based on compassion or pragmatism, and still other influences might be present. In addition, there is an *ad hoc* quality to mainstream feminist arguments, as part of a theory may be invoked to back up one demand, while the implications of the rest of the theory are ignored. In particular, radical feminist arguments have often been lifted out of their underlying theoretical context. Alternately, different principles might be applied to what are in some respects similar situations. For

instance, women were supposed to beware of ways in which family commitments could infringe on individuality, and talk of mutual interdependence and co-operation within the family was looked on with some skepticism, but one was supposed to adopt a much more idealistic approach when looking at the demands that women's groups made on their members.

To the extent that there is any overall trend in recent mainstream feminism, it is a tendency to move to the left of traditional liberal feminism. However, even this does not indicate any unified ideal because even though radical and socialist feminists share such characteristics as expressivism and anti-commercial attitudes, there are differences between vaguely anarchistic radical feminist ideals, and the advocacy of state interventionism favoured by socialist feminists.

Another point to be considered is that some of the issues raised by modern feminists do not readily fit into traditional ideological categories. For instance, while androgyny was not a completely new concept (Plato's Republic included one version of it[49]), it was never a major theme in western political thought. Parallels between economic and sexual exploitation, and the concept of "sexual politics" as a system of power went beyond traditional liberal or Marxist feminist arguments about women's place in society. Finally, there is the curious fact that "female values" stereotypes can be found in conservative anti-feminist thought, in maternal feminism, in radical feminism, in socialist feminism, and increasingly, in mainstream feminism. This makes it impossible to compartmentalize comments about "different but equal" into traditional ideological categories.

Another characteristic of mainstream feminism is that rhetoric has not

always matched the substance of demands. Feminists have often used liberal rhetoric even when demands have changed. For instance, the shift from demanding laws against discrimination to demanding quotas for minorities may be glossed over as "real equal opportunity." Conversely, when mainstream feminists took up the originally radical feminist slogan that "the personal is political" they were not endorsing the radical feminist view of capitalism and marriage as nothing but systems of oppression which needed to be completely abolished.

A final point which needs to be brought out is that the term "mainstream feminism" encompasses people with a very broad spectrum of opinions. For purposes of this thesis it was more useful to do a survey of themes in mainstream feminism than to provide summaries of the writings of individual feminists, but a thematic treatment should not be allowed to obscure the fact that there is considerable difference between the outlook of, for example, Betty Friedan, lately labelled a "conservative feminist" in some circles,[50] and Gloria Steinem, who says that if labels must be used, she prefers to call herself a radical feminist.[51] In addition, the views of mainstream feminists, notably Betty Friedan and Alice Rossi, have changed substantially over the years.[52] In short, modern mainstream feminism is a complex phenomenon.

Chapter Three

Footnotes

[1]Political science examples include Joyce Gelb and Marion Leif Palley, Women and Public Policies (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982), which examinesfeminist lobbying on four major issues, in relation to "four rules for emergent interest group success;" Pamela Johnston Conover and Virginia Gray, Feminism and the New Right: Conflict over the American Family (New York: Praeger, 1983), which uses collective action and symbolization of issue theories to account for New Right and feminist successes and failures; and Nancy E. McGlen and Karen O'Connor, Women's Rights: The Struggle for Equality in the 19th and 20th Centuries (New York: Praeger, 1983), which uses modified collective action theories in examining why certain feminist issues have come to the fore at different times, and in assessing feminist strategies for gaining support.

[2]Betty Friedan, It Changed My Life: Writings on the Women's Movement (New York: Random House, 1976), p. 84.

[3]Mary Lyndon Shanley, "Afterward" in Irene Diamond, ed., Families, Politics, and Public Policy: A Feminist Dialogue on Women and the State (New York: Longman, 1983), pp. 358-360.

[4]Ibid., p. 358.

[5]Mary Midgley and Judith Hughes, Women's Choices: Philosophical Problems Facing Feminism (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983), p. 11.

[6]Sheila M. Rothman, Woman's Proper Place: A History of Changing Ideals and Practices, 1870 to the Present (New York: Basic Books, 1978), p. 242.

[7]For a critique of this aspect of de Beauvoir and her influence on radical feminism, see Jean Bethke Elshtain, "Liberal Heresies: Existentialism and Repressive Feminism," in Liberalism and the Modern Polity, Michael C. Gargas McGrath, ed. (New York: Marcel Dekker, 1978). Whether or not existentialism should be considered a "liberal heresy" is another matter.

[8]For a good brief account of de Beauvoir's feminism, and especially her concept of "the other" see the entry in Mary Anne Warren, The Nature

of Woman: An Encyclopedia and Guide to the Literature (Inverness, Calif.: Edgepress, 1980), pp. 107-113.

[9]For a brief discussion of behaviorism as an influence on feminism, see Mary Midgley and Judith Hughes, Women's Choices, pp. 11-13.

[10]Ethel Klein, Gender Politics: From Consciousness to Mass Politics (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984), pp. 66-67.

[11]Barbara Sinclair Deckard, The Women's Movement: Political, Socio-economic and Psychological Issues, 3rd. ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1983) is a useful source on feminist issues and activities.

[12]Sally Helgeson, "Virtue Rewarded: Government in the Role of Mr. Right," Harper's, (May, 1978), p. 24. For information on how the conference was organized and on the resolutions, see Caroline Bird, What Women Want (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979).

[13]Ibid., p. 27 and p. 23. Jean Bethke Elshtain, arguing from a different ideological perspective, has also discussed "the state as Mr. Right." See her essay "Antigone's Daughters: Reflections on the Female Identity and the State," in Irene Diamond, ed., Families, Politics, and Public Policy, pp. 300-311.

[14]There is a voluminous literature on affirmative action. One useful anthology is Barry R. Gross, ed., Reverse Discrimination (Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1977).

[15]Perhaps the most useful starting place for this topic is the book Pornography and Censorship, David Copp and Susan Wendell, eds. (Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1983). It gives representative writings from various views, excerpts from court decisions, and a section on recent research on the effects of pornography on behavior. Laura Lederer, ed., Take Back the Night: Women on Pornography (New York: William Morrow, 1980) is a basic source for pro-censorship feminist arguments. Varda Burstyn, ed., Women Against Censorship (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1985) presents a variety of feminist arguments against censorship.

[16]The July/August 1985 issue of Society (Vol. 22, No. 5), pp. 28-86, includes a section of articles representing the major arguments for and against "equal pay for work of equal value." A number of the articles also include recommendations for further reading.

[17]Galston does not discuss this issue in the article cited in chapter one, but "social inclusiveness" would be one of the stronger arguments a liberal could use.

[18]Traditionally, when liberals talk about harm to others they mean direct, tangible harm to specifiable individuals. Sometimes advocates of censorship argue that there is a direct link between readership of pornography and some readers committing sex crimes, but research in this area is still controversial. The more general argument is that pornography harms women by fostering a social climate which is detrimental to women. A sexist social climate is a very amorphous kind of harm.

[19]Such concern as did exist focused on the fact that males held power in government and the bureaucracy, not on distrust of concentrations of power per se.

[20]According to Olive Banks, "It can be argued... that all the equal rights legislation of this decade was, in a real sense, in advance of public opinion, as witnessed by the difficulties in its implementation." Faces of Feminism (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1981), p. 215.

[21]Friedan argued that even though anti-feminists had exaggerated feminist hostility to the family, it was true that feminists showed considerable hostility towards it, did show a certain disdain for housewives, and did indulge in "man hating" rhetoric. She argued that feminists should stop dwelling on their negative feelings, recognize that most women wanted both jobs and families, and concentrate their efforts on finding ways to make shared parenting and jobs more compatible for both men and women. She suggested feminists concentrate on economic issues instead of sensationalistic "sex" issues like pornography. Furthermore, she argued that many men wanted a more balanced home and job life, and that flexible jobs, parental leaves, and the like should be considered human issues rather than women's issues.

[22]"NOW Statement of Purpose" in Betty Friedan, It Changed My Life: Writings of the Women's Movement (New York: Random House, 1976), p. 87.

[23]The Epilogue of Alonzo L. Hamby's Liberalism and Its Challengers: FDR to Reagan (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), contains a good discussion of the attitudes of reform-minded intellectuals and activists in the 1960s and 1970s. For their anti-commercial bias, see pp. 346-348.

[24]According to Friedan, the idea was that women at home all day would

use more household products than employed women would, and that single-dwelling suburban homes would require more furniture and upkeep than apartments.

[25]Norman Podhoretz, Breaking Ranks (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), p. 75.

[26]Linda Glennon, Women and Dualism: A Sociology of Knowledge Analysis (New York: Longman, 1979), contains a chapter on expressivism. Much of Glennon's discussion applies more to radical than mainstream feminism. I have focused on aspects of expressivism which I think apply to mainstream feminism, as well.

[27]See Mary Vetterling-Braggin, ed., "Femininity," "Masculinity," and "Androgyny": A Modern Philosophical Discussion (Totowa, N.J.: Littlefield, Adams and Company, 1982), for articles using a variety of definitions of androgyny. The book includes a comprehensive list of "Further Readings."

[28]See Joyce Trebilcot, "Two Forms of Androgynism," in Vetterling-Braggin, ed., pp. 161-169.

[29]See, for instance, Sandra Lipsitz Bem, "Psychological Androgyny" in Alice G. Sargent, ed., Beyond Sex Roles (St. Paul: West Publishing Company, 1977), pp. 319-324.

[30]For a discussion which does touch on possible coerciveness, see Bernard R. Boxill, "Sexual Blindness and Sexual Equality," Social Theory and Practice, Vol. 6, No. 3 (Fall, 1980), pp. 281-298. The article is a response to Richard Wasserstrom, "Racism, Sexism and Preferential Treatment: An Approach to the Topics," U.C.L.A. Law Review, 24 (February, 1977), pp. 581-615.

[31]Hester Eisenstein, Contemporary Feminist Theory (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1983) is a useful source on changing attitudes towards issues of sex differences. The focus of the book is on radical feminism, but, as this thesis argues, a number of radical feminist attitudes have influenced mainstream feminism.

[32]Ibid. Hester Eisenstein's book is an excellent survey and critique of radical feminist concerns. Barbara Sinclair Deckard, The Women's Movement, is another useful source on radical feminist issues.

[33]Gloria Steinem played a major role in popularizing the distinction. See "Erotica vs. Pornography," in her book Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1983), pp. 219-230.

[34]For details on the origins of radical feminism, see Jo Freeman, The Politics of Women's Liberation: A Case Study of an Emerging Social Movement and Its Relation to the Policy Process (New York: David McKay, 1975) or Sarah Evans, Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979).

[35]Ibid., p. 105.

[36]See Betty Friedan, It Changed My Life: Writings on the Women's Movement (New York: Random House, 1976), pp. 156-157.

[37]Hester Eisenstein, p. 132.

[38]On this point, see Mary Daly, Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), pp. 27-29.

[39]The term "redemption" is used deliberately. See Ross S. Kraemer's review of Gyn/Ecology in Signs, Vol. 5, No. 2 (Winter 1979), where he points out affinities between Daly's outlook and that of the Gnostics, who divided humanity into the "children of light" and the "children of darkness."

[40]At root, what was at issue was two different conceptions of the nature of society, and the role of the individual in society. The radical and socialist feminist approach derived from Marxist, systemic, "holistic" views of how society works, while the mainstream feminist view stressed the actions of individuals in creating or opposing social change.

[41]From a scientific viewpoint, there are problems with generalizing from a self-selected sample, especially since radical feminists were not demographically representative of American women as a whole. See Hester Eisenstein, p. 133.

[42]Radical and socialist feminists have since gone on to develop more complex arguments about economic and sexual oppression in both the public and private spheres, but the original formulation was of parallel systems of oppression, rather than cross-cutting and interacting ones.

[43]There were some radical feminists, like Mary Daly, who did not think males capable of behaving in a "humane" enlightened manner, but the majority of feminists were more optimistic.

[44]Betty Friedan, The Second Stage (New York: Summit Books, 1981), p. 103.

[45]See the essays in Sandra Harding and Merill B. Hintikka, eds., Discovering Reality: Feminist Perspectives on Epistemology, Metaphysics, Methodology, and Philosophy of Science (Boston: D. Reidel Publishing, 1983). Not the least of the problems with the attempt to link sociology of knowledge perspectives with female biology is that many of the leading anti-dualistic, "subjectivist" philosophers are male.

[46]Detailed discussions of the gender gap can be found in Ethel Klein, Gender Politics: From Consciousness to Mass Politics (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984) and Keith T. Poole and L. Harmon Zeigler, Women, Public Opinion, and Politics: The Changing Political Attitudes of American Women (New York: Longman, 1985).

[47]Some feminists did point out the feminist/women distinction, but the very fact that the term gender gap was popularized by feminists suggests that it was a secondary consideration.

[48]See Harmon Zeigler and Keith Poole, "Political Woman: Gender Indifference," Public Opinion, Vol. 8, No. 4 (Aug./Sept. 1985), p. 56.

[49]See Susan Moller Okin, Women in Western Political Thought (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 69.

[50]Judith Stacey, "A New Conservative Feminism," Feminist Studies, Vol. 9, No. 3 (Fall 1983), pp. 559-583.

[51]Gloria Steinem, quoted in Women's Realities, Women's Choices, Hunter College Women's Studies Collective (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 86.

[52]Friedan talks about the changes in her views in The Second Stage. In Alice Rossi's controversial article "A Biosocial Perspective on Parenting," Daedalus 106 (Spring 1977), pp. 1-32, Rossi explains why she changed her views on the androgynous ideal.

Chapter Four

I Introduction

This thesis began with the argument that radical and socialist feminists have frequently defined liberalism inadequately, and consequently made claims about liberal feminism which do not stand up. The chief means by which this occurs is by defining any form of feminism which does not call for the abolition of capitalism "liberal;" other times "liberalism" may be defined as possessive individualism. A common tactic is to take the statements of "popular" mainstream feminist writers and treat them as exemplars of philosophic liberalism. Not surprisingly, such statements are often found wanting when subjected to philosophic scrutiny. And here a second theme comes in: it is not only radical and socialist feminists who may be dissatisfied with mainstream feminist arguments; the arguments may also be unsatisfactory from a _liberal_ philosophic perspective.

Radical and socialist feminists have some justification for latching on to popular mainstream feminist arguments, insofar as there is only a very small body of work by philosophic liberal feminists in recent years. What is significant is that they have ignored this body of work. Between vague definitions of "liberalism," a failure to distinguish between popular and philosophic mainstream feminist arguments, and a refusal to consider those liberal philosophic writings which are available, one is hard put not to conclude that academic feminists have not taken liberal feminism very seriously, preferring to demolish paper tigers. At the same time, one should not lose sight of the second theme: that modern philosophic liberal feminism has not been very well developed. If liberal feminism is to

present a challenge to socialist and radical feminist theory, or even to be a coherent alternative, it needs to be more than an eclectic mixture of arguments, porous to illiberal presuppositions and demands. Some flexibility and openness to new ideas is a virtue, but fundamental principles also deserve serious attention.

This chapter will have five main sections. The first will consist of historical considerations on past and present American mainstream feminism, with the main focus on political implications. The other four sections each deal more directly with liberal political and philosophic concerns. The first has to do with androgyny, maternalism, and individualism; the second takes up themes of power and politics; the third deals with the state and pluralism; and the fourth directly addresses issues of liberty. There is some overlap among the topics, but a rough categorization of the issues makes them easier to deal with. There are many other topics which could have been dealt with, but these should be enough to indicate that:

> a liberal approach makes a difference in feminist as in all other aspects of politics.[1]

Of course, liberalism is a complex and diverse doctrine, and arguments given here are by no means the only ones that might be made.

II Historical Considerations and Comparisons

Some parallels between antebellum and/or late nineteenth and early twentieth century feminism, and modern mainstream feminism have almost achieved the status of cliches, and will not be dwelt on here. For instance, there are obvious similarities between some women rejecting the limited role assigned to them in the abolitionist movement and their drawing of

conceptual parallels between black slavery and "the slavery of sex" and the similar combination of first-hand experience in reform movements and the use of the concepts of "racism" and "sexism" by modern feminists.[2] In addition, most feminist leaders and the main feminist constituency have always been white, middle-class women,[3] although feminists have often claimed to speak for all women, and have often advocated measures aimed especially at helping needy or working-class women.

In what follows, the focus will be on slightly less familiar patterns. While there are obvious differences between earlier and modern feminism, particularly in regard to the scope for allowable state action, and sexual ideals (bringing men "up" to female standards vs. increasing sexual freedom for both sexes), there are also a number of parallels. Liberal individual rights arguments have been present in all three eras, and there has also been a strong moralistic reform component, directed less at securing women's rights than at morally transforming society as a whole. In the antebellum era the arguments were straightforwardly evangelical; in the suffragist or maternal feminist era the rhetoric was often of applying scientific principles to social change, but the ultimate aims were often justified with reference to the "social gospel." In modern feminism, it is primarily radical feminism that can be seen as a successor to the evangelistic impulse to morally transform the world,[4] but then radical feminism has had a major influence on mainstream feminism. Furthermore, there appears to be something of a shift occurring once again where an emphasis on what men and women have in common is giving way to an emphasis on "separate natures" and "female values" being needed to save society from "masculine" corruption and aggression. Just

as the whole range of Progressive reforms was rationalized as "social housekeeping" and bringing female moral superiority and motherly sensibilities to bear on social problems, so preventing nuclear war, saving the environment, staving off "American imperialism" in the Third World, and getting the American government to spend more on social services and less on the military are issues which women are supposed to be especially concerned about, not as socially responsible citizens, but as mothers, or potential mothers.[5]

The implications of this trend will be taken up shortly, but two related trends will be briefly noted first. Both nineteenth and twentieth century mainstream feminism started out with a typical liberal emphasis on voluntary reform, but soon gave way to an emphasis on state coercion: if people would not behave the right way voluntarily, then it was necessary to make them do so. Prohibition is one example of this approach; attempting to ban pornography is another. The evangelical/moral reform influence is important here because, while the liberal might argue for a gradualist educative approach or call for mild regulations, from a moral reform perspective things are likely to appear more black and white, and it is wrong to tolerate sinful (or perhaps "reactionary") behavior. Right from the start American feminists and moral reformers had a tendency to call on the state to enforce their views when educative efforts did not produce quick enough, deep enough results. This was true of the temperance movement even before the Civil War, and the trend continued in the Progressive era.

A second tendency which is worth noting is the expansion of the feminist agenda to encompass a whole range of reforms, which may then be considered

an integral part of feminism. Causes supported by modern feminists—environmentalism, political reforms, peace, increased social services, and support for labour—bear a striking resemblance to the Progressive roster of reforms. Furthermore, modern feminists have begun to use familiar maternal feminist rationales, and virtually any social reform can be viewed as an extension of feminism once it is claimed that a social practice has to change to bring it into line with "female values."

The crucial point here is not whether various Progressive and modern reforms are worthy of support. At the definitional level what matters is that once feminism has been expanded to mean "any reform which might contribute to a better society" its distinctive meaning becomes lost. A concept which means all things to all people has little cutting edge, and it may make it impossible to analyze clearly when other reforms might come into conflict with narrowly-defined feminist goals. At the level of practice, what matters is that the strategy of increasing support by linking up with allied causes can backfire if it ends up alienating people who approve of equal rights, but disagree with some of the other policy positions that feminists seem to be committed to.

Returning to "female values" issues, Emily Stoper and Roberta Ann Johnson have drawn a number of parallels between maternal feminism (although they do not use the term), and modern feminists, including both some mainstream and radical feminists. Stoper and Johnson focus on the political implications of using moral superiority and related arguments, in order to suggest that modern feminists should be cautious about using them. One danger with moral superiority/female values arguments is that they can

boomerang. Anti-feminists have argued that "feminine" qualities are valuable in the home but not suited for the wider world. Both maternal and some modern feminists have played up the more flattering depictions of traditional female qualities to argue that it is those very qualities that are needed in the public sphere, and that only women can provide them. However, as long as the stereotype itself is not challenged there is always the possibility that it will be turned around again. An image of women as sentimental, self-righteous, and so naively idealistic as to be out of touch with political realities would not necessarily help a women's group that wished to influence public policy, and the stereotype might well make it more difficult for women seeking political careers.

The authors then summarize arguments made by Midge Decter in an analysis of the group Women Strike for Peace, as an example of possible pitfalls for pressure groups taking the high moral ground:

> First, their purity may be "borrowed" by others not so pure and cynically used for other purposes.... Secondly, it may become difficult for the group (like the Pope) to admit mistakes, because so much of their strength lies in their belief that their moral instinct is perfect and that moral instinct is an unerring guide. Thirdly, the combination of initial enthusiasm and ineffective strategy may quickly lead to disillusionment and demoralization. And, last, Decter says the effort expended in merely expressing one's moral wishes distracts from the real work that needs to be done, the work of a dispassionate study of the realistic alternatives to war in a given situation.[6]

Stoper and Johnson add that both nineteenth and twentieth century feminists have "been unwilling to give up their purity," and make the compromises necessary to succeed in the political system. "Typically, they call for a restructuring of all social institutions as the only answer to the righteousness/power dilemma."[7] This is more true of modern radical feminists

than mainstream ones, but even mainstream feminists have worried about activists getting co-opted by "the power structure," and demanded major changes in American politics. The fact that many mainstream feminists insisted on supporting an agenda of increasingly radical reforms in the name of sisterhood and solidarity, even though that alienated members of the general public who might otherwise have supported the more moderate reforms,[8] is perhaps a modern example of the unwillingness to compromise "purity" even when practical considerations are at stake, and a whole reform agenda stands to be lost.

Returning to Stoper and Johnson, they argue that the glorification of "feminine" qualities also needs to be closely examined because those qualities are not necessarily valuable in all situations, or when taken to extremes. For instance, compassion can turn into naive sentimentality, while "masculine" qualities such as logic and assertiveness do have their uses. In short, while appropriating traditional stereotypes may have short-run advantages, in the long run it locks women into limited roles, and may hamper political effectiveness. Stoper and Johnson do not explicitly contrast "separate nature" arguments with traditional liberal attempts to challenge stereotypes and insist that women be treated as individuals, but it is significant that in both nineteenth and twentieth century American feminism there has been a tension between attempts to challenge stereotypes on the one hand, and attempts to make use of stereotypes for feminist purposes on the other.

There are several other possible parallels between nineteenth and twentieth century feminism. Historian Carl Degler and others have pointed out that, while women have had a certain amount of success extending rights

to women, and giving women the option of home or career, feminists have run into great difficulties every time they have substantially challenged women's role in the family.[9] When early feminists called for the vote as an individual right, their opponents argued that the household was a unit and should be represented by the head of the family. Treating wives as independent individuals violated Biblical views ("wives, submit yourselves unto your husbands"), and would sow seeds of discord. Later suffragists circumvented this line of argument as much as possible by claiming that women needed the vote as an extension of their role as mothers.

Jo Freeman has pointed out that most of the successes of modern feminists were in fields which had direct parallels to black Civil Rights issues such as discrimination in education and employment, and financial institutions unfairly denying people credit. Issues which did not have direct parallels had (and continue to have) difficulty in gaining as much support.[10] For instance, abortion demands have encountered strong opposition, and sexual harassment is not taken nearly as seriously as feminists believe it should be. However, it is when feminists try to make major changes in women's and men's roles within the family that they have encountered the most resistance. In recent years it has become acceptable for a middle-class wife to work outside the home, but to a large extent this has been accomplished by adding the role of working outside the home onto the role of homemaker. Numerous studies have shown that husbands seldom do an equal share of housework and childcare, even when both spouses work equally long hours outside the home.[11] A slightly different example involves the image of the Equal Rights Amendment.

> When the ERA was perceived as a means of ensuring equitable treatment it passed Congress and was quickly ratified by 35 states.[12]

However, when Phyllis Schlafly and others depicted it as a threat to the family, opposition mounted, and the drive for the ERA ultimately failed.

The movement against the ERA hints at yet another parallel between nineteenth and twentieth century feminism: opposition by women. Although feminists have claimed to speak for all women, many women have been indifferent towards organized feminism, while others have actively opposed it. This has complicated the tasks of feminists immensely.

Two final possible parallels between the suffragist era and recent feminism are also worth noting. First, just as the suffragist reform coalition fell apart after the uniting issue of the vote was gone, it may be that modern American feminism will lose momentum without the ERA to serve as a uniting cause. Reformers may go off in different directions, pursuing a variety of goals.[13] Second, it has been argued that one reason feminism declined in popularity in the 1920s was that unrealistic expectations of what would happen when women got the vote set the stage for disillusion when no spectacular changes took place.[14] It is possible that something similar may happen with the ERA. Feminist rhetoric depicted the ERA as, if not a cure-all, then something close to it, and a symbolic affirmation that women and men were equals. The failure of the ERA would not only be an insult to women, but would be a signal to reactionaries that they could do whatever they wanted, and open the legislative floodgates to send women back to the Dark Ages. Since the campaign for the ERA did fail, and life has gone on pretty much as before, it is possible that many people will conclude that the ERA was not so necessary after all, and that feminist complaints in general are overblown. The effect of freighting the ERA with unrealistic

expectations of what it would do if it passed, combined with dire forebodings of what would happen if it failed, may have the same long-term effect as portraying the vote as a panacea: public scepticism of feminist rhetoric, followed by disillusion and public apathy. More optimistically, however, it has been pointed out that modern feminism has had a broad impact on social attitudes; and, at the political level, that mainstream feminist lobby groups have become accepted in the political system.[15] In this view, modern feminism is in a better position to maintain some influence than earlier feminism was.

III Androgyny, Maternalism, and Individualism

Why group androgyny and maternalism together? First, because both involve stereotyping, and second, because both lend themselves to certain kinds of moralistic politics which a liberal would be uneasy about. There are, however, also important differences between them, so they will be dealt with one at a time.

The previous chapter discussed a number of points related to androgyny: its many definitions; the fact that some formulations of androgyny end up setting up one stereotype of the ideal personality (which has anti-individualistic overtones); the failure of advocates of androgyny to confront issues of coercion when discussing the transformation to an androgynous society; and the tendency to translate political issues into demands for personality transformation. In addition, it was pointed out that some, though by no means all, advocates of androgyny insisted as a matter of principle that there were no significant innate psychological differences between the sexes. This anti-scientific attitude, ruling potential evidence

out of court for ideological reasons, is strongly at variance with the liberal tradition.

The tendency of advocates of androgyny to translate what might conventionally be considered debates about moral and political issues into debates about personality traits is particularly significant. To use only one example, the Vietnam War was blamed on "masculinity" run rampant. Such a view takes into account neither conventional geo-political explanations for war, nor possible distinctions between just and unjust wars, nor even the fact that men do not always approve of, or women disapprove of, a country going to war. It also obscures the fact that there are various components to traditional masculinity, and even conflicting stereotypes, as between the passionate war-monger and the cold rationalist. The central point, however, is that complex moral and political issues are reduced to condemnations of personality traits, which are described in simplistic, moralistic terms. Furthermore, given liberal-democratic definitions of politics, this tendency to turn concrete policy disagreements into abstract moral universals is in a sense anti-political. What room is there for give and take when one side claims what in other contexts would be called all virtue and wisdom for itself and demands the moral and personality transformation of all non-androgynous opponents?

There is another issue at stake as well. One undercurrent in many androgyny arguments is the idea that since men have always used "separate natures" as an excuse to discriminate against women, the only way to stop discrimination is to deny the existence of sex differences.[16] Bernard Boxill made an apt reply to one such argument: a better approach is to

educate people to distinguish between the idea that some traits are more common or stronger in one sex than the other, on average; and the idea that all women or all men do or do not have "X" trait.[17] Acknowledging possible average differences does not inevitably lead to iron-clad, all-encompassing stereotypes. The liberal case for equal rights does not rest on everyone being exactly the same; it rests on the tolerance of diversity, and the belief that people should be treated as individuals and not judged in accordance with vague stereotypical impressions of race or sex.

Advocates of separate-nature claims at times adopt the anti-scientific stance of some androgyny theorists. There is a remarkably quick shift from the radical feminist glorification of female Third World guerillas in the late 1960s—evidence that women could be just as dedicated and effective warriors as men—to the assertion that women are essentially peaceful, and men aggressive, in the mid-seventies, to the claims that women are the natural leaders of peace movements found in some of the current literature. Unless one wishes to suggest that there was a complete turn around in "woman's nature" between 1972 and 1976, it would seem that evidence has been used very selectively to buttress ideological positions. There is a large body of serious research into possible sex differences,[18] but it does not back up the more simplistic separate nature claims. The limited, cautious, tentative nature of many findings is certainly not reflected in sweeping claims that if women held "real" political power, there would be no more wars—an argument which is a direct parallel of the maternal feminist argument that if women had the vote there would be no more wars.

Moral superiority claims of women, or race, or class, or religion for that matter, may also be anti-political in the sense mentioned above in

connection with androgyny: there can be little conception of people trying to accommodate each other's legitimate needs in a way which will promote the common good, when one group is portrayed as selfishly bent on domination, while the other group claims an altruistic concern for the good of the whole.

One last problem with moral superiority claims is that, in effect, they endorse different moral standards for men and women, or at least set up different expectations. If depicting men as "naturally" war-mongers and polluters of the environment does not quite absolve them of responsibility for their actions, it does leave an opening for men to reply, "But what else would you have expected? Now you can go and do your lady-of-the-manor bit, consoling people and repairing some of the damage." Mary Wollstonecraft pointed out some of the dangers of separate moral standards as early as 1792, and she made another point that is relevant here: should not all good qualities be encouraged in both sexes, and bad qualities discouraged? A comment that Harriet Taylor Mill made in response to some of the transcendentalist rhetoric at an American women's rights convention is also much to the point:

> What is wanted for women is equal rights, equal admission to all social privileges; not a position apart, a sort of sentimental priesthood.[19]

IV Power and Politics

It has been pointed out several times in the course of this thesis that several strands of feminist thought lead to anti-political attitudes. Evangelical, maternal, and radical feminists all tend to view politics as a battle between good and evil rather than as a pragmatic means of conflict

resolution among people whose concerns may be equally legitimate, and who all may have some useful ideas on how to solve a given problem. Politics take on the air of a moral crusade, and the fundamental demand is for the moral transformation of the opposition. This does not mean that such feminists have completely refused to participate in politics, but that they have generally expressed a distate for conventional politics, and called for its purification.

Romanticism and expressivism also lead to an impatience with procedures and political institutions, for various reasons. Rules and regulations put a damper on individual spontaneity. Procedures take time to be adjusted to new situations, and bureaucracies are notoriously insensitive to unique circumstances and special cases. Furthermore, it can be frustrating when rules seem to stand in the way of solving a problem and thwart the goals of an individual or group. The frustration is intensified when those goals are strongly felt moral ones. This anti-institutional impulse is another factor in feminist calls for a new kind of politics based on simple, altruistic devotion to the public good, without a lot of rules and regulations standing in the way of benevolent impulses. However, feminists have also called for increased regulations when it would further feminist ends, for instance, insisting on quotas to increase the number of women delegates at political conventions.

The subject of power has also been touched on at various times in this thesis. Mainstream and radical feminist attitudes toward power are frequently ambivalent. On the one hand, there is a distaste for what are seen as political power games, and a desire to banish power from human affairs, but,

on the other hand, feminists have also wanted power for themselves to put their ideals into practice. This same tendency can be found in earlier feminism, as well.

Modern feminist views on power derive largely from radical feminism, although those views quickly became absorbed into mainstream feminism in a watered-down form. Only a few of those radical feminist views will be highlighted here. One of the main claims was that both the public and private spheres were structured by dominance relations. This depiction of the public sphere derives from Marxism, and as such, is incompatible with the liberal understanding of how politics works in modern Western societies. The addition of "patriarchy" to "class dominance" is significant from a Marxist/socialist/radical feminist perspective, but does nothing to bridge the gap between liberal and non-liberal perspectives. The novelty of radical feminism was to apply Marxist modes of analysis to marriage, with women as an oppressed class suffering from false consciousness. Mainstream feminists sometimes objected that this was a distorted interpretation of the emotional complexities of marriage and the differing daily activities of many husbands and wives, which could better be characterized as mutual interdependence; but, nonetheless, radical feminist rhetoric of oppression did become commonplace in mainstream feminist descriptions of marriage.

The radical and sometimes socialist feminist method of dealing with power was to reconceptualize it. More specifically, they distinguished what was variously called "coercive" or "male" or "power as domination" from "cooperative" or "female" power. "Coercive" power had all the characteristics familiar to nineteenth century feminists; however, instead

of just disowning it, some modern feminists argued that there was another kind of power, which was usually overlooked in what was beginning to be called "malestream" thought. More specifically, egalitarian decision-making on the basis of a group consensus was a way of accomplishing things, and thus a kind of power.[20] Given beliefs about "female values" this kind of power was supposed to come more naturally to women than to men, and "co-operative power" should be the organizing principle for society as a whole. In socialist feminist formulations, if not always in radical feminist ones, men were also supposed to be capable of exercising "co-operative" power, even though the way they were socialized made it more difficult for them to do so.

The unworkability of participatory democracy, with unlimited discussion and decisions made only on the basis of unanimous consent, as organizational principles for any large-scale, complex society, is a familiar topic in political science and will not be pursued here. A point which does need to be made, however, is that even though radical feminists pride themselves on using cooperative modes of power within their own groups, they have often shown a willingness to use coercive modes of power against others. Examples of radical feminist actions drawn from books by Robin Morgan include: disrupting a bridal fair, leaving a stink bomb inside the Miss America pageant, and throwing a brick through the window of a pornography shop.[21] It is safe to say that the people at the receiving end of such activities would not have given <u>their</u> consent, had anyone consulted them. In short, "cooperative power" is reserved for in-group situations where some kind of consensus is potentially achievable. That is all well and

good as far as it goes, but it does not do away with the issue of what to do when there are serious conflicts between groups. From the liberal perspective, cooperation within and among groups is to be encouraged, but reconceptualizing power does not do away with the hard political questions that the liberal approach to politics recognizes and attempts to deal with. Mainstream feminists need to recognize the limitations of radical and socialist feminist attempts to redefine power, rather than adopting their rhetoric.

As the above excursion into mainstream and radical (and socialist) feminist attitudes toward power indicates, feminists have tended to waver between two extremes: wanting to banish power entirely, and wanting it in their own hands. Traditional liberal concerns about how to limit and channel power are almost absent, and a point made by Isaiah Berlin and others goes unexamined: many people object to concentrations of power in the wrong hands, but they do not object to concentrations of power in the right hands, with "right" usually being defined as people they agree with.[22]

V The State and Pluralism

Most of the issues dealt with in previous sections of this chapter related to both nineteenth and twentieth century feminism. The issues in this section focus mainly on modern feminism, and can be dealt with fairly briefly because they have been touched on earlier. The first point is simply that modern mainstream feminists have placed great reliance on the state as the mechanism to bring about social change. This reliance has taken two main forms: regulatory and monetary. Feminists have attempted to get numerous laws changed, and have demanded state financing for

extensive social services.

This predilection for turning to the state to solve problems is a sharp contrast from classical liberal wariness of increasing state power. It is also a contrast with pre-1960s modern liberalism, which acknowledged a larger role for the state in providing a "welfare net" but still wanted only limited state intervention in society, and was suspicious of the intrusiveness and inefficiency of bureaucracies. Equally significant, mainstream feminists have made relatively little contact with the recent "neoliberal" movement in the United States, although this may be changing. Betty Friedan's The Second Stage is included in a list of suggested readings in a recent book on neoliberalism.[23]

Neoliberals argue that government is only one means among many of dealing with social problems, and that even where governmental action is required, heavy-handed, blanket regulations, or "throwing money at problems" are not necessarily the appropriate actions for a government to take. Neoliberals would make much more use of selective regulations, small-scale pilot projects, and voluntary government-private sector cooperation. Neoliberals also stress the need for a healthy economy in order to be able to finance social services which are needed, the importance of a good public education system, and the need to foster a sense of community.[24]

Turning briefly to modern feminist writings on the public/private split, it is significant that when society is seen as being divided up only into the public and private spheres, with the former in some sense controlling the latter, there are not many alternatives to state action to bring about social change. Voluntary associations, or what neoconservatives call

"mediating structures" between the individual and the state[25] are simply invisible in an analysis of society which sees only the public sphere, meaning the-state-and-the-economy, and the private sphere, meaning only the family.

From a liberal pluralistic perspective it is important to realize that a range of social institutions are available, and may be more effective in dealing with some social issues than massive state action is. It could also be argued that there is much to be said for the old idea of the individual states as social laboratories that can try out different ways of handling problems, which the other states can then learn from. It would be useful to take advantage of the fact that the United States is a federal system with many state governments, instead of raising all issues to the national level and having the federal government impose one uniform policy on all states. In other cases, it might be appropriate to have the federal government set goals, but allow the individual states flexibility in designing programs to meet the goals.

Feminists have preferred to deal with issues at the federal level, partly because it is more efficient to lobby one government than fifty different ones, but also because they distrust the more "reactionary" states and do not want women in such states to do without beneficial reforms. However, from the liberal perspective, the advantages of diverse "social laboratories" should not be overlooked, especially because so many "women's issues" are new to the political agenda. It is rather early to assume that the best ways of dealing with problems have been found, and that there is nothing to lose by imposing uniform policies nationwide. In addition,

reliance on lobbying the federal government is a double-edged sword: it may ensure that women in all states benefit if a reform passes; but on the other hand, if legislation is stalled at the federal level, it may hold back progressive states which would have introduced legislation on their own, if something had not been considered an issue for the federal government to deal with.

Leaving aside arguments that voluntary associations and state governments may be more effective at handling some issues than the federal government, a point made in chapter one is worth reiterating. Strong independent social institutions provide a counterweight to concentrations of governmental power, and are an important component of a free society. It is therefore preferable to make use of them, rather than sapping their power, when it is possible to achieve reforms by working through them. It is true that the results of doing so may not be as uniform, comprehensive, and as quick to have an impact as government-imposed reforms; but uniformity is not a good in itself in liberal philosophy, the liberal does not believe that the state has an unrestricted right to do whatever it wishes in all spheres of society, and given human fallibility, the liberal feels that there is much to be said for gradual, small-scale changes, rather than sudden, wholesale social engineering.

VI Liberty

One recent book on liberalism asks the plaintive question, "Who today is called a liberal for strength and confidence in defense of liberty?"[26] The author's answer is that almost no one is, because American liberalism in the last twenty years has changed almost beyond recognition. Self-

proclaimed liberals favour extensive state intervention into the economy and society, and make equality rather than liberty their prime social value. In European terms, they would often be classified as social democrats or democratic socialists.[27] People who adhere to or rediscover and update older liberal ideals are liable to be labelled "neoconservatives" or occasionally "neoliberals." (This is not to say that all neoconservatives actually are traditional liberals; many of them incorporate conservative elements into their thought—especially on the subject of women and the family.)

To return to the question of who now is called a liberal for defending liberty, the answer would also be, very few feminists. Until recently, the emphasis was on what might be called statistical equality or equality as sameness. Using the androgynist premise that men and women are innately alike, and that apparent differences in personality and patterns of activities chosen are either the result of sexist socialization or discrimination, the overall aim was to achieve similar patterns of life for both sexes—often a combination of part-time paid work and part-time childcare and housework, with equal members of men and women in virtually all fields of employment. To maintain traditional differences, would, it was thought, almost inevitably work to women's disadvantage. Given the resurgence of maternal feminist ideas, the ideal of equality as sameness has declined in popularity somewhat. However, feminists have not reverted to the liberal ideal of equal opportunity; instead, they have talked rather vaguely about "equality in difference" or "real equality."

The first chapter took up the distinction between negative and positive

liberty. To recap briefly, the root meaning of negative liberty is non-interference. The state provides a framework of rights and law and order, leaving people to live their lives as they choose. Many feminist goals over the years have been aimed at securing basic rights for women, and removing the legal disabilities specific to women, such as laws banning women from some jobs, or laws depriving married women of property that they would otherwise be entitled to. In addition, 1960s arguments that the state should not restrict the availability of birth control methods effectively increased the liberty of women and men to make their own decisionsabout having children.

"Positive liberty" can mean either state intervention or self-development (or to further complicate matters, state intervention aimed at furthering the self-development of people). Since negative liberty is not the only value for the liberal, there may be good grounds for state intervention to achieve certain goals, but nonetheless, there is a trade-off, and the liberal is acutely aware of the dangers of an all-powerful state.

Given the liberal view that there is no guarantee that all good things are compatible, or that things will neatly divide up into all good vs. all bad, there is considerable scope within liberalism for debating just how much state action and what types of state actions are justified. Two features of modern mainstream feminism are, however, worth pointing out. First, there is what might be called the order of precedence. For the liberal, the basic assumption is that freedom, defined as negative liberty, is of prime importance, and infringements on it need to be justified. Furthermore, even if the claims of liberty are overridden in a particular

case, the restriction of liberty is still a genuine loss. For mainstream feminists there appears to be little regret at overriding claims of liberty. There is certainly little sympathy for anyone who, for instance, opposes employment quotas for women. Opposition is likely to be attributed to self-interest (by men, or major corporations), or to the failure of women to understand correctly the dimensions of the problems. These are, of course, real possibilities, but so is the possibility that opponents are concerned about the principles at stake, and fear that the long-term costs of eroding principles may exceed the immediate benefits. Second, it is important to note that while some forms of "positive liberty" are compatible with liberal values, this is not necessarily the case. Some forms of state intervention are not acceptable to the liberal. To use a rather far-fetched example, nationalizing an economy in order to redistribute half the wealth to female citizens would not be an acceptable way of improving the economic status of women. In addition, some arguments for a particular form of state action might be acceptable, while other justifications might not be. For instance, it might be possible to construct a liberal case for affirmative action but that does not mean that the arguments commonly used by mainstream feminists are in keeping with liberal principles.

Traces of a developmental doctrine of liberty can be found in antebellum feminism, in both romantic/transcendentalist and evangelical variants. In both, however, it was crucial that the development was truly _self_-development. Inner growth or moral transformation had to be voluntary; forcing outward obedience on a person would not achieve inner change. Later nineteenth and early twentieth century feminists were more inclined to

believe that changes in the social environment could trigger changes in morals,[28] and they took a more elitist view of some of their fellow citizens. For these reasons among others, they were more willing to use legislation to force enlightened behavior on the less progressive.

Positive liberty doctrines have played a much more prominent role in modern feminism. The psychological aspect of positive liberty doctrines came into modern mainstream feminism in a dramatic way in Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique, in which she argued that women had in effect been brainwashed by big business and sexist social scientists, whose views were popularized in the mass media and taught in schools. Friedan was confident that once women understood this, they could quite easily overcome their conditioning and get whatever educational training they required to take advantage of equal opportunities. Friedan did not actually say that women who accepted the stereotypical housewife role were unfree, but it quickly became commonplace in mainstream feminism to talk of conditioning and slavery. In addition, a "liberated woman" was not a woman who had a range of choices open to her, but a woman who adopted particular attitudes and types of activities.[29] It is important to note that in traditional liberal thought one would not usually call a "normal" adult unfree, although there are debates about such things as people whose judgment is impaired by drug addiction.

If the rhetoric used by Friedan, Alice Rossi, Carolyn Heilbrun, and other relatively mainstream feminists often had overtones of positive liberty, their actual remedies were fairly mild—non-sexist education and flexible job schedules that would allow both parents to play a major role

in child care, thus widening the range of opportunities for self-development.

Radical feminists went far beyond claims about big business and social scientists convincing women that woman's place was in the home. Instead, they argued that the entire history of the human race, with the possible exception of a matriarchal Golden Age, was one of patriarchal brainwashing and oppression. The theory was a direct parallel to the Marxist view of class oppression. Also lifted directly from Marxism was the doctrine of false consciousness. From the liberal perspective, the problem with doctrines of false consciousness is that they do not allow for differences in viewpoints. There is one correct theory of society, already known to be true, and acceptance of the theory entails a specific set of goals and preferences. Opposition can thus be attributed to either a failure to understand the theory (because anyone who truly understood the theory would have to agree with it) or else to "sinister interests"—people who do understand the theory but oppose it for selfish reasons of their own.

In contrast, the liberal is committed to the doctrine that no theory can be known absolutely to be eternally valid, and that rational people in full possession of the same facts may still have different values, and that even if they agree on values, they may nonetheless disagree about the best way to go about implementing their aims. Thus, rhetoric about non-feminist women or other kinds of feminists suffering from false consciousness is something a liberal feminist needs to be wary of. It is possible that non-feminist women are on occasion misinformed about some issues, and might agree with feminist positions if they were aware of certain facts. However, it is also possible that they might disagree with feminist

interpretations of the facts, or agree with feminist interpretations, but prefer some other approach to handling problems.[30] They might even agree with feminist interpretations, but prefer to give higher priority to other matters. Of course, what counts as a "fact" in the first place is one of the key issues in disputes among different groups of feminists, as well as between feminists and non-feminists. What clearly will not do is to assume that women who object to feminist programs are conditioned and unfree, while women who have had their consciousness raised and do agree with some particular feminist program are free[31]—thus making agreement with a particular set of opinions the test of a free mind.

The above discussion of liberty only touches on the deep issues involved, but it does illustrate the difference that a liberal perspective makes. It also illustrates why liberal feminists should look very carefully at radical and socialist feminist claims before taking up their rhetoric.

VII Conclusion

This thesis started off with the claim that feminist theorists too often have a superficial view of both liberalism and of the history of American feminism. A more adequate understanding of either requires more definitional clarity and more attention to detail. This thesis has sought to provide both, by relating liberal philosophic principles to the many elements of American mainstream feminism. It has not attempted to sketch in any full-fledged theory of modern philosophic liberal feminism. Janet Radcliffe Richards has offered one quite rationalistic approach; Mary Midgley and Judith Hughes have presented a quite different left liberal or social democratic approach. In addition, other authors have provided

briefer useful comments.

Liberalism does offer wide scope for development, but it must rest first and foremost on respect for the individual, not stereotypes; and as Janet Radcliffe Richards has said, the test for true liberators is whether they attempt to widen choices and let people decide for themselves which to accept, or whether they insist on imposing their own choices.[32]

Chapter Four

Footnotes

[1]Elaine Spitz, "On Shanley, 'Marital Slavery and Friendship'," Political Theory, Vol. 10, No. 3 (Aug. 1982), p. 464.

[2]For a useful, detailed analysis of the strengths and limitations of sex/race parallels, including historical information, see William Chafe, Women and Equality: Changing Patterns in American Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), Chapters 3 and 4.

[3]Carl Degler, At Odds (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 448.

[4]Olive Banks, Faces of Feminism: A Study of Feminism as a Social Movement (Oxford: Martin Robinson, 1981) is particularly useful on the ways in which radical feminism in some respects resembles evangelical feminism.

[5]For a useful critique of even Jean Bethke Elshtain's relatively moderate arguments for a politics infused with maternal sensibilities, see Mary G. Dietz, "Citizenship with a Feminist Face: The Problem with Maternal Thinking," Political Theory, Vol. 13, No. 1 (Feb. 1985), pp. 19-37.

[6]Emily Stoper and Roberta Ann Johnson, "The Weaker Sex and the Better Half: The Idea of Women's Moral Superiority in the American Feminist Movement," Polity, Vol. X, No. 2 (Winter 1977), p. 210.

[7]Ibid., p. 212.

[8]Judith A. Sabrosky, From Rationality to Liberation: The Evolution of Feminist Ideology (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1979), p. 161, comments on how the more radical demands alienated the general public, and how the scattering of feminist efforts on a long list of demands prevented concentrated work on the really major demands, like the ERA.

[9]See Carl Degler, At Odds: Women and the Family in America from the Revolution to the Present (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980). The tension between women's demands for fulfillment and the restrictiveness of their family roles is a major theme of the book.

[10]Jo Freeman, The Politics of Women's Liberation: A Case Study of an Emerging Social Movement and Its Relation to the Policy Process (New York: David McKay, 1975), p. 229.

[11]Barbara Sinclair Deckard, The Women's Movement, 3rd. ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1983), p. 81 gives statistics. Carolyn Teich Adams and Kathryn Teich Winston, Mothers at Work (New York: Longman, 1980) discusses possible options to deal with the problems of combining work and parenthood. See pp. 69-70 for reasons why it is unlikely that husbands will suddenly start doing half the housework in the near future.

[12]Jane Roberts Chapman, "Policy Centers: An Essential Resource," in Irene Tinker, ed., Women in Washington: Advocates for Public Policy (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1983), p. 178. A study which emphasises the importance of the symbolic meanings attributed to the ERA and abortion by their advocates and opponents is Pamela Johnston Conover and Virginia Gray, Feminism and the New Right: Conflict over the American Family (New York: Praeger, 1983).

[13]Nancy E. McGlen and Karen O'Connor, Women's Rights: The Struggle for Equality in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (New York: Praeger, 1983), p. 380.

[14]William L. O'Neill, Everyone Was Brave: The Rise and Fall of Feminism in America (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1969), p. 68.

[15]Irene Tinker, ed., Women in Washington: Advocates for Public Policy, describes the efforts of various feminist lobby groups. Although these groups are not as powerful or well-funded as some other lobby groups, they are not in imminent danger of disappearing.

[16]Hester Eisenstein and Alice Jardine, eds., "Introduction," The Future of Difference (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1980), pp. xvi-xvii.

[17]See Bernard R. Boxill, "Sexual Blindness and Sexual Equality," Social Theory and Practice, Vol. 6, No. 3 (Fall 1980), p. 290. In Boxill's terminology, "sex-activity correlations" need not lock people into rigid sex roles.

[18]Academic journals which publish research on sex differences include:

The Psychology of Women Quarterly and Sex Roles: A Journal of Research.

[19]Harriet Taylor Mill, "The Enfranchisement of Women," in Alice S. Rossi, ed., John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill, Essays on Sex Equality (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 120.

[20]See, for instance, Nancy C.N. Hartsock, "Feminism, Power, and Change: A Theoretical Analysis" in Bernice Cummings and Victoria Schuck, eds., Women Organizing: An Anthology (Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, 1979), for one of the more thoughtful discussions of "power."

[21]See Robin Morgan, Going Too Far: The Personal Chronicle of a Feminist (New York: Random House, 1977), p. 74 for the bridal fair protest (which she later regretted), and Robin Morgan, The Anatomy of Freedom: Feminism, Physics, and Global Politics (Garden City, New York: Anchor Press, 1982), p. 55 for the other examples.

[22]See Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," in Isaiah Berlin, Four Essays on Liberty (London: Oxford University Press, reprinted 1977), pp. 162-166.

[23]Charles Peters and Philip Keisling, eds., A New Road for America: The Neoliberal Movement (Lanham: Madison Books, 1985), p. 98.

[24]See Randall Rothenberg, The Neoliberals: Creating the New American Politics (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984) for more information on the neoliberal movement.

[25]For more information on the idea of mediating structures, see Michael Novak, ed., Democracy and Mediating Structures (Washington, D.C.: The American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1980).

[26]Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr., The Spirit of Liberalism (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. vii.

[27]See Irving Kristol's comments in "A Symposium: What is a Liberal—Who is a Conservative?" in Commentary, Vol 62, No. 3 (Sept. 1976), pp. 74-75.

[28]Daniel Levine, Jane Addams and the Liberal Tradition (Madison:

State Historical Association of Wisconsin, 1971) stresses the importance of the idea that the individual could be changed by changing the social environment. See especially p. 91, and p. 172.

[29]Janet Radcliffe Richards, The Sceptical Feminist: A Philosophical Enquiry (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1980), p. 102.

[30]Ibid., pp. 84-85.

[31]Richard's chapter "Enquiries for Liberators" includes a good discussion of the care which needs to be taken when discussing conditioning and freedom.

[32]Ibid., p. 100.

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LIBERALISM AND AMERICAN FEMINISM: THEORETICAL AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

Author

DIANE MARIE CROSSLEY

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