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Woman's Essential 'Nature':
A Classical, Communitarian Gender Mythology

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis argues that women do not share an essential 'nature'. Further, if it could be shown that women do share an essential 'nature', the consequences would be undesirable. Although mainstream philosophy has largely abandoned nature theories, I will show that certain branches of feminist theory retain the notion of an essential 'woman's nature' that cannot be ignored, transcended, or eliminated without destroying the distinctive character of women. To claim that women share a different 'nature' than that shared by men is to invoke a particular chain of reasoning derived not from science (for judgements of significance and ontological sameness are not amenable to scientific investigation) but from the heuristic classical, communitarian world view. Whether the notion of a distinct 'woman's nature' is accepted or rejected, this decision results in a pragmatic orientation toward women, their roles, and their potential that has a direct effect on the educational methodologies, curricula, and environment seen as appropriate to them. The thesis serves as a counterpoise to the prevailing communitarian thread in cultural feminist theory that rejects the liberal individualist premises of liberal feminism.

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For my daughter

Amanda Rachel Goff

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my parents
Rita and Ron Regan

my sister
Jane Young

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This thesis argues that women do not share an essential nature. Further, if it could be shown that women do share an essential nature, the consequences would be undesirable.

There is a fairly general consensus that contemporary feminism is fragmented, divisive, and may even be of peripheral concern to young women: for example, "Feminism as a concept is so nebulous, now that any sense of a united or coherent women's movement is so long gone" (Segal 1987, 206). Self-identified feminist writers (Sommers [1994], Faludi [1991], Fox-Genovese [1991], and Okin in her *Afterward* to the 1992 edition) point to this lack of cohesion, as do the media.[1] A variety of feminist frameworks, including liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, radical feminism, and socialist feminism, have been identified by Jagger (1983), Tong (1993), and, in a Canadian context, by Descarries-Bélanger and Roy (1991), but there is no consensus as to how feminisms are to be classified. For example, Tong distinguishes between "feminine" and "feminist" approaches in a way that Jagger does not; Dwyer calls into question Sommer's typology of "gender feminists" and "equity feminists" (Tong 1993, 4-10; Dwyer 1996, 328). I wish to suggest a different system of classification that orients the fragmentation in feminist theory principally around the notion of 'woman's nature'—particularly whether this alleged nature is to be given credibility as a key element in the contemporary political platform(s) of feminist theory.

Although it may be that mainstream philosophy has largely abandoned nature theories following Locke's suggestion that "If we suppose...that things existing are distinguished by nature into species, by real essences...we shall be liable to great mistakes" (Locke 1959,

69), the notion that there exist "precise, distinct, real essences" (Locke 1959, 63) is still vigorously pursued in some branches of feminist theory. Essentialism refers to the notion that entities within the same category share common, indispensable elements. These elements cannot be eliminated without destroying the entity or its distinctive character. Those feminist theorists who acknowledge that essentialist theories are vulnerable to criticism reject the notion that their theories are essentialist (Houston 1988, 175-185).[2] Through a detailed exploration of 'natures' and essentialism, I will support the argument that an influential group of contemporary feminists (not to mention many historical, male, philosophers) holds the view that women do share an essential nature, despite their protests to the contrary. This group of feminists I shall refer to as cultural feminists.[3] [4] I shall refer to those, including myself, who reject the view that women share an essential nature as liberal feminists.[5] The main characteristics of cultural feminism and liberal feminism are described below.

This undertaking is particularly important at this time because I will support the claim that 'woman's nature' provides a deeply problematic political, philosophical, and pragmatic anchor for the vigorous anti-liberal communitarian[6] affiliation of contemporary feminism, with which essentialism is closely associated.[7] Thus, although the historical survey in Chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis seems to look backwards to a tired and pointless debate (Dwyer 1996), in the *minutiae* of political philosophy, this survey serves to illuminate communitarian and liberal themes (in particular, the state versus the individual, the crisis of modernity, notions of the self) as they recur today in the pivotal and often acrimonious debates over the future of feminism (Denfeld 1995, Frazer and Lacey 1993, LaFramboise 1996, Sommers 1994).

Deaux and Kite underline the ubiquitousness of the "set of beliefs and opinions about males and females and about the purported qualities of masculinity and femininity" and label this set of beliefs a "gender mythology" (Deaux and Kite 1987, 94). This label implies that beliefs about the sexes (not only feminist theories) are not wholly attributable

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to fact. Rather, like myths, they may involve traditional ways of thinking derived from a particular world views, with heuristic properties amenable to providing an uncomplicated and relatively unexamined explanation of practice and belief. Thus, if today's popular media seem to insist on a non-physical 'natural' dichotomization of the sexes in terms of traits, cognitions, and behaviours, this tendency to divide human nature into distinct male and female natures may provide a useful cognitive and ideological[8] structure within which to understand why men and women act in certain ways. This is my own position. Similarly, if the liberal feminist movement described below seems to characterize women as more similar than dissimilar in nature to men, this countervailing tendency to consider all individuals in terms of one common human nature or to reject all theories of nature (in the tradition of Sartre or the later Wittgenstein, for example: "One thinks that one is tracing the outline of the thing's nature...and one is merely tracing round the frame through which we look at it" [Wittgenstein *Philosophical Investigations* I:114]) may provide quite a different cognitive structure within which to understand why men and women act in certain ways. In this way, it is possible to conceive of the gender belief system not as monolithic but as divided into two interwoven but distinct ideological strands that, in opposition, form a dominant *leitmotif* in the history of female (and feminist) philosophy because they are deeply rooted in the history of philosophy itself.

Liberal theory and cultural feminism are presented in the following sections as what Jagger calls "ideal types" in order to illuminate their positions on 'woman's distinct nature' and what it means to have one. It is hoped that these portrayals resonate at least partially with the reader's own experience of feminist theory.[9] Although I do not wish to ignore the substantive differences between theorists, for contemporary feminism represents a diverse constellation of ideas and methods, I strongly believe that a feminist's stance on 'woman's nature' is fairly transparent to the careful reader (even though it may

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vary over time and between articles) and that it is worthwhile using this typology for the following reasons. First, considered in this polarized way, cultural and liberal feminism can be seen, more readily, to represent those two diffuse ideological tendencies in feminism that I suggest can be traced back in detail to classical and Enlightenment philosophy. Thus, in considering feminism in an artificially-polarized way some significant and helpful illumination may be shed on the etymology and importance of the concept of 'woman's nature', a figure of speech in the rhetoric of contemporary feminism that may be rather confusing in meaning if considered in isolation from its history. As an example of this confusion, in *Revolution from Within*, Steinem says, "Taking our place in nature instead of conquering it.. means changing from binary and linear thinking to a cyclical paradigm that is a new declaration of interdependence" that will erode patriarchy (Steinem 1992, 188). Yet this thesis will show that "taking our place in nature" supports a classical understanding of womanhood that, far from eroding patriarchy, 'buys into' the patriarchal argument from nature. Further, I will establish that "binary thinking" is not opposed to a consideration of natures but is clearly inseparable from it, particularly as applied to the 'nature of woman'. This is but one example of the problematic character of cultural feminist rhetoric that verges on incoherence when it is disengaged from the discourses that engendered it.

Second, I believe that this undertaking may clarify and extend the tenuous critical perspective on feminist communitarianism.[10]

I consider liberal and cultural feminism to be essentially rival arguments with conceptually incommensurable ideological premises, classical (communitarian) and modern (liberal individualistic), that cannot be weighed objectively one against the other. Although each feminism purports to be objective, often these feminisms are adopted non-rationally and on pseudoscientific or nonscientific bases. The rival ideologies, classical

and modern, on which they are constructed depend on extremely complex concepts, particularly those which concern natures (in contemporary terms, those which concern 'the self'), that are historically rooted and subject to debate. Unfortunately, these historical roots are not acknowledged by feminism and their contingent debates are glossed over in favour of rhetorical oversimplification, as will be documented below. Because the cultural feminist concepts, in particular, have been stripped from their necessary frameworks in a contemporary world that has repudiated cosmological order and the discipline of proper purpose in favour of the liberal-individualist virtues, it is difficult to see their pragmatic application and unambiguous intellectual coherence, to say the least (for example, Frazer and Lacey 1993, 5).

Although the rhetoric of the cultural feminist movement refuses to acknowledge that its political platform is indebted to earlier male philosophers, this is clearly the case. For example, in locating radical and socialist feminism in the 1960s and 1970s, Jagger is either being disingenuous, dangerously tunnel-visioned, or deliberately distorting the facts in the interests of sisterhood and the thrust of her argument:

> The liberal and the traditional Marxist conceptions of feminism are rooted in philosophical traditions that are, respectively, 300 and 100 years old. Radical feminism, by contrast, is a contemporary phenomenon generated by the women's liberation movement of the late 1960s ...While utilizing some earlier feminist insights, radical feminism is developing a perspective on women's situation that in many ways is startlingly original...Radical feminism is unmistakably a 20th-century phenomenon. (Jagger 1983, 83)

> Like radical feminism, socialist feminism is a daughter of the contemporary women's liberation movement. It is a slightly younger daughter, born in the 1970s... In spite of the programmatic nature of its achievement so far, I believe that socialist feminism constitutes a distinctive approach to political life... (Jagger 1983, 123)

Jagger describes both the radical and socialist formulations of human nature and 'woman's nature' in cultural feminist communitarian terms. That these terms are neither

"startlingly original", "distinct", or "unmistakably a 20th-century phenomenon" but classical with roots firmly buried in ancient Athens and nineteenth-century Europe should be evident as this thesis progresses.

As Eisenstein says, "The radical recognition of 'women as a distinct group' destabilizes the individualist stance of liberalism" (Eisenstein 1993, xiv). It is this "radical recognition of 'women as a distinct group' that I will establish to be equivalent to 'woman's nature'. It is critical to recognize what is being "destabilized" by the cultural feminist doctrine of 'woman's nature' and to decide whether the "destabilization" (or loss of the centrality) of rights, reason, equality, freedom, autonomy, self-definition, dignity, privacy, and self-development is worth the substitution of fixed roles, separate natures, proper purposes, state control, duty, conformism and prescriptivism, and the emphasis on the embodied and embedded nature of the self.

Cultural Feminism

Advocates of feminine culture (whether they be Marxist feminists, radical feminists, anarcho-feminists, or socialist feminists[11]) underwrite the notion that males and females have and must continue to have separate, distinct 'natures' characterized by separate and distinct psychologies, trait sets, and modes of behaviour (Epstein 1988, 233 and Faludi 1991, 320-332, support this interpretation; Sherwin provides a good example of this approach when she states "Moreover, in our society at least, men are inclined towards abstract general thought and tend to find universals clearer and more comfortable than particulars...Women, however, seem to think most readily in terms of particulars" [Sherwin 1988, 18-19]). Cultural feminism has been characterized as "the insistence on the basic and pervasive difference between men and women—that reproductive differences should be the main basis for a classification of all traits" (Epstein 1988, 9).

Obviously, the insistence on sexual differentiation has been used historically by men to rationalize the subordinate place of women. Perhaps Rousseau's *Emile* best exemplifies the antifeminist use of this 'argument from nature', which places women in the home as the subordinates of men because their natures best suit them to this environment and these domestic tasks.[12] However, the disjunctive female nature, fused with women's lived experience of patriarchal oppression, is seen to have historically found expression through the construction of an essentially positive female culture, separate from mainstream (or 'male-stream') culture. Thus, an emphasis on sexual difference has been coopted and used by feminists to advance the causes and interests of women by demonstrating that female culture is superior to male culture, as in the following example:

> It can be argued that throughout the millennia of their subordination the kind of knowledge women acquired was more nearly correct and adequate than was the knowledge of man. It was knowledge not based on theoretical propositions and on works collected in books, but practical knowledge derived from essential social interaction. (Lerner 1993, 11)

Lerner clearly assumes that she is furthering the cause of women: to embrace difference is not to reject feminism. Indeed, as the end of the century approaches, a cultural feminist emphasis on difference seems to predominate in feminism, both academic and grassroots, as Segal pointed out a decade ago:

> The dominant popular conception of feminism today is one which stresses basic differences between women and men, and asserts the moral and spiritual superiority of female experience, values, characteristics and culture: women's oppression on this view results from the suppression of this women-centred vision or separate female 'world'. (Segal 1987, 213)

As more women entered the urban workforce during the Industrial Revolution, women and men alike began to question whether female identities and traditional areas of female strength in the traditional role of the Angel in the Home, were being sacrificed as the harsh capitalistic interests of the productive sphere moulded women workers into

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'little men.' Intellectuals like Wollstonecraft were felt to have devalued traditional feminine behaviours and traits, particularly by emphasizing the mindless drudgery of housewifery and the foolish vanity of personal ornamentation (Martin 1985, 100). As formerly, today's cultural feminism expresses a dissatisfaction with modernity and attempts to restore womanliness to its historically-valued position of socially-embedded influence (Frazer and Lacey 1993, 102 and 136) : Ehrenreich and English, for example, refer to a pre-Industrial gynocentric order in which womanly skills were "indispensable to survival" (Ehrenreich and English 1978, 8). In addition, I shall attempt to show in Chapters 4 through 8 that cultural feminism strives to rehabilitate and preserve the feminine essence for, in common with the classical philosophers,[13] they believe an entity's essence can be known and has priority over individual women's pragmatic experiences and personal styles (thus, the 'masculine' woman is seen not only as anomalous but as unnatural [Faludi 1991, 324]).

Women, to the cultural feminist, share through a common nature a set of traits opposite to those traditionally seen as male and are seen as intrinsically "intuitive, emotional, ...tender and submissive" (Ehrenreich and English 1978, 23).Accepted by cultural feminism is the notion that women's experience of nurturing must be given priority over men's, so that a more intimate or valid connection between women and nurturing (and by extension nurturant, or traditionally feminine, traits) is affirmed (Ackelsberg and Diamond 1987, 517; Rothman 1987, 156):

> Feminist culture is based on what is best and strongest in women, and as we begin to define ourselves as women, the qualities coming to the fore are the same ones a mother projects in the best kind of nurturing relationship to a child: empathy, intuitiveness, adaptability... inventiveness, protective feeling towards others, and a capacity to respond emotionally as well as rationally (Jane Alpert in Jagger 1983, 97).

Until the recent renaissance of cultural feminism, with a new vigorous program of social activism aimed at radically transforming society as a whole, through what Jagger terms "radical feminism"[14] and Friedan "second wave feminism," the responsibility for - humanizing the cold world was placed on the shoulders of women.[15] Today, cultural feminists envision a radical shift in the emphasis of public life to incorporate and exalt feminine traits and strengths. They disassociate themselves from patriarchal institutions and methodologies, embracing ecological issues over what they see to be alien (*i.e.*, male) technology and control of nature (Keller 1983, 132; French 1985).

Okin suggests that many of Hillary Clinton's speeches show a subtle cultural feminist orientation as, apparently, do Pope John Paul II's (Okin, Afterword to the 1992 edition, 380 fn#28). Gilligan's cultural feminist expression is less subtle. She goes as far as saying, "Women's development delineates the path...to a less violent life" (Gilligan 1982, 172). It is not uncommon for cultural feminists to link the male world to nuclear war (French 1985) and 'Nazi science'.[16] Unlike those (male) philosophers whose belief in a separate female nature formed the basis for an intellectual rationalization of the patriarchal *status quo* through the denigration of female capabilities, cultural feminists elevate the so-called feminine traits, strengths, and perspective, portraying women as more virtuous than men. Rather than seeking the same rights as men, they chose to push for social reforms that will empower women as they *are*, without turning them into 'little men'. Their goal is to reject assimilation (assimilation is seen as "death" [French 1985, 443]) and create a new social order built around traditional feminine values and traits.[17]

A particularly articulate, although not recent, statement of cultural feminism's goals is that of Ehrenreich and English:

> [The aim of feminism is to] frame a moral outlook which proceeds from women's needs and experiences but which cannot be trivialized, sentimentalized, or domesticated... [It] must necessarily challenge the masculinist social order itself. It must insist that the human values that women were assigned to preserve expand out of

the confines of private life and become the organizing principles of society...a society that is organized around human needs: a society in which child rearing is not dismissed as each woman's individual problem, but in which nurturance and well-being of all children is a transcendent public priority...The Market must be pushed back to the margins. And the "womanly" values of community and caring must rise to the centre as the only *human* principles. (Ehrenreich and English 1978, 324)

The crux, then, of the cultural position is that men and women have completely separate, indeed primarily opposing and mutually exclusive, fixed natures that determine their particular life roles, occupations, traits, behaviours, values, and modes of cognition. From this perspective, it is pernicious to ignore gender differences because males will be "validated" at the expense of females (Martin 1985, 35), in as much as those traits, behaviours, and virtues traditionally considered male (for example, aggression, rationality, and dispassionate self-control) are accorded more value than those traits, behaviours, and virtues traditionally considered female (for example, gentleness, intuitiveness, and emotionality).

Cultural theorists face criticism for ignoring, in their research methods and analyses, the "relationships of dominance and subordination in society" (Ackelsberg and Diamond 1987, 515) that give context to women's own understanding and articulation of their experiences and affect what superficially appears to be their 'true nature'. The tautology legitimates itself: if researchers study women who are unequally placed in society, certain traits will be observed simply because they are the traits exhibited by individuals who occupy subordinate positions; and in turn, these traits will be allocated to women by researchers. Further criticism assails cultural feminism for its essentialism, accusing cultural feminism of considering 'woman' as a monolithic category with "some single type of conflict-free female essence, which all women share, but which patriarchy has denied, crushed or distorted" (Segal 1987, 128; also Fraser and Lacey 1993, 132). It is this latter criticism that this thesis explores in detail.

Liberal Feminism

The liberal feminist perspective argues in favour of absolute equality between the sexes. Although women and men are not seen as identical in every way, they are thought to be more similar than different. Although their bodies differ, the intellect, 'self', or soul does not appear either feminine or masculine (von Hippel 1792 reprinted 1979, 74), at least not consistently (Riley 1988, 96). Indeed, femininity and masculinity tend to be seen as social roles or *personae*, at least partially open to cognitive negotiation (see Appendix I). Liberal feminism poses a challenge to the deeply seated Aristotelian way of thinking about women as imperfect men. To liberal feminists, men and women do not have to look the same or act the same in order to think the same and share a common, nebulous human nature. Thus, "It is pernicious to look upon a woman as a female first and a person second" (Donovan 1985, 17). Stereotypical gender traits are seen as the artificial[18] products of society rather than a set of characteristics inherent in the female half of the population by nature:

> Let us at first make entire abstraction of all psychological considerations tending to show, that any of the mental differences supposed to exist between women and men are but the natural effect of the differences in their education and circumstances, and indicate no radical difference, far less radical inferiority, of nature. (Mill 1869, 489)

Thus, feminine and masculine characteristics *per se* are not held to be necessary or vital parts of the self; the loss or mutability of these characteristics is not seen as damaging to the self. Indeed, to some liberal feminists, femininity exists to be transcended through an act of the will, circumvented or modified through education, or eliminated through non-sexist childrearing practices. Liberal feminism rejects the traditional notion of an innate and intractable female 'nature', which is attributed to the artificial causes "education and circumstances."[19] Thus a change in education or circumstances could result in a corresponding change in women, increasing or decreasing their psychological and mental

differences: "Where is then the sexual difference, when the education has been the same?" (Wollstonecraft 1792 reprinted 1967, 55). Christine de Pizan recognized that "Nature provided [women] with the qualities of body and mind found in the wisest and most learned men" (de Pizan 1405 reprinted 1992, 64). Either there is no distinct 'woman's' nature or it is impossible to perceive one under the social overlay that renders the perception of women 'artificial', even "debased" (Grimké in Lerner 1993, 163):

> Neither does it avail anything to say that the *nature* of the two sexes adapts them to their present functions and position, and renders these appropriate to them...I deny that anyone knows, or can know, the nature of the two sexes, as long as they have only been seen in their present relation to one another...What is now called the nature of women is an eminently artificial thing—the result of forced repression in some directions, unnatural stimulation in others... For however great and apparently ineradicable the moral and intellectual differences between men and women might be, the evidence of their being natural differences could only be negative. Those only could be inferred to be natural which could not possibly be artificial—the residuum, after deducting every characteristic of either sex which can admit of being explained from education or external circumstances (Mill 1975, 453)

Mill's theme was echoed by the American feminist, Sarah Grimké (1792-1873), as follows:

> [I wish to suggest] that intellect is not sexed; that strength of mind is not sexed; and that our views about the duties of women...are mere arbitrary opinions...[Man] has done all he could to debase and enslave her mind; and now he looks triumphantly on the ruin he has wrought, and says, the being thus deeply injured is his inferior. (Grimké 1838 in Lerner 1993, 162)

Because women are not seen to possess a distinct female nature that, as traditionally conceived must be respected and not violated because it sets limits on possible social arrangements, in Holmstrom's phrase, one consequence is that the serious consideration of other social arrangements than the *status quo* are now allowed (Holmstom 1982, 37). Thus liberal feminism's rejection of the notion that men and women have separate natures and trait sets that are innate, fixed, intractable, and universal as to sex has direct

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political implications. From this perspective, there is no compelling reason to protect femininity or to fear the loss of women's shared 'voice' and her traditional role as wife, mother, and caregiver. Indeed, it came to be seen that 'the nature of woman' cannot be known through an examination of her function in the community (see Okin [1979], for example), because 'woman's true nature' as a person and full citizen had been deliberately deformed by the patriarchy in the service of 'useful' ends like child rearing, care of the elderly and the ill, and homemaking (Riley 1977, 62; Okin 1979, 247, 253; Donnelly 1985, 34).

In other words, from the liberal perspective, woman's inequality in a man's world cannot be attributed to her own deeply socialized or innate feminine 'nature': women are not less (or differently) intelligent or demonstrably less (or differently) rational than men, nor are they less (or differently) capable on the job. Traditional feminine skills do not preclude the acquisition of skills traditionally seen as masculine. Rather than stemming from 'woman's nature', women's inequality has a variety of socially-determined external causes. Further, if women appear to share a distinct 'nature' that renders them, for example, more nurturing, affiliative, and ecologically-conscious than men, these traits are most probably 'artificial' rather than 'natural' — inculcated through ubiquitous external pressures:[20]

> Through socialization, she is coerced to subsume within herself, as it were, the prescriptions of society and to make them the basis of her behaviour, thus creating the illusion of a female nature. Socialization is seen simply as the systematic denial of our supposed absolute individuality and liberty by the constraints imposed by social roles. (McMillan 1982, 63)

Although a simulacrum of a 'woman's nature' may result from social pressures, feminist education, consciousness-raising, free-will choices, maturity, individual autonomy and agency, and cognitive reflexion dilute and mediate the process of socialization, such that women may free themselves from patriarchal constraints.

The liberal feminist argument is couched in terms of equality, rights, reason, and individual autonomy. Because 'woman's separate nature' has been used to justify her oppression and exclusion from privilege, full personhood, even citizenship, liberal feminists have fought for the recognition that women share the same universal human nature[21] that men possess and they downplay any alleged biological or socially-constructed differences between men and women as insignificant or malleable. For example, accused of lacking rationality by those who fought to keep them enslaved, women like Wollstonecraft claimed that rationality for their own. Neither were women content to accept their exclusion (for example, "Happy are you, reader, if you do not belong to the sex to whom all good things are denied" [de Gournay 1622, in Lerner 1993, 198]) from rights and privileges held by men on grounds that did not hold up well to logical argument or to a sense of fair play, so they coopted what was seen to be a masculine accoutrement and made reason the basis of the liberal feminist position. This was clearly Wollstonecraft's strategy in the following passage:

> If women are to be excluded, without having a voice, from a participation of the natural rights of mankind, prove first, to ward off the charge of injustice and inconsistency, that they want reason—else this flaw in your NEW CONSTITUTION will ever show that man must, in some shape act like a tyrant; and tyranny, in whatever part of society it rears its brazen front, will ever undermine morality. (Wollstonecraft 1967, Dedication)

The historical oppression of women, from a liberal perspective, results from the failure to extend liberties to all human beings, regardless of sex, sexual orientation, race, religion, physical attributes, or class (Frazer and Lacey 1993, 42). Liberal feminism works to "admit women into modern society on an equal footing with men" (Ehrenreich and English 1978, 20-21), to assimilate women into what had traditionally been the masculine world outside the home. The appeal to 'sameness' and inclusion in the same category as men is a strategic attempt to guarantee the same rights for women as are

possessed by men (separate but equal status having been ruled inherently unequal in the educational context by the US Supreme Court's decision in *Brown vs. Board of Education* in 1954) and to transcend those "dichotomous systems of thought [that] serve the existing power structures and organization of society by reinforcing the notion of the 'we' and the 'not-we, the deserving and the undeserving" (Epstein 1988, 233).[22] Woman's oppression is no different than that faced by other socially disadvantaged groups, whose members are also subject to objectification through historically-rooted stereotyping. Indeed, there is a fair amount of consensus that "the feminist and anti-racist arguments have largely been won (certainly in terms of formal legal equalities, and in academic debates)" in the liberal arena (Frazer and Lacey 1993, 49) and any remaining difficulties may be sited in the transitional period between oppression and full equality.

Thus, it is suggested that the liberal perspective argues in favour of one general, vaguely-defined human nature in which, ideally, all human beings participate.[23] Grounded in this universal human nature is the absolute equality of the sexes. Although the sexes are not identical, differences are not categorical, significant, or intractable enough, from the liberal viewpoint, to entail a separate nature. Because both sexes participate in one common nature, there are no roles, occupations, traits, behaviours, values, or modes of cognition that are not suitable and open to both sexes alike. From this perspective, stereotypical gender traits are seen primarily as the products of social interaction rather than a set of inherent, adamantine, and indeed valuable characteristics that define women through their shared 'nature'. As will be suggested in subsequent chapters, liberal feminism can be traced back to Plato's comparison of male and female watchdogs, and male and female doctors, who share in the same nature and carry out the same task with minimal and insignificant differences (Plato 1987, 232). John Stuart Mill (1806-1873)

and Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) are examples of philosophers who developed the liberal feminist perspective following the principles of the Enlightenment.

Philosophical objections to the liberal interpretation of women as a full participant in one universal human nature address the failure of this movement to obtain full equality, dignity, and rights for women through the abolition of the patriarchy (for example, Eisenstein 1993; Frazer and Lacey 1993, 78). Liberalism is rebuked for 'buying into' a male-oriented, male-created world in which violence and naked aggression are a part of everyday life. Criticism also addresses the illogic of separating women's minds from women's bodies—the idea of the disembodied mind underlies any attempt to equate the sexes and minimize the centrality of women's biological reproductive role (for example, McMillan 1982). Further, it deplores the necessity for women to acquire so-called male attitudes, male skills, male knowledge, male priorities, and male values because this colonization of women distorts their true nature (for example, Martin 1985) and threatens "the dismantling of gender as an explicit category of political decision and distribution" as women are "decategorised" (the terms are Frazer and Lacey's 1993, 79).

The Argument from Nature

This tension in contemporary feminist thought between the mutability and interchangeability of gender roles as sociopolitical constructs on the one hand (liberal theory) and the notion that there are an essentially male 'nature' and an essentially female 'nature' that must be respected (cultural theory) is reflected in conflicting educational philosophies (for example, Stein [1987], Martin [1985], Belenky *et al* [1986] support sex-specific education while the early Friedan [1963] does not). In other words, depending on which perspective one takes, one's attitude toward female students' abilities, strengths, interests, and preparation for their life role must be different.

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Many contemporary feminists, including myself, came to an appreciation of the goals of feminism through Friedan's *The Feminist Mystique* (1963). These feminist goals were as follows:

> To find themselves, fulfil themselves...to free themselves from submission as servants of the family...to find their own identity as separate from men, marriage and child-rearing—and to demand equal opportunity with men, power of their own in corporate office, Senate chamber...at whatever price. (Friedan 1991, 18)[24]

In other words, this liberal form of feminism involved a struggle to be judged and treated as an individual, on one's own merits, and not as a member of the category 'woman'; a liberation from the potentially repressive aspects of home and family; an opening up of possibilities and the end of exclusionist policies and practices rooted in gender; an attempt to gain the same rights possessed by men; and a confrontation with those who would deny women equality with men.

The central themes of feminism arising out of conflict with oppression and exclusion are rights, individualism, reason, equality, and freedom. For those who identify these liberal values[25] with feminism, it is extremely difficult to accept as feminist that alternative framework, herein termed 'cultural feminism', for which individuality is subsumed in the sex-class category 'woman' (Eisenstein 1993, 6-8); for which a liberal conception of equality is less important than the ratification and valuing of sex differences (Fox-Genovese 1991, 244; Martin 1985, 36); for which the affective and caring aspects of a woman's life are of more central importance than her rationality (Hanen 1988, 30); for which rights are suspect as male inventions that deny the social nature of humanity (Faludi 1991, 322); and for which freedom to pursue self-fulfilment is dismissed as mere egotistical selfishness, moral decay, and social anarchy (Fox-Genovese 1991, 8; Eisenstein 1993, 5). The pervasiveness of this shift in perception can be seen as a betrayal (Midgeley 1983, 5; Epstein 1988, xi; Sommers 1994; and Faludi 1991, 319; Denfield 1995) or as an evolution. Friedan herself provides an excellent example of the

latter perception in *The Second Stage* (1991), in which she reverses her earlier political platform and calls for the following actions as necessary to revitalize feminism:

> Affirm the differences between men and women. New feminist thinking is required if American women are to continue advancing in a man's world, as they must, to earn their way, and yet 'not to become like men'... More books, like Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice*...are needed. First-stage feminism denied real differences between women and men except for the sexual organs themselves. Some feminists still do not understand that true equality is not possible unless those differences between men and women are affirmed and until values based on female sensitivities to life begin to be voiced in every discipline and profession, from architecture to economics, where, until recently, all concepts and standards were defined by men. (Friedan 1991, 352)

Many of those of us who teach attempt to treat all of our students as equals, with the same sets of values, abilities, and potentials. We would be deeply insulted were we accused of teaching our male and female students in different ways. Yet cultural feminism urges teachers to recognize the 'real' differences between female and male students as central and to consider that teaching differently to both sexes may be more moral, more philosophically appropriate, and more pragmatically effective (Martin 1985; Sherwin 1988, 18-19, 23; Belenky *et al.* 1986).[26] Attitudes are reflected in actions, and this pragmatic application of a very abstract set of concepts justifies the detailed investigation into those concepts ('nature', 'human nature', and 'woman's nature') undertaken subsequently in this thesis. In other words, theory for theory's sake is not my aim here. I wish to understand where the notion of woman's 'separate nature' came from, what this notion entails in detail, and where this notion will take feminism—and, indeed, where it will take the lives of young women— if pursued to its logical (communitarian) conclusions.

The following chapters explore the origins of the conceptualization of one particular type of nature—'woman's nature'—in the traditional notion 'human nature' as an exercise in applied philosophy. It is not suggested that there *are* no differences between males and females apart from the obvious anatomical and physiological differences.

Rather, the origins and consequences of the attribution of such differences to 'woman's nature' are explored and associated with communitarianism.[27]

The idea that most cultures and societies have not been, and probably still are not, completely fair to women has historically provided the primary motivating force behind feminism. That human beings are worthy of respect is the visceral conviction or intuition on which Taylor, for example, bases morality (Taylor 1989, 3-8): if women are not felt to possess such dignity by nature, an ontological explanation or framework must be developed which justifies this deprivation or, at least convincingly portrays it as less important than other key considerations. Thus, Epstein notes that sex-roles are "justified on the basis of ideologies and popular cultural opinions that maintain the assignments are just and the arrangement is good (or that, if not, little can be done about it)" (Epstein 1988, 10). Ontological explanations have to do with the nature of our being and the modes of existence open to us. Moral issues are inextricably bound up with meaning and humanity's proper place within the cosmos, and theories of human nature. The connection between feminism, political theory, morality, and the type of metatheory known as ontology is both indisputable and largely unarticulated (for example, Frazer and Lacey 1993, 187).

While endorsing Richards' moral definition of feminism ("A movement for the elimination of sex-based injustice" [1982, 16]), I have become increasingly aware of the difficulties in defining the term, especially because in any given site of conflict (the debates over abortion, payment for housework, so-called family values, and specific teaching methodologies addressed to female students, are a few examples) opposing views find expression under the feminist rubric. For example, Sommers (1994) draws attention to the above-noted trend for contemporary *fin de siecle* feminists to fight for the legitimization of those so-called 'feminine traits and values' that earlier feminists repudi-

ated as the symptomatic products of oppression. Like de Beauvoir, some may fear that, "This renewed attempt to pin women down to their traditional role...that's the formula used to try and keep women quiet" (Mednick 1989). That it is difficult to define a movement with such a diverse political platform ought not to come as a surprise because, as Lovejoy emphasizes, all of the many 'isms' "stand as a rule, not for one doctrine, but for several distinct and often conflicting doctrines held by different individuals or groups to whose way of thinking these appellations have been applied..." (Lovejoy 1936, 6).

The most commonly applied justification for unfair treatment based on biological sex alone requires the affirmation that women and men are not the same, do not want the same things, are not capable of or interested in the same achievements, are not suited to the same pursuits. This is the argument from nature: that is to say, the contention that the social inequality of women is the inevitable consequence of categorical, immutable, ineradicable, 'natural' sex differences. Tulloch calls this argument the "naturalistic fallacy concerning the nature of women—that of arguing from what women's nature apparently is to what it ought to be" (Tulloch 1989, xiv). The codification of this argument from nature provides fuel for the investigation of human nature, as defined by males and predicated on males, because the act of definition requires that an entity be defined in opposition to 'what it is *not*'.[28]

According to Okin, "The most prevalent argument used to justify the perpetuation of a distinct and subordinate sex role for the female is that such a role is natural" (Okin 1979, 106). It is this justification that liberal feminism set out to question, and this justification that has been claimed and subverted by cultural feminism in its demand for a positive revaluation, or "revalorization" (French 1985, 448), of women's essential traits and specific nature. That cultural *feminists*, as well as those antifeminists who rationalize female subordination, ground their argument in 'woman's nature' is of particular interest

and will be developed subsequently. The separation of women and men, as to their unique 'natures,' anchors both the nonfeminist notion that 'woman's nature' is inferior and the cultural theorist notion that 'woman's nature' is, in many ways, morally superior to man's. On the other hand, liberal feminism requires a belief in one common, though nebulous,[29] human nature in which both male and female individuals participate equally. We can, therefore, expect liberal feminism and cultural feminism to articulate distinct and often contradictory ontologies.

To reiterate, this thesis argues that women do not share an essential nature. If scientific evidence should conclusively prove that, in fact, a distinct female nature does exist, then this thesis would have no basis for proceeding. However, an examination of biological and gender acquisition theories suggests that neither biology, psychology, nor social science provides an inviolate model of gender acquisition on which to ground a distinct female nature (Chapter 4 and Appendix I support this claim). However, there are many who disagree with Deaux and Kite's conclusion that scientific research into sex differences has more to do with mythology than science (Deaux and Kite 1987, 94). They may suggest that, on the contrary, science simply attempts to describe women as they *are*, through rigorous and value-neutral observation. From this perspective, the application of scientific method to the understanding of women is intended to separate the myth or stereotype from the reality, as science has come to be seen as the dispassionate observer of sensory data rather than the purveyor of social norms. Thus, as cited above, Friedan can plead for the affirmation of "real" differences between women and men. In other words, following the empirical tradition, science commonly purports to be a neutral tool to which "knowledge of nature's ways begins with and is controlled by sense-observation" (*Chambers Encyclopaedia* 1967, 155). Social interpretation that invokes science to explain 'the way women are' suggests that the truth about women's very nature can be

discovered through value-free observational research (Harding 1986, 34-41 for example) rather than philosophically through "a search for a general understanding of values and reality by chiefly speculative rather than observational means"as stated in *Webster's* definition of the term 'philosophy'.

The idea that 'women's nature' is simply observed and recorded off 'reality' is a tenacious one: indeed, it seems rather obvious that 'women's nature' is, at least partially, a *descriptive* concept. Yet 'women's nature' is a concept, as all definitions of natures are concepts, that defines what women *are* by virtue of their very being and not simply as how they are observed to be. This theme is pursued in Chapters 2 and 4 and it is enough to note, at this introductory point, that the knowledge of an entity as it really *is* transcends the world of empirical observation because it requires a judgement that separates the natural from the artificial (see also Appendices II and III). For example, it may be impossible to achieve a true understanding of any mammal observed in captivity. Wollstonecraft points out that, under the "concurrence of circumstances" prevailing in the late eighteenth century, women could commonly be observed to be "weak, or degraded" (Wollstonecraft 1967, 93), yet despite empirical study she disputes that this weakness is the result of 'women's nature'. Similarly, Mill suggests that it is impossible to know 'woman's nature' because women have only been observed in one particular environment in which they are oppressed (Mill 1874, reissued 1958, 451). Hence it seems as though something other than pure empirical observation is involved in any consideration of what women *are*. Mill suggests that a consideration of 'woman's nature' cannot be descriptive but must be speculative. In other words, the application of science to the quest for understanding of the way women *really are*, is a spurious one. To know what women are, then, cannot merely entail a description of her external attributes and behaviours but must also be a definition of her true 'nature'. This is philosophy, not science, because it

requires interpretive speculation. Science can only study women as they appear in the specific "concurrence of circumstances" applying today; it cannot excavate the reality from the appearance without substituting the tools of philosophy for those of science.[30] If science and social science provide a spurious foundation for a separate female nature, the possibility that the basis for 'female nature' is an ideological one rooted in the history of the philosophy of man and woman becomes viable. In other words, the tenacious conviction, despite lack of scientific proof over more than a century of rigorous experimentation, that men and women possess categorically separate natures is central to a gender belief system that has more in common with political, moral, and ethical theory than science.[31]

As Lovejoy wrote in defence of his history of an idea, *The Great Chain of Being*, there are complications implicit in the multidisciplinary study of any idea:

> The study of the history of ideas is full of dangers and pitfalls...because it aims at interpretation and unification and seeks to correlate things which often are not on the surface connected, it may easily degenerate into a species of merely imaginative historical generalization; and because the historian of an idea is compelled by the nature of his enterprise to gather material from several fields of knowledge, he is inevitably, in at least some parts of his synthesis, liable to the errors which lie in wait for the non-specialist. (Lovejoy 1936, 21)

Applied philosophy, like the history of ideas, draws upon so many fields that it inevitably short-changes them. However, like Lovejoy, "I am not unmindful of these dangers and have done what I could to avoid them." The hazards of such an undertaking ought not, perhaps, to preclude taking the risk. The large-scale goal of this and the following chapters is to give an overview of the key issues, with the intent of developing a more complete understanding of what it means to believe that women share a distinct nature. The concepts to which these chapters refer have long and complex histories that deserve singular attention for their impact on feminist theory that obviously cannot adequately be provided by a broad study such as this.[32]

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What I wish to establish conclusively are the following specific points: first, that one objective universally-accepted 'woman's nature' does not describe scientifically-verifiable reality, if indeed such a description is a viable possibility; second, that the defining process itself poses power-based difficulties for women because the notion that women are *thus* necessarily establishes limits and boundaries that may not be congenial (indeed may be oppressive) to many women; third, that the weak conclusions at which the scientific investigation of 'woman's separate nature' arrives cannot possibly provide an iron-clad foundation for the objective ratification of the female 'nature'; fourth, that cultural feminism represents women as sharing a distinct 'nature', separate from that of men; fifth, that the cultural feminist explanation of sex-role socialization has been rejected as inaccurate but nonetheless the biological, identification, and social learning theories of sex differentiation presented in Appendix I have been incorporated into an ideologically-driven myth of woman's separate 'nature'; sixth, that female sexuality and women's physical role in reproduction provide the only possible foundation for a distinct female 'nature' (the extent to which women's experience is sexualized is debatable and the only rational stance *vis-à-vis* 'woman's nature' is the admission that we cannot know (a) whether or not there *is* a 'woman's nature', and (b) if there is one, exactly what it consists of); seventh, that the classical, communitarian *weltanschauung*[33] is approximately congruent with the cultural feminist platform; and eighth, that the modern, liberal-individualistic *weltanschauung* is approximately congruent with the liberal feminist platform.

To this end, the following two chapters identify and clarify particular ontological assumptions made by feminist philosophy by locating these assumptions within the larger contexts of classical (communitarian) and modern (liberal individualistic) philosophy and sociopolitical theory.

ENDNOTES

1. To cite a local news story, Janice Kennedy in her aptly-titled article, *Fractured Feminism: Little Joy In It* (*The Gazette*, Montreal, May 15, 1995), writes, "The movement is killing itself from within".

2. Dallery also points out that a certain type of feminist rejects the essentialist label (1989, 62-65); Frazer and Lacey acknowledge the criticism but term it "exaggerated" (1993, 132). Challenger recognizes that "the Aristotelian and Durkheimian conception of the social nature of the human condition dovetails nicely with contemporary feminist notions of the self and morality that are relational and contextual and that critique notions of autonomy that have undergirded modern theories of moral development," yet he disassociates "much of modern feminist thought" from the underlying essentialism of this classical perspective. I argue that it is logically incoherent to deny the essentialism of "conceptions of the social nature of the human condition" while embracing relational and contextual notions of the self and of morality.

3. The term cultural feminism is not uncommon (for example, Houston 1988, 168; Frazer and Lacey 1993, 107; Denfeld 1995, 165). Cultural feminism is also known in the literature as sexual maximalism, relational feminism (Faludi 1991, 325), sexual romanticism (Ehrenreich and English 1978), gender feminism (Sommers 1994), difference theory, trait theory (Deaux and Kite 1987), second-wave (or third-wave, in Britain) feminism (Friedan 1991), ecofeminism, biological feminism, and neofeminism. Elements of cultural feminism (notably separatism and female moral superiority) also appear in radical and lesbian feminism (Jagger 1983; Riley 1988, 2), and in socialist feminism (Frazer and Lacey 1993, 107).

4. I classify the following feminist thinkers as representative of cultural feminism: Jagger, Ruddick, Gilligan, Chodorow, Belenky, Tong, Noddings, McMillan, and the later Friedan.

5. Liberal feminism is also known in the literature as sexual minimalism, sexual rationalism (Ehrenreich and English 1978), mainstream feminism, and equity feminism. (Sommers 1994).

6. Communitarianism (Bell 1993; Frazer and Lacey 1993) is also known as collectivism or corporatism (Fox-Genovese 1991), communalism (Okin 1989), and the organic society (Poleman 1983).

7. The communitarian affinities of contemporary feminism are outlined in Frazer and Lacey (1993, particularly 101-128): "Indeed, in many ways the relationship (between communitarianism and feminism) is closer than an affinity, for feminist arguments against liberalism have been an important ingredient in the development of the communitarian critique" (Frazer and Lacey 1993, 128-129). In their *Preface*, they suggest that there is a *lacuna* in the feminist literature concerning a critical evaluation of the communitarian critique of liberalism. Fox-Genovese also notes the tendency of many feminists to favour communitarianism while "rarely develop[ing] the political theory and practice that their support [of community values] requires" (Fox-Genovese 1991, 51). Eisenstein states, "Until a conscious differentiation is made between a theory of individuality that recognizes the importance of the individual within the social collectivity and the ideology of individualism that assumes a competitive view of the individual, there will not be a full accounting of what a feminist theory of liberation must look like for Western society" (Eisenstein 1993, 5). Fox-Genovese, Eisenstein, and Frazer and Lacey conclude by repudiating liberal individualism and expressing sympathy with communitarian values (although Frazer and Lacey ultimately reject communitarianism for many of the same reasons I discuss in the closing chapters of this thesis). Frazer and Lacey's own critical evaluation of communitarianism is oriented around a post-modernist synthesis of liberal and communitarian themes. My own work suggests that no such synthesis is possible, given that a simple acknowledgement of the importance of *both* individual and social group leaves the central issues of self, oppression, and social practice unresolved.

8. Ideology is defined and discussed in Chapter 2.

9. Although these two polarized characterizations are herein presented in a rather over-simplified manner, this artificiality is a tool used to throw the differences between these interpretations of 'woman's nature' into high relief. As a type of shorthand, those who favour the interpretation that women have a distinct nature separate from that of man will be designated by the term 'cultural' theorists. Those who favour the countervailing interpretation that men and women share in one common human nature will be designated 'liberal' theorists. It is recognized that no theorist will conform in all particulars to the two conceptions of 'woman's nature' presented in this thesis. Similar classifications have been suggested (Jagger 1983, Descarries-Bélanger and Roy 1991) and Jagger's caveat applies here:

It is obvious that any attempt at categorization runs the risk of oversimplification at best and of distortion at worst.

The feminist theories that I identify in terms of their basic assumptions about human nature are meant to be viewed as rational reconstructions or ideal types. This implies that perhaps no individual will accept every aspect of what I identify as a single theory. Those who accept the position in general terms may not have articulated the presuppositions on which I claim their position rests; or they may not wish to draw the conclusions that I think are implied by their view...The reconstruction of feminist theories as ideal types minimizes the similarities between them and sharpens the differences (Jagger 1983, 12-13).

10. In particular, I will show that the "anxiety that an interpretivist approach is not genuinely distinct from subjectivism," in Frazer and Lacey's terms (1993, 183) rests on firmer philosophical grounds than "anxiety." Indeed, it is firmly grounded in a resilient classical (and normative) appeal to 'natures'. My characterization of the critique of feminist communitarianism as tenuous is supported in Note 7 of this chapter; contemporary feminist philosophy and politics are largely taken to be uncritically communitarian.

11. Or not feminists at all: Rousseau, for example, expresses many of the same beliefs about women found in cultural feminist critiques of the liberal viewpoint (of which critiques, the best example is probably Carol McMillan's *Women, Reason and Nature*).

12. Although Weiss (1987), for example, believes that Rousseau perverts the natural in the interests of preserving the family under capitalism.

13. The term 'classical' is here used in a specialized way that will be developed in Chapter 2.

14. Jagger states, "Radical feminism, by contrast [to liberal feminism], is a contemporary phenomenon generated by the women's liberation movement of the late 1960's" (Jagger 1983, 82). This thesis contends that this statement is at least partially erroneous because radical feminism is directly indebted to a strand of cultural feminism that can be traced far back through Western history.

15. For example: "We believe that the emancipating process has now reached the limits fixed by the physical constitution of women, and by the fundamental difference that must always exist between their main occupations and those of men. The care of the sick and the insane; the treatment of the poor; the education of children" (From *An Appeal Against Female Suffrage*, 1889, authored by women and quoted in Riley 1988, 73).

16. Science is vulnerable to criticism that it lacks morality and ethics. Because science isolates itself from moral judgement, preserving the myth that the "social uses and abuses of science are distinct from and irrelevant to assessments of the progressiveness of science," its critics fear "that any talk of ethical 'oughts' which apply to science is inherently subversive and anti-scientific, even anti-intellectual" (Harding 1986, 40). The parallel is easily drawn to "Nazi science" (Weizenbaum 1976, 254):

What the defenders of the fundamental value-neutrality, the purity, of science really mean, they say, is that science's logic and methodology, and the empirical core of scientific facts these produce, are totally immune from social influences.. (The positivist) mystical belief (is) that science's inherent progressiveness resides in the separation of its logic and its facts from its social origins, social uses, and social meanings. (Harding 1986, 40)

Germany implemented the "final solution" of its "Jewish Problem" as a textbook exercise in instrumental reasoning...The same logic, the same cold and ruthless application of calculating reason, slaughtered at least as many people during the next twenty years...We have learned nothing...Had (religion been addictive), perhaps God would not have died and the new rationality would not have won out over grace. But instrumental reason, triumphant technique, and unbridled science are addictive. They create a concrete reality, a self-fulfilling night-mare. (Weizenbaum 1976, 256-257)

17. There has been an attempt to present a definitive 'neofeminist' credo as a synthesis of cultural and liberal feminism but, although Ehrenreich and English among others believe that, in the final analysis, "[Today's] feminism hesitates, unable to intervene in the dominant polarization between neo-romanticism [cultural] and neo-rationalist [liberal] ideologies", (Ehrenreich and English 1978, 123) in fact, the neofeminist perspective is clearly a cultural one, in which the difference between the natures of both sexes is germane (see Epstein [1988], Sommers [1994], and Mednick [1989]).

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18. The word 'artificial' is used to mean *not* fixed, innate, or intractable but the product of education and acculturation. "Nature, natural, and the group of words derived from them, or allied to them in etymology, have at all times filled a great place in the thoughts and taken a strong hold on the feelings of mankind" (Mill 1874, reissued 1958, 313). It is necessary to clarify what is meant when a particular trait, cognition, behaviour, or social arrangement is justified or explained through reference to *human nature* or an individual's *nature* for, although this thesis will specifically addresses the philosophical difficulties in defining and describing any theory of human nature or of a particular nature in detail, it is the particular way in which the concept *nature* has been used extensively in traditional (non-Marxist) philosophy, political science, and educational theory that is my specific focus. That is, both human nature and an individual's nature are contrasted with the educative process—these natures form a set of resilient, even fixed, 'givens' to which education must accommodate itself (Berry 1986, x). From this viewpoint, which is not my own, natures must be respected, "not violated" in Holmstrom's words, because among other things, they "set severe constraints on possible social arrangements" (Holmstrom 1982, 37). Any educative, or indeed social and cultural, process must build on what Adler terms "the determinate set of potentialities that constitute the inherent properties of specific human nature—the specific nature of *homo sapiens*" (Adler 1993, 26-27).

Considered in this light, the educational process is not natural but artificial, a product of art distinct from the individual's basic human nature, which it may either complement, perfect, or transcend. Bantock emphasises the distinction between artifice and nature as follows:

> The word [nature] is used to refer to those features which constitute the essential defining characteristics of a being or object—those essential qualities which give it its fundamental character. Thus we speak of the 'nature' of man—either in general terms or of an individual specifically; and in both these ways the word is extensively used in educational theory...Man's original nature (potential) is transformed through culture (in the selective sense); as Erasmus was to put it, '*homines non nascuntur sed finguntur*'...Hence [the] images of 'moulding', 'fashioning', and [the] stress on 'art'. Man's 'nature' provides the potential; his 'art' actualizes it. (Bantock 1986, Vol. 1 35 and 37)

The potential provided by nature is not unbounded and completely free-ranging, however. It is seen to impose some universal limits on possibilities, even if these limits are conceived in very basic terms, such as cognition, corporeality, sociality, and a finite lifespan (Berry 1986, xiii). Human nature is not a boundless potentiality because it suggests a "common core of human experience" such that there is a definite sameness about all people in all places: for example,

> [Human nature] presupposes that the human mind is the same everywhere and at all times. Man's determinate nature remains constant as long as man remains an identifiable and definable species and living organism (Adler 1993, 26-27).

A nature that consists either of maximum potentiality for any outcome or unlimited adaptability allows for the possibility of humanity becoming 'not humanity'. In other words, humanity must be conceived of as remaining within the fixed bounds of what it means to be a human being. In Hospers' terms, human nature consists of those features which constitute the essential defining characteristics of a being or object—those essential qualities which give it its fundamental character (Hospers 1963, 34). Berry argues in *Human Nature*, "Human nature just because it is human nature cannot be changed" (Berry 1986, 96). Those who invoke appeals to human nature seek to impose universal and intractable qualities upon individuals. Those who believe in the fixed bounds of a fundamental character of humanity *are* those who believe in human nature (Bantock 1986, 35). The bounds referred to are *themselves* what is meant by human nature as it has been defined variously through time, with varying degrees of specificity: exactly what it is that cannot be changed without destroying the fundamental character of humanity, in other words, seems open to debate. It is this notion of "a fixed human nature, of an essence of man" that communitarian, contextualist, existentialist, pragmatist, and other contemporary theorists have critiqued (Fromm and Xirau 1968, 3; Berry 1986, 122). The notion of human nature will be further examined in Chapter 3.

The contemporary sense of 'artificial' as unauthentic, affected, even phony, obscures the meaning of the word as synonymous with culture, human ingenuity, the '*non-natural*' world in which we live, and the development of a certain kind of expertise in living. Yet culture and the rational experience of culture are the senses in which the word 'artifice' is employed in educational theory and in philosophy. Thus Aristotle uses the word 'art' in comparing men with animals:

> Experience seems to be almost the same sort of thing as science and art; but, in fact, it is through experience that science and art occur among men. (Aristotle 1963, 40).

Aristotle goes on to associate art with wisdom (Aristotle 1963, 41-42). John Stuart Mill notes that the highest of human

endeavours, including justice, the arts, and knowledge are considered to be products, not of nature, but of art, or culture:
> We have hitherto confined ourselves to one of these acceptations, in which it stands as a general designation for those parts of our mental and moral constitution which are supposed to be innate, in contradistinction to those which are acquired; as when nature is contrasted with education; or when a savage state, without laws, arts, or knowledge, is called a state of nature; or when the question is asked whether benevolence, or the moral sentiment, is natural or acquired; or whether some persons are poets or orators by nature and others not. (Mill published 1852 reissued 1958, 339)

The word 'culture', with its etymological origins in agriculture, metaphorically suggests the deliberate cultivation of the seeds of nature toward a particular end. The seeds of nature represent the 'givens' of human nature and their cultivation represents the development that is accomplished empirically through an individual's experience of culture.

19. That Mill is using the traditional, non-contextualist, notion of nature is indicated by his attribution of differences between men and women to nature rather than to education and circumstances. The contextualist view of 'nature' (quotation marks are used because it is thought that this may be a misapplication or at least redefinition of the term [for example, Holmstrom 1982, 37]) would suggest that nature is *constituted through* education and circumstances, not *contrasted to* education and circumstances.

20. Socialization theories are more fully explored in Appendix I.

21. A similar strategy is to deny that human beings possess 'a nature'.

22. In terms of equal treatment, absolute equivalence is unnecessary. For example, siblings need not be identical twins to be treated equally. In one way, equal treatment results when differences are treated *as though* they did not exist. In other words, differences are not treated as significant or important in a particular context. Because individuals cannot be equal in mathematical terms, equality cannot be an intrinsic quality of individuals but either a quality of the treatment accorded them or a judgement based on their common participation in a particular quality. For example, it may be said that, insofar as rationality is concerned, men and women are equal because they participate in this quality to the same extent or to the extent of some baseline measurement.

23. Liberal feminism is not unamicable to more recent (existentialist, Wittgensteinian) notions that there is no shared human nature. In this case, the 'nature' of humanity could be reconceptualized as indeterminate, or 'having no fixed nature'.

24. Note that Friedan's own position has changed over time from that of liberal feminism to cultural feminism.

25. Those who do not identify these values with liberalism are referred to the discussion in Chapter 3.

26. In my classroom, I am commonly encountering the notion that women prefer not to debate abstractions. This statement is delivered as fact, not opinion. Interestingly, I seem to hear this from women in my Philosophy of Education class in the context of a heated debate, in which women are participating as eagerly and vociferously as men.

27. Although this thesis focuses on providing a metatheoretical background to feminist theory, it is not primarily a feminist thesis because an investigation into the implications of designating a specific nature for other selected sub-categories of human nature could equally have addressed sexual orientation, national character, or race, for example. Rationalization of particular stances toward individuals allocated to these categories have also been couched in terms of their natures.

28. The problems of definition are addressed in Appendix II and, concerning women, Chapters 4 and 5.

29. So nebulous, indeed, that this 'human nature' may only amount to an acknowledgement that human beings are mortal.

30. Scientific investigation of sex differences are not commonly held to be investigations into 'a nature'. Rather, they are felt to be value-neutral records of empirical observation of behaviour. Whereas attempts to characterize women from a non-scientific viewpoint have been dismissed as male chauvinism, those characterizations linked to psychology have received widespread acceptance: for example, "Psychologists have observed that women tend to prefer social, interactive processes, unlike men, who long for the isolation of completely private thought" (Sherwin 1988, 19). Yet attempts to investigate the female nature scientifically through a search for natural sex differences are so highly vulnerable to methodological and interpretive difficulties that the weak conclusions at which they arrive cannot possibly provide an iron-clad foundation for objective ratification of the female nature. The scientific approach to a study of sex differences is examined,

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in support of this statement, in Appendix I.

In the introduction to their well-known critical compilation of sex difference research, Maccoby and Jacklin list the issues that have been raised by the scientific community as central to "What is to become of woman and man." It is apparent that the scientific study of sex differences has gone far beyond empirical observation and entered the realm of philosophical speculation:

> Do the sexes differ in their emotional reactions to people and events? Do they differ in the vigour with which they attack the life problems confronting them? Do they have equal potential for acquiring the knowledge and skills necessary for a variety of occupations? If psychological differences do exist, on the average, are the differences great enough to impose any limits on, or indicate any especially promising directions for, the kinds of lives that individuals of the two sexes may reasonably be expected to lead? (Maccoby and Jacklin 1974, 1)

Emotional reactions and psychological differences, as Kagan (1989) and Weiss (1993) point out, cannot easily be observed and must, in fact, be deduced by the observer. Even more problematic is the investigation of causal relationships, potentials, significance ("are the differences *great enough*"), and evaluative notions implicit in the phrase "the kinds of lives that individuals...may reasonably be expected to lead."

The scientific investigation of behaviour-based sex differences is not a recent area of concern (Jensen 1989, 61) but the question, as phrased by Allen, "What is to become of woman and man?" was formerly in the domain of ideas (1985, 2). With the rise of what postmodernism terms the expert, authority for the response to such questions was assumed by the scientific community as it usurped the search for the laws of nature that were earlier under the aegis of philosophy and theology. The *oeuvre* of B.F. Skinner provides an excellent example of the use of science to answer philosophical questions (Skinner 1971, in particular). The questions asked of science that are itemized by Maccoby and Jacklin above address the self-same issues as does the philosophy of man and woman but in many cases without prior consideration of the difficulties in defining, analysing, and explicating the term 'nature' in the context of those intrinsic noncognitive dispositions and tendencies that are thought to characterize the distinct essences and inherent characters of men and women.

The 'nature of woman' is difficult to locate scientifically. Empirical data seem to convince many that women have a separate nature, while in many cases the self-same data convince others that one common unisex human nature is what actually exists. According to Ayer, this may suggest that an analysis of the meaning of 'woman' or of woman's nature is beyond the reach of observation and matters of fact because it requires a philosophical investigation and not a scientific one:

> It is not further scientific information that is needed to decide such philosophical questions... These are not questions that can be settled by experiment, since the way in which they are answered itself determines how the result of any experiment is to be interpreted. What is in dispute in such cases is not whether, in a given set of circumstances, this or that event will happen, but rather how anything at all that happens is to be described. (Ayer 1956, 7)

Wittengenstein points out that "The existence of the experimental method makes us think we have the means of solving the problems which trouble us; though problem and method pass one another by" (Wittengenstein *Philosophical Investigations* II:xiv). Indeed, these passages prefigure the conclusion sought in this thesis: that an investigation into woman's nature from a scientific viewpoint is bound to fail. The tools of science cannot discern meaning.

31. This phenomenon is similar to that described by Midgley in *Evolution as Religion* (1985).

32. Regrettably, the implications of the issues raised here have received scant attention from feminists both cultural and liberal. For illustrative purposes only, Epstein, in an otherwise excellent work, addresses human nature, 'woman's nature', and the history of theories of the social order in a brief 16-page introductory chapter (1988). This metatheoretical background work that is essential to the future viability of feminism as both a political platform and an academic pursuit has not been done in any systematic and exhaustive sense. A secondary large-scale goal of this undertaking is to provide an impetus for other scholars to explore these concepts (for example, the defining process, universality, order/disorder, stereotypes, certain knowledge, the construction of the self, and so on), as they relate to women, in far more depth.

33. The terms 'classical' and 'modern' are used in a specific way that will be developed in Chapters 2 and 3..

CHAPTER 2: THE CLASSICAL, TELEOLOGICAL WORLD VIEW

In this chapter, I shall provide a background for my claim in Chapter 4 that an inevitable outcome of anchoring cultural feminist arguments in classical communitarianism is that intellectual assent must be given to essentialism, contextualism, determinism, prescriptivism, and structural/functionalism (particularly in the sense of the primacy of order over autonomy, individual self-expression, and the other liberal individualist virtues that will be presented in the next chapter).[1] Thus, this chapter documents that essentialism, contextualism, determinism, prescriptivism, and structural/functionalism are congruent with, indeed they are derived from, the classical world view. I will show that these concepts are also congruent with the cultural feminist understanding of the 'nature of woman'. I suggest that, consequently, cultural feminism anchors its most basic understanding of 'woman' as a category in concepts and modes of thought that are actually patriarchal.

To elucidate these connections and set the scene for the subsequent discussion, I begin with a critical look at communitarianism, specifically McIntyre's description of the classical tradition (1981). The affiliation of cultural feminism with communitarianism is confirmed by Fox-Genovese (1991, 51), Frazer and Lacey (1993, 128-129), and Eisenstein 1993, 5). I then turn to a discussion of human nature, essence, function, and hierarchy as the principal building blocks of the interrelated functional network that is the teleological universe underlying communitarian political theories. My discussion relies heavily on the works of Plato and Aristotle because these philosophers provide an exemplary illustration of this central metaphor of the classical framework.[2] In contrast, the next chapter turns to a consideration of the antithetical tenets of liberal individualism that are congruent with liberal

feminism. Liberal individualism proceeds from the radical reconceptualization of the universe in opposition to the classical viewpoint, as one with no discernable *kosmos* (the Greek word signifies order), proper purpose, or hierarchy of natures.

Because this thesis argues that women do not share an essential nature, it is critical to begin by situating the terms 'natures' and 'human nature' in a particular context. The way the concept of 'a nature' and 'human nature' have been used in the past generates a set of corollaries that, if acknowledged, would quite possibly lead, at the very least, to a reconsideration of the value of such concepts to contemporary feminism and, perhaps, to the rejection of such concepts altogether.[3] It would be highly unlikely that talk of 'woman's nature' could avoid the assumptions and implications generated by talk of 'natures' in general, and 'human nature' in specific. On the other hand, an attempt to explicate 'natures' may well involve a thesis in itself. I am aware that certain readers—particularly those who espouse the notion that 'woman's nature' is simply observed scientifically and recorded objectively off 'reality' as briefly discussed in Chapter 1—may not accept the following assertions without supporting documentation and discussion. For this reason, I have included both documentation and a more complete discussion of 'human nature' in Appendices II and III.

* * * * *

Of the main elements of human nature (description, explanation, pragmatic application, judgements of significance, similarities/differences, and function) developed in Appendices II and III, the descriptive element is the closest to objectivity in attempting to present a straightforward depiction of the human being. Yet, in fact, the other subjective elements overshadow this first. Because it is intimately connected with ideology,[4] one true and definitive, objective, universally-accepted human nature cannot simply be observed in external reality and recorded as with a videotape machine. Consequently, the safest course of action seems "not to expect too much from a concept of human nature" (Berry 1986,

140). Nonetheless, the concept of human nature ought not, however, to be cursorily rejected because, as will be elaborated in the ensuing discussion, important tenets—usually considered patriarchal[5]— of the nature theories of the classical *weltanschauung* survive in contemporary feminist thought, subsumed under the rubrics communitarianism (Frazer and Lacey 1993), collectivism or corporatism (Fox-Genovese 1991), communalism (Okin 1989), and the organic society (Poleman 1983).[6]

This chapter and the next are pivotal to my argument because they attempt to demonstrate that human nature works politically (or, as an ideology)—if not 'objectively' — to underpin two opposing conceptions of the cosmos: (1) the communitarian classical vision of an ordered universe working toward an harmonious perfection, presented in this chapter, and (2) the liberal-individualistic modern vision of a mechanistic (perhaps even chaotic) universe of no knowable goal or proper purpose, presented in Chapter 3. These frameworks are not unique to this thesis: the teleological[7] infrastructure of the pre-Enlightenment West has been documented by Strauss (1953), Willey (1961), MacIntyre (1981), Bloom (1987), Taylor (1989), and others. Because these two frameworks are large-scale, of necessity this chapter makes some rather large-scale generalizations and claims. I am acutely aware of the difficulty and scope of this undertaking but I believe that the usefulness of the paradigms provided by these opposing cosmographies[8], particularly in search of a deeper understanding of the aforementioned feminist affiliation with communitarianism, helps balance these negative aspects. In defence, the concluding chapter of this thesis directly addresses the complexities implicit in working with paradigms.

In the sense that I have pointed out above, these two paradigms correspond to a debate in political philosophy that has a long history — communitarianism *versus* liberalism.[9] In another sense, however, there is the tendency, particularly in feminist theory, to treat communitarianism in isolation from its roots. Thus, while liberalism is seen to carry with it a significant amount of 'dysfunctional baggage', communitarianism has, as it were,

left its Louis Vuittons at the station and decided to walk to the hotel unencumbered. Thus Frazer and Lacey can state that communitarianism "has not been systematised in contemporary work," while noting that "communitarian themes have been present in feminism since its inception" (Frazer and Lacey 1993, 1).[10] As a result, feminist theorists who express an affiliation with communitarianism may reject important elements of communitarianism. For example, it is not unusual in cultural feminist theory to want both a repudiation of liberalism and a return to communitarianism, *and* an increase in personal freedom and self-determination (Eisenstein 1993, 192).[11] As this and the next chapter will demonstrate, personal freedom and self-determination are liberal virtues, not communitarian ones.[12]

Frazer and Lacey's description of communitarianism may prove helpful in the discussion to follow:

> Communitarianism can briefly be characterised as the thesis that the community, rather than the individual, the state, the nation or any other entity is and should be at the centre of our analysis and our value system...Core positive themes [are] the social nature of life, identity, relationships and institutions. Communitarians emphasise the embedded and embodied status of the individual person, by contrast with central themes emphasized in contemporary liberal thought which construct an abstract and disembodied individual. (Frazer and Lacey 1993, 1-2)

Thus, the key elements of communitarianism, following Etzioni (1993), Frazer and Lacey (1993), Okin (1989), Fox-Genovese (1991), Miller (1967), Bell (1993), the *Communitarian Manifesto* (1991), and others, are the following: first, the community and not the individual is the source of value; second, the identity of human beings depends completely on their social context (it is impossible to think of an abstract human being, a universal human being, or a universalized 'human nature' that applies to all humans), hence individuals are determined by their environment; third, the individual is an embodied individual (the body cannot be transcended because mind and body cannot be conceived as separable); fourth, related to point one above, values and virtues arise out of particular practices; fifth, communal and public goods are central, consequently individual rights are unimportant (if

not suspect); sixth, contrary to the empirical tradition, ought may be derived from is. I maintain that both the cultural feminist notion of 'woman's nature' and these important elements of communitarianism depend on the classical world view. Consequently, the inevitable outcome of anchoring cultural feminist arguments in classical communitarianism is that intellectual assent must be given to essentialism, contextualism, determinism, prescriptivism, and structural/functionalism.[13] It is interesting that Frazer and Lacey go so far as to equate feminism and communitarianism: "Feminists emphasise the collective, or communitarian nature of social life, of values, of the processes which disadvantage women and other groups in liberal societies" (1993, 100). Note that they group *all* feminists under the one, communitarian, umbrella. This begs the question as to whether liberal feminists are, from this viewpoint, feminists at all. Perhaps the following discussion may extend and strengthen the critical perspective on feminist communitarianism,[14] and underline some of the difficulties suggested by the moral and ethical consequences of the cultural feminist conception of womanhood.

The Communitarian Critique of Modernity

By and large, our *fin de siecle* world is not sympathetic to the idea that individual wants and needs ought to be sacrificed in the interests of serving others. It no longer seems moral to sacrifice one's autonomy and self-development through "comprehensively knowing the grounds of one's duty [through]...conscience and self-conquest" (Arnold *Culture and Anarchy*, 1958, 482). Still less is it considered moral to prescribe to others that they must sacrifice their autonomy and happiness in the interests of service. In the classical teleological cosmos, as presented later in this chapter, it will be demonstrated that there is a compelling reason for such self-discipline. The larger order is seen to be perfect. Therefore it is moral, appropriate, just, and dignified to conduct one's life in accord with one's true nature; to properly submit one's will to the interests of the larger wholeness. In a religious context,

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there may be additional dividends in terms of the development of a rewarding relationship with the divine, the cultivation of one's immortal soul, and the possibility of an afterlife. Further, altruistic satisfactions derived from serving one's fellow citizen, one's family, one's community while furthering the solidarity of the harmonious ordering of society can rationally be combined with the benefits accruing from the dignity of one's station and the reciprocal net of benefits and duties extending down the hierarchical ladder.

MacIntyre, who Frazer and Lacey (1993, 103) and Okin (1989, 42) identify as a communitarian, correctly points out that, in the nonteleological world, it may not be as easy to see the benefits of virtue as it may have been in classical societies, "Virtue [today] is, indeed has to be, its own end, its own reward and its own motive" (MacIntyre 1981, 214). In other words, the modern *zeitgeist* is becoming increasingly hard-put to justify virtue by reference to any ultimate purpose. The existential *angst* of forging an identity in a confusing and rapidly-changing world is exacting and distressing. Sartre and others have described the onerous, even anguished, personal/spiritual journey toward authenticity in an alienated universe. One can understand the longing for an earlier time, when men and women lived in certainty of their 'definition' in terms of their essential 'nature, their proper purpose and 'situation', for whom the idea of morality was best borne out through social norms. Ehrenreich and English emphasize that there are positive consequences for women from the standpoint of a classical teleological world view, as follows:

> So there could be no Woman Question in the Old Order. Woman's work was cut out for her; the lines of authority that she was to follow were clear. She could hardly think of herself as a "misfit" in a world which depended so heavily on her skills and her work. Nor could she imagine making painful decisions about the direction of her life... (Ehrenreich and English 1978, 9)

For many cultural feminists, this "Old Order" provides a utopian, seductive vision of community living wherein there are few uncertainties and the authority of the social group is analogous to that of the parent in benevolently directing and controlling the lives of

individuals. Frazer and Lacey (1993) and Okin (1989, 42) concur that the perceived crisis of modernity elicits a response in feminism that rejects liberal theory and invokes "more integrated societies of the past in which small, homogeneous communities provided a stable set of social identities" (Frazer and Lacey 1993, 164; Okin 1989). Illich suggests similarly that capitalist industrialism precipitates a breakdown of traditionally complementary male-female roles, behaviours, and traits as it fashions men and women into genderless possessive consumers (Illich 1982, 11 *fn.* 5). He depicts this radical transition from "gendered subsistence to dependence on scarce products" as a "sad loss" (Illich 1982, 197). Bell notes (but rejects as mistaken) the association of communitarianism's ideal society with *Gemein-schaft*, "the static, orderly, rooted conception of community, where people simply assume and fulfil socially given roles. Members of the community are tied to fixed modes and hierarchies of status and power; their behaviour is regulated by an instinctive,unqualified attachment to the local community" (Bell 1993, 90). Austen in comparable fashion advocates that contemporary feminism reconsider and adopt Bradley's nineteenth-century ethical idealism, for its rhapsodic contextual emphasis on the centrality of social role:

> It is the self-realization of each member, because each member cannot find the func-
> tion, which makes him himself, apart from the whole to which he belongs...We have
> found in the end, we have found self-realization, duty, and happiness in one—yes,
> we have found ourselves, when we have found our station and its duties, our
> function as an organ in the social organism. (Austen 1995)

Similarly, Marx's use of the word *idyll* in reference to the Middle Ages is difficult to understand unless it is seen in the context of the communitarian vision that he shares with cultural feminism.[15] However, as Mendus (1993) emphasizes, like all communitarian utopian visions, Marx's idyll fails to take adequate account of conflict. For example, Marx's tunnel-vision focus on the oppressive capitalist system leads to the belief "that men as a group oppress women as a group is false" (Jagger 1983, 66). Saul's equation of Marxism and feudalism is even more mordant: "The absence of private property is often seen as an

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essentially Marxist characteristic. But most feudal societies used the same idea and structure: the sole difference being that the ultimate repository of power had changed costume" (Saul 1992, 19).

Although MacIntyre attempts to sanctify the classical, heroic tradition, it is obvious that such anti-individualist social projects are built on the backs of individuals who cannot express their entitlement, their rights, because the human community is prior (MacIntyre 1981, 233). In other words, the "shared good for man," which MacIntyre opposes to the liberal conception of the good as "each man by nature seeks to satisfy his own desires" (MacIntyre 1981, 213) turns out, from a liberal feminist viewpoint, to be just that—the shared good for *man* built on the underlying, unstated notion that there is an underclass that exists to be used for the advancement of man's good. This underclass, whether it be slaves, in the Aristotelian tradition that MacIntyre exalts, or women as has been pragmatically played out in history, has desires that matter less than their functional usefulness for the communal society that is depicted as optimal. How can MacIntyre, for example, support the classical notion of the common good given that its morality is predicated on, indeed *requires*, the oppression of all but a minority elite?

How gladly did the slaves and women place their own desires and their conceptions of 'the good' that, according to Patterson, included fantasies of liberation and equality for males only, behind that of the good of the entire community (Patterson 1991, 54)? If 'the good' "has to be the good for one who inhabits [this] role" (MacIntyre 1981, 205) rather than an individual's "own self-chosen conception of the good life" (MacIntyre 1981, 182), then liberatory individualistic notions of what is good for one as a unique individual—not as a woman, wife, mother, or daughter—must be abandoned as selfishly egotistic. This amounts to redefining 'the good' out of all comprehension from a modern viewpoint. Similarly, the 'happiness' referred to by Bradley above takes no account of the heartache consequent upon the mismatch of personality and social role. It is interesting, and alarming,

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that Frazer and Lacey echo these conservative notions in a work that is ostensibly post-modernist. For example, their interpretive framework provides no standpoint from which to critique the notion that "We must put in place the kinds of social institutions, practices, policies, norms and values which will bring proper community life about" (Frazer and Lacey 1993, 116). The notion of "proper" community life presupposes either universal consensus as to what is "proper" and what is not, or the (potentially forced) imposition of "proper" values. Notions of proper purpose and proper values are inextricably bound up with considerations of, and lend moral authority to, the *status quo*. Communitarianism must be viewed with extreme suspicion, particularly by women, who have no empirical reason to trust 'society' to define 'proper' values. Yet Frazer and Lacey suggest that feminism "requires a specifically communitarian analysis in many respects" and hold out the promise that communitarianism can solve problems of "child care, sexual violence, the ideologies of popular culture and pornography, or the legal regulation of sex and gender" (Frazer and Lacey 1993, 121).

There will always be those who do not want to do particular work because it is not personally fulfilling, not in tune with their own desires for themselves, or not particularly enjoyable, despite its overwhelming value to the community. Care of the sick and elderly in the home, and housework are two such undertakings. Despite the cultural feminist attempts to valorize housework and 'care', few who have actually kept house for any period of time or looked after an elderly relative with Alzheimer's could possibly claim as much satisfaction for these activities as for any paid job outside the home. Although many women's jobs outside the home may be characterized by as much drudgery and monotony as housekeeping, at least they have an element of social interaction, not to mention remuneration. The traditional communitarian society that is the basis of the classical *weltan-schauung* and that MacIntyre eulogizes, would require women, because of their essential 'nature' and appropriate role or 'proper purpose', to morally conform in unity with a role

(MacIntyre 1981, 190-191) that constrains them to 'freely', compassionately, and lovingly serve others in a caring, nurturing, domestic mode.

MacIntyre's *After Virtue* can be read as a cultural feminist paeon to community. A more subversive reading might be built around the liberal feminist critique that his elitist conception of 'the good' is constructed on the unstated oppression of the masses. A smoothly functioning society in which individual desires are freely subordinated to the collective good has long been an appealing goal. Hence the success of many cults. However, we do not have at our disposal any pragmatic realization of this goal in which the collective good has meant something other than the good for those at the top of the hierarchy. Nor have we seen a society where self-sacrifice in cooperation with the larger good has been completely voluntary rather than forced, coerced, or ideologically inculcated—although the Victorian 'Angel in the Home' comes close to epitomizing a bourgeois subclass that conformed with a good deal of single mindedness to that particular vision of womanhood. However, for every hundred Angels there was perhaps one Harriet Taylor, Annie Oakley, Hester Stanhope, or Florence Nightingale whose idea of 'the good' was not that of the community nor was her idea of virtue conformity to an irrevocably assigned role. Thus, in paraphrase, from the communitarian perspective,

> [Woman's] station in the cosmic order is designated to [her]. To fulfil this position properly is [her] only chance; to fail to do so is [her] true danger. Even the most daring stretch of [her] powers must still be governed by the spirit of obedience; even [her] highest creativity does service to conformity...Order can mean for [woman] only the taking of [her] designated place in the cosmic order. (Kuntz 1968, 453-454)

Patterson notes that Hesiod, a classical poet, "recognizes the positive aspects of women which make them useful, even essential for men...but he 'regards as negative those qualities which involved open or secret assertiveness of her own will'" (Patterson 1991, 61). Thus a traditional description of femininity uses words like gentle, passive, caring, warmly emotional; as though there have never been women who are aggressive, ambitious, selfish,

and coldly abstract. From the perspective of the harmoniously ordered society, women who refuse to perform their 'natural' proper functions present a danger or threat to the well-being of all. Thus Aristotle described the ship's crew in Book III, Chapter 4 of *The Politics*, each with his own nature and function in order to ensure the safety of the voyage (Aristotle 1972, 107). A cabin-boy who acted as a ship's captain would imperil the whole crew.

In short, MacIntyre can only lament the passing of the classical *weltanschauung* because, as a rational, free male, his position at the epicentre and apex of the old teleological system is one of unlimited power and privilege. The espousal, by cultural feminists, of the collectivist ethic favoured by MacIntyre sits poorly on top of a liberal individualistic philosophical base. MacIntyre, himself, recognizes this fundamental conceptual incompatibility, as do feminists Jagger and Eisenstein. However, the incompatibility of the communitarian ethic and women's 'liberation' has not been fully addressed, although Grimshaw supports my interpretation of MacIntyre's argument (1989), and Frazer and Lacey (1993) echo many of the concerns raised herein. Neither Grimshaw nor Frazer and Lacey, in my opinion, take their critiques far enough so that the connection between (MacIntyre's) traditionalism and communitarian solutions, essential natures, and cultural feminist theory is clear.

Implicit in the archetype of a distinctly-natured woman who sacrifices her own self-interests in virtuous service of a larger order (or of "proper community life" in Frazer and Lacey's words) are those ideas from which earlier, liberal, feminists thought they needed to be liberated. It is particularly interesting that Ehrenreich and English, and Austen who are quoted above gloss over those negative aspects of communitarian organic society that engendered liberal feminism. A society that restricts self-realization to conformity to an assigned socially-beneficial role is a society organized along paternalistic lines, in which women are told where their duty lies and how best they may serve the community, as a macrocosm of the family. It is interesting that, from a contemporary communitarian viewpoint, a reworking of family law "invokes older notions of duty, interdependence and collective

responsibility" through which "individual rights arise out of the definition of members of families in terms of their status and role as husbands, wives, and parents" (Kingdom 1996, 32). Duty, interdependence, collective responsibility, status, and role are clearly classical concepts that have provided an historical basis for women's oppression. According to Glendon, "Those who consider that families, churches, labour unions, and the like are more apt to oppress than to empower individuals" are likely to reject collectivism (Glendon 1991, 182); as one of the founders of the communitarian movement and a key author of the *Responsive Communitarian Platform*, Glendon finds such an attitude ill-founded. Yet women have certainly an historical basis to fear the oppression of family, church, the workplace (unionized or not), and the like. Whether women's proper purpose is outlined by fatherly males or by cultural feminist women does not change the notion that this sort of classical arrangement is paternalistic and, hence, at the very root of patriarchal social arrangements. When cultural feminist Sherwin states, "Plato's ideal state is a society that has no political problems as we know them," she does not qualify this statement by reminding her reader that Plato's ideal state was a dictatorship, however benevolent (Tong 1993, 183).

Having introduced a number of difficulties with MacIntyre's communitarian approach to 'woman's nature', the next section continues with a more detailed study of the origins of 'woman's nature' through an examination of the classical notion of 'human nature' — particularly as it concerns essence, significance, hierarchy, proper purpose, and the ordered universe.

Essence

Essentialism refers to the notion that entities within the same category share common, indispensable elements. These elements cannot be eliminated without destroying the entity or its distinctive character.

Human nature is an example of a concept. One practical use of the concept human nature is to accentuate what is *significant* about a human being from one particular viewpoint or another — those characteristics that are indispensable to human beings — the *essence*, in other words, of the human being. This can be worded plainly as follows: human nature describes what is most important about human beings *to the person using the concept*. This clearly relegates the objectively descriptive aspect of human nature to a subordinate position. If the value of human nature as a concept is only weakly related to its scientific and/or descriptive element, why has this concept received so much attention in common parlance, science, and philosophy over so long a time span? This section attempts to explicate the usefulness of the subjective elements of human nature as an effective, even formidable, political concept.

The 'nature' of an entity cannot be reduced to the sum total of all the knowledge about that entity (this statement is supported in Appendix II). A judgement of significance, amongst other considerations, affects the qualities of an entity that are selected as salient, or essential. This distinction is commonly observed in language, which refers to "the *real* essential nature of X."[16] Language obfuscates, to an extent, the two subtly different meanings of the word 'essence'. There is the first sense that refers to necessity, to something that is an absolute requirement, without which the entity — woman in this case — would no longer 'be itself'. In other words, from this viewpoint, essence seems to be the constitution or actualized form of the universalized concept 'nature of woman'.

Then there is the second sense of 'essence', that Aristotle developed and uses in the following: "So the things that have an essence are those of which the account is a definition." In this passage, he seems to mean that nouns (though, presumably, adjectives like 'beautiful' and adverbs, too) like 'nose', 'number', and 'female' (Aristotle *Meta*, VII, 4; 1963, 84-87) have or express a particular quality that all noses, all numbers, and all females hold in common. Through abstraction, the mind distinguishes which of the attributes shared

by all members of a particular category are universally present and necessary to the entity. The extent to which the specific entity realizes this quality is a measure of its own perfection. To Plato, however, the characteristics of entities achieve a mystical life of their own: the qualities things have in common that Aristotle terms essences are a reflection of those qualities as they exist apart from that particular entity. In other words, through contemplation of the specific, Plato (but not Aristotle) is led to the idea of a universal quality (ideal Forms that were perfect, unchanging, and remote) in which the specifics participate.

In addition, for Aristotle, entities can only be fully understood if they are allowed to reach their fulfilment or *telos*: in other words, the "essence of a thing, what it is for a thing to be what it is" needs to be understood in terms of "the purpose of a thing and its good" (Aristotle 1963, 45). Classical definitions had to do with an entity's appearance, composition, and behaviour — like the contemporary empirical definition set out in Appendix II — but also with something outside the entity (to give a simple example, it is difficult to define a table without referring to its function). For Plato, the 'something outside' was the remote ideal Form that the entity was drawn toward becoming like, and, for Aristotle, this was the peculiar form of excellence in terms of its function. The classical concept *nisus* expresses the movement of an entity toward its peculiar form of excellence, or *arete*.

To belabour the point, function implies use, use implies a user, and both imply an external locus. This departs from a contemporary empirical definition of an entity, which looks for inherent characteristics of the entity and ostensibly pays no heed to the purpose of an entity, what its 'good' is.[17] This 'good' seems closely related (if not identical) to Plato's conception of *arete*, the particular excellence of a thing in terms of its function or, in human terms, a person's role or occupation in the community or city-state (Plato 1974, 25-26). That the perfection of an entity ('womanliness' or 'femininity') is its real nature (Joad 1939, 292) is a notion that is developed in Chapter 4.

Essentialism was challenged when Locke suggested that definitions are not of things themselves, but of the names we give them (Locke 1959, Vol. II, 71). There are those in the twentieth century who consider that 'essentialist' is a pejorative term, implying that those so-addressed cling to an outmoded notion that is irrefutably erroneous. For example, Dennett is surprised that "Even today, Darwin's overthrow of essentialism has not been completely assimilated" (Dennett 1995, 39). Putnam has been influential in advancing this viewpoint and is quoted by Kagan in his investigation into the foundations of behavioural science:

> It begins to look as if Kant was right, and science only gives us relations between objects and not the objects themselves (p. 44)...Not only has modern physics failed to reveal to us any ready-made objects, any objects with a built-in and unique description, but the objects it does postulate are intimately connected with the observer and his ways of observing them (p. 178). (Kagan 1989, 49)

Cultural feminists fight to escape the essentialist label (Dallery 1989, 62-65; Frazer and Lacey 1993, 131-132). They are aware that, according to Taylor, a great deal of modern academic doctrine currently suggests that "'nature' is ontically entirely dependent on the existence of particulars which exemplify it. If they disappear, it disappears" (Taylor 1989, 190). Contemporary ecological consciousness would be hard put to admit there is an essential dodo, for example, that would outlast written record. Chapters 4 and 5 further consider the essentialist label as it pertains to cultural feminism.

Holmstrom characterizes Aristotle as an essentialist because he posits, "sets of individually *necessary* and jointly sufficient characteristics which constitute the (unchanging) nature or essence of that species" (Holmstrom 1982, 26). Indeed, according to Taylor, Aristotle insists that "Nature herself has made certain hard and fast divisions between kinds which it is the business of our thought to recognise and follow" (Taylor 1955, 25). This notion, that definitions must conform to real "lines of cleavage" in nature, is opposed to the nominalist position that definitions are, in a sense, arbitrary and simply declare the meaning

we will give to a word (Taylor 1955, 26). Evolutionary theory seems to deny that essential things, by definition, could be no other way and that part of an entity's nature is *of necessity* a part of it. Post-Darwin, evolution caused a rapid decline in essence-explanations, because nothing in nature was seen to be immune to change (and change not necessarily in terms of realizing its potential). However, as will be clarified as this argument unfolds, the classical *weltanschauung*, accompanied by its emphasis on essences, lives on subliminally in many of the ways we continue to conceive of woman's nature.

To paraphrase Kagan, "The fact that our language contains the word [man] tempts us as it did Aquinas, to posit an essence; at least in the Western mind, words invite the idea of a most fundamental referent in nature" (Kagan 1987, 45). Kagan refers to the tradition of Plato and Descartes who believed that, although many concepts are derived from experience, certain concepts (such as a triangle, and human nature) can be articulated although they have never been encountered in nature. They are attributed an existence in nature independent of the consciousness of the articulator. In other words, they are an abstraction.[18] An example from Descartes' *Fifth Meditation* follows:

> When I imagine a triangle, it may be that no such figure exists anywhere outside my consciousness (*cogitationem*), or never has existed; but there certainly exists its determinate nature (its essence, its form), which is unchangeable and eternal. This is no figment of mine, and does not depend on my mind... (Descartes 1971, 102)

In classical Greek philosophy, specific entities try to realize themselves or, in Plato's terms, are pulled by the Forms toward perfection or the full expression of their essence. Consequently, there is a strong inclination to define entities in terms of their potential—not what they are, but what they could possibly be at their best. In other words, the nature or essence of an entity may not exist in real life, but exists apart from its embodiments, as an abstraction or as an eternal and perfect form. According to Collingwood, this classical viewpoint was influenced by those sixth and seventh century BC Ionian "philosophers of nature" who viewed human nature as "something which makes its possessor behave as it

does" (Collingwood 1972, 43-44). Unlike the modern notion developed by Hume, that causes must precede behaviour, the classical idea is that an entity is drawn or moves toward[19] the fulfilment of a 'final cause'. This final cause is the realization of its own essence in the sense of *arete* or personal excellence.

Further, Plato attaches importance to the abstract idea of the way things in this world *could be* if they achieved their potential in terms of approaching the perfection of the Forms and less importance to the way entities actually are, or seem to be. In defining an entity in terms of its potential perfection, of necessity he must look to other than this imperfect, changeable world for the source of a true definition. Thus he can acknowledge that the way things are done here on earth, no matter how universal, are imperfect and can be contrary to nature. For example, he says, "The contrary practice, which prevails at present, is in reality a violation of nature" (Plato 1977, 32; Plato 1974, 118). In his emphasis on the ideal man as he could possibly be imagined, Bambrough suggests that Plato elevated man to god-like status and overlooked the more negative aspects of man as he actually exists (Bambrough 1963, 283).

On the other hand, although Aristotle accepted and built on Plato's notions of definition, form and essence (indeed, he devoted much effort to elucidation of the above-noted complexities in the definition process [Aristotle 1963, 137-]), he tied essences or commonalities firmly to the realm of experience and denied them a separate existence (Aristotle 1963, 88). His concept of the forms is similar to Plato's in that they are universal, but they cannot be disengaged, except in thought, from the entities that they embody (Bambrough 1963, 30; Gutek 1997, 36). This grounds his vision of natures more securely and unequivocally in what is observed in the world around him—in the *status quo*. Instead of Plato's pure reason (the thought experiment), Aristotle used *organon*, or logic based in empirical observation of the real or sensible world, as a tool and method of reasoning because "formal rules of this kind enable us to proceed from knowledge to knowledge, to

argue from premises whose truth is known to conclusions whose truth was hitherto un-known" (Bambrough 1963, 22). Owens notes, "[Aristotle's] starting points depend upon correct upbringing of the individuals from their earliest years. Yet that upbringing presupposes correct moral notions already dominating the ambient...The charge of circularity looms large" (Owens 1992, 299). In other words, an Aristotelian conception of practical science seems closely, perhaps indissolubly, linked to the *status quo*. Although we are urged to, "Study the man who is in the most perfect state of body and soul," and "Look for the intentions of nature in things which retain their nature, and not in things which are corrupted" (Aristotle 1977, 51), it is difficult to perceive how individual judgement and wis-dom can be capable of discerning the difference between the *status quo* and the way things ought to be, and the difference between perfection and the appearance (or illusion) of perfection.[20] At the core, the perfect man that Aristotle urges us to study is a man who exists in this world (and has a composite nature that is not ideal, in the Platonic sense, but realistic), not in an utopian thought-experiment.

Since the perfection of a man is his real nature (Joad 1939, 292), to "see what the best man is like" will show us true human nature (Bambrough 1963, 282). This "ascription of an ideal character to human nature" (Berry 1986, 29) demonstrates conclusively that human nature is a moral question, fused with moral considerations of perfection, 'the good', 'the good life', 'proper purpose', 'virtue' and 'justice'. Hume confirms this by equating moral philosophy with "the science of human nature" (Hume 1977, 1).[21]

Here is the genesis of the notion that what is natural must also be good: unless the essential man is perfect, the connection between 'natural/by nature' and moral excellence is logically flawed. Further, it is an easy step from the way an individual *could* be at his or her best to 'the way an individual *ought* to be'. The use of the term 'ought' has, again, immedi-ate and inescapable ethical and moral connotations. Berry supports the position that "no moral judgment can be a pure statement of fact" (Berry 1986, 51). Because the normative

aspect of human nature requires a consideration of the perfect individual, we clearly see that human nature is not only descriptive (a "pure statement of fact") but also prescriptive. The ethical ought prescribes, in fact, the norm.

Before Darwin, the law of unity of type posited "a best member of each animal and plant species which represented not only the most frequently occurring type but also the essential one" (Kagan 1987, 46). Similarly, there is a strong assumption in classical theories of human nature that human nature represents the embodiment of the best in humanity. In understanding human nature through understanding the perfect being, the classical philosopher must conclude that the essence of humanity is as it is by necessity. If there are no essences, then everything that an entity is, is by accident and not by necessity (Aristotle's example of an "accident" is that man is not white by nature, because he can be other than white [Aristotle 1963, 61]). Obviously, individuals can be other than good. To avoid falling into the solipsism that good must be an accident and not a human attribute by nature, the classical philosopher must base his assessment of human nature on a perfect man.

The implications of the Platonic and the Aristotelian ways of looking at essence (which reflect the idealist and empiricist viewpoints) for feminism are developed in Chapter 4, but the most direct consequence of considering human nature as it would appear in the most perfect of the species is that essence no longer has any claims to objectivity what-soever. To describe the 'nature' of a man (or of a woman) is not mere description, but a value-judgement embedded in a moral and ethical framework. 'The most perfect man' or 'the most perfect woman' can be hypothesized and defended, but any claims as to universal acceptability of an inviolate definition have as much validity as claims to have defined 'the good life', 'beauty', 'right and wrong', 'the good' and a dozen other philosophical loci of discourse. Further, today we tend to think that such hypotheses are necessarily culturally- and chronologically-specific. Aristotle's perfect man may have been an ideal for Athens in the fifth century BC but is an implausible ideal for twentieth-century urban culture. To

define a perfect man in a universal sense depends on having in mind a notion of 'the good' that applies universally. MacIntyre (1981), from a communitarian viewpoint, does not think a viable morality can be constructed without such a universal basis and does not favour the course of leaving it up to each individual to work out for him or herself.[22] Chapter 3 demonstrates that this is a notion at odds with the modern viewpoint, from which, in Locke's words, "I decide for myself, by myself," and Chapter 5 suggests that this notion may have negative consequences for women.

Significance

The expressions 'human nature' and 'the nature of man' began to be used frequently in classical Greek writings in the late fifth century BC. In contrast to the earlier use of the word '*physis*,' or nature (in Homer, for example), these expressions convey the idea that the real inner character of an entity could differ from its appearance (Philips 1973, 571). This section draws attention to the issue of significance rather than appearance, or form, in determining the nature of entities including human beings (see Appendices II and III for a more complete discussion of significance). The awareness that there may be a disparity between the way an entity appears and its true nature was of central importance in Plato's writings because, as explained above, human beings here on earth approach the perfection of the form 'human nature' to varying degrees. Thus each individual's nature may appear to fall far short of, or in fact appear to be in opposition to, his or her true nature.

In this tradition, Plato avoids the obvious assumption that form fits function. True to his rational affinities, he considers that, for most occupations, physical appearance is irrelevant to performing the job well. A bald cobbler can do the job as well as a long-haired cobbler. Their differences are insignificant.

> We valiantly and pugnaciously insist upon the verbal truth, that different natures ought to have different pursuits, but we never considered at all what is the meaning of sameness or difference of nature, or why we distinguished them when we

assigned different pursuits to different natures and the same to the same na-
tures...We never meant when we constructed the State, that the opposition of
natures should extend to every difference, but only to those differences which
affected the pursuit in which the individual is engaged. (Plato 1977, 29)

According to Plato, in detecting natures, only those differences and samenesses
ought to be considered *significant* that affect the job being done (Appendix II further
substantiates the notion that to select an attribute of an entity as significant involves a value-
judgement and is obviously subjective). A certain nature will attract an individual to or
render the individual fit for a particular pursuit in the community or ideal city-state.
Therefore, if this pursuit and its relevant qualities are analysed, insight will be gained into
the nature of those individuals who are involved in it—thus, "the physician and carpenter
have different natures" (Plato 1977, 29). This highlights the importance of an individual's
function because that function, in a practical sense, brings into relief those natural qualities
that fit him or her for that particular function. The centrality of individuals' occupations is
absolute because they constrain "their habits, dispositions, and frames of mind" (Berry 1986,
10)—in other words, functions sustain individual natures.

Plato's task is to locate those qualities that would make it either suitable or
impossible for an individual to perform a specific function in the city—baldness is obviously
irrelevant to cobbling, in his example. An individual's nature, as stated above, is that which
is most important about that individual: to Plato, what is most important, or significant, is
the *capacity* to perform a certain function in the utopian city-state. Capacity is related to
potential. Neither capacity nor potential depends on the current state of affairs, the *status*
quo, to determine the nature of an individual. Hence, once again, the descriptive aspect of
human nature is clearly not paramount.

Aristotle picks up on the importance of function but in a far less idealized manner.
Relying for embodiments of perfection on the environment in which he lived, he was not as
free to speculate on potential capacities as was Plato. To illustrate, Plato can speak of

women as having natural capacities for traditionally male functions and as being talented and virtuous ("the temper of a guardian", "a philosopher", "has spirit", "has a turn for gymnastic and military exercises", "has a gift of healing" and so on [Plato 1977, 31]), possessing Guardian qualities, and participating in "the gifts of nature" with men. Aristotle, however, must "assess virtue according to function" (Aristotle 1962, 52) and disagree with Plato: "It is also clear that there is some variation in the ethical virtues; self-respect is not the same in a man as in a woman, nor justice, nor courage either, as Socrates thought" (Aristotle 1962, 52).

Thus, Aristotle ties female virtues to women's actual roles, rather than to their potential roles in the best of all possible worlds. An opposition is developed between the virtues of the two sexes: silence becomes a virtue in a woman, while remaining a weakness in a man (Aristotle 1962, 52). To Plato, there is one list of virtues in which both sexes could participate alike, according to the gifts of nature. As noted in Appendix II, Aristotle conceived of the divine unities as being composed of paired opposites: the complementary union of opposites, like day and night, slave and master, man and woman, created a perfect natural unity (for example, Aristotle 1963, 49).[23] Further, for Aristotle, form must fit function. He states, "Since everything else has the end as its purpose, it is in fact the shape or form that will be the cause, in the sense of its being the purpose" (Aristotle 1963, 227). In this, he followed the Pythagorean theory that "it was form in things that made them behave as they did behave, made them be what they were... Form is essence or nature" (Collingwood 1972, 55).

Hierarchy

Above, the emphasis on reason as a peculiarly human characteristic was noted. If humans are observed to operate more rationally than animals and thus obtain a place at the apex of the pyramid of species ("As man is the best of all animals when he has reached his

full development"[Aristotle 1972, 29], and Appendix III), some humans are certainly observed to operate more rationally than others.[24] Clearly, this is Plato's position: "I was thinking that, in the first place, each one of us is born somewhat different from the others" (Plato 1974, 40) and "Do you suppose some men are better than others? Or are all equal?" "They certainly aren't all equal!" (Plato 1987, 235). His Noble Lie divides human beings into three major subsections (and an underclass of slaves) of decreasing status, by nature (Plato 1974, 83). Separating humans "by nature" is an intrinsically hierarchical activity:

> For both Plato and Aristotle, the politics of domination are grounded in the facts of human nature. As we shall see, despite apparent references to a common human essence, neither Plato nor Aristotle believed in a nature shared by all humans. Rather, there are several different kinds of nature possessed by different kinds of humans...They thus assert a variety of human natures, hierarchically arranged. (Spelman 1988, 10)

This hierarchical ranking goes against the modern understanding of human nature as a 'lowest common denominator' shared by all human beings, a view that will be presented in the next chapter. In classical philosophy, human nature was the best to which individuals could aspire and depended on the category their specific type of human nature fell into. In other words, 'the best' for a slave was not necessarily 'the best' for a statesman. The underlying commonalities of 'what it means to be a human being', while recognized, were accorded less importance than the particular category of human being to which one belonged, by nature. Plato states, "Human nature seems to be more finely subdivided than this, which makes it impossible to play many roles well" (Plato 1987, 153).

As is the case with any categorization constructed on difference, there is the tendency to rank order the resulting divisions hierarchically. Plato's subsections are dramatically rank-ordered through the simile of gold, silver, and base metals. These hierarchically-ranked divisions of humanity were the genesis of the concepts 'equal' and 'unequal' and of the notion that there were appropriate functions, activities, and virtues for those in each subdivision.[25] Of particular interest is the idea that inequality is not only an

accepted fact but a moral and social necessity resulting in harmony and justice both civic and individual. This idea is supported by the following passage:

> In all things which form a composite whole and which are made up of parts, whether continuous or discrete, a distinction between the ruling and the subject element comes to light. Such a duality exists in living creatures, but not in them only; it originates in the constitution of the universe; even in things that have no life, there is a ruling principle, as in musical harmony. (Aristotle 1977, 51)

Inequality is not seen as oppressive[26] or as avoidable (given, for example, changes in social arrangements or government) but as a necessary operating principal built into "the constitution of the universe". It must not be forgotten that the classical view of human nature, particularly as revealed in Euripides's dramatic works, is essentially a tragic one in which human beings are called upon to accept the actions of the gods whether or not they understand them within the framework of human justice. To demand justice, in a play like *Prometheus Bound*, is foolishly to rail against gods who equally bless and curse, and whose will must be conformed to despite human suffering. The tragic limits of human power and the bonds and bounds imposed by their positions in the "great chain of being" are, in the classical world view, an integral and inescapable part of the responsibilities of being human.

Human beings are defined, constrained, limited, and to a large degree constituted by their particular social position: "The self becomes what it is in heroic societies only in and through its role; it is a social creation, not an individual one" (MacIntyre 1981, 122). Further, roles afford the only protection possible — individuals without roles, like strangers, outlaws, and itinerant wanderers were treated harshly. Solitude was suspect, as was any notion of personal privacy:[27]

> The person who stood apart, even if his intention was not deliberately to commit evil, was inevitably destined to do so, for his very isolation made him more vulnerable to the Enemy's attacks. No one would run such a risk who was not deviant or possessed or mad; it was commonly believed that solitary wandering was a symptom of insanity...It was a pious work to place them back in some community, regardless of what they might say, to restore them by force to that clearly ordered and well-managed world where God intended them to be... (Duby 1988, 510)

Because they had no status in terms of a defined place in the community, strangers lost their identity as human beings and thus were unprotected by natural law (MacIntyre 1981, 116-117):

> [Roles] are part of my substance, defining partially at least and sometimes wholly my obligations and my duties. Individuals inherit a particular space within an interlocking set of social relationships; lacking that space, they are nobody, or at best a stranger or an outcast. (MacIntyre 1981, 132)

Each entity in the "composite whole" operates under particular necessary restraints imposed by an impartial law of nature, and humanity is no exception. Thus Plato can make the failure to follow one's ordained social role the ultimate injustice: "Interference by the three classes with each other's jobs, and interchange of jobs between them, therefore, does the greatest harm to our state, and we are entirely justified in calling it the worst of evils" (Plato 1987, 206). While each contributor to the good of the community is seen as an important (perhaps an equal) contributor, the differences in the jobs that each performs allow each to be ranked in a hierarchy.

Notions of 'the good' require that some activities are held to be intrinsically better than others. Activities are hierarchically ranked, in the Platonic and Epicurean tradition, according to how rational or self-sufficient the pursuit. Rational activities are considered to be of a higher order than those activities involving bodily functions, the passions (Taylor 1989, 278), or dependency on other people. Activities that depend on other human beings for their fruition are intrinsically inferior to those that are self-sufficient or valuable in and of themselves (Berry 1986, 10). For example, shop-keeping, farming, and household management carry less prestige than politics and philosophy; citizenship is restricted to those who do not depend on others for their livelihood. Each individual has his or her appropriate activities, attributes, and virtues according to class (Aristotle 1977, 54). The next section addresses a central concept in classical theories of human nature—that of an individual's proper, social function in the unequal hierarchy of natures.

Function as 'Proper Purpose'

The classical notion is that entities can only be understood if they are allowed to reach their fulfilment or *telos*: in other words, the "essence of a thing, what it is for a thing to be what it is" needs to be understood in terms of "the purpose of a thing and its good" (Aristotle 1963, 45). It is this proper purpose that Aristotle terms "the end or final cause," and ties to the process of ordering (Bambrough 1963, 207-208; Aristotle 1963, 213, 225). Spelman confirms this interpretation: "All things, including human beings, are defined by their special function—that which nature intended them and their kind alone to do well" (Spelman 1988, 39). In the context of community life, "each thing [is fashioned by nature] for a single use" (Aristotle 1977, 49). In Plato's words, "the function of each thing is to do that which it alone can perform, or perform better than anything else could" (Plato 1974, 26). The purpose of a knife, for example, is to cut. Thus, a letter-opener and a knife may have a similar form, but their natures are different because one's purpose is opening letters and the other's purpose is cutting or stabbing. A letter-opener may also be used for homicidal purposes, but this would be unnatural—against its nature and proper purpose. In analysing a thing's nature, its one true purpose must be isolated. Nature and purpose are reciprocals of one another:

> [Aristotle] identif[ies] nature and purpose in such a sense that to study one is to come to understand the other: If we rightly understand the nature of man, we shall rightly conceive the end for man. This intimate connection between nature and end or purpose is itself one of the links connecting the various departments of Aristotle's philosophy. (Bambrough 1963, 27-28)

The connection between nature and purpose in classical philosophy is further supported by Aristotle: "Nature is an end and a purpose; for the case of things that are in continuous motion and have an end, this end is their purpose" (Aristotle 1963, 213) and "There is purpose in things that come to be and exist by nature" (Aristotle 1963, 225) .

Plato viewed the analysis of an individual's nature as more of an exercise in speculation on potential or capacity, whereas, in the Aristotelian vision of purpose, form must fit function and the *status quo* is the source for detecting proper purpose. However, both philosophers agree that, for human beings, the purpose or function referred to is determined by the external context of communal life. In other words, it is not an internal or personal contemporary purpose like self-development nor a religious purpose like salvation.

The notion of function or 'use' implies a user—every individual in the community of the *polis* is not simply useful in a general sense but has one particular (proper, true, or appropriate) use to which he or she is suited by nature. Clearly, as Plato describes the genesis of the city, the purpose of individuals is to serve the collectivity, thus furthering the harmonious order of the cosmos. The value of the individual lay in his or her relationship to the entire natural order and individuals were important insofar as they fulfilled their appointed function and occupied their proper place in the hierarchy of nature. Man *qua* individual man is not a concept at the nucleus of the classical perspective:

> The history of philosophy only gradually became interested in man. In antiquity, the primary object of philosophical interest was the cosmos... Only during the fourteenth century did philosophers noticeably focus on man as a knowing subject... (Krapiec 1985, 365)

That the classical notion of function implies a locus of control external to the individual suggests the importance of the community in the classical world view. In every whole, there is a ruler and there are those who are ruled (Aristotle 1977, 51). Every class is ruled by the class above it, and there are explicitly-defined meshed privileges, responsibilities and obligations extending in both directions—from the ruled to the rulers and from the rulers to the ruled. Hence, each individual in the *polis* has a responsibility to the community, reflected in his or her obligations to those higher in status and duties or responsibilities to those lower in status:

For the given rules which assign men their place in the social order and with it their identity also prescribe what they owe and what is owed to them and how they are to be treated and regarded if they fail and how they are to treat and regard others if those others fail. (MacIntyre 1981, 116)

Similarly, unequal status meant that privileges and power were allocated unequally within the community, and without necessary injustice. This is the situation that epitomized social arrangements in the West throughout the feudal Middle Ages (and which Marx in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* characterized as "idyllic" [Marx and Engels 1968, 37] for reasons discussed subsequently) and after as a counterpoint to or critique of liberal democratic principals. The 'functionality' or harmonious operation of the city-state was of primary importance—the happiness and fulfilment of individuals ought to lie in their appropriate conformity to the ruling principle of order that originated in the very constitution of the universe and found expression through the community (Aristotle 1977, 51).

Particular excellence in terms of function necessitates specialization (Plato 1987, 119). The organization of entities on "the basis of a division of labour among... variously specialized members" is the premise of science and political theory alike (Halle 1977, 127). According to McMillan, "The reason for such a division is that it facilitates greater efficiency and economy of production, a consequence of which is the segregation of people into different groups" (McMillan 1982, 119).[28] For human beings, this function or, more precisely, proper purpose is understood to be a particular social role or occupation: "Each one of us is born somewhat different from the others, one more apt for one task, one for another" (Plato 1974, 40). Specialization in one's proper purpose leads to personal excellence (Plato 1974, 65; Aristotle 1963, 293) and to a just city (Plato 1974, 99); thus, "Everyone must pursue one occupation of those in the city, that for which his nature best fitted him" (Plato 1974, 98). Above, we have seen that human nature in classical philosophy was defined in a way that allowed individuals to be grouped into substrata based on a

hierarchy (Taylor 1989, 279) of fitness for particular social tasks. The underlying commonalities of *human* nature were not seen as valuable or bestowing benefits on individuals; indeed, until the Enlightenment (as suggested in Chapter 3), it was commonly accepted that any universal human nature that applied to all members of the genus *homo sapiens* was of more meagre import except, possibly, in theology where all men were equally humbled before God, than an individual's nature as reflected in his or her social position or role.

Kosmos: Hierarchy, Proper Purpose and
Teleologically-Ordered Structure

The notion that the cosmos has a rational, discernable structure in which each entity has its own proper purpose (function) and perfection (end) is the ideological basis of teleology. The notion of *telos*, the particular excellence of each entity toward which it moves, was presented earlier in this chapter. The ordered structure of the universe was deduced from such things as the cyclical changing of seasons and the predictability of these cyclical changes (Collingwood 1972, 12). To this day, the conviction is that we inhabit an ordered universe or, from the modern Kantian perspective, that we order our universe simply by being rational entities within it: for example,

> All man's basic science, all his artistic creation, even his social and political philosophy, have in their development been directed at the progressive realization, through comprehension, of a single logical order conceived as representing one universal realm of being in its ultimate reality...All thought is necessarily based on the premise that being is to be equated with an order of some sort. (Halle 1977, 87 and 91)

The building blocks of the teleological universe are order (*kosmos*), hierarchy, and proper purpose. The previous section discussed hierarchy and proper purpose; this section demonstrates how these concepts sustain the ordered universe of the classical framework.

Each of the four concepts—order, hierarchy, proper purpose, and teleology—is related to human nature, as suggested above.[29]

The use of the adjectives 'natural' and 'unnatural' implies a universe in which a sense of proper purpose is present—in other words, it implies a teleological conception of the universe. If unnatural acts are unquestionably bad, natural acts must be good. Like nature itself, whatever is deemed "natural" acquires an authority of permanence and ubiquitousness. What is natural is inherent in humanity the world over and cannot be done away with without dire consequences. Therefore, what is natural must be encouraged, protected, and cultivated. Natural roles and actions are suitable, appropriate—the opposite of perverse. Natural behaviour is "bred in the bone and must out in the flesh". If unnatural implies perversion, natural must imply that objects or actions are fulfilling their true, suitable, fitting, appropriate, proper purpose—as ordained by nature in the interests of achieving cosmic and civic harmony. Thus Plato has Socrates say, "Each element within [the just individual] is performing its proper function" (Plato 1987, 220). Harmony is a particular type of order that expresses beauty, tranquillity, and perfection in its design. Related to the art of music and to the sciences of mathematics and astrology, harmony is a metaphor characteristic of the classical theory of human nature.

According to Plato, "People will lead the best and most flourishing lives of which they are capable, and the state will be the best and the happiest possible state, if each person fulfils his or her 'natural' role" (Spelman 1988, 20). This 'natural' role refers to each person's true, suitable, fitting, appropriate, or proper purpose in the order of things. In other words, to make any sense whatsoever[30] of Plato's reference to nature in this context, a teleological cosmos and a teleological definition of nature must be assumed. Aristotle confirms this: "For whatever is the end-product of the perfecting process of any object, that we call its nature...Moreover the aim and the end can only be that which is best, perfection..." (Aristotle 1972, 28).

Thus, short of calling someone 'a natural' in the Shakespearean sense, the adjective natural implies approval because an act or object is believed to be fulfilling its proper purpose ('natural food', 'natural athlete', 'breastfeeding is natural'). At a more complex level, 'natural' connotes a rational, reasonable appeal to a teleological vision of the cosmos that implies an external design and purpose, operating independently of but in harmony with ideal social conventions and legal institutions.

The more natural one becomes, the closer one will be to these positive values and the nearer the fit between what was intended ("the way things were supposed to be") and the reality. Again, the teleological foundation of the concept of nature is striking. The adjective 'natural' places an intrinsic value on the ordered totality of the putative untouched, uneducated, uncivilized world—this aspect of classical philosophy appears in Aristotle's harmonious cosmography but reached its apotheosis in the Romantic and Deist movements of the eighteenth century, perhaps as a reaction against the advent of the modern *zeitgeist*. The further humanity moves into a mannered, over-refined, artificial (and by contemporary extension, technological) form of existence, the further he moves from what he was properly meant to be. Thus Nature, understood teleologically (rather than in the contemporary sense of Richards, Berry, and Hospers), has *everything* to do with the way we live our lives; it functions as a touchstone for right action and provides an overall design and social purpose accessible through the exercise of reason.

Western society at the end of the twentieth century has largely abandoned the notion of a cosmos in which personal fulfilment may be found in obeying and conforming to one's particular position in the natural order of society. The pre-Darwinian responsibility to "choose between morally proper and improper behavior" (Kagan 1989, 8) in terms of acting appropriately, has largely been substituted by noncognitive predispositions given free rein. Yet the notion of an ordered universe mirrored in a community in which each entity plays its appointed part is pervasive in philosophy and continues to characterize twentieth-century

science. The philosopher of science, Halle, gives a Kantian interpretation of the necessity to impose order as an inescapable attribute of the human mind: "All thought is necessarily based on the premise that being is to be equated with order of some sort" (Halle 1977, 91). That most twentieth-century individuals refuse to accept fulfilment as other-determined may, in the eyes of such communitarian scholars as MacIntyre, Illich, and McMillan, represent nothing more than the mere substitution of personal egotism, selfishness, and social chaos for conformity to a sex-imposed role in the name of social order. Indeed, as will be suggested in subsequent chapters, the desire to repudiate liberal individualism and return to an idealized organic society in the classical mode is a powerful component of the communitarian elements of cultural feminist theory.

The ordered universe requires laws to sustain it for, if phenomena occur in patterns that may be predicted there must be some causal agency that is being obeyed. These postulated causal agencies are labelled 'laws'. The traditional scientific position is that matter is arranged in an orderly fashion and follows laws (either absolute laws or statistical-probability laws). If the behaviour of an entity seems random, it only seems so because the pertinent laws have not been discovered or correctly interpreted.[31] The next chapter presents a more detailed examination of natural law. Yet human social arrangements, although pat-terned, are not 'natural' in the biological sense of genetic determinism. Halle gives the example of bees who, if removed to a location remote from their hive, would replicate the original hive and apian social arrangements exactly (1977, 296). The design of apian society is hard-wired in the DNA of each individual bee. Human social arrangements, on the other hand, are not genetically determined but imagined—constantly re-invented and renegotiated.

According to Halle, the imagined order that replaced the genetic (DNA-pro-grammed) order in higher animals began as myth, in which order was brought out of chaos, and must always be founded on ideology rather than nature (Halle 1977, 353). Chaos is that primordial abyss (the Greek root of *chaos*) in which confusion and chance occurrences hold

sway. It is a state of lawlessness, for there is no sense of design or purpose into which entities may fit—all is undifferentiated and governed only by chance. The desire to impose order on chaos seems to be fundamental to the human mind:[32] "We get the impression that mind seeks order for its own sake rather than for the sake of some practical advantage associated with it. Not only is it moved to seek order in nature, it imagines order beyond what it is able to find in nature" (Halle 1977, 272). Further, "All man's basic science, all his artistic creation, even his social and political philosophy, have in their development been directed at the progressive realization, through comprehension, of a single logical order conceived as representing one universal realm of being in its ultimate reality" (Halle 1977, 87).

From this perspective, the human conviction that there *is* order in the cosmos leads to the notions that things are as they are for a reason; that the existing configuration is as it is of necessity; and that the grand design of the universe exemplifies rational perfection. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, God *ordered* the world with man as its ruler (Genesis 1:26). Basic to the teleological proof of God is the observable perfection of the natural order (Hospers 1956, 343-344). Because the universe works so well, it seems to be governed not by chance but by an intentional order in which each element has its own purpose. From the lowest creatures to the structure of the universe, entities could be divided into functional parts that were plainly seen to directly contribute to the successful functioning of the whole. The classical vision is predominantly an organic one.

The Deist slant on the classical definition of nature incorporated God into the teleological goal of the universe by proposing a divine architect or watchmaker God, and depicting "the world in its final perfection as conceived by its creator and effected by his laws" (Mayr 19xx, 123). Classical in their belief that the natural order works because the natures of individual entities entail their own unique purposes, the Deists placed new emphasis on the *mesh* between these purposes while, to a great extent, rejecting conformity

to social position in favour of self-development: "The purposes sought by each, of the causal functions which each one exercises, interlock with the others so as to cohere into a harmonious whole. Each in serving itself serves the entire order"(Taylor 1989, 275).

Although Locke disagreed with the notion of *homo sapiens* as the highest species (he thought there might be intelligent "spirits" above us [Locke 1954, 67]), he echoes the traditional classical vision of cosmographical design that we encounter in Plato and Aristotle: "And when we consider the infinite power and wisdom of the Maker, we have reason to think that it is suitable to the magnificent harmony of the universe, and the great design and infinite goodness of the Architect" (Locke 1954, 68).

It is in the conviction that each entity has its proper purpose in the "great design" that the natures of each entity become normative and prescriptive (for example, "What is, is good, and no general law can be bad" [Rousseau 1974, 334]). In departing from one's own true nature, one sabotages the design of the entire cosmos and damages the mesh between one's own nature and the natures of other entities: Plato equates minding one's proper business with justice (Plato 1987, 204) and the failure to do so with injustice (Plato 1987, 206). Normative thinking represents order and security; human beings legitimate the norm by invoking "what is proper and what is improper in terms of what God or nature intended" (Halle 1977, 299).

True and mature happiness for individuals means understanding one's place in the interlocking design of the universe and "finding one's highest satisfaction in furthering the design" (Taylor 1989, 281). It is appropriate, in this view, that the individual will be subordinate to the collective will. Again, this provides a dramatic contrast to contemporary North American notions of happiness as self-fulfilment through self-determination. The pre-eminence of "what is proper and what is improper" over individual autonomy is predicated on a belief in proper purpose. But, in the contemporary world, reason is not understood as it once was, when it was "defined in terms of a vision of order in the cosmos" (Taylor 1989,

21) nor is fulfilment understood as suppressing or transcending one's own freedom and will to conform to one's place in the ordered cosmos. I will return to these themes in my discussion of 'woman's nature'.

To summarize, classical cosmography presents the universe as an interrelated functional network working toward a harmonious goal that is accessible to reason. Each entity, including *homo sapiens sapiens*, has one proper purpose within the community that is a direct function of its particular nature. In other words, the ordered universe is predicated upon the particular *natures* of each entity within it. Indeed, classical cosmography requires a hierarchy of particular natures, each characterized by one proper purpose, to sustain its notion of order. Hence it is difficult, if not incoherent, to engage in a dialogue of particular natures without concurrently invoking other elements of the classical framework. Particularly, natures cannot be separated from notions of hierarchical ranking, function, the value of the status quo, perfection of the entity, and subsumption of the 'self'[33] into the larger category of one's fixed social role. Perhaps less obviously, as discussed in this chapter, a consideration of natures is associated with the concatenation of description and prescription (the notion that 'ought' can be derived from 'is') and the notion of a universal 'good' that applies to everyone.

As stated above, the classical framework is one in which there are several hierarchically-ranked human natures. Each nature represents the perfection of that individual, such that the perfection of a slave nature will not be the same as the perfection of a free citizen and the perfection of the ruler will not be the perfection of the ruled. Allen points out that the teachings of Aristotle took pre-eminence over those of Plato (Allen 1985) and, consequently, form was tied to function and the search for perfection was restricted to this present world of empirical data. Individuals are seen as members of categories, according to their natures, possessing appropriate and discrete virtues, traits, behaviours, and social roles

that are realized to varying degrees depending on the individual. People can be understood and correctly governed if it is known to which category they belong.

Within this hierarchy, reason suggests that the collectivity has priority over the individual. Certainly the locus of control is not within the individual in the sense of freedom to determine one's own place in the social order. Such an arrangement would lead to chaos, and according to Plato, finally to a state impossible to rule and destined for tyranny. Ultimate control resides in the state as a microcosm (or 'micro-*kosmos*') of the universal design, even insofar as private lives were concerned. Until the French Revolution, according to Fox-Genovese, the state had absolute and divine authority over the individual (Fox-Genovese 1991, 58-59). One's status was fixed at birth and it was one's honour, dignity, and duty to conform to it—thus, "Political roles in classical Athens must be considered in terms of duties rather than rights. Obligations to family and state were the strongest compulsion in the lives of citizens" (Pomeroy 1975, 60). Whether this duty is seen as oppressive is largely irrelevant because the ends, in terms of cosmic harmony, clearly justify the means.

The priority of the community over the individual is absolutely central to the classical *weltanschauung*. Humanity can survive without society but, without society, it cannot achieve its *arete*. Humanity's true nature is that of *zoon politikon*. Plato clearly believed that the rational city-state would be all-powerful, that there would remain no area of 'private' life untouched by state intervention (for example, Guardian children would be born and communally raised as the result of a program of eugenics resulting from the state regulation of the most intimate and private human sexual and reproductive functions). Individuals were seen as interdependent members of a single body, as illustrated by the organic metaphors 'a corporate body' and 'the body politic.' To speak of an individual's nature without reference to his or her proper place in society was a logical impossibility.

The state was the instrument of the inescapable maintenance of social order because collective solutions must, logically, be government solutions (McElroy 1982, 20). The state and public institutions became difficult to change and "comparatively inflexible" when it came to supporting the *status quo* (Miller 1967, 52). Because the nature of the individual served the needs of the entire community, natures were not only at odds with personal freedom and self-determination but were sustained by a completely different conceptual and cosmographical category. In Burke's words, "Individuals pass like shadows; but the commonwealth is fixed and stable" (1780 *Speech on Economic Reform* quoted in Lukes 1973, 3). The absolute priority of state over individual could only receive rational assent if the individual was seen in terms of his or her nature, or proper purpose, within the collectivity. Talk of 'natures', whether male natures, female natures, slave natures, homosexual natures, or black natures, exists within the classical purview. There are consequences to espousing the notion that particular subdivisions of humanity have separate and distinct natures. The consequences for women will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Further, the state use of force and oppression in the interests of preserving order were justified (for example, through Aristotle's discussion of slavery) because, in the absence of one genetically-determined (bee-like) conceptualization of the common good, individual conformity to the *most rational* working-out of the common good must be subordinated to the larger design. If a particular conception of 'the good' is defined as being the good for all, much in the way that it was for Plato in *The Republic* and Skinner in *Walden II*, a perfect society can be designed around that good. Thus those whose natures, through an inferior level of rationality (slaves or women, for example), did not allow them to fully participate in the larger design and fully grasp the larger good had to be forced, coerced, or otherwise manipulated into accepting their place in the social order. The state had absolute, even divine, authority to support the claims of the group order (Fox-Genovese 1991, 59).

Collective definitions of 'the good' may more realistically seem to be definitions of the good congenial to whichever particular interest group at the top of the hierarchical ladder that is formulating the definition. The liberal feminist Okin states that, "The implications of most communitarian arguments are reactionary and inegalitarian" (Okin 1989, 42 and 41-73) and critiques MacIntyre and the cultural feminists ("who have come to look on communitarianism as an ally in their struggle against what they see as a masculinist abstraction and emphasis on justice, impartiality, and universality" [Okin 1989, 43]) on much the same basis. If we cannot say, or avoid saying, what the good is for all individuals (or even for *any* individual except ourself), there is no possibility of that type of totalitarian state that Plato, Skinner, or Hitler describes. *Webster's* provides a common-usage definition of 'totalitarianism' as follows:

> Of or relating to centralized control by an autocratic leader or hierarchy; of or relating to a political regime based on subordination of the individual to the state and strict control of all aspects of the life and productive capacity of the nation esp. by coercive measures (as censorship and terrorism).

In other words, in a totalitarian state the collectivity is more important than the individual and there is no area of private life unregulated by the state; the cultural feminist wish to dissolve the liberal public/private distinction (for example, "Today many feminists are repudiating the distinction between the public and private spheres" [Fox-Genovese 1991, 19-20]) may seem somewhat naïve in this light (according to Frazer and Lacey, this stance "seems to commit feminism to the view that there are no moral limits on proper state action" [Frazer and Lacey 1993, 73]). Philosophically, there are decided implications to the classical position that, "The state or collectivity is prior to the individual" and decided implications to the liberal position that, "The individual is prior to the state or collectivity." Thus Bell can suggest that it may be appropriate for governments to take steps to ensure an end to *anomie*, despite "liberalism's absurd and counter-intuitive restrictions on the legitimate functions of government." He also suggests making divorce "a more time-

consuming procedure." Because "family life is a good worthy of our allegiance," divorce must be condemned as a vice *per se* (Bell 1993, 12-13).

As stated in the introduction to this chapter, the central tenets of the classical *weltanschauung* described above survive in contemporary political and feminist thought and are today subsumed in communitarianism. Miller describes, in an historical context, communitarian systems as conformist, downplaying self-expression, tradition-bound, and closed (organized in terms of a class or caste system; one's membership in a particular caste was determined from birth and remained fixed, with few exceptions, throughout the lifespan [Fox-Genovese 1991, 61]). He calls communitarianism, "A tribal self in which the group is higher than the individual and is logically prior to the individual" (Miller 1967, 80). In the communitarian society, "Society becomes like a great organism, every part performing a fixed function with no desire on the part of the 'foot' to become a 'heart', or the heart to become a 'head' (Miller 1967, 149)

There is a subtle sense of determinism, in that social roles are predicated on one's nature at birth. To know a person's social role is, in a real sense, to know that person. The emphasis for individuals is on self-discipline and self-control through the internalization of the most perfect models of one's particular type of nature, and on one's responsibilities and obligations to those above and below in the hierarchy of social roles. Bantock points out that "highly wrought socialization based on imitation" is held to improve on nature by following the best models, according to the Renaissance humanist Castiglione (Bantock 1989, 79). Thus, "self-regulation through reason" may be achieved (Bantock 1989, 87). In Burke's words: "Society requires [that] the inclinations of men should frequently be thwarted, their will controlled, and their passions brought into subjection" (in Lukes 1973, 4). This other-directedness in society's interest is linked, through Plato, to shared possession and the communist virtues (to Marx, "the right of man to property... is the right of

of selfishness" [McLellan 1977, 51]). In a more conservative or moderate form, it leads to the importance of charity (*caritas* or caring) and a sense of *noblesse oblige*.

In addition, the classical viewpoint gives priority to rationality (the cosmic order and the perfection of humanity were accessible to reason through Aristotelian observation and Platonic thought-experiment), abstraction, universality, generalizability (what was specific to individuals could be universalized and generalized, allowing natural laws to be formulated that would permit the accurate prediction of behaviour [Krieger 1989][this point will be taken up in Chapter 3, the section on Natural Law]), essentialism (the notion that each entity is defined in terms of its most perfect example), and necessity (since the grand design epitomized perfection, things are the way they are of necessity and could properly be no other way).

In this chapter, I have described how essentialism, contextualism, determinism, prescriptivism, and structural/functionalism (particularly in the sense of the primacy of order) are derived from the classical world view. Chapters 4 through 8 will examine these classical elements as they affect women. Cultural feminism, I suggest, anchors its most basic understanding of woman as a category in concepts and modes of thought that are actually patriarchal. Before beginning this argument, however, I will present the basic ideological elements underlying the modern worldview (and liberal feminism), in order to complete my examination of the background and origins of contemporary feminist theories. The modern world view requires a reconceptualization of the self and society. This reconceptualization provides a philosophical and ideological basis for liberal feminism, and is rigourously critiqued — indeed repudiated — by cultural feminism today, from a communitarian standpoint. In order to understand the liberal feminist viewpoint that is being repudiated, it is important to remind women what liberal individualism stands for; hence the delineation in the next chapter (see Chapter 6 for the discussion of cultural feminist criticisms of liberal feminism).

ENDNOTES

1. I take issue with Frazer and Lacey's suggestion that communitarian theory rejects structuralism (Frazer and Lacey 1993, 3). The functionalism embedded in communitarian notions of what they term "value communitarianism" ("the commitment to collective values, public culture and a concern with the collective aspects of human life") is predicated on the notion that "individual behaviour and action are determined by structures and forces which are not easily observable." Further, what Frazer and Lacey call "social constructionism" is intimately involved with structuralism (despite some tricky word-play on pages 167-181, they seem to acknowledge this association on page 172: "Even on this very simplified characterisation of structuralist developments in social theory, we can see the links between the structuralist reaction to empiricism and the communitarian reaction to liberalism's focus on individual agency at the expense of social structure").

2. This original classical framework was revitalized and somewhat modified during the Enlightenment, particularly by Rousseau, in accord with Deist principals.

3. As Taylor (1989) seems to imply, theories of human nature predate and, in a sense, prefigure modern theories of the self.

4. Like 'human nature', this term 'ideology' is used frequently but seldom defined. A sociological term, it is thought to have originated with Karl Marx. Its textbook definition is as follows:

> [An ideology is]...a pattern of ideas that justifies and helps preserve a social system. This defensive and justifying function usually follows if a doctrine successfully formulates a group perspective. Even if an ideology includes reformist or revolutionary ideas, it is usually self-justifying from the standpoint of the group that accepts it. (Broom and Selznick 1970, 256).

The above description echoes the description of theories of human nature as "closed" and "self-referential systems" offered by Stevenson (1987, 12, 22). The self-referential aspect of ideology is perhaps its darker aspect, and makes it vulnerable to a Marxist analysis. It is possible that an ideology may be used in less than straightforward ways to mask the machinations of those in power ("In Marxist thought ideology is usually conceived as a form of mystification" [Sarup 1989, 85]) or to coopt those in a subservient position such that they willingly cooperate in their own subordination.

The foundation of a political, economic, or religious system is a usually unstated belief in a specific nature of humanity that underlines the focal points of *all* theories of human nature as giving meaning to life, being action-oriented (prescriptive), and applying limitations (in terms of realistic goals)(Stevenson 1987, 7; and the discussion in Appendices II and III). Theories of human nature, therefore, address vital problems at the very heart of human existence: "The meaning and purpose of human life, what we ought to do, and what we can hope to achieve—all these are fundamentally affected by whatever we think is the 'real' or 'true' nature of man" (Stevenson 1977, 3).

The central rationalizations for particular social solutions to these pivotal issues are, in this thesis, termed ideologies. This is a particular use of the term that recognizes that the concept 'ideology' has been used pejoratively, yet seeks to minimize this use by pointing out the function of ideologies in maintaining viable ways of living within an ordered and harmonious society. The central rationalizations for particular social solutions may or may not be true, but there is no necessity that they be false, either in common usage or according to the jargon of academic specializations. Without negative connotations, it is possible to speak of a democratic ideology, a particular religious ideology, a socialist ideology, an educational ideology, a feminist ideology, and so on. The negative connotations of the word may be derived from Marxist theory, which presents ideology as "subject only to [its] own laws" (Engels 1968, 628) and suggests that mere human invention is presented as truth in order to subdue and pacify those who lack power. In support of the notion that ideology is a value-neutral term, *Webster's* gives a common usage definition that does not include obvious negative characteristics: "Ideology 1: visionary theorizing 2a: a systematic body of concepts esp. About human life or culture b: a manner or the content of thinking characteristic of an individual, group, or culture c: the integrated assertions, theories, and aims that constitute a sociopolitical program." Similarly, in a more academic or specialized context, *A Dictionary of the Social Sciences* and *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* describe ideology as follows: "[Ideology] did not begin as a term of abuse, and in current usage it often so far escapes any implications of exposé or denunciation that it embraces any subjectively coherent set of political ideas" (Edwards 1967, Vol. 3 124) and "Ideology is a pattern of beliefs and concepts (both factual and normative) which purports to explain complex social phenomena with a view to directing and simplifying sociopolitical choices facing individuals and groups" (Gould and Kolb 1964). In truth, there are fundamental

elements of human life that simply cannot be proven but remain at the level of cognitive analysis, belief, or faith. Something accepted on faith is considered to be removed from direct sensory perception and communicated to one by a third party. If I see something myself, I do not commonly need to accept its existence or 'truth' by faith. Belief and faith are often considered to mean that an individual accepts the validity of something on someone else's word. In other words, the individual does not rely on his or her direct perception of something, but on the perception and cognitive interpretation of the thing by someone she or he deems trustworthy.

It is not necessary, nor even productive, to espouse the Marxist notion that ideologies are simply an invention of those in power that are foisted onto the unsuspecting masses. Rather ideologies are embraced by many as a useful framework within which to regulate and understand their own actions and the actions of others. One does not need scientific proof to bolster the conviction that an ideology is true, though selected studies may confirm what one already 'knows' to be true. As Eliade pointed out, even primitive humanity needed to associate actions with a larger explanatory framework for them to have meaning (Eliade 1959, 5-6). Because our own motive forces elude perception and clear understanding, we turn to ideological frameworks to make sense of our world and our actions therein. Even a Marxist interpretation of ideology concedes that "real motive forces" are elusive: "Ideology is a process accomplished by the so-called thinker consciously, it is true, but with a false consciousness. The real motive forces impelling him remain unknown to him; otherwise it simply would not be an ideological process. Hence he imagines false or seeming motive forces..." (Engels 1968, 700).

Theories of the nature of humanity are implicit in ideologies though seldom made manifest. For example, indispensable to the notion that we live in a meritocracy is the conviction that we are born equal and that good jobs go to those who work hardest. With reference to this dissertation, liberal feminism conceals one common human nature that is the foundation of liberal individualism behind its rhetoric; Marxism would not work if human nature were not dependent on the collectivity; much social science makes sense only if a causally-determined nature of humanity renders problematic the potency of free will and human agency. Interestingly, ideologies are also implicit in theories of human nature. Kagan gives the example of 'play', a concept he theorizes has more to do with Western ideological concerns for personal liberty than to consistent patterns of observed behaviour (Kagan 1989, 78).

As mentioned briefly above, and discussed more fully in Appendices II and III, theories of human nature are not merely abstractions but pragmatic imperatives, or calls to action. They stir the imagination and call up a visceral response. Stevenson (1977) and Ryan (1973) link all theories of human nature to the idea of action—that something must be done—and to ideology: "Our images of human nature are centrally important ideological phenomena [which]... incorporate the validating assumptions of those imperatives. The assumption that these imperatives... have their roots in 'human nature' is one main condition of their very intelligibility" (Ryan 1973, 3). By "incorporate the validating assumptions of those imperatives," Ryan means that ideologies are self-referential systems, or "closed systems" to use Stevenson's phrase (Stevenson 1987, 15). Thus all questions about a particular theory of the nature of humanity can be answered only by reference to that same theory. For example, if those who believe in meritocracy are asked why so few poor children of colour become members of parliament or doctors, they might respond that poor children of colour aren't, by nature, interested in studying and working hard enough to succeed at school, or that they are born with low IQs.

No matter that they appeal to science for support, ideologies, like religions, require a leap of faith. Ideologies have to do with values and beliefs: They do not *require* a scientific foundation, though they may benefit from one in this era that holds science in high esteem. Thus Stevenson can say, "Some controversial statements about human nature may not be held as scientifically testable hypotheses at all" (Stevenson 1987, 22).

In the best sense, then, ideologies carry with them norms, values, and a whole cohesive set of moral standards espoused by the group sharing that perspective. Theories of human nature are a potent ideological tool, and all ideological tools possess a form of authority over individuals. My own position is not the Durkheimian one, which emphasizes the value of conformity to social norms. The authority referred to here is one which is acted against as well as acted in accord with. In other words, the authority of social norms may be as potent in incurring a non-conforming reaction as when internalized and acted upon. The possibility of associating cultural feminism and the early sociological movement engendered by Durkheim's classical, communitarian philosophy is interesting for the point of view of this thesis, but regretfully I have not included my research and conclusions in this area because the length of this dissertation is already unmanageable.

Feminism itself is characterized as an ideology by Richards (Richards 1980, 14-16), yet, few feminists define their use of 'ideology'. Eisenstein is an exception and is quoted at length because she cogently recapitulates the rather

nebulous points above. However, it must be borne in mind that her interpretation, although useful in the present context, has a Marxist slant and presents a negative view of ideologies as deliberate falsifications:

'Ideology' is defined here as a set of ideas that help mystify reality. It has this potency because it reflects enough of reality to appear persuasive. Because ideological statements are always partially true, they cannot be dismissed as utterly false but need to be understood in terms of the way they mystify the real relations of social power by presenting only parts of them, which become distorted in their piecemeal form. To the extent that ideology seems to describe some part of one's life correctly, it can pressure, direct, and affect people. 'Ideology is not effective or credible unless it achieves resonance with people's experience' (Eisenstein 1993, 10).

In the interests of clarity, the following descriptive characteristics of an ideology are correlated to theories of human nature: first, ideologies are affiliated with a description of human nature that is realistic but skewed in a particular direction or incomplete; second, ideologies are self-referential (that is to say that questions posed to a particular ideology may be answered only within the frame of that particular ideology—thus they require an appeal to dogma); third, ideologies are beliefs that do not require scientific proof to be useful and effective; fourth, ideologies justify and preserve particular social systems and institutions (such as capitalism, socialism, religion, democracy, the school system, and so on) through group norms, values, and moral standards; fifth, from a Marxist viewpoint, ideologies mystify reality by hiding power and domination behind a screen of false consciousness that coopts subordinates in their own oppression, using the tool of opposites to force unrealistic choices by depicting the world in black and white (evil bourgeois/virtuous proletariat, benevolent liberal/malevolent communist, damned/saved, and so on).

What, then, is the relationship between theories of human nature and ideology? First, according to the above description, theories of human nature and ideology are linked. Stevenson goes so far as equating them, as quoted above:

A system of belief about the nature of man which is thus [in a positive, dynamic, living way] held by some

group of people as giving rise to their way of life is standardly called an 'ideology'" (Stevenson 1987, 9).

This connection (which could even be termed a 'co-dependence') does not rest on this research alone as it is strongly supported from both a liberal and a Marxist perspective by Berry (1986), Eisenstein (1993), and Richards (1980), as well as Stevenson (1987). This is, of course, a function of the fact that an underlying, hidden basis for virtually all human activities can be posited and labelled an ideology—but, regardless, it is not too farfetched to imagine that one might reconstruct a theory of human nature from virtually any piece of writing (including fiction), institution, social arrangement, and so on.

Appendix II outlined the difficulties in thinking of a nature as something that exists 'out there' in 'reality', that can readily be apprehended scientifically. However, even if it were a straightforward matter of proving a certain theory of human nature scientifically, it must be remembered that there is an ideology of science itself that, depending on one's interpretation, can support or call into question the relationship of fact to data. By an ideology of science, it is meant that much of what science presents as fact is, rather, belief (for example, value-free research remains an elusive goal rather than standard practice). It ought not to be thought that communal human living can be accomplished without ideology. It seems quite likely that ideologies are a necessary part of social life. From this viewpoint, then, labelling human nature an ideological construct can be in no sense pejorative since all that this implies is that there are hidden motives for virtually all human behaviours.

Second, ideologies are self-referential. One of the consequences of this self-referential aspect is that ideologies are extremely difficult to disprove because objections are always answered in terms of that particular ideology. Theories of human nature are similarly difficult to disprove and they can also be considered to be closed systems (Stevenson 1987, 13-22).

Further, with reference to the third point above, because there are moral judgements, value judgements, and judgements of significance deeply embedded in theories of human nature, theories of human nature are not primarily amenable to scientific proof. How, for example, would one prove a belief at the foundation of most theories of human nature—that human life is inherently valuable? This belief cannot rest on mere description of the world around us. Empirical science can easily point to contrary evidence (abortion, euthanasia, and war, for example) to show that the taking of human life is sanctioned. The *value*, above the word 'significance' was used, of something cannot be proved scientifically.

Theories of human nature seem to fit the description of being beliefs held by interest groups. If a belief is "ill-founded", our scientific ideology would suggest that the belief is not grounded in fact, as expressed scientifically. Theories of human nature have a component that is not amenable to scientific proof derived directly from empirical evidence. The representative quotations with which Appendix II began state that all men seek knowledge by nature

(Aristotle), and that human nature is expressed through sympathy and fellow-feeling (Arnold). Obviously, scientific proof of these theories of human nature is a logical absurdity. Even if no evidence of knowledge-seeking or fellow-feeling were to be found, believers would respond that the testing methods were imperfect, that the subjects were acting against nature, that researchers were looking in the wrong places, or that a false interpretation was read into on the subjects' actions. Lack of scientific proof would not shake the believers' faith in their vision of human nature. To hold a belief so tenaciously, one must have vested interests. Arnold and Aristotle, quoted in Appendix II, had vested interests in that they held to a particular view of human nature as a call to action and wished to implement certain moral or social arrangements vis-à-vis such conceptions as 'the good life', for example, congruent with their own views of human nature. Thus with reference to the third point above, it appears as though theories of human nature do not require scientific proof to be useful and effective and hence do, in this way, correspond to ideologies.

Fourth, theories of human nature have plainly been used to justify and preserve social systems and institutions. Theories of human nature underlie and can readily be extrapolated from 'the facts' of capitalism, Marxism, totalitarianism, the educational system, Christianity, democracy, and so on. In this way, the concept 'human nature' clearly serves ideology.

Finally, there is reference in point five above to the use of opposites as a tool of ideologies. In a fairly contemporary context, according to Sarup's interpretation, Derrida says, "Binary oppositions represent a way of seeing, typical of ideologies" (Sarup 1989, 41). As presented in Appendix II, this is unquestionably true of theories of human nature. Something either is or is not in terms of Aristotelian logic, natural continua are ignored, and choices are forced. "All human beings seek happiness, by their very nature", according to the quotation at the beginning of this appendix. There are no grey areas: Aristotle does not mention some human beings, or a tendency or preference to seek happiness in the above quotation. We must take it or leave it—there is no middle ground.

In conclusion, theories of human nature seem to be closely related to ideologies. Ideologies relate to real life as experienced by individuals, so that they indisputably resonate with experience, but they also slant that reality in the direction of their own aims. Human nature is not 'read off' the slate of reality. It should be clear that notions of human nature are artificialities that select and omit elements of the human condition to make a point of their own, even if this is not done for purposes of outright deception. Theories of human nature seem to belong to the realm of ethics, not science.

According to MacIntyre, moral debates involve "incommensurable premises". It is possible to see theories of human nature as moral questions that are conceptually incommensurable. By incommensurable, MacIntyre means that there is "no rational way of weighing the claims of one as against another. For each premise employs some quite different normative or evaluative concept from the others" (MacIntyre 1981, 8). In the absence of ways to evaluate competing premises through rational debate, the external world is scrutinized because there is the hope that "facts can eliminate incorrect bases for holding a moral conviction" (Kagan 1989, 22). Yet, as discussed in Appendix II, 'facts' may be subject to conflicting interpretations. Kagan, a respected psychologist, presents a long and persuasive argument suggesting that science is coopted as the basis for deciding ethical and moral issues for the following reason:

> Empirical fact is supposedly objective. It resides in nature rather than opinion. It therefore seems impartial, and, by implication, just...Through marvellously useful inventions that have permitted humanitarian advances, technical feats that magnify man's sense of potency, and the ability to predict a few brief moments in the future... science and a rational approach to experience have acquired a secular power that makes it easy for citizens to expect that the knowledge generated by scientists is the best guide to morals. (Kagan 1989, 23)

In other words, although there is a strong element of desire that science answer the unanswerable, 'nature questions' may transcend the limits of both naïve empirical observation of the 'way things are' and scientific expertise in analysing the facts of a human being's nature. MacIntyre also questions the tendency in moral disagreement to appeal to impersonal criteria (MacIntyre 1981, 9), seemingly implying that, in moral questions, there may not be criteria that are impersonal. It may be fundamentally inappropriate, as Wittgenstein suggests, to appeal to science to solve what are really moral questions (Wittgenstein 1975, 18). In suggesting a particular theory of human nature, perhaps we cannot avoid making a value judgement or developing a moral preposition.

Second, MacIntyre suggests that contemporary moral debates depend on concepts that are historically rooted, yet their roots are not overtly acknowledged (MacIntyre 1981, 10). This tends to confirm the opinion advanced in this dissertation that theories of human nature and, particularly, female nature, are not predominately empirical (although they have a basis in the observation of the real world) or amenable to scientific proof, but are ideological concepts that depend on the two opposing cosmographical paradigms, or moral frameworks, that will be developed in this chapter and the next, namely, the classical and the modern world views. According to MacIntyre, the use of concepts derived from

historical world views may be problematic ("an unharmonious melange of ill-assorted fragments") because they are divorced from their historical context (MacIntyre 1981, 10). This chapter and Chapter 3 locate 'human nature' in two historical contexts that have, it is suggested, particular relevance for the examination of 'woman's nature' that follows.

5. For example, French clearly equates patriarchy with hierarchy, dualism, power, order, duty, and universalism (1985, 489-542). This chapter demonstrates that hierarchy, dualism, power, order, duty, and universalism are classical concepts that are as central to communitarianism as they are to the classical *weltanschauung*. The next chapter shows that these concepts have been rejected by liberal individualists. In rejecting liberal individualism, in turn, cultural feminists are re-embracing concepts long considered inamicable to feminism.

6. Specifically, these elements of classical nature theories involve how nature-talk invokes limits, bounds, and bonds; opposition and dualistic thinking; the selection of significant qualities through a value-judgement oriented to the most perfect of the type; hierarchal ranking through the proper purposes of differently-natured human beings; power relationships; universality as to category; validation of the *status quo*; utopian social criticism through an appeal to a Golden Age; and the primary importance of order. A more complete discussion of these elements may be found in Appendices II and III.

7. A more complete definition of this term is developed as the chapter progresses but, for a working definition, teleology refers to the *design* of nature and to the notion that entities are directed toward and shaped by their particular end or *purpose*. Fox-Genovese also uses the term "particularism" to describe that aspect of the teleological world view that suggests "each being has a discrete *telos* and should aspire to the specific forms of excellence appropriate to its own kind" (Fox-Genovese 1991, 116).

8. Cosmography, or the general description of the organization of the universe, was particularly important in the study of human nature. Today's common usage of the term, as presented in *Webster's* dictionary, confirms that it is "the science that deals with the constitution of the whole order of nature."

9. In his review of *The Politics of Community: A Feminist Critique of the Liberal-Communitarian Debate* by Elizabeth Frazer and Nicola Lacey, Leonard Williams suggests the aridity and vexatiousness of this academic debate.

10. Interestingly, Etzioni, who has done more to advance the cause of communitarianism than most, is missing from Frazer and Lacey's bibliography, although his co-founder Glendon's book, *Rights Talk* is cited. Neither is there any reference to the so-called *Communitarian Manifesto* ("The Responsive Communitarian Platform" [http://www.canniff.com/preamble.html]) of 1991 drafted by Amitai Etzioni, Mary Ann Glendon, and William Galston, the Communitarian Network (in Canada, The Canadian Communitarian Forum), the Character Education Partnership, Inc. (http://www.usnews.com/usnews/news/betsy2.htm) that seeks to implement communitarian goals in education, or the strong communitarian affiliations shared by President Clinton and his wife (http://www.usnews.com/ usnews/ issue /moral.htm). Several communitarian groups active in public policy, community politics, and education have been organized in the USA and Canada over the past 6 years, and there is a sense that this is a vigorous grassroots movement akin to nineteenth century progressivism (http://www.cpn.org/sections/tools/models/ communitarianism.html).

11. How this is to be done is not worked out except with an appeal to "transcendence" and the double-speak notion that "Freedom is the sense that we are choosing our own bonds" (French 1985, 542).

12. Further the liberal-individualist rhetoric of the pro-abortion lobby sits ill on a communitarian foundation predicated on responsibility to others, duty to the community, state control over private affairs, and so on (thus McMillan can state with logic that "the women's liberation movement is a rebellion against nature" [McMillan 1982, 118] because the anti-dualistic stance of communitarian materialism cannot acknowledge that a woman may be oppressed by her own body [McMillan 1982, 122]). McMillan's analysis of the division of labour, based on Arendt's *The Human Condition*, ignores the classical basis for the division of labour in Plato's hierarchy of natures and attributes it only to "Marxian economic theory" and a disembodied "single subject" as the reification of 'society' (McMillan 1982, 119-120). This constitutes a weakness in her argument, since she single-mindedly faults liberal individualism and "economic theory" for a phenomenon deeply embedded in the communitarianism that she appears to favour (for example 1982, 64, 66, 73). The materialist or anti-dualist stance of cultural feminism is discussed in Chapter 7.

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13. I take issue with Frazer and Lacey's suggestion that communitarian theory rejects structuralism (Frazer and Lacey 1993, 3). The functionalism embedded in communitarian notions of what they term "value communitarianism" ("the commitment to collective values, public culture and a concern with the collective aspects of human life") is predicated on the notion that "individual behaviour and action are determined by structures and forces which are not easily observable." Further, what Frazer and Lacey call "social constructionism" is intimately involved with structuralism (despite some tricky word-play on pages 167-181, they seem to acknowledge this association on page 172: "Even on this very simplified characterisation of structuralist developments in social theory, we can see the links between the structuralist reaction to empiricism and the communitarian reaction to liberalism's focus on individual agency at the expense of social structure").

14. For example, the rather mild critique offered by Frazer and Lacey (1993).

15. Frazer and Lacey make the qualified link between socialism and cultural feminism (1993, 102).

16. According to Ayer, " [The] preoccupation with the ways things are, or are to be, described is often represented as an enquiry into their essential nature" (Ayer 1956, 8). The notion that essential natures refer only to the way things are to be described and not to any critically necessary components residing in the thing itself undercuts the whole notion of natures and, indeed, seems to be the currently accepted philosophical position. This thesis, however, notes that cultural feminist and communitarian political philosophies rest on the antecedent notion that natures do circumscribe the essential elements of an entity.

17. Though Appendix II notes the problematic nature of the defining process.

18. From Owen's viewpoint, the nature of something is an abstract concept that can be "reasoned to" but not perceived directly:
> As common, then, the nature is nowhere found to exist...It is something that can be reasoned to but not visualized...This means that a nature, just as a nature, is not an existent, either really or cognitionally. (Owens 1992, 155).

19. *Nisus*, a tendency to change in certain ways, implying effort toward a potential (Collingwood 1972, 75 and 83).

20. The contemporary pluralist notion that 'perfection' represents mere subjective evaluation denies the possibility of one universally valid assessment of perfection. Aristotle's unshakeable faith in the ability of reason to discern truth must be considered in its historical context.

21. The notion that we each have the right to determine what the good, and the good life, are for ourselves is a modern, liberal notion (see Chapter 3). Bell terms this notion 'normative self-determination (Bell 1993, 34). In contrast, communitarians suggest that shared values may determine the good, and the good life for all members of the community. If the good, and the good life for all, may be articulated, it follows that shared understandings of human nature may also be articulated. Liberal individualism has largely rejected all but the most vague conceptions of human nature.

22. Cultural feminist theorists display a similar orientation, as will be discussed in Chapter 4.

23. In a contemporary context, Illich suggests that gender requires bounds and limits. In stating, "Gender implies a complementarity within the world that is fundamental and closes the world in on 'us'...," Illich contrasts the "unlimited openness" of liberal individualism that artificially constructs sex roles on "the existence of a genderless *man*" with the substantive, essential, and enduring nature of what this thesis terms the classical notions of male nature and female nature (Illich 1982, 81).

24. Sir Thomas Elyot, English author of *Governor* (1531), writes "A public weal is a body living, compact or made of sundry estates and degrees of men...so that in everything is order, and without order may be nothing stable or permanent; and it may not be called order, except it do contain in it degrees, high and base, according to the merit or estimation of the thing that is ordered...God giveth not to every man like gifts of grace or of nature...So in this world they which excel others in this influence of understanding...such ought to be set in a more high place than the residue..." (in Bantock 1989, 95-96). As Bantock points out, this passage is directly influenced by Plato's *Republic*.

25. In the Platt translation, Aristotle uses the word "inequality" with reference to those who are inferior and ruled over (Agonito 1977, 53). With reference to appropriate functions, "Both of them must have a share of virtue, but varying according to their various natures" (Aristotle 1977, 53) and "Everyone must pursue one occupation of those in the city, that for which his nature best fitted him" (Plato 1974, 99).

26. This remark requires qualification. Philosophical writings of the time suggest that there were those who considered the ruler/ruled dichotomy to be oppressive. For example, "Others say that it is contrary to nature to rule as master over slave, that the distinction is one of convention only, since in nature there is no difference, and that this form of rule is based on force and therefore wrong" (Aristotle 1972, 31). However, their voices did not have the impact on Western philosophy that Plato's and Aristotle's had. Further, even if there were no evidence of contrary opinion, this would not allow one to presume that specific individuals would not have found their own personal situations oppressive for reasons a twentieth-century North American may link to their hierarchical situation (obvious examples are members of the slave caste, prisoners taken in war [who were deprived of citizenship rights], and many women).

27. It is interesting to note that, from a communitarian perspective, the 'stranger' again becomes a ominous, unpredictable figure: For example, "It is sobering to reflect that the typical child-abuser is...a loner, a socially isolated individual without a support system" (Glendon 1991, 134).

28. Interestingly, McMillan attributes "the segregation of people into different groups" to the division of labour. A closer attention to classical philosophy would suggest the opposite causal sequence—by nature people are categorized and labour is divided in accord with the natural strengths of each group. This provides further evidence that the ignorance of classical roots of cultural feminist theory sometimes distorts its argument.

29. Sarup supports these connections and reinforces this interpretation by linking these concepts similarly as follows, "Teleology (thinking of things in terms of their orientation to a *telos* or end) is a way of ordering and ranking meanings in a hierarchy of significance" (Sarup 1989, 40).

30. Critics of human nature have argued that nature and natures cannot be invoked to justify social arrangements in any contemporary sense of the word. Some of the more important criticisms are presented below.

Homo Sapiens transcends nature: When political philosophers use the words 'nature' and 'natures' and 'natural' in their attempts to evaluate the legitimacy of social roles and institutions, they appeal to another court than that of social convention: For example, "Man will have nothing as nature made it" (Rousseau 1974, 5) is a criticism of man not nature.

Yet, in the pre-Cartesian cosmography, human beings are higher animal in a uniquely privileged relationship to God with dominion, "Over every living thing that moveth upon the earth...", charged by God to, "Replenish the earth, and subdue it" (Genesis 1:28). Nature in the sense of the external world in its entirety exists to be used and transcended by humanity (Krapiec 1983 31; Ernst 1973, 63-64). Given this world view, to look to 'inferior' nature to find a direction for humanity would be absurd.

Mill charges humanity with the imperative of rising above, "transcending and improving upon nature," in Hosper's words (Hospers 1982, 114). Taylor reminds us of Kant's insistence on the instrumentality of the natural universe in service of humanity (Taylor 1989, 365). In Darwinian terms, evolution restored homo sapiens to the apex of adaptive development thanks to the species' well-developed brain rather than its physiological superiority (this theme is taken up at length by de Chardin [1964], particularly p. 90). Jung opposes nature and consciousness. Similarly, Nietzsche mockingly drew attention to the differences between nature and artifice, seemingly drawing a contrast between the unconscious, innate, instinctive aspects of human nature and the highly-developed rationality that only arises through engaging in knowledge:

"According to "'nature'" you want to *live*? ...Living—is that not precisely wanting to be other than this nature? Is not living—estimating, preferring, being unjust, being limited, wanting to be different?" (Nietzsche 1966, 205)

Nothing, according to these respected thinkers, can be gained in terms of guides to human action by looking downward or backward to other natural creations because of "the unbridgeable gulf between humanity and animality" (Berry 1986, 15).

Nature provides destructive as well as instructive models: In his interesting essay on *Nature*, Mill points to many of the difficulties in invoking "nature, natural, and the group of words derived from them" (Mill 1958, 313). He points out that the injunction to 'follow nature' is meaningless if nature is taken to mean the external world in its entirety,

which we cannot help but be subject to (Nietzsche echoes this, "Live according to life", "How could you *not* do that? Why make a principle of what you yourselves are and must be?" [Nietzsche, 1966, 205]), and criminal if taken to mean copy the actions of nature toward humanity:

In sober truth, nearly all the things which men are hanged or imprisoned for doing to one another, are nature's every day performances... Nature impales men, breaks them as if on the wheel, casts them to be devoured by wild beasts, burns them to death, crushes them with stones like the first Christian martyr, starves them with hunger... All this, Nature does with the most supercilious disregard both of mercy and of justice... (Mill 1958, 325)

In a similar vein, Nietzsche exhorts, "Imagine a being like nature, wasteful beyond measure, indifferent beyond measure, ...without mercy and justice..." (Nietzsche 1966, 205). According to Taylor, Kant speaks of the "'radical evil' in human nature (Taylor 1989, 366). Baudelaire fastidiously remarks, "I have always found in Nature... something shameful and distressing" (Taylor 1989, 435). Possibly the most convincing on this subject is le Marquis de Sade who, in view of his own cruel propensities, seems particularly well-qualified to point out that the positive aspects of nature are equaled by the negative:

There is not a single virtue which is not necessary to Nature and conversely not a single crime which she does not need and it is in the perfect balance she maintains between the one and the other that her immense science consists (di Nicolas 1989, 247)

Obviously, "nature red in tooth and claw" cannot provide a reference point for human action.

Nature as metaphor doesn't echo only the good: References to nature may intend to direct humanity not to an external and objective reality of nature but to harmonious nature as a metaphor or idealized reflection of human actions and human concerns (in literary criticism, this is known as 'the pathetic fallacy').

Yet, as confirmed by Mill, the pathetic fallacy invokes negative, as well as positive, human experiences and emotions (Mill 1958, 324). Nature can also be portrayed as chaotic, frightening, and hostile to humanity. Two examples from Shakespeare illustrate that the bard understood that nature is harmonious with human actions, such that if bad events are taking place nature will be wild and out of control. The following extracts illustrate the dramatic sympathy between nature and the darker aspects of human life:

A little ere the mightiest Julius fell...
As stars with trains of fire and dews of blood
Disasters in the sun; and the moist star
Upon whose influence Neptune's empire stands
Was sick almost to doomsday with eclipse...
As prologue to the omen coming on
Have heaven and earth together demonstrated
Unto our climatures and countrymen
        (Hamlet, Act I Scene i)

Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks. Rage, blow
You cataracts and hurricanes, spout...
   ...And thou, all-shaking thunder,
Strike flat the thick rotundity o'th'world,
Crack Nature's moulds, all germains spill at once,
That makes ingrateful man.
        (King Lear, Act III, scene ii)

Nature as metaphor draws attention to the order/disorder theme that will be taken up in the section of Chapter 7 on Natural Law, as "the disorder in one [domain] is reflected in the others" (Taylor 1989, 299). Just as nature provides metaphors for harmony and positive human emotions and experiences, so with disharmony and negative emotions and experiences. Moreover, to base a guide for human action on a man-made, artificial metaphor is to step back from nature itself and reify that specific, ideology-bound notion of nature which is found most congenial to one interest group or another.

Human Behaviour Cannot be Understood In Terms of Animal Behaviour: If we turn to nature as a guide to authentic human behaviours and dispositions, the raw material we are looking for may lie in our common mammalian ancestry. As mentioned above, sociobiologists (E. Wilson, Lorenz, Skinner, and so on) have sought to find the genetic determinants of human behaviour (aggression, work ethic, sex roles, and so on) in animal behaviour. However, it is now

generally accepted that genetic and biological factors determining human behaviour have not been isolated, nor can they be inferred from the behaviour of subhuman species.

Even if it were granted that animal traits and behaviours (the mothering instinct, for example) could be generalized to the human animal, this would give no basis for limiting human performance to the mere expression of such drives. Nor would it provide a basis for giving free rein to other so-called biological drives (aggression, as in Desmond Bagley's *The Naked Ape* or male sexual violence in Susan Brownmiller's *Against our Will* and Andrea Dworkin's *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*). There is usually a more persuasive argument for transcending drives and curbing natural instincts.

Further, significance surely lies in the *differences* between human and animal behaviour: "In general, to show that X has evolved out of Y does not show that X *is* Y, or is nothing but Y, or is essentially Y" (Stevenson 1987, 116). Indeed, X is obviously more than Y and that 'more than' is the interesting part.

Man cannot survive as a natural creature: One may also speak of natural behaviour or advocate a return to nature; for example, 'natural childbirth' and the 'back to nature' movement. Such an appeal usually implies the rejection of the artificialities of civilization (for example, anesthetized childbirth) and a renewed interest in the body (breast-feeding and "...for the great masses of people, free and natural meant achieving heterosexual satisfactions" [Bloom 1987, 99]). Yet, 'by nature', humanity is ill-equipped to survive in the natural world: as an animal, human beings are inadequate to the environment and must rely on their natural intelligence to develop artificial methods of survival (Krapiec 1985, 31) (Hippel 1979, 68):

> The physical circumstances of human life... differing as they do from those of animal life, show that even at a fairly primitive level the relation of both man and woman with nature is one of opposition and discord (McMillan 1982, 10).

It is only through "artificial fabrications" that are the products of rational knowledge, that humanity survives (Hospers 1982, 112). Hegel's belief (McMillan 1982, 6-7) that a return to the natural would "condemn [man] to being nothing more than an animal" is echoed by de Beauvoir, "unless we can engage in activities that 'transcend our animal nature,' we might as well be brute animals" (de Beauvoir 1989, 64). One of the traits that characterize human nature, for Krapiec, is the transcendence of external nature through the use of tools. A second essential trait is the creation of a "human community of rational and free beings" (Krapiec 1985, 33-34). Obviously, Krapiec's conception of humanity does not lend itself either to the rejection of society and artificiality or to a search for the essence of humanity in humanity's aboriginal form. In rejecting all but the natural, we would need to reject all that raises humanity above a bestial level: art, music, scholarship, medicine, social welfare, and so on:

> If the artificial is not better than the natural, to what end are all the arts of life? To dig, to plough, to build, to wear clothes, are direct infringements of the injunction to follow nature. (Mill 1958, 321)

Although it seems good advice to seek out humanity's most fundamental abilities and concerns to discover what optimal social arrangements can be created, given innate human limitations, in practice this search is problematic. We cannot get behind the veneer of civilization in any pragmatic sense. The 'natural state' does not exist. Western culture has always sustained charismatic fringe groups of back-to-nature advocates: from the early eremites, to Thoreau, to Frank Lloyd Wright's *Taliesin* community. Yet their lifestyles attest more to the particular ideologies of their times than to an original state of nature.

Natural Man is a Chimera: It seems clear that any attempt to see behind the veil of civilization to some 'real' essence of natural human life will be problematic. There is simply no hard data available to the researcher: The Wild Boy of Aveyron and emotionally damaged children raised in isolation provide poor models for realistic human concerns and actions. Similarly, the scant archeological relics remaining from more primitive times permit only the most insubstantial glimpses into pre-civilized life. Sociobiology is another blind alley. All that Lorenz, for example, can generalize from biological and historical "fact" is that man's natural aggression explains many of his aggressive actions. This heuristic assumption is, as Hospers points out in another context, as undeniable as it is meaningless (Hospers, 1982, 72-3).

Knowledge of the 'real' man behind the social creation must be conceded unattainable. Attempts to present facts about "natural man" say more about the failure of the researcher's imagination (as when recent researchers attest that prehistorical women depended on men to provide the food that sustained the family—ignoring their vitally important roles in foraging and fishing) than anything else.

Natural man, in other words, is a tool of the philosopher—he is no more than a metaphor: a mirror and a projection of the philosopher's most fundamental beliefs about man. Upon Natural Man, described in Rousseau's *Discourse on the*

Origins and Foundations of Inequality among Men and Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature*, were projected conflicting visions of what man is and what man ought to be. Thus Hume describes the state of nature as "a mere philosophical fiction, which never had, and never cou'd have any reality":

> The *state of nature*, therefore, is to be regarded as a mere fiction, not unlike that of the *golden age*, which poets have invented; only with this difference, that the former is describ'd as full of war, violence and injustice; whereas the latter is pointed out to us, as the most charming and most peaceable condition, that can possibly be imagin'd. (Hume 1984, 544-545)

Natural, as it refers to natural man and the natural state, is a synonym for basic, unadorned, unchanged. Natural may be represented as describing an aboriginal state, rooted in the materiality of the body and the external world. Yet, at the same time, natural connotes a rational, reasonable appeal to deeply-held (what may be termed) spiritual values that imply an external morality operating independently of social conventions and legal institutions. By implication, the more natural one becomes, the closer one will be to these positive values and the nearer the fit between what was intended (the way things were supposed to be) and the reality (the way things are). Except in its theological context, in which the state of nature is one without spiritual enlightenment, the adjective natural implies both a rejection of the artificial works of man and an intrinsic value placed on the totality of the putative untouched, uneducated, uncivilized world. There are obvious prelapsarian echoes.

Understood as metaphor, natural man *per se* can only be theorized. Natural man cannot be separated from his varied descriptions any more than human nature can be separated from its varied descriptions. Natural man does not exist in an objective sense—he is metaphor or projection of an objectification of philosophical ideas about the nature of man: "The old sociological image of 'primitive society may simply be a myth which tells us less about the moral orderliness of savages than it does about the anxieties of our own social theorists" (Ryan 1973, 3).

It is evident that natural man cannot be understood as "what man is *really* like" under the false veneer of civilization. Natural man, being a metaphor or the projection of an idea, cannot function as a touchstone used to assess the goodness or viability of existing social arrangements predicated on real people.

The Natural Man Ignores the 'Social Animal': Rousseau depicts Natural Man roaming the earth alone, apart from group life, and self-sufficient rather than pursuing a social existence. This vision of individuals as existing before group life and voluntarily associating to create communities as is axiomatic in liberal political theory: It is commonly worded as the axiom that individuals precede social groups. This is a complex philosophical concept that has engendered much controversy and is addressed in the body of this thesis.

Rights Cannot Be Based on Human Nature: As will be described in more depth in Chapter 3, rights are those actions or possessions to which one is justly entitled by virtue of the possession of qualities entitling one to membership in a particular category. Although the notion of rights is often linked, as pointed out above, to that of natures, one's natural actions are not necessarily rights. Rights and natures may also be seen in fundamental opposition because the notion of just entitlement implies social sanction: Thus, the murderer may murder because it is in his or her nature, but he or she is not justly entitled to perform this action. Therefore, the murderer does not have the right to murder. Unless, like Rousseau, we believe that a completely free human being must act in a good way (or like Plato, that a wise man must be virtuous), the foundation of basic human rights cannot be in human nature. Natures, in a just society, may be required to be curbed as well as protected. In other words, natures ought not to be appealed to provide social or moral values. Social and moral values can be seen to transcend human nature. Wollstonecraft took up this argument when she pointed out in her *Dedication* that the ubiquitousness of tyranny does not justify its continuation (Wollstonecraft 1967, xx).

31. This traditional framework is undergoing modification currently, with recent discoveries in fractal (rather than linear) theory and in quantum physics. The role of chance (in evolution, for example) has been largely ignored by a scientific community that insists on the imposition of order.

32. Psychology tells us that the organism seeks to avoid disequilibrium and return to an ordered, stable state. This pursuit of homeostasis in psychology is critiqued by Cornelius Ernst from a theological viewpoint.

33. Although the notion of the self, *pace* Taylor (1989), remained undeveloped until the Enlightenment.

CHAPTER 3: THE MODERN FRAMEWORK

Individualism, Natural Rights, Natural Law
and Human Nature

Having explored the communitarian origins of the cultural feminist understanding of 'woman's nature' in classical philosophy, this chapter continues an exploration of the background of contemporary feminist theories by turning to a consideration of the 'modern' framework that provides an ideological underpinning for the liberal feminist perspective. Notions of human nature have not remained constant and uncontaminated by the vicissitudinous process of history, although the search for a universal definition that reflected the "permanent, stable, unchanging core of being in each of us" (Taylor 1989, 178) has persisted over the course of years. It lies outside the focus of this thesis to document the countless influences which combined and battled to produce the modern *weltanschauung*. Further, there appear to be as many theories purporting to explain this shift in perspective as there are books on the subject. For these present purposes, this world view shall merely be described[1] to highlight its points of difference from the classical framework presented in Chapter 2.

The term 'modern' has been used to differentiate this framework from the classical though a more accurate and descriptive term, 'liberal', has been used by others, including Jagger (1983). The term liberal may be considered more accurate because, although the modern framework characterizes contemporary Western capitalist society, strong elements of the classical have attained prominence from time to time—for example, during the confrontation over female suffrage, as a key platform of early sociology and social reform

movements, during the conservative Reagan era, and again as we face the end of the current millennium. Perhaps, by clinging to the names classical and modern, the false impression is conveyed that the modern completely obliterated the classical viewpoint or, in some way, rendered it obsolete or proved it false. This is a logical assumption, particularly as the modern viewpoint became the dominant ideology during the Enlightenment primarily as a reaction against the *anciens regimes* (those predicated on aristocratic rule) that took their moral justification from the teleological *kosmos* of the classical perspective. It should be clear, however, that the history of philosophy is seldom so straightforward. For example, Aristotle refers to those of his contemporaries who express what could be termed modern opinions. One expresses a Darwinian sentiment (Aristotle 1963, 224), another seems Cartesian (Aristotle 1963, 70), and Rousseau exemplifies the use of selected elements of the classical framework to advance an argument that has a strong liberal flavour. A more accurate analysis would be that these two viewpoints exist today in parallel and are frequently and often illogically commingled.

I have retained the terms classical and modern, however, because for my purposes in examining the background of contemporary feminist theories it is of particular interest that the modern theory reached its full expression and attained prominence as a critique of the world view that supported the practices of the *anciens regimes*, as mentioned above. In stronger though no less accurate terms, modern liberal individualism is a revolt against classical, communitarian political arrangements. Indeed, liberal theory, particularly in its infancy, emphasized an opposite stance in the interests of developing a strong political platform through diametric opposition. In feminist theory, it is often suggested that communitarianism themes address the failures of liberalism, or modernity (for example, Frazer and Lacey 1993, 2, 102; also Chapter 6 of this thesis). The notion that liberalism arose out of the failures of classical communitarianism, as I suggest, is less commonly encountered.

Thus, in direct confrontation with the classical viewpoint, liberal individualists assert that we fail to respect an individual "when we see him and consequently treat him not as a person but as merely the bearer of a title or the player of a role..." (Lukes 1973, 133).[2] Further,

> We deny his status as an autonomous person when we allow our attitudes to him to be dictated solely by some contingent and socially defined attribute of him, such as his place in the social order or his occupational role...to control or dominate his will...to restrict the range of alternatives between which he can choose...[to] limit or restrict his opportunities to realize his capacities of self-development. (Lukes 1973, 133-134)

To a great extent, the term 'cultural', with its emphasis on *culture* and society, obfuscates the stalwart dependence on inherent natures and intractable essences that characterizes the classical world view. Similarly, the term liberal, with its emphasis on *liberation* or freedom, leads to the oversimplified conclusion that the modern world view denies the bonds and bounds of community in favour of the selfishness of an individual free to do as he or she wills. Classical and modern are terms that carry less philosophical baggage, referring as they do to large-scale time frames rather than to philosophical concepts.

The main emphases of the modern perspective are equality, reason, individuality and individualism, rights, and freedom. Rather than follow a straightforward sequence of sections explicating each of the above in turn, these concepts are addressed below in sections entitled *Natural Rights*, *Natural Laws*, and *Individualism* because this affords an opportunity to return to the concepts equality, reason, the individual, rights, and freedoms as their modern expressions arose in reaction to the prevailing classical ideas.

A Brief Synopsis of the Modern Viewpoint

It is interesting that, as the power of human nature to provide the justification for hierarchical, fixed caste membership in the closed[3] feudal society of the Middle Ages waned, the theory of natural law came into prominence. Both human nature and natural law are

classical concepts, yet the autonomous individual (this modern concept will be addressed below in the section entitled *Individualism*) could and can today be postulated to harmoniously exist in a world governed by natural laws, providing human behaviour and social arrangements were rationally designed and voluntarily assented to in the progressive and progressivist interest of forwarding the cause of a perfect society.

During the Renaissance, according to Collingwood, the conviction that the universe was teleological was undermined by the notion that, "All change and process (occurred) by the action of material things already existing at the commencement of the change" (Collingwood 1972, 94). In other words, the attribution of action shifted from future to prior cause. Although it sowed the seeds of determinism in the behaviourist sense, the idea that there was no *nisus*, no future causes, and no ultimate purposes was a liberating one as it could be interpreted as meaning that other social arrangements than the existing ones could be given serious consideration.[4]

In Miller's opinion, teleology in the sense of final purpose is gradually abandoned in favour of science, which presented physical events occurring without purpose ("To understand earthquakes, for example, is it necessary that we know the purpose for which they take place?"), "in complete indifference and blindness," and in obedience to natural laws (Miller 1967, 4-5). Nature, in other words, is no longer the *best* way for the cosmos to work, it is merely *a* way that "works" in the sense that things unfold causally. Materialism, or the idea that valid explanations are explained by laws of matter, began to replace classical and theological notions of rationality, soul, and the divine immanence of nature within the individual. From a natural law perspective, things may still be the way they are *of necessity*, as in the classical viewpoint, but the prescriptive sense in which they tend to or ought to aspire to perfection disappears. Hobbes, for example, interprets morality as "the science of motion of human minds" (Ozmon and Craver 1995, 322), thus "men's thoughts are the

product of straight-forward physical interactions" (Redhead 1984, 103) subject to the same laws of motion as other matter.

This emphasis on the natural laws of materialism rather than divine intervention and sustenance of a teleological cosmos was taken up by the Deists, as follows: "God does not interfere in man's private affairs...He is indifferent to man's special pleas for personal help. Man must shape his own destiny by the use of universal laws" (Miller 1967, 92).

The classical notions of proper purpose and of conformity to fixed roles through self-discipline in the interests of fulfilling the harmonious order of the community began to be questioned during the Reformation when Luther insisted on the freedom and responsibility of interpreting the Bible according to the dictates of individual conscience rather than the duty to internalize the accepted tradition of authorities (Miller 1967, 87). According to Miller, before the Reformation, institutions had a higher value than individuals: "The individual was real only in so far as he participated in the power, the value, and the dignity that lay outside himself" (Miller 1967, 93). This echoes the pre-eminent value placed on universals (groups and institutions) over specifics (individuals) that exemplifies classical philosophy. To Rousseau, Voltaire, and Locke, individuals alone are 'real' in Miller's sense, and social structures, like institutions, are not. The shift is from the grand general laws of the classical viewpoint to a modern, empirical approach that values specifics (individuals) over universals (groups and institutions).

Further Locke's idea that human beings arrive in the world as *tabulae rasae* to be written upon by experience exemplifies the rejection of the classical notion of human nature as an innate 'natural' quality or drive toward a specific function-dependent perfection within the natural order. Liberated from a fixed true nature, humanity can create itself rationally under the guidance of natural laws. In such a world, a poor boy or girl could theoretically become president of the United States.

The single element of human nature retained by the modern *zeitgeist* is that of rational capacity (Jagger 1983, 32). As presented in Appendix II, because it is intimately connected with ideology, one objective universally-accepted human nature cannot simply be observed in external reality and recorded. This chapter demonstrates how it became possible to think of one objective universally-accepted human nature through the expedient of refusing to define it in any detail, eventually extending it to virtually all human beings, associating it with a type of "baseline" justice to use Rawls' (1971) term, and removing all consideration of universality from a notion of 'the good'. It is interesting, in a feminist context, that Jagger, one of the strongest cultural feminist critics of liberal individualism, supports the notion that "the concern with justice remains a typically liberal preoccupation" (Jagger 1983, 175).

Natural Rights

General and Specific Rights

General, or human, rights provide the foundation on which the modern liberal perspective is built. The cornerstone of this foundation, to pursue this analogy, is the conviction that it is profoundly unjust to group individuals on the basis of arbitrary distinctions and deny those rights (whether general or specific) possessed by one person to another person, without due cause: "Natural rights presuppose a fundamental postulate of equality. They are indeed tied to the idea of justice, that is, to equal treatment for all those who belong essentially to the same category" (Wiener 1973, 25). As Rawls states, "Those who hold different conceptions of justice can, then, still agree that institutions are just when no arbitrary distinctions are made between persons in the assigning of basic rights and duties and when the rules determine a proper balance between competing claims to the advantages of social life..." (Rawls 1971, 5). He goes on to say that, in a modern constitutional democ-

racy, "All sane adults, with certain generally recognized exceptions, have the right to take part in political affairs" (Rawls 1971, 222). A few pages further, he continues,

> Turning now to the worth of political liberty, the constitution must take steps to enhance the value of the equal rights of participation for all members of society... Ideally, those similarly endowed and motivated should have roughly the same chance of attaining positions of political authority irrespective of their economic and social class. (Rawls 1971, 224)

Rawls uses the phrase "have the right to" with reference to participation in the democracy. Obviously, the classical notion of separate hierarchical castes of human nature has been replaced by one human nature belonging to "all sane adults" and "all members of society." This section of the thesis addresses two common classifications of rights—the general and the specific—and, in this way, highlights some of the implications of one universal human nature.

General Rights

There are certain general 'unalienable' rights so fundamental to the quality of life that our North American contemporary political ideology has raised them to an article of faith. These general rights are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. These rights are not seen to belong merely to categories of individuals but to all individuals (although the reality falls short of this perception).[5] In other words, with reference to general rights all individuals ought[6] to be considered as belonging to the same category, usually termed one common human nature.

As presented in Chapter 2, the classical notion of human natures did not emphasize one monolithic human nature that was the essence of all individuals universally: "We must remember that the state is one of those things in which the substrata may differ in kind and that one may be primary, another secondary, and so on, there being nothing, or scarcely anything, which is common to them all, which makes them what they are" (Aristotle 1962,

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103). This was clearly an elitist philosophy, particularly as expressed in Plato and Aristotle's discussions of the ruler and the ruled, the superior and the inferior. In general, the essence of humanity was grounded in the rationality of the freeborn male of the species and the classical defence of slavery was that the slave belonged to an inferior category of human nature that did not possess reason, almost like animals (Aristotle 1963, 388). Theoretically, the modern viewpoint extends rationality to all human beings through their shared human nature; for example, "Nature hath made man so equal, in the faculties of the body and mind" (Hobbes 1972, 12) and posits that all are *essentially* equal, without *significant* difference, despite the ostensible inequalities in the way they appear to be. As the reader will recall from the discussion of essence in Chapter 2, this modern viewpoint is congenial to the classical notion that essence entails both qualities as they actually exist in a human being (Aristotle) and those qualities in their perfect form (Plato). The modern liberal viewpoint expands a vague definition of human nature such that the potential perfection of an individual's nature is acknowledged but the route to that perfection is left unspecified, as best discovered by each individual. Further, from the modern perspective, an individual's perfection is not seen in relation to or contingent upon service to the community. In the classical view, clearly all individuals were not on the same footing with reference to rationality and this allowed the philosopher to rank them hierarchically by nature and tie their natures to that rationally-derived common, or shared, communal 'good' of which McIntyre (1981) speaks at length. Their individual perfections were clearly defined and contingent on their social positions. As seen in Chapter 2, each class had its own peculiar social rights and social obligations that reflected and ensured the shared larger good.

According to Arendt, post-Enlightenment individuals lost that tenuous claim to "equality before God as Christians"[7] to secularism: "Men were no longer sure of these social and human rights which until then had been outside the political order and guaranteed not by government and constitution, but by social, spiritual, and religious forces" (Arendt 1966,

291). Therefore, it became imperative to devise a secular 'court of higher appeal', or 'last resort', what Amélie Rorty terms an 'insurance policy' and Rawls terms 'baseline rights' derived under a veil of ignorance, to preserve individual dignity and autonomy; to defend the individual from being used instrumentally; to protect individuals against other individuals, against the collectivity, and against the political power of the state (Donnelly 1985, 21; Rorty 1990, 22; Rawls 1971, 136-142). Over time, the shared 'good' of the classical viewpoint had come to be seen as oppressive: since God was no longer seen as personally involved in human social arrangements, suffering here on earth no longer had divine compensation in terms of a pay off in the next world or of the peace-of-mind, complacency, or sense of well-being derived from living a virtuous life here on earth in conformity to a fixed, and frequently subservient status. This is obviously an immense shift in attitude and change in the conceptualization of human nature from the classical position. This shift will be further considered in the section of this chapter entitled *Individualism*. The interests of the community are clearly prior to those of individuals, in the classical *zeitgeist*, and the state is the central controlling entity in the lives of individuals. In contrast, the modern vision is of a state with radically curtailed powers that exists principally to protect the rights of the individual, which "can only be infringed upon by the state in extraordinary circumstances" (Fox-Genovese 1991, 7): the state must "protect the dignity of each individual and promote individual autonomy and self-fulfilment. Given these values, liberals have inferred that the good society should allow each individual the maximum freedom from interference by others" (Jagger 1983, 33).

Protection of the individual is fulfilled through the ratification of that abstract formal postulate: the general rights of man.[*] Formal sanction of individual rights is adhered to as a dogma. That is, these rights are held to be, "Irreducible to and undeducible from other rights or laws, no authority was invoked for their establishment; Man himself was their source... all laws were supposed to rest on them" (Arendt 1966, 291).

General rights are treated as a kind of baseline, below which it is unthinkable that human beings can fall. They represent the minimal guarantees presented by Rawls's principals of a just society chosen under a veil of ignorance (Rawls 1971, 136-142). General rights are seen as[9] independent of whatever particular social class, political regime, gender, or race to which an individual may belong. The image of 'blind Justice' indicates that no other interests than those common to all human beings (or, to the abstract human being) are to be taken into account in adjudication. The intent is to ensure that certain minimal rights cannot be stripped from the powerless individual by any political regime or collectivity—or, in Rawls' terms to select those minimal rights that an individual may be guaranteed, no matter what that individual's circumstance. In other words, to be eligible for these minimal rights, an individual must possess the minimal qualifications (that these minimal qualifications fluctuate and elude definition is Rorty's argument) of membership in the species *homo sapiens*, in other words, membership in 'one universal human nature'. The American abolitionist, William Lloyd Garrison, provides a example of the appeal to general rights, "Wherever there is a human being, I see God-given rights inherent in that being, whatever may be the sex or complexion" (Henry 1945, 199).

Specific Rights and Categories

If general, or human, rights provide the foundation on which the modern, or liberal, perspective is built, then specific rights, which belong to groups and not to all individuals, underwrite the classical viewpoint.

Specific rights are intimately bound up with the authority of society. They are determined and awarded by the collectivity or community, and are granted to categories of individuals. Thus, in a contemporary context, one is not entitled to designate it one's right to perform surgery or teach preschoolers. These specific rights are granted to specific categories of individuals, or, these individuals are entitled to specific rights on the basis of

certain qualifications they possess. These qualifications may be seen to be achieved through a combination of factors such as, for example, noble birth, education, level of intelligence, manual dexterity, and social status.[10] As Rawls points out, interest groups may lobby for inclusion in certain categories and claim entitlement to the corresponding rights and advantages (for example, individuals claim 'rights as' human beings, as members of parliament, as Canadians, as heads of families, as aboriginals, as farmers, and so on).

The principle of specific rights exists, in the modern viewpoint, in tandem with general rights. Specific rights are seen to be earned rights that are, in theory, open to anyone who has reasonable claim on them. For example, the specific right to perform surgery is theoretically open to anyone who successfully undertakes the requisite course of study. Alternatively, specific rights are granted to those operating under disadvantages in order to even out their chances and bring them up to the 'baseline', to use Rawls' term.[11]

In the classical viewpoint, however, although specific rights existed, in the sense that rights to perform surgery (for example) were restricted to a particular group of educated surgeons, the possibility of considering or claiming something as 'one's right' was not articulated in those terms. Specific rights were not open to anyone, and could not be claimed on the rights-basis of entitlement. Rights discourse is an Enlightenment invention: it was simply not possible to speak in terms of rights before that time. The classical entitlement to rights was grounded solely and specifically in one's social position. For example, the specific right to perform surgery would have been restricted to free males, probably of a certain class. In general, in feudal society, specific rights were fixed by one's birth status, and its implied nature, within a particular curtailed range of possibilities. Thus, an individual born a peasant was likely to die one. It would have been ludicrous for a peasant to claim equal rights on the basis of an essential sameness that the prevalent classical ideology denied. Rights claims only became possible with the advent of the modern notion that, by nature, all men are equal (Wiener 1973, 25).

Granting and denying are implicit in any discussion of rights. In postmodern terms, rights discourse is a site of a power struggle. Rights claims have historically been an impetus for social activism. Indeed, the right to have rights is the only guarantee of personal, individual agency and power, according to Arendt (Arendt 1966, 296). To some extent, the right to have rights is the only guarantor of full, autonomous personhood.

In presenting an issue as a right, it is commonly implied that it is morally unjust to exclude a set or sets of individuals from the category of those eligible for the right. The language of rights can be used to co-opt the power of a moral crusade and initiate a call to action by morally and intellectually responsible citizens. Donnelly supports this position when he posits that "A failure to respect someone's rights is not just bad or wrong and a failure to discharge a duty; it is a special and particularly serious affront to that person" (Donnelly 1985, 4). More explicitly, "a rights-claim is a demand for action...claiming a right *makes things happen*" (Donnelly 1985, 5). An appeal to rights has a pragmatic, action-oriented function that is similar to the function of human nature in the classical framework.

Distributive Justice

It is axiomatic that denying rights to those who have the same qualifications for those rights is unjust (the Latin word *jus* means 'right' or 'law'). Further, it goes against reason and logic to deny rights to some without good justification. If one grants that two individuals possess the same qualifications, one has no reasonable grounds on which to accept the rights claims of one and reject the rights claims of the other. These two individuals fall into the same category, based on their qualifications.

The categorization of individuals with respect to rights is known as the principle of distributive justice and can be reworded as follows: "Equals should be treated equally and unequals unequally...the first injunction refers to treatment within a category, the second to treatment between categories" (Peters 1967, 47). From a classical viewpoint, distributive

justice awards specific rights to specific categories of individuals—this notion is retained by modernity but underlying it is the notion that general rights belong to all individuals by virtue of their common membership in the category 'human being'.

The principle of distributive justice was articulated by Plato: those of equal nature (who fall into the same category) ought to perform the same tasks while those of different natures (who fall into different categories) ought to perform different tasks.[12] To treat individuals that fall within the same category differently is considered unjust (Peters 1967, 51).[13] Similarly, according to Aristotle, to enslave those of inferior nature (those in a different category) is just but to enslave those of noble nature (those in the same category as the enslavers) is unjust (Aristotle 1963, *Politics Book I*, 391).

As discussed in Chapter 2, in the classical tradition, the nature of individuals was knowable (although this knowledge required rare wisdom and judgement). Once the nature of an individual was known, that individual could be placed in a category—freeborn, slave, Guardian, artisan, and so on. The assumption that Plato rebuts with his well-known reference to watchdogs is that men and women have different natures based on their reproductive roles and, therefore, ought to be placed in different categories. His position was Mill's: women share the same potential personal qualities as do men, and ought not to be categorized simply on account of their physical sexual characteristics.

Mill and Plato were obviously struggling against the prevailing opinion of their cultures. Again, as discussed in Chapter 2 and according to Allen (1985), the prevailing opinion of the patriarchy has followed a competing analysis of sex categories articulated by Aristotle, wherein natures can be discovered if an entity's "end, goal or purpose (*telos*)" is known (Berry 1986, 9). Rather than taking this as an injunction to speculate, as Plato did, about the possible ends to which women might aspire, the Aristotelian tradition viewed the experienced as the real. The function that each individual fulfilled in the real world was seen as inseparable from the individual's proper purpose, or nature. In other words, whereas

Plato looked beyond the appearance to the real, Aristotle refused to separate appearance and reality: "Since women and men appeared to be different in body, Aristotle concluded that they really were different" (Allen 1985, 88).

Rights Theories

Two rights theories have particular significance for a discussion of human nature: the theory of natural rights and the theory of conventional rights.

Natural Rights

The theory of natural rights depends on the classical viewpoint and, thus, emphasizes the explication of natures, especially human nature, and ties rights to (an unevenly distributed) reason (Strauss 1953, Collingwood 1972). The most 'natural' element of human nature is reason. As Taylor puts it: "Permanent, stable, unchanging core of being in each of us...beneath the changing and shifting desires in the unwise soul, and over against the fluctuating fortunes of the external world, our true nature, reason, provides a foundation, unwavering and constant" (Taylor 1989, 178).

From the classical viewpoint the good is external to humanity though accessible to reason and natural inclination. Humanity is perfectible and the perfecting of one's nature is good. If one can determine the nature of humanity, one can find out what is good for humanity. If one can determine the nature of an individual, one can find out what is good for that individual. Virtue lies in perfecting one's own nature within the social group. Thus Plato describes three types of souls, each with its own occupations, behaviours, and specific rights.

Working toward perfection is only possible to the classical philosopher in a social setting because being human requires social interaction. In terms of rights and justice, humans band together through interaction into cities that are organized hierarchically, into a

teleological system in which each individual has his or her proper purpose.[14] The wise ought to rule, as in the *Republic* because their natures render them fit to rule well and justly. The rights of the rulers differ from the rights of the ruled. Slavery and other sorts of tyranny can be justified if those enslaved lack the rational faculty necessary for self-rule. Justice lies in giving "to everyone, not what a possibly foolish law prescribes, but what is good for the other, i.e., what is by nature good for the other" (Strauss 1953, 147). In other words, the locus of control is outside the individual because individuals may not be capable of apprehending what is best for them.

The classical perspective is inherently hierarchical, teleological (anti-individualistic), and relies heavily on reason, as presented in Chapter 2. An elite is needed to tell the masses what to do. The elite ought not to impose control by force but by reason. Although Plato states that all men can reason, not all humans can achieve wisdom; wise men are as rare as the gold to which Plato compares them. The wisdom of the elite, however, leads them to recognize that rights and responsibilities go hand in hand. The hierarchy of natures does not imply an ever-increasing scope of rights culminating in the elite's right to do whatsoever it wishes.

To recapitulate, the principal tenets of the classical theory of natural rights are the following: first, reason is basic to human nature; second, the nature of humanity is knowable through his function in society, by means of reason; third, humanity is inseparable from society; fourth, duties and responsibilities are emphasized, rather than rights, and an individual's service to the community is seen as more important than the individual's right to self-determination;[15] fifth, individuals are arranged in a hierarchy, such that certain individuals are entitled by virtue of their natures to rule over others. In the language of rights, the rights of each individual are determined by that individual's place in the hierarchy. Each individual has its proper purpose within a teleological universe. The will of the individual must be curtailed by the individual's hierarchical position.

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Conventional Rights

On the other hand, modern theories of conventional rights move away from the emphasis on 'the good' found in classical philosophy's theories of natural rights. Instead of asserting that humanity moves naturally toward the good, conventional rights theorists believe that humanity must be forced or coerced toward the good. Unlike naturist theories of rights, the first desire is that for self preservation. Social bonding is a rational matter of general convenience, agreed upon for the purpose of self-preservation. A very early example of this school of thought is Lucretius's Epicureanism; Hobbes's state of war is a later example. In this view, rights are held to as a form of protection from others (the "defence of the individual against the claims of society" [Fox-Genovese 1991, 50]).[16]

Since, from the perspective of conventional rights, the most important desire is the desire for self-preservation, the most important and basic right is the right to self-preservation. The state is made responsible for preserving individuals from the infringement of their rights by others: "We must live with one another, at the minimum, by respecting everyone's fundamental moral nature or personhood... None may attack another's life, none may dictate another's actions, and none may obtain another's belongings" (Machon 1989, xxv).

In this view, notions of responsibility for or obligation to others are absent; social bonds are formed contractually, on the rational basis of self-preservation. In this view, there is no longer an external sense of 'the good' that guides humanity and each individual becomes capable of determining independently what is necessary for survival and the good life: "But neither one person, nor any number of persons, is warranted in saying to another human creature of ripe years that he shall not do with his life for his own benefit what he chooses to do with it" (Mill 1985, 142). In other words, "Everyone is by nature the judge of what are the right means to his self-preservation" (Strauss 1953, 185).

The basis for the social contract is will, not reason—reason is a servant of the will. For example, Locke believes reason determines the method by which to achieve a goal

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determined by the will. The law provides protection from the will of others and virtue lies in peaceful coexistence achieved through the balance of self-interests against each other. In contrast to the classical position, the will is not to be curtailed, even less thwarted, in the rational interests of the larger good.

The classical philosophers believed humanity was inextricable from society. In contrast, from the modern conventional rights viewpoint, the individual could be conceived of as existing outside of society. This is traditionally phrased as "The individual is prior to society" (Aristotle 1963, 29) or, in Jagger's terms, "Essential human characteristics are properties of individuals and are given independently of any particular social context" (Jagger 1983, 42). Thus, we are who we are because of our highly-valued idiosyncratic personality and not because we are formed by society through and for its own needs. Further, in contrast to the classical viewpoint, the modern (or conventional rights) perspective is non-hierarchical and homogenous. The same human nature is shared by all males, and gradually extended to include all females, through the active intervention of liberal feminist activists and theorists. Formal description of this human nature is kept deliberately vague and expressed in terms of virtually unlimited potential. Since the modern viewpoint is that individuals are born without a specific purpose, hence without a specific 'given' nature, they may freely work to develop their specific gifts, personalities, and personal self-definition.

In summary, the main points of the modern theory of conventional rights are the following: first, the individual needs protection from others, especially from those in positions of more power; second, the most important right is self-preservation; third, the state must guarantee the rights of the individual (it is far less clear whether the state is responsible for enforcing the responsibilities of citizens toward each other, though the individual's responsibilities to the state are recognized through the social contract[17]); fourth, each individual is capable of deciding what 'the good' is for that individual; fifth, reason is important but is used instrumentally in the service of 'the will' (thus, reason is not the only way to discover

what is good for the individual: what is good may simply be what is desired); sixth, because each individual is capable of deciding what 'the good' is for that individual, all individuals are equal in this respect; seventh, all individuals possess the same human nature—natures are not derived from the function each individual has within society (thus, justice can be blind and a king and a commoner are 'in essence' the same); eighth, the doctrine of individualism, as presented later in this chapter, implicit in conventional rights theories, teaches that each individual has the right to determine what makes him/her happy and act to pursue that goal—providing that pursuit does not trample on the next person's right to pursue his or her goal. In other words, the vision implied by "the pursuit of happiness" is that, in the matter of general rights, all individuals belong to the same category[18] and one's happiness ought not to be determined by others. However unrealistic in terms of the potential for actual achievement, in an ideal form, the modern viewpoint inherent in conventional rights theories expresses a nonhierarchical egalitarian vision in which one's aims and goals are not imposed by the collectivity from 'outside' but freely negotiated with others.

In conclusion, the above two notions of rights represent, indeed epitomize, the two contrasting visions of human nature herein labelled the classical and the modern. By extension, as will be argued in Chapter 4, the theory of natural rights and the theory of distributive justice exist today within the communitarian, cultural feminist purview; the theory of conventional rights and theory of general rights, within the liberal feminist purview.

Individualism

Individualism has been called the dominant ideology of the West. As a dominant ideology it must obviously be a useful and important concept, yet there is no clear, universally acceptable definition of individualism (Miller 1967, 75).[19] However, there are several common themes that would enable one to describe a particular philosophy as individualistic, with which this section will be concerned.

The term individualism may or may not have been coined by de Tocqueville; certainly it was negatively popularized by him and has been commonly identified as an American ideology since he wrote *Democracy in America*. It is closely aligned with the antislavery movement (McElroy 1982, 4) and the notion of self-ownership popularized by the Enlightenment revolutions. Two twentieth-century definitions of individualism are the following:

> Individualism is a theory which maintains that selves or persons are the loci of human-value, dignity and worth, and that as individuals they constitute the source of new ideas whose practical application is necessary for the growth of society and for the emergence of new values shared by the participants in the group of which the individuals having the new ideas are members. (Miller 1967, 75)

> All modern political theory, except the theory of Bolshevism and of Fascism, is... individualistic in that it seeks to find room for and encourage the individual moral judgement and is based on toleration and the maintenance of a system of rights. (definition in the *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* by A.D. Lindsay, 1930-35, in Lukes 1973, 42)

Lukes' analysis of individualism may provide less jingoistic insights, given his self-confessed antiliberal bias toward socialism (Lukes 1973, 157). He lists five components of individualism: the dignity of humanity, autonomy, privacy, self-development, and the abstract individual.

Dignity

Individual human dignity was a concept affirmed by religion. For example, in *I Colossians III:11*, Paul writes, "Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all." In other words, although the individual is seen to belong to a social category (Greek, Jew, and so on) personhood is seen to transcend social category. This early (and potentially politically radical, as the Roman overlords had earlier realized) individualistic strand was rendered too attenuated by the prevailing classical *zeitgeist* of the Middle Ages to exert much influence

until Luther and Calvin picked up this theme with their revolutionary emphases on individual interpretation of holy scripture and individual reason as a guide to salvation without clerical mediation.

The notion of dignity may need, as its necessary foundation, the idea of the self. The classical viewpoint valued individuals as appropriate to their nature (or, more precisely, according to their position in the socio-political hierarchy). According to Krąpiec, the self was a concept 'invented' by Hume to take the place of the soul: "A permanent spiritual substance which is the unifying foundation of changing impressions" (Krąpiec 1985, 73). Indeed, as described by Taylor, the self as we understand it seems to be a rather recent (post-Enlightenment) invention that emerged as human beings took centre stage in the cosmos:

> Disengagement from cosmic order meant that the human agent was no longer to be understood as an element in a larger, meaningful order. His paradigm purposes are to be discovered within...And this yields a picture of the sovereign individual, who is 'by nature' not bound to any authority. (Taylor 1989, 193-194)

The chimerical nature of the self led Amélie Rorty to say, "There is no such thing as 'the' concept of a person" (Rorty 1990, 21), thus removing support for the classical notion of a consistent innate human nature.

Through contemplation of specific individuals, Plato had deduced that there was a universal quality—rational human nature—in which all free men participated (although not equally, or to the same extent) (Taylor 1989, 178). Thus, the classical dignity of humanity was bound up with his rationality: this is also the modern viewpoint, illustrated by Locke's conviction that we must decide for ourselves, by our self (for example, on religion, Locke 1959, 438). However, as described above and in Chapter 2, from the classical viewpoint all individuals did not participate equally in the common reason—indeed, the emphasis was on *inequality*. With the exception of Plato's anomalous treatment of women, dignity was an

attribute only of those who most fully participated in reason (Aristotle 1963, 388), notably free men eligible for citizenship.

If there is no one universal human nature and human nature is culturally or caste specific, then there can be no basis on which individuals can claim to be equal to any (or all) other individual(s). If there is no formal universal human nature, liberal individualism dies. True universality is what gives prior value to the individual because it is the link to those universal characteristics that ratifies the individual in the sense that it gives him or her value (Berry 1986, 70). In a classical or organic society, each individual has value, but that value is specific to and contingent on the individual's appropriate role. Thus a king and a slave each has value, but not *the same* value. One universal human nature, on the contrary, allows the slave claim to a common humanity, or common nature, with the king. Thus it is no longer possible to justify oppression, unequal treatment, even cruelty on the grounds that the underclasses are not like 'us', value different things, feel things differently, think differently, and so on. It becomes possible, in Biblical words, to ask "Who made thee a prince and a judge over us?" (Exodus II:14).

The modern perspective came to a resolution of this dilemma by gradually diluting and extending the notion of human nature so that it could apply to all individuals, eventually including women. Generally speaking, the baseline is now some element of rationality. As pointed out above, there are those who demand that dolphins and certain primates be included under the human nature umbrella (Singer 1978, for example).

From the classical viewpoint as described in Chapter 2, the individual has dignity but this quality is vested in the individual's role, in terms of one's fulfilment of one's proper purpose, within the ordered cosmos. Dignity lies in subordinating one's own personal interests (and Plato's reference to greed, self-indulgence, and "the profits of wrong-doing" [Plato 1987, 112] indicate that humanity *was* capable of personal interests) to the greater good of the community and, by extension, the natural order. Thus Burke, one of the oppo-

nents of the French Revolution, was quoted in Chapter 2 as saying, "Society requires the inclinations of men should frequently be thwarted, their will controlled, and their passions brought into subjection" (in Lukes 1973, 4) One of the enduring criticisms of the liberal position has been that it leads in the other direction, away from social constraints, limits, and bounds toward anarchy and pure egotism (Lukes 1973, 4-5, 13-15).

To want equality is to consider that the other has something desirable. To wish to participate in that desirable state is, from the classical viewpoint, to make the difficult claim that one has been placed in the wrong caste accidentally, through some freak of nature. Thus, in the Middle Ages, serfs were virtually always serfs for life (the rare exceptions were those with particularly spectacular abilities, accidental good fortune, or access to ecclesiastical career paths). To ensure that those at the lower end of the echelon were kept in their proper place, the full power of the ideological machine (religion, philosophy, popular wisdom, and so on) was brought into play. The principle of distributive justice was largely accepted as an inalterable fact of nature: it was simply the way things *were*. MacIntyre confirms my interpretation thus: "There are powers in the world which no one can control...These forces and the rules of kinship and friendship together constitute patterns of an ineluctable kind. Neither willing nor cunning will enable anyone to evade them" (MacIntyre 1981, 117).

Equality before God did not imply equality before humanity or the social order. This must not have been easy to accept, given the grinding poverty and brutal subjugation of the underclasses, but it was the duty of each individual to accept reality and respond obediently to the demands of his or situation within the community (indeed, the popular use, until approximately WWII, of the word 'situation' for occupation harks back to one's hierarchical position on the pyramid of the social orders). The hierarchical order can morally and legitimately "sacrifice the individual for the good of society" (Poleman 1983, 57). Individual will and desire is to be controlled by reason and, from a religious viewpoint, by faith that in

serving the social order one was serving God. This is a radically different situation than that described above, with reference to the modern perspective and conventional rights. What individuals *want* has, in the modern *zeitgeist*, overtaken what individuals must do. The following quotation supports my interpretation of the classical position, as the Chorus must wrench its will to slavery:

> And mine it is to wrench my will, and consent
> to their commands, right or wrong,
> To beat down my edged hate.
> And yet under veils I weep...
>
> Aeschylus (*The Libation Bearers*, 95)

To the classical way of thinking, as suggested in Chapter 2, an individual that did not belong to any particular category was a non-person. There are more contemporary echoes of this non-personhood in the treatment of refugees in contemporary theatres of war and in Hitler's refusal to allow Jews participation in the universal Aryan human nature (he gave the Jewish people "their own special nature" [Hitler 1943, 306]). Both Amélie Rorty (1990) and Patterson (1991) point out that a 'contrast class' (this is Rorty's term) of nonpersons may be necessary in order to conceptualize, define, and partake in such modern positives as freedom, rights, dignity, and equality.

The pursuit of happiness is another aspect of human dignity. Happiness, in the classical view, involves elements of duty, conformity, and self-discipline that are extremely difficult to align with our modern notion of happiness. Additionally, the idea that our own reason can show us the way to pursue happiness is a modern one. In theory, if all individuals unite into society to support this self-determined happiness, self-interests will be balanced off against each other. This is the vision that guided the founders of the United States of America, tutored by Locke.

Autonomy

Autonomy is taken to mean that thoughts and actions do not belong to the collectivity but to each individual, and that each person plays an active role in determining his or her purposes. Thus, "Each individual [is viewed as] the expert in identifying his or her own interest" (Jagger 1983, 30). It is a modern, non-organic, right that has validity independent of the community and the individual's place in the community. Fox-Genovese supports my contention that this right does not exist in classical communitarian societies (Fox-Genovese 1991, 115). To insist on autonomy is not to say that individuals are not influenced by other individuals and by groups, or to believe that ideas occur spontaneously rather than in reaction to outside stimuli, but to affirm the rationality of the individual and her or his ability to make a free (in the sense of 'not determined by agencies or causes outside his control') and reflexive choice, even though this choice may go against the norms of the community. This agency and rational intentionality is undercut by the communitiarian notion that we do not control our own lives in the sense of making individual decisions because "'the hidden hand of the community' ...guide[s] most of what we do" (Bell 1993, 32). This theme will be taken up in the discussion of socialization in the following chapters (see also Appendix I).

Autonomy is also known as the right to self-rule. Patterson eulogizes it as follows:

> That people are free to do as they please within limits set only by the personal freedom of others; that legally all persons are equal before the law; that philosophically the individual's separate existence is inviolable; that psychologically the ultimate human condition is to be liberated from all internal and external constraints in one's desire to realize one's self...—all add up to a value complex that not only is unparalleled in any other culture but, in its profundity and power, is superior to any other single complex of values conceived by mankind. (Patterson 1991, 403)

The classical viewpoint holds that human beings are brought under and subject to the natural laws that govern all entities. Entities, human or not, that obey laws are not free to do otherwise. Pre-Enlightenment, personal power was rare, if not nonexistent, even rulers expressed the power and authority of the group (Patterson 1991, 11). Autonomy requires the possession of at least a minimum of personal power over oneself, if not over others, to

the extent that precludes the unwelcome encroachment that is implicated in the power of others over the self.

From the modern viewpoint, although individuals are deeply influenced by their environment, they are to be held responsible for their own thoughts and actions, (for example, Ullman 1967, 52). This aspect of the modern *zeitgeist* is not overly sympathetic to the so-called "Twinkie" defence or the battered woman syndrome because, as rational responsible agents, individuals are not held to be passive victims of their natures, drives, instincts, or deeply-rooted socialization. From the modern perspective, the self retains a unique core, an innate personality, that may be modified by social interaction, but is not created by social interaction alone. For example, Ryan points out that this individual nature may be linked to an underlying autonomous human nature, perhaps expressed somewhat differently in each individual:

> But if human nature is so manipulable, one of the functions of the notion of human nature is much impaired, for it plays a much-reduced role in setting a limit to political possibility. Unless something substantial, basic and important survives the process of socialization, and remains intact behind the social appearances, we are unable to say anything very profound about how well or how ill social arrangements satisfy human needs and aspirations. (Ryan 1973, 13)

Today, here in Canada, freedom is considered a positive value. In the Montreal *Gazette*, a survey reported that working-class Canadians value freedom above all other concepts listed (July 19, 1995). While slaves in the classical period certainly valued freedom (we know they desired manumission[20]), freedom in the sense of being able to determine one's own purposes was not commonly known—if, indeed it existed at all ("The liberal idea of freedom... is not to be found in ancient Greece or Rome, or in Christian countries before the Reformation" [Wiener [ed.] 1973, *Liberalism* 36). Even kings were conscious that they were "slaves to the masses" according to Euripides (in Patterson 1991, 140).

It should be obvious that, in linking individuals to a particular human nature, the classical perspective downplayed the value of autonomy in the interests of structured social

harmony and efficiency. Autonomy, as the freedom to act, was accepted but in the context of the reason's control of the will. Self-discipline, self-denial, and obedience ("The mind is bowed to the yoke" [Mill 1975]) in the interests of the larger order, rather than freedom, were the keys to identity, personal fulfilment, and happiness: "Without... a place in the social order, a man would not only be incapable of receiving recognition and response from others; not only would others not know, but he would not himself know who he was" (MacIntyre 1981, 116). In flaunting the bounds of convention and the bonds of community lay the potential for injustice and unhappiness, because liberty must be regulated. This is illustrated by later figures like Rousseau and Durkheim, as well as by the ancient philosophers: "True happiness consists in decreasing the difference between our desires and our powers, in establishing a perfect equilibrium between the power and the will. Then only, when all its forces are employed, will the soul be at rest and man will find himself in his true position" (Rousseau 1989, 44). Self-regulation through the acceptance of limits and service to the community is a strong theme in Durkheim's writings: "We must limit our horizons, select a definite task, and involve ourselves utterly, instead of making ourselves, so to speak, a finished work of art, one that derives all its value from itself rather than from the services it renders" (Durkheim 1984, 333).

From the modern liberal perspective, autonomy is inextricable from self-definition. An individual's assignment to a particular social role or caste (whether the assignment is arbitrary, based on birth into an aristocracy, decided by a wise ruler on the basis of which categorical nature one falls into, or as revealed through one's occupation) by an external agent in the interests of an imposed, divine or natural order is seen as a pernicious affront to that individual. In Lukes' words, we fail to respect a person,

> When we see him and consequently treat him not as a person but as merely the bearer of a title or the player of a role...We deny his status as an autonomous person when we allow our attitudes to him to be dictated solely by some contingent and socially defined attribute of him, such as his place in the social order or his occupa-

tional role...to control or dominate his will...to restrict the range of alternatives between which he can choose...limit(s) or restrict(s) his opportunities to realize his capacities of self-development. (Lukes 1973, 133-134)

Mill described the shift in emphasis from the power of authority to determine an individual's purpose to the power of the individual to determine his or her own purpose as follows:

> Human beings are no longer born to their place in life, and chained down by an inexorable bond to the places they are born to, but are free to employ their faculties, and such favourable chances as offer, to achieve the lot which may appear to them most desirable. Human society of old was constituted on a very different principle. All were born into a fixed social position, and were mostly kept in it by law, or interdicted from any means by which they could emerge from it...The old theory was that the least possible should be left to the choice of the individual...all he had to do should, as far as practicable, be laid down for him by superior wisdom. Left to himself he was sure to go wrong. The modern conviction...is that things in which the individual is the person directly interested never go right but [if] left to [the person's] own discretion, and that any regulation of them by authority, except to protect the rights of others, is sure to be mischevious. (Mill 1975, 445)

Privacy

Privacy, sometimes called negative liberty, is invoked by individualists as an area of non-interference in which a person may pursue self-development and self-determination. Clichés like "An Englishman's home is his castle," and "The State has no business in the bedrooms of the nation" signify the high regard which the individualist has for privacy.

Mill supported the right to privacy even in self-destructive situations (Mill 1975, 101) and, indeed today we tend to call undue government interference in our lives paternalistic. Two contemporary examples are the debates over assisted suicide and proposals to make bicycle helmets mandatory by law. The modern notion of privacy may be contrasted with the ideal state described by Plato, in which even the most private function (procreation) is rigourously controlled by the state.

Self-development

This is seen as the responsibility of each individual—the individual is an agent responsible to him- or herself for attaining a certain level of moral and personal achievement, along the lines determined by him- or herself:

> The primary ethical task for each person is the fullest development of himself or herself as a living human being *and* as the individual that he or she is...The valuation of human life amounts to the valuation of the particular human life over which the person has direct responsibility, namely oneself. (Machon 1989, xxiii)

Amélie Rorty describes self-development thus:

> A person is essentially capable of stepping back from her beliefs and desires to evaluate their rationality and appropriateness; she is also capable (at the very least) of attempting to form and modify her beliefs and desires, her actions, on the basis of her rational evaluations. The idea of autonomy...also emphasizes imaginative creativity. Because their decisions and actions are intentionally identified, and because they have latitude in transforming, improvising, and inventing their intentions, persons can, in a number of significant ways, form the worlds in which they live. (Rorty 1990, 25-26)

The person described in the above quotation sounds nothing like the description of a feudal serf in a closed society or an auxiliary in Plato's Republic. Indeed, Poleman contends that the organic model of society cannot account for personality (Poleman 1983, 58). The classical viewpoint concentrated on conformity to an external order, not on transforming, improvising, inventing, and forming the worlds in which we live. That classical world is already perfect and does not need interference from humanity to spoil its harmonious design.

Many individualists see responsibility to the community as a corollary of self-development (see also, Lukes 1973, 71):

> Collective responsibility, the responsibility of society, is a responsibility to its individual members, and consists in those services which society can perform among those which need to be performed to provide conditions in which every individual may actualize his potentials by performing a social role of his own choice. Men are equally free only insofar as they have equal opportunities for self-actualization, growth, and personal achievement limited only by their individual abilities and nurture. (Miller 1967, 129)

Mill makes it clear that the modern vision of human nature is radically different from the classical: "Human nature is not a machine to be built after a model, and set to do exactly the work prescribed for it, but a tree, which requires to grow and develop itself on all sides, according to the tendency of the inward forces which make it a living thing" (Mill 1975, 73). From the modern viewpoint, the individual is an agent capable of a large degree of self-determination, achieved through agency, reflection, and reflective choice. Through self-determination, an individual may stand against traditional values and repudiate authority, as indeed many did during the Reformation and the Enlightenment (Kymlicka 1993, 218).

The Abstract Individual

The liberal individualist concept most challenged by cultural feminism is that of the abstract individual. Chapter 1 presented the rival cultural and liberal feminist arguments in more detail. For the purposes of this chapter, a *précis* will suffice. According to this view, as above, individuals are the natural givens and social arrangements are the artificial 'man-made' edifices built upon them. Thus, Rousseau, for example, can describe an original state of nature in which men and women exist asocially. If individuals can be conceived of as apart from society, then governments, sex-roles, and other 'non-natural' institutions may be seen as artificial, fluid, malleable, and vulnerable to being changed by individuals without negative outcome. This aspect of the modern viewpoint is usually worded as "the individual is prior to the state," and it is diametrically opposed to the classical viewpoint: "The city or state has priority over the household and over any individual among us. For the whole must be prior to the parts...It is clear then that the state is both natural and prior to the individual" (Aristotle 1963, 29). According to Burke, "Individuals pass like shadows; but the common-wealth is fixed and stable" (in Lukes 1973, 3).

In describing the Middle Ages as follows, Ullman gives a particularly compelling description of society organized in the classical, communitarian mode:

[Society was] one whole and was indivisible, and within it the individual was no more than a part...The individual was so infinitesimally small a part that his interests could easily be sacrificed at the altar of the public good, at the altar of society itself...All individual bodies may and will die, but what cannot die is the idea of law, the idea of right order, which holds the public and corporate body together and which therefore possessed sempiternity (Ullman 1967, 46-47)

* * * * *

The unchanging bedrock of the modern position is a deliberately vague formulation of a universal human nature that traverses and transcends all categories (race, gender, religion, and so on) and to which belong non-negotiable universal human rights. All other social arrangements are artificial conventions based on the coming together of individuals for mutual benefit that requires some limit to personal freedom. This perspective underlies the liberal feminist perspective described in Chapter 1. Through the possession of an abstract human nature, all individuals regardless of sex, race, creed, or sexual orientation, share in common rights.

The notions of human nature, natural rights, and natural law are male creations. Yet they have had a profound impact on the lives of women and it behoves feminist theorists to value them seriously. To do less would "serve their cause poorly and insult the intelligence" of those who espouse the feminist cause under any banner (Fox-Genovese 1991, 57).The following chapter attempts to relate the content of Chapters 2 and 3, particularly the classical, communitarian *zeitgeist*, to women.

ENDNOTES

1. Any author is vulnerable to what Bantock terms "the parochialism of the present" and I am no exception. Particularly in any description of the feudal hierarchy, I find my modern liberal prejudices colouring my description. Perhaps by, once again, owning up to my own bias, I may warn my reader that I find objectivity as elusive as those who claimed a value-neutral scientific objectivity in sex-differentiation research.

2. Further, it is interesting that Frazer and Lacey note the development of the communitarian argument in opposition to liberal and modernist theories.

3. Wherein "social condition at birth" determines one's opportunities (Fox-Genovese 1991, 61).

4. Obviously, this statement requires more detailed examination. Due to space considerations, I have omitted the supporting argument, which invokes Hume and Kant on natural law.

5. The word 'individual' is used in this chapter, except where otherwise indicated, to mean a sane adult, of 'normal' intelligence, not presently incarcerated by the penal system nor serving active military duty. This qualification is necessary to simplify the treatment of rights, which becomes much more complex when applied to children, the insane, the convict on death row, the soldier, or the mentally handicapped. That these complexities also apply to women will, I hope, become clear in the following chapter.

6. The word 'ought' in this context indicates the prescriptive nature of the general rights theory. Evidently, all individuals are not accorded their general rights (murder victims, the homeless, those in a coma, and so on). The word 'ought' also implies the abstract nature of general rights theories: for this I rely on Arendt and Strauss, particularly in their discussions of Burke's opposition to the French Revolution (Arendt, 299-300; Strauss, 294-323).

7. Indeed, in my readings on 'human nature' in the past five years, I am tempted to generalize that I have found no pre-Enlightenment reference that countered injustice with an appeal to rights. Early feminist writings appeal to the "duties and obligations" of women to educate themselves and remark that "Women are proper to all" or "as Capable of Offices and Employments in civil Society as Men are" (these representative, if late, examples are from de la Barre, published in 1677).

8. The sexist phrase 'rights of man' is used in this context because the notion was developed and popularized by men and about men. Wollstonecraft wrote her *Vindication* in an attempt to extend the 'rights of man' to women. Today, the name and slogan of the International Foundation for the Promotion of Human Rights suggests a different formulation: "Peace of mind would come to all people through a universal respect for the **basic human rights of everyone.**"

9. Though to reiterate, the idealized, abstract vision of general rights was not played out pragmatically.

10. Although a contractual right may be held by only one individual, contractual rights are reciprocal and consequently imply the ratification of all parties involved. In other words, an individual cannot designate it his or her right to collect a sum of money from another individual unless that other individual agrees to respect his or her right (often in return for some privilege). However, contractual rights and their corresponding obligations are seen as freely entered into, without the normative (i.e., principal of right action that guides the collectivity) essence of the general and specific rights mentioned above.

11. For example, aboriginal Canadians have the right not to pay taxes on the same basis as non-aboriginal Canadians as a type of compensation for the systematic abuses of the past, the unique contribution they made to the formation of our country, and the challenges they face in our non-aboriginal society today.

12. As discussed in earlier chapters, Plato also pointed to the difficulties in categorization, which rests upon the judgement of "significance" or "insignificance" (the male and female watchdog, the bald and hairy man). The issue of significance, Berry points out, is always subjective (Berry 1986, 37 and throughout).

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13. This conception of justice is not dismissed by Rawls, but is critiqued as to the methods used to determine rights and duties (Rawls 1971, 6).

14. There are echoes of this classical notion of the ordered universe in Rawls. For example, he states, "In the absence of a certain measure of agreement on what is just and unjust, it is clearly more difficult for individuals to coordinate their plans efficiently in order to insure that mutually beneficial arrangements are maintained" (Rawls 1971, 6).

15. This section imposes a modern concept (self-determination) on a classical viewpoint of the nature of humanity. classical philosophers could arguably not have seen an individual's self-determination apart from the individual's place in the hierarchy.

16. In a privately printed manuscript of Schopenhauer's *Parables*, which I was fortunate enough to see, he tells the story of porcupines who wish to live closely together but, inadvertently, prick each other. This fable illustrates the difficulties that human beings have in living within society:

A number of porcupines huddled together for warmth on a cold day in winter; but, as they began to prick one another with their quills, they were obliged to disperse. However the cold drove them together again, and just the same thing happened. At last, after many turns of huddling and dispersing, they discovered that they would be best off by remaining at a little distance from one another. In the same way the need of society drives the human porcupines together, only to be mutually repelled by the many prickly and disagreeable qualities of their nature. The moderate distance which they at last discover to be the only tolerable condition of intercourse is the code of politeness and fine manners; and those who transgress it are roughly told - in the English phrase - *to keep their distance*. By this arrangement, the mutual need of warmth is only very moderately satisfied; but then people do not get pricked. A man who has some heat in himself prefers to remain outside, there he will neither prick other people nor get pricked himself.

17. Burke, amongst others, uses a classical argument against "imaginary rights" as the foundation of the just state and urges "provision for our wants and... conformity to duties" as a better basis for government, according to Strauss (1953, 298).

18. Obviously, this is the ideal and not the real situation.

19. Individualism is appealed to by libertarian anarchists and ultraconservatives alike (McElroy 1982); according to Lukes, Oscar Wilde saw socialism as the route to individualism while J.S. Mill saw socialism and individualism as direct opposites (Lukes 1973, 32-35).

20. Manumission is a difficult concept to align with the classical position on human natures. Plato and Aristotle supported slavery, as mentioned above, on the basis that certain individuals possess 'slave natures'. However, as with any ideology, there are exceptions which do not fall under the rule and, as mentioned in Chapter 6, there were those who disagreed with Plato and Aristotle's cosmology and preferred the modern interpretation of slavery as the instrumental use of equal human beings through the imposition of power over the weaker by the stronger.

CHAPTER 4: WOMEN AND THE CONCEPT OF 'NATURES'

In this chapter, I turn to a consideration of what the 'nature' concepts embedded in cultural feminism and classical communitarianism mean when they are applied specifically to women. In this chapter and the next, I will argue that the influential group of contemporary feminists (not to mention many historical, male, philosophers), which I referred to as cultural feminists in Chapter 1, holds the view that women do share an essential nature, despite their protests to the contrary. In this chapter and the next, I intend to show that cultural feminism is 'essentialist' in that it requires a concept of 'woman's nature'. Cultural feminism's alignment with essentialism cannot be presumed because this affiliation is vigorously denied (for example, Houston 1988, 175-185; also Dallery 1989, 62-65; and Frazer and Lacey 1993, 132). I shall also consider whether and in what ways the cultural feminist understanding of 'woman *qua* woman', or woman as a sex-class, accords with the classical notion of 'woman's nature' through an examination of universals, determinism, significance, and hierarchy—the key elements of 'human nature' derived in Chapter 2 and Appendices II and III.

I maintain that both 'woman's nature' and communitarianism depend on the classical world view. Consequently, an inevitable outcome of anchoring cultural feminist arguments in classical communitarianism is that intellectual assent must be given to essentialism, contextualism, determinism, prescriptivism, and structural/functionalism.[1] Perhaps this undertaking may extend and strengthen a critique of feminist communitarianism and underline some of the difficulties suggested by the moral and ethical consequences of the cultural feminist conception of womanhood. At this point, it may be appropriate to repeat

the main elements of communitarianism, first cited in Chapter 2: first, the community and not the individual is the source of value; second, the identity of human beings depends completely on their social context (it is impossible to think of an abstract human being, a universal human being, or a universalized 'human nature' that applies to all humans), hence individuals are determined by their environment; third, the individual is an embodied individual (the body cannot be transcended because mind and body cannot be conceived as separable); fourth, related to point one above, values and virtues arise out of particular practices; fifth, communal and public goods are central, consequently individual rights are unimportant (if not suspect); sixth, contrary to the empirical tradition, ought may be derived from is (Frazer and Lacey [1993], the *Communitarian Manifesto* [1991], Okin [1989], Fox-Genovese[1991], Miller[(1967], Bell[(1993]). These elements are congruent with the classical world view presented in Chapter 2. In this and the following chapters, I will show that they are also congruent with the cultural feminist understanding of the 'nature of woman'.[2]

'Woman's Nature'

Logically, it ought to be possible to take the following stipulative definition of an entity's nature and apply it to 'woman's nature': Human nature is the essential and innate qualities, forces, or properties within all humans that are fixed, inherent, and inseparable, giving humanity its fundamental character and tendencies as revealed in its actions, including cognitions (Appendices II and III examine 'natures' in general and 'human nature' specifically to derive this stipulative definition of a 'nature'). Thus, 'woman's nature' is the essential and innate qualities, forces, or properties within all women that are fixed, inherent, and inseparable, giving women their fundamental character and tendencies as revealed in their actions, including cognitions.

On a closer look, then, first, 'woman's essential nature' is located within the woman as a basic part of her makeup; her 'nature' is either innate or the result of deep socialization;[3] women do not act as they do because of any external force (for example, overt coercion, manipulation, incentive, deliberate repression, or totalitarian repression) but because it is their 'nature' to act in this way.

Second, 'woman's essential nature' is inherent, not transitory or changeable by the individual or by external social forces; it is universal over time and place (transcultural).

Third, 'woman's essential nature' has to do with women's actions; it renders women predictable because of their disposition or tendency to act in a certain way; it expresses their dominant qualities (as, for example, in the balance of the humours). 'Woman's nature' is a non-rational drive to action; it is the expression of an unrestrained and spontaneous attitude, not a result of external causes in the sense of pressures, prompting or constraints; neither is it a result of deliberation.

Fourth, 'woman's essential nature' locates women within a distinct class of persons (the category or sex-class 'woman'), such that it could be said that all members of that class share that same nature.

Fifth, 'woman's essential nature' pertains both to the physical makeup of women and to those internal forces (drives) that make them act.

Sixth, 'woman's nature' comprises "those characteristics in the absence of which we would not call the thing a [woman]," to paraphrase Hospers (Hospers 1956, 34). As presented in Chapter 2, essentialism refers to the notion that entities within the same category share common, *indispensable* elements. These elements cannot be eliminated without destroying the entity or its distinctive character.

If human nature and the nature of humanity are identical, 'woman's nature' is that Pythagorean duality or opposite by which both human nature and humanity's nature are defined.[4] In other words, 'woman's nature' is what humanity's nature is not.[5] In view of the

above six elements of a definition of 'woman's nature', does it seem likely that women 'in fact', or from a cultural feminist viewpoint, possess a distinct shared 'nature'?

If 'woman's nature' is located within each woman from birth as a basic part of her makeup, then sex differences would seem to be a result of or linked to her anatomy and physiology. The biological position has not been borne out in the literature, as no consistent connection between cognitive or personality traits and the sex of the subject has been observed (Rose et al 1984, 136, 146; Holmstrom 1982, 31; Linn and Hyde 1989, 17; Hacker 1983, 39; Leder 1985, 304; Deaux and Kite 1987, 94: this argument is supported in Appendix I). However, this connection is given some support, despite the lack of evidence, by cultural feminists: for example, "Here the landscape is dominated by sex differences, differences that appear as biologically given" (Jagger 1983, 93-98). Chapter 7 and Appendix I present a more thorough discussion of cognitive, identification, and social learning sex-role socialization theories.

Alternatively, 'woman's nature' is the result of deep socialization whereby attitudes from the surrounding environment are taken into the self in the sense of being uncritically incorporated into the subconscious of the individual and provide subliminal, non-reflexive sources of behaviour for that individual. This is the communitarian stance elucidated by Bell (1993) and first developed in detail by Owen, the nineteenth-century utopian socialist whose position it was that human beings are formed in every particular by the environment in which they find themselves:

> It having been discovered that man at birth is wholly formed by the power which creates him, and that his subsequent character is determined by the circumstances which surround him, acting upon his original or created nature—that does not in any degree form himself, physically or mentally, and therefore cannot be a free or responsible agent. (Robert Owen, "The New Social System" *The New Harmony Gazette* 2 (January 10, 1827), 113, quoted in Gutek 1997, 227)

This stance on the origin of the self is evident in cultural feminist theory: for example, "A contemporary individual's life experience is shaped by her sex and gender assignment from birth to death" (Jagger 1983, 134), "While various sex differences might not be biologically determined, they are still so thoroughly ingrained as to be intractable" (Moore 1995), and "Psychological differences between men and women are due to differences in their socialization" (Holmstrom 1982, 30).

Such adamantine qualities are theoretically posited, but it is critical to realize that such fixed qualities not amenable to conscious manipulation or extinction through re-education have not been shown to exist, even under rigorous and inhuman brainwashing (Farber 1966, for example). On the contrary, it has been convincingly demonstrated that the mechanisms of socialization are moderated by the cognitions of the subject (Allen 1985, 1; Linn and Hyde 1989, 17; Leder 1985, 304; Hacker 1983, 39; Goslin 1969, 3; Kolhberg 1966). Identification theory (see Appendix I), although appealed to by cultural feminist Chodorow (1978), is not a 'fact' in the sense that it remains a hypothesis in the realm of speculation. Chodorow's belief, according to Segal, that "There is a basic and stable male and female gender identity and difference" and, "Female identification and the assumption of core gender identity are straightforward" (Segal 1987, 141), is not supported by current research in the psychology of socialization. Identification theory has been abandoned by all but so-called difference theorists as a viable avenue of scientific investigation because it is plainly *not* the method through which sex differences are acquired (Mackie 1983, 107).

Social learning theories (see Appendix I) have similarly fallen by the wayside in all but cultural feminist writings because the 'automatic' or non-cognitive nature of the process has also been demonstrated *not* to be the way children assimilate sex differences. Social learning's conditioning model of socialization is favoured by many cultural feminists. For example, "In view of his own *conditioning*, we have little reason to believe that Plato would perceive sex stereotyping..." (Martin 1985, 24); "The total degradation of women brought

about by brutalization and *conditioning*" (Grimshaw 1986, 126); "If stories portray women as irrational and immoral, will not students of both sexes *come to believe* that males are superior and females inferior human beings?" (Martin 1985, 26); Daly refers to socialized women as "fembots" unable to think for themselves (Daly 1979); Grimshaw draws attention to, though does not support, the strand in feminist theory that depicts women as "totally victimized, conditioned or indoctrinated" (Grimshaw 1986, 134) and refers to "a state in which one is a mere pawn, a non-person, a puppet who is simply manipulated by strings pulled by other people" (Grimshaw 1986, 158). Why should girls, in Henshel's terms, be "slowly induced into believing that the differential outcome of this socialization process is natural, meaning that women are what they are rather than what they, just like men, have been forced to internalize" (Henshel 1973, 100)?[6] "Forced internalization" is a concept that deserves more attention, if not outright scepticism.

Current socialization theories are cognitive in the sense that the child is an active participant, choosing which models to follow, whose opinions to value, and which social norms to adopt, although the extent and style of conscious participation in the socialization process are unknown. Moreover, in addition to being obsolete, social learning and cognitive development theories both posit an external force (the reification 'society') that guides and controls — though, again, the *extent* of the control varies, depending on the theory — the socialization process. To accord with our definition, 'woman's nature' must arise from within the person herself rather than originating externally.

The first element of my definition, therefore, can only hold true if one clings to either the biological or identification theory of sex differences. This would fly in the face of evidence and go against current acceptable practice in psychology, sociobiology, and sociology, as discussed in Appendix I. However, this is exactly the cultural feminist approach—faced with lack of scientific evidence, the appeal is to intuition, women's own life experiences, and anecdotal evidence. Moreover, the lack of 'hard' evidence is easily countered by noting that

new research may at any time produce indisputable proof that men and women are different in more than a physiological sense. For example, in the following quotation, Martin, who I identify as a cultural feminist, openly acknowledges that there is no scientific evidence of sex differences in cognition. Instead of taking the moderate position that we simply do not know whether women are different in this way, she bases her entire subsequent argument on this specious claim for difference: "No research has yet been done that shows conclusively that being female affects the way one learns, but I submit that in view of everything we know about the differential socialization of males and females it would be foolhardy to assume that it does not" (Martin 1985, 19). In fact the sketchy and frequently contradictory nature of the current state of knowledge with respect to the psychological mechanisms involved in the socialization process suggest that it would be foolhardy to make *any* assumptions whatsoever in this area.

Another example, from the work of Belenky *et al.*, shows a similar strategy of acknowledging yet refusing to deal with lack of scientific support:

> It is possible that more women than men tip toward connected knowing and more men than women toward separate knowing. Some people, certainly, would argue that this is so, but we know of no hard data (to use a favorite separate-knowing term) bearing directly on the issue, and we offer none here because we interviewed no men. (Belenky *et al.* 1986, 103)

Consequently, despite the deliberate attempt to 'hedge bets' in this preamble, the different voices of Belenky's connected knowing and Gilligan's and Nodding's ethic of care have come to be seen as *female* voices. Thus Austen states,

> Despite the fact that Gilligan...deemphasize(s) the connection between this distinctive moral orientation and women, there remains considerable interest in *whose* voice it is. Many commentators seem to accept that the different voice is a woman's voice, and on that basis proceed to account for the difference. (Austen 1995)

In the same vein, Jagger says, "Considerable work still needs to be done in elaborating the concept of women's standpoint. A number of arguments used to establish it are still

speculative and require further development and investigation" (Jagger 1983, 371). This does not preclude the construction of Jagger's main argments against liberal individualism on standpoint theories.

To counter charges of essentialism, it is not sufficient to add a disclaimer, in the guise of a qualifying statement, to what is clearly a description of women's true 'nature'. For example:

> The different voice I describe is characterized not by gender but theme. Its association with women is an empirical observation...But this association is not absolute, and the contrasts between male and female voices are presented here to highlight a distinction between two modes of thought... rather than to represent a generalization about either sex. (Gilligan 1982, 2)

Yet Gilligan concludes with a forthright reference to "the different voice of women" and "two disparate modes of experience" (Gilligan 1982, 173-174). This "voice" and this "mode of experience" certainly seem to refer to the notion (cited in Chapter 2's definition of essentialism) that entities within the same category share common, indispensable elements that cannot be eliminated without destroying the entity or its distinctive character.

Nor is it acceptable to anchor one's belief in a single study, as Jagger does with the Scheman study (Jagger 1983, 43) that will be discussed in Chapter 6 of this thesis and as Chodorow does, according to Gilligan, below:

> In her analysis, Chodorow relies primarily on Robert Stoller's studies which indicate that gender identity, the unchanging core of personality formation, is 'with rare exception firmly and irreversibly established for both sexes by the time a child is around three.' (Gilligan 1982, 7)

Stoller's findings run against the findings of other social scientists, documented in Appendix I. Further there is no scientific basis for considering gender identity to be at the core of personality (see Chapter 7 for a discussion of theories of the self).

If these examples are *not* descriptive of 'woman's true nature', the burgeoning cultural feminist *oeuvre* is founded on the meagre finding that *some people* are more nurturing, more affiliative, less warlike, and so on than others. This is hardly a basis for the following trumpet-call:

> Thus women not only reach mid-life with a psychological history different from men's...but they also make a different sense of experience, based on their knowledge of human relationships...As a result, women's development delineates the path not only to a less violent life but also to a maturity realized through interdependence and taking care. (Gilligan 1982, 172)

Cultural feminism must either admit that it is essentialist and makes claims based on 'woman's essential nature', or it must abandon claims to the particular women's "way of knowing" and moral standpoint that, according to Riley, "Conflates the attributed, the imposed, and the lived, and then sanctifies the resulting *mélange*" (Riley 1988, 100). Hopefully, the foregoing discussion has made the theoretical connection discernible but, like any recidivist, I will return to this subject below and in the following chapter.

A more moderate path between the liberal and the cultural, is to emphasize along with Wollstonecraft and Mill, that we cannot know what women's true 'nature' is for the following two reasons. First, to know the nature of something is to know its potential in a wide variety of environments. Yet women have only been studied in one particular environment—that of male-dominated society saturated in masculine authority. Second, knowledge of women's 'nature' depends epistemologically on knowledge of mental states, our own if we are female and others' if we are male. Kagan (1989) and Wilson (1993) emphasize the radical and seemingly insurmountable difficulty in knowing both our own mental states and those of others:

> One simply does not *know*—not, at least, without a good deal of insight and experience—how one really stands in reference to one's own aggression, masochistic tendencies, willingness to be depressed, ability to mourn, desire to dominate, suitability for this or that job or marriage-partner, and so forth more or less without end... to make claims to certain knowledge must seem ridiculous to any psychologically sophisticated person. (Wilson 1993, 242)

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For ideological purposes, cultural feminism depends on the concept of a distinct female 'nature'. From the preceding discussion, it ought to be clear that natures cannot be proved scientifically. Whether or not a distinct female 'nature' is 'real', it is a social fact that carries its own authority, to use Durkheim's vocabulary.

Universals

The second point in the above definition of 'woman's nature' states that this essential 'nature' is inherent, not transitory or changeable by the individual or by external social forces; it is universal over time and place (transcultural).

Universals are congenial to the classical perspective, while the modern perspective tends to concentrate more on the specifics and on particular instances. Although universals originate in observation, they quickly move into the realm of abstract rationality: Exceptions to the rule may be attributed to the vulnerability of the senses or to the actions of an entity against its true nature. The empirical school of thought encourages suspicion of grand general laws and keeps an open mind that things must not always be thus. Further, from the modern perspective, natural laws are not normative or prescriptive. They merely describe "custom" and may be obvious human inventions, as long as they are not arbitrary (Hume 1984, 536).[7] Individual exceptions, to the modern viewpoint, are not deviant in the sense that they transgress against universal natural laws, but interesting in that they show other possibilities and potentials. The empiricist notion of natural law is more of a tendency in behaviour than an approximation to an ideal.

Again, the second point of our above definition is closely linked to the classical perspective in its emphasis on universality. 'Woman's nature' must, of necessity and universally, be thus. It cannot be changed. Given what is known of women, is this a realistic perspective? Again, unless cultural feminists acknowledge that *any* change in social

arrangements will not result in a change in the *status quo* for women, it is dangerous to accept the universality of 'woman's nature'. If cultural feminists redefine 'woman's nature' as culturally or environmentally derived (for example, from the lived experience of the body discussed in Chapter 7), they have in fact *not* defined 'woman's nature'—or have redefined it out of all resemblance to the nature of any other entity, as discussed in Chapter 1, note 18.

Determinism

The third aspect of the definition of 'woman's nature' expresses the connection between behaviour and nature. Its emphasis on predictability aligns it more closely with the modern viewpoint than the classical. However, in expressing her dominant qualities, this aspect of the definition, and the fourth aspect (the physical makeup of the person or those internal forces [drives] that make her act) suggest the deterministic element in cultural feminist theories of socialization that are the legacy of the natural law theory. As suggested in Appendix I, the cultural feminist theory of socialization draws on scientific theories but ultimately requires a leap of faith in its insistence that a unique 'woman's nature' inevitably develops 'we know not how'. It is impossible to separate the cultural feminist notion of socialization from that of Aristotle's notion of *nisus* by which an entity is drawn toward its own particular excellence, *arete*, final cause, or perfection. By vaguely attributing 'woman's nature' to socialization, cultural feminism seeks to base it on the modern notion of antecedent causes, but that is its *only* link to whatever scientific basis accruing to our current state of knowledge on psychological matters pertaining to socialization. In fact, there is no scientific basis for a theory of 'woman's true nature'.

In underwriting the predictability of woman determined by her distinct nature, the notion of 'woman's nature' hooks into the power aspects of definition (the attempt to define 'woman' is further discussed in the following chapter): Understanding an entity and predicting how it will behave allow an entity to be treated in a certain way. For example, if

such-and-such a thing happens, the entity will react in such-and-such a way. This works in the moral realm by reinforcing the aforementioned disjunction between woman and rationality. Women, in other words, are not seen as completely free to act. In the negation of this freedom they are seen as less than fully human. An excellent example is contained in the Canadian Criminal Code, in which women "are expected to behave in peculiar sorts of ways" after giving birth and cannot be held responsible for infanticide (Code *et al.* 1988, 150). This is another consequence of women's identification with the body. 'Woman's nature' as child bearer, from this perspective, does not permit her to transcend the exigencies of the body and make a fully rational moral choice.

In concentrating on 'woman's nature', cultural feminists must logically accept that woman is not fully rational, and link morality to affect rather than cognition.[8] Indeed, as mentioned above, there is an antirationalist emphasis on emotion, intuition, and the importance of small-scale day-to-day practical matters in cultural feminist pedagogy. For example, "Subjectivist women distrust logic, analysis, abstraction, and even language itself. They see these methods as alien territory belonging to men" (Belenky *et al.* 1986, 71). Again, this is dangerous territory for women if they repudiate full rationality and hand over responsibility for their moral actions to internal forces.

Riley's analysis of the woman-emotion-morality link focuses on Rousseau and the Deist return to nature as the origin of women's moral identification with emotion. Women's connection with rationality has been tenuous, at least from the time of Aristotle. Riley quotes Ian Watt as follows: "It is, in all events, very evident that the eighteenth century witnessed a tremendous narrowing of the ethical scale, a redefinition of virtue in primarily sexual terms" (Riley 1988, 40). As remarked in Chapter 2, Plato considered that men and women participated in the same set of virtues through their unsexed soul/mind, while Aristotle believed woman had her own particular set of virtues related to her function as wife and mother. In the above extract, Watt refers to the re-emphasis during the

Enlightenment of the Aristotelian notion of women's unique virtues. As Riley says, "The whole moral potential of women was therefore thoroughly different, and their relation to the order of moral reason was irretrievably not that of men's... the soul of the woman shrinks and is made gender-specific" (Riley 1988, 41).

One of the consequences of the above is that what were traditionally seen as the 'tender emotions' became increasingly the domain of women. The more negative aspects traditionally allocated to women and their sexuality went underground, while those like Wollstonecraft, de la Barre, Taylor, and Mill who rejected the notion of a unique women's morality and fixed set of womanly virtues were a distinct minority:

> All women are brought up from the very earliest years in the belief that their ideal of character is the very opposite to that of men; not self-will and government by self-control, but submission and yielding to the control of others. All the moralities tell them that it is the duty of women, and all the current sentimentalities that it is their nature, to live for others; to make complete abnegation of themselves, and to have no life but in their affections. And by their affections are meant the only ones they are allowed to have— those to the men with whom they are connected, or to the children who constitute an additional tie between them and a man. (Mill 1975, 444)

If humanity's purpose, particularly under the burgeoning capitalist industrialization of the 19th century, was to participate in the productive sphere, women's complementary function was to stay home, keep the family together, and humanize the cold world outside the home through her selfless, caring example. The cultural feminist linkage of womanhood with social reform, pacificism, nonviolence, ecological concerns, caring, connectedness, and the tender emotions seems to have begun with Rousseau and culminated a hundred years later in what Riley calls the "sociological feminist" movement (Riley 1988, 44-66). Taylor supports this interpretation by implying that sex roles arose out of the Deistic revival of classical theories of an ordered, interlocking universe:

> The principal thing that makes the entities in the world into an order is that their natures *mesh*. The purposes sought by each, of the causal functions which each one exercises, interlock with the others so as to cohere into a harmonious whole. Each in serving itself serves the entire order. (Taylor 1989, 275)

We have seen this ordering in the description of the teleological universe in Chapter 2 but, to Taylor, the novel emphases are the complementarity of male and female and the idea that our emotions rather than reason, as in the classical paradigm, are of paramount importance in deciding our true purposes:

> This design becomes evident to us partly through our own motivations and feelings. The good is discovered partly by turning within, consulting our own sentiments and inclinations, and this helped bring about a philosophical revolution in the place of sentiment in moral philosophy (Taylor 1989, 361-362)

One of the consequences of the emphasis on complementarity of the sexes was the new importance of the family. For example, "The family occupied a tremendous place in our industrial societies, and that it had perhaps never before exercised so much influence over the human condition" (Ariès 1962, 10). The notion of family life as a moral oasis in the midst of an uncaring world, and the elevation of a very specific aspect of woman (their 'nature'), provided a pure moral antithesis to the individualistic strivings of rampant capitalism. Thus, Julia Ward Howe could write, "Woman is the mother of the race...In all true civilization she wins man out of his natural savagery to share with her the love of offspring, the enjoyment of true and loyal companionship" (in Lasch 1991, 63). The following is Bloom's summary:

> [Rousseau] retraced the picture of nature that had become a palimpsest under the abrasion of modern criticism, and he enticed men and women into admiring its teleological ordering, specifically the complementarity between the two sexes, which mesh and set the machine of life in motion, each differing from and needing the other, from the depths of the body to the heights of the soul. He set utter abandon to the sentiments and imaginations of idealized love against the calculation of individual interest...In essence he was persuading women freely to be different from men and to take on the burden of entering a positive contract with the family, as opposed to a negative, individual, self-protective contract with the state... (Bloom 1987, 115-116)

The cult of motherhood and the popularity of Angel in the Home imagery in the 19th century led to the intimate connection between women and philanthropy so prevalent in

Victorian iconography. Riley's thesis is that the growing demand for women's participation in the rights assured by one general human nature resulted in a countervailing "rehabilitation" of women, such that domestic virtues and "the empathies supposedly peculiar to the sex might flourish on a broad and visible scale" through taking on the moral burden of social care (Riley 1988, 46-47). Pragmatically this social affinity resulted in, for example, gaol, hospital, and workhouse reform and in the movement toward professionalizing domestic work of which Catharine Beecher provides an excellent example. The underlying if paternalistic message was that women were separate beings, different from men, but with a specific, valuable, and necessary contribution to make to society:

> Kind hearted people there may have been here and there, but no systematic efforts have yet been made, as they might be, to reclaim from still lower depths of degradation the sick, the sinful, and the outcast of our parish work-houses. Such a work remains for us to do, and though we have called it essentially one for women to enter upon, we would not by any means limit it to them, but earnestly invite the co-operation of all who have the time to devote to it. (Louisa Twining in Riley 1988, 53)

Appeals to the 'civilizing' aspect of womanhood were condemned by liberal feminists as disingenuous, as in the following passage from a suffrage speech by Harriet Taylor:

> We deny the right of any portion of the species to decide for another portion, or an individual for another individual, what is and what is not their 'proper sphere'. The proper sphere for all human beings is the largest and highest which they are able to attain to. (Taylor in Riley 1988, 83)

There are remarkable parallels with cultural feminist claims for a unique female moral vision centring around the traditional role of mother and its attendant virtues (Ruddick 1989). According to Segal, "An apocalyptic feminism has appeared which portrays a Manichean struggle between female virtue and male vice, with ensuing catastrophe and doom unless 'female' morality and values prevail" (Segal 1987, ix). This struggle is not a new one—indeed, the passage by Louisa Twining could have been written by a contemporary cultural feminist—and it carries the same message now as it did then: the

male world is "beyond redemption" and the only hope for women is a retreat from partnership and equality in the public sphere into the utopian womanculture of the private sphere (Denfeld 1995, 168). This was surely the classical paradigm of proper purpose as it found its Victorian expression through "the subordination of intellect to social feeling" (Riley 1988, 44-66).

Significance

The third element of the definition of 'woman's nature' that began this chapter suggests that 'woman's nature' expresses women's dominant, most important, and most significant qualities. Plato drew attention to the importance of significance in determining the elements of an entity's nature. A definition of 'woman's nature' picks up on certain significant elements of womanliness. For example, although all the women of one's acquaintance may read the daily newspaper, this has not been selected as a significant element of 'being a woman', of 'woman's nature'. However the significant elements of 'woman's nature' were first selected is open to question but, given what we know of the defining process, it is not too far-fetched to posit that the intersect of the set of female commonalities with the set of male commonalities are *not* included in 'woman's nature'. In other words, we return to the idea that definitions demand the use of opposites. Additionally, any judgement of significance necessitates the ratification of the aspects of definition presented in Appendix II and further discussed in Chapter 5. If one set of the aspects of being a woman is deemed significant, another set will be silenced. The selection of particular aspects is not objective but evaluative (Appendix III). Selection of particular aspects of 'woman' requires judgement and cannot be separated from a consideration of those elements that, for the one who is defining, define the perfection of woman. To belabour this point, the perfect woman, from the point of view of man, seems frequently to resemble the comely,

childlike Sophie of Rousseau's *Emile*. It seems to have been impossible to separate considerations of women's perfection from her sexual and reproductive functions.

One of the difficulties in selecting significant elements of womanliness on which to construct a 'woman's nature' involves the idea that Plato brought to our attention with his anecdote of the bald cobbler. In selecting significant elements, one may look past the obvious physical appearance of an entity to the potential capabilities of individuals *vis-à-vis* their potential occupation. In other words, there is a difference between the appearance of an entity and the way it *really* is or could possibly be in the best of all possible worlds. In the classical *zeitgeist*, the way an entity really is refers to the potential perfection of that entity. The Platonic twist on this theme is taken up by liberal feminists, while an Aristotelian perspective (denuded of its pejorative description of 'woman's nature') is reclaimed by cultural feminists. This point receives further attention in the following section's discussion of *Essence*.

There is a further consideration, however, about which Plato and Aristotle are again in disagreement. Plato bases his abstract notion of women's potential perfection not in Aristotle's empirical studies but in a thought-experiment about the gender identity of the mind or soul. Consequently, he perceives the following:

> A woman's or a man's nature flows directly from the character of her or his soul, which is an immaterial and therefore non-sexual entity. Since the soul or mind is neither male nor female, when Plato considers the question of how woman and man are opposite, he concludes that when they are considered from the perspective of their real nature, they are the same. More specifically, it is the sexless soul and not the material body that determines the identity of the woman or man. (Allen 1985, 61)

The Platonic tradition, therefore, further frees woman from *any* definition of her 'nature', not couched in vague, unisex, and universal terms of potentiality, and the consequent limitations and bifurcations that a gendered definition of natures imposes. It also sets up or anticipates the Western philosophical tradition of devaluing the material world, in

particular the body. These two Platonic elements have been incorporated into liberal individualism and the liberal feminist stance on 'woman's nature'—woman must be recognized as a full person, sharing in one common human nature and set of traits, behaviours, virtues, and cognitions with man because her rational and spiritual potential is virtually unbounded. Those oft-noted feminine characteristics are *insignificant* to what is really important about woman, to her 'nature', in other words. She must be treated as an individual and not as a member of the category 'Woman', which imposes a definition that is, of necessity, limiting. According to Plato, "The philosopher's occupation consists precisely in the freeing and separation of soul from body.' Therefore, if a woman achieves this practice of the separation of soul from body, she is living in terms of her most perfect identity" (Allen 1985, 63). The implications of the antimaterialist stance for a consideration of 'woman's nature' will be outlined in the section of Chapter 7 that discusses the 'lived experience of the body'.

To Aristotle, using Riley's phrase, "It had become possible to *be* a sex" (Riley 1988, 43). The definition of functionalism, as used in architecture rather than in Durkheimian sociology, emphasizes this Aristotelian union of form and function. Because women's form differs from man's, her 'nature' must be different. Indeed, unlike Plato who treats male and female watchdogs equivalently, Aristotle is so convinced of the unity of soul and body that he seems to describe the sexes as though they were separate species (Allen 1985, 89):

> In all genera in which the distinction of male and female is found, Nature makes a similar differentiation in the mental characteristics of the two sexes. This differentiation is the most obvious in the case of human kind and in that of the larger animals and the viviparous quadrupeds...With all other animals the female is softer in disposition than the male, is more mischievous, less simple, more impulsive, and more attentive to the nurture of the young...[These characteristics] are especially visible where character is the more developed, and most of all in man. (Aristotle 1977, 48)

It is interesting that, before the American Civil War, debate over slavery concentrated on a 'scientific' attempt to prove whether blacks and white were members of the same species. If they were proven to belong to separate species, slavery could morally be defended as legitimate and appropriate (Kagan 1989, 23). Nazi Germany similarly sought to classify Jews as separately natured (Weiss 1996, 128-142). Aristotle goes as far as he can in treating women and men differently but, since his teleological argument does not depend on the separation into species, he is not required to preserve their taxonomic distinction (see the section on *Function and Proper Purpose* in Chapter 5).

To Aristotle, the actual appearance of a person's body has everything to do with the way that person *really* is. Rather than follow his own injunction to look for the most perfect woman in order to know 'woman's nature', he seems to have taken man as the perfect being and compared woman to him by looking through the lens of defining opposites referred to in Appendix II: "The fact is, the nature of man is the most rounded off and complete, and consequently in man the qualities or capacities above referred to are found in their perfection" (Aristotle 1977, 49).

Aristotle seems to transgress against his own commandment because he must defend his view that wholes are made up of complementary yet hierarchically-arranged opposites. Two perfect natures, male and female, potentially undercut the cardinal organizing principle of his schema of cosmic harmony, which consists of the duality between the ruler and the ruled (Aristotle 1977, 51). In support of this interpretation, Aristotle says, "Nor is the good divisible between them but that of both belongs to the one for whose sake they exist" (Okin 1992, 79). He thus, without rational basis, denies the possibility of a distinct but perfect 'woman's nature', while supporting the idea of 'woman's nature' as essentially flawed. Further, he makes but does not support the assumption that "man is one of the things that are excellent by nature... [Man's goodness] is 'good absolutely' [while that of others is] 'only good for that thing'" (in Okin 1992, 92). 'That thing' refers to the function or

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particular usefulness of something. As will be discussed later in this chapter, Okin attests that Aristotle is incapable of separating perfection from function for all entities except those few men at the top of the hierarchical ladder, and approaches the problem of 'woman's nature' with the question "What is woman *for*" rather than "What is woman's potential?" (Okin 1992, 10).

It is possible to read Aristotle's logical inconsistency as potentially subversive to the rest of his argument. That this was not done may testify to the entrenched power of functional ascription to woman as a category. My position, however, is that too little attention is paid to the classical meaning of an individual's nature in terms of the absolute priority given to the teleological organization of the cosmos.

Hierarchy

The fourth element of the above definition of 'woman's nature' locates women within a distinct class of persons. Aristotle and Plato both see the project of classification (in other words, locating an entity within a distinct class of entities), hence definition, as existing particularly for the purpose of ranking. Aristotle begins by ranking substances as primary and secondary, accepting (but not arguing in support of) the premise that primary substances are "Subjects to everything else and that all other things are either asserted of them or are present in them," and thus are "more of a substance" than other substances are (Aristotle 1963, 138-139). Thus, substances are no more equal than are human beings. The classical viewpoint is essentially hierarchical and elitist, as shown in Chapter 2. Aristotle described a linked, hierarchical *scala naturae* that ordered species in terms of their perfection, their soul, or their potential perfection (Lovejoy 1936, 58-59). In other words, inequality is ontologically necessary to the classical perspective.

The division of entities into categories is not a simple matter of reading intrinsic defining qualities off nature through empirical study (Appendix II). Rather, entities are

sorted on artificial bases. That gender has been one of the primary sorting categories has been investigated by few feminist theorists. Spelman questions why sorting according to gender is commonly seen as more 'natural' than other divisions: "There are a lot of different ways of sorting human beings. If we look at that variety, we of course see that sorting along one dimension cuts across another" (Spelman 1988, 101).

There is no need to separate individuals into broad categories, or classes, unless it is to differentiate between them so they can be accorded different treatment or given different tasks. It is possible that communal living may require separation of labour, hence a separation of labourers into categories. It certainly seems, in a pragmatic sense, as though communal tasks are more efficiently and effectively carried out if the jobs are divided and if there is an appointed leader. As Durkheim points out, small-scale agriculture seemed to have been the last bastion of non-specialized labour (Durkheim 1984, 1) but, even on the family-run farm, tasks are split between the husband and wife. If all individuals were equal, confusion would conceivably result, and the natural order of society would be compromised. Everyone is not born capable of doing the same job so, for maximum efficiency, people must be sorted according to what they are best at. With reference to the prevailing Aristotelian viewpoint, 'woman's nature' is incompatible with equality:

> For that some should rule, and others be ruled is a thing, not only necessary, but expedient; from the hour of their birth, some are marked out for subjection, others for rule...Again, the male is by nature superior, and the female inferior; and the one rules, and the other is ruled; this principle, of necessity, extends to all mankind. (Aristotle 1977, 50-51).

To Aristotle, if something is expedient for the community or, in other words, useful as the means to an end, it is natural. Yet he was largely unable to rationally explain or justify this belief in his support of slavery. He was able to see that sometimes men are slaves through convention or expediency, not nature (Aristotle 1962, 31 and 35-36)—so he did

separate expedience and convention—but he refused to negate the connection between the useful and the natural. This theme will be further developed in the following chapter.

From a feminist viewpoint, the recognition and validation of categorical difference, in terms of women and men, is a key issue (Frazer and Lacey 1993, 9). Liberal feminists downplay the differences between men and women, while cultural feminists emphasize it. Indeed, according to Frazer and Lacey, liberal feminist "decategorising" of women (in the sense that it is now illegal to treat women differently than men in many contexts) has led to the "marginalization" of gender issues (Frazer and Lacey 1993, 80), an outcome they find deplorable. From a liberal perspective, this "marginalisation" is a welcome change for the better, occuring because problems existing heretofore, exist no longer. For example, equality of opportunity is increasingly extended to women, with sex discrimination laws enforcing fair treatment.

To accept and ratify differences between individuals, or groups of individuals, is the basis for according different, appropriate, treatment to each. Thus, individuals who are different may logically be seen to be best at different things and, consequently, able to perform certain functions better than others. It is interesting that cultural feminism recognizes the dangers of binary thinking in all areas but that of sex. According to Fox-Genovese, in her critique of liberal individualism[9], "Some influential feminists are reject-ing...'binary thinking'—a way of thinking that rests on the delineation of difference as the foundation of all knowledge and *therefore promotes hierarchy*, notably the hierarchy that places men over women" (my italics, Fox-Genovese 1991, 4). Note that Fox-Genovese accepts the unbreakable link between difference and hierarchy in the first pages of her book, yet argues for a validation of the differences between men and women ("the eternal female nature" [Fox-Genovese 1991, 240) in a *non-hierarchical* society. I cannot think that this is a coherent or rationally-defensible argument.

If difference is preserved, even emphasized, and moral superiority is imputed to one category over the others, the consequence is "an ethic with distinctly elitist political implications" (Mendus 1993, 26). The elitism of the classical viewpoint is commonly acknowledged. However, in its insistence on difference and its emphasis on the moral superiority of women, cultural feminism seems to ignore its own elitist implications for such ethical concerns as caring. Mendus presents a cogent and timely case for caution (1993) and Spelman introduces the following argument:

> Paradoxically, in feminist theory it is a refusal to take differences among women ser-
> iously that lies at the heart of feminism's implicit politics of domination...To stress
> the unity of women is no guarantee against hierarchical ranking, if what one says is
> true or characteristic of women as a class is only true or characteristic of some
> women: for then women who cannot be so characterized are in effect not counted as
> women (Spelman 1988, 12)

Putting Spelman's argument to a use she had not perhaps anticipated, it is similarly hierarchic, and potentially oppressive, to assert that women are morally superior to men. The notion that 'woman's nature' can be circumscribed has also led to difficulties within feminism. For example, women who do not display 'woman's special nature' or 'women's values' or 'maternal thinking' can be denied as 'inauthentic voices', "female impersonators" (Feldman quotes Steinem's use of this phrase with reference to "Texas senator Kay Hutchison's 1993 campaign" [Feldman 1995, 198]), "assimilationists or collaborationists" (Feldman attributes these epithets to Faludi [Feldman 1995, 198]} and treated as sell-outs to the patriarchal, capitalist, military-industrial complex. Spelman reminds her reader, "Just as some humans are more human than others (which Plato and Aristotle held), so, it is feared, some women are more 'woman' than others'"(Spelman 1988, 175). As noted earlier in this chapter, the universalism of 'woman's nature' suggests that 'woman's nature' must, of necessity, be thus. It cannot or ought not to be changed. Women who act against their 'nature' will accrue the negative press of 'unnatural' actions discussed in Chapter 2.

Following the Beijing United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, the following report by Jonathan Power appeared in the Montreal *Gazette*:

> Women *are* different, but not those who decide to climb to the top of a man's world. They have, it appears, to shed too much of their femininity to get there... I would say that all these women have compromised large portions of their femininity. At the end of the day, it is not, I believe, in a woman's character to make war or to prepare for war, as all these women do...These women have been simply subverted by the male culture they attempted to do well in...Women's primal instinct is to nurture, to care and to mediate, even to compromise. Not all women possess these attributes to the full. Many women, confused by the pressures of life and perhaps misled by some of the dictates of the women's movement, feel pushed to repress them... (Montreal, September 9, 1995)

Thus women who do not conform to their nature or "primal instinct" and display female values are "confused", "misled", "subverted", and personally "compromised". They have lost those characteristics that cannot be eliminated without destroying the distinctive character that women share. This is the very crux of essentialism (see Chapter 2).

Sommers (1994) shares my concern, as does Segal:

> [The definition of women's values] sets us the project of separating off the experiences of women in touch with their own true 'female values' from those of other women who are alienated from themselves and promote 'male values'. But any need to distinguish women who have 'real female values' from women blinded by 'male values' encourages a distinctly puritanical, repressive politics, sadly not unfamiliar in gatherings of feminists today. (Segal 1987, 35)

Further, the ideological basis of claims to female moral superiority, given the dearth of objective evidence for categorical sex-differences, denies the reality and responsibility of mothers who kill or pursue an aggressive strategy in the theatre of war. Indeed, the recent Susan Smith infanticide case was defended largely on the powerlessness of the defendant to restrain herself from drowning her two sons because of her experience of sexual abuse as a child. According to Maccoby and Jacklin, "Studies of battered children indicate that mothers are at least as likely as fathers to brutalize their children" (Maccoby and Jacklin 1967, 372), yet there is a tendency to see family violence perpetuated *on* women, not *by* women. The

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active role of women in warfare is downplayed, for example, in Nazi Germany, the Resistance movement in World War II, during the Falklands war, (Segal 1987, 198), or "as militantes against Somoza for the FSLN" (Ferguson 1993):

> Some feminist writers have recently promulgated strongly the notion that a matriarchal society would or did lack the aggression that does and did characterize a patriarchal one. (Evidently nonpacific types such as Mrs Gandhi, Mrs Meir and Mrs Thatcher count as honorary men for the purposes of this argument because they have adopted masculine values in order to succeed in the patriarchal world.) (Fraser 1989, 7)

Fussell points out that antiwar literature is rarely female (Fussell 1988, 111). Female engagement in sadistic and sexually-violent acts is increasingly defended in terms of infantilisation and less than full moral agency. Karla Homulka's defence was organized around the 'battered wife' syndrome, which renders the full moral agency of the battered woman a virtual impossibility. Maternal implication in child-battering and infanticide are downplayed, though these are far from exclusively, even primarily, male crimes. Women's violence is not selected as significant; hence it plays no part in her 'nature'.

There is a widespread reluctance to see women as voluntary participants in violent acts, which are often depicted as male (Segal 1987, 146), because this directly contradicts the cultural feminist contention that "Women's development delineates the path not only to a less violent life but also to a maturity realized through interdependence and taking care" (Gilligan 1982, 172). Yet from certain perspectives, abortion is a violent act and approximately 1.3 million women aborted yearly in the US from 1980-1985 (*World Almanac 1990*, 846). Women's moral superiority seems intimately related to hoary notions of the Angel in the House, whose true calling was "creating a haven in a heartless world" (Eyer 1992, 102); for example, to Coleridge in 1818, "Mother is the noblest thing alive" (Fussell 1985, 203) and, during World War I, "The ultimate monitor and gauge of perfect purity is Mother" (in Fussell 1985, 204). As Fraser points out, not only is there the social predilection to see woman "as a pacifying influence throughout history, this pacifying role

being perceived as hers 'by nature' and hers in duty," but women's own acceptance and espousal of this perception that ensure its tenacious hold on the public imagination, despite the most horrendous evidence to the contrary (Fraser 1989, 7). Again, the ideological aspects of the perception of 'woman's nature' outweigh the 'objective' element.

Essence

There is a sense of confusion in the attempts to understand how women *are* that seems to derive from the flotsam left behind when the classical tradition of essence floundered on the Galapagan reefs of evolutionism. The position that all women share a common, universal, ahistorical and essential 'nature' is difficult to defend logically, given the heterogeneity of womankind cross-culturally, panhistorically, transracially, between socio-economic classes and as observed in everyday life. In other words, an entity's nature cannot be completely understood as descriptive or in terms of its own internal qualities (Appendix II). However, if an understanding of woman is taken to reflect the essential woman, or 'woman's nature', both the commonalities and the diversities in women's experiences, behaviours, and traits are more easily explained. Plato might have posited a universal quality of woman (although he did not), or 'womanliness', that exists in the ideal form and is reflected in individual women to a greater or lesser extent. Although Plato did not subscribe to the idea of a separate female 'nature', a philosophical foundation was laid in the Platonic Forms for the 'nature of woman' as potential, in terms of each individual woman's approximation to or progress toward perfection. Similarly, instead of following the path he chose of relegating woman to the status of an imperfect man, Aristotle could instead have searched for actual women who embodied his idea of woman, or 'womanliness', to perfection. *The Book of the City of Ladies* (de Pizan 1992) could be described as written in the Aristotelian tradition — women who exemplify the various virtues to perfection are presented as models of 'women's nature'.[10]

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In other words, a reference to the essence of womanliness, or to 'woman's nature', evokes an abstract notion of what it means to be a perfect woman. In defining 'woman's nature', the goodness and virtue peculiar to woman must be considered. Whether Plato's method of gauging perfection through potential or Aristotle's method of deriving perfection from the best examples of actual womanhood is used, it is certain that the perfection of an entity *is* its true nature.[11] The real 'nature of woman' cannot be removed from a consideration of her perfection, whether this perfection lies in the development of common characteristics with man or in the realization of those particular and distinguishing characteristics she alone possesses. Little wonder it is difficult to align women's violent acts with her 'nature'.

The fourth aspect of the definition of 'woman's nature', above, locates woman within a distinct category by virtue of her essential 'nature'. This element of categorization provides a focus for this thesis. As mentioned in Chapter 1, essentialism refers to the notion that entities within the same category share common, indispensable elements. These elements cannot be eliminated without destroying the entity or its distinctive character. Above, it was noted that cultural feminists label those women who do not display womanly traits "female impersonators," "little men," and "inauthentic voices." In other words, women who do not display womanly traits are seen to have lost or destroyed their distinctive character, to be acting 'unnaturally' and against their proper purpose. They no longer share common, indispensable elements with other members of their category 'woman'. They have been "decategorized," to use Frazer and Lacey's term. Surely this is a direct appeal to classical essentialism.

At this point, attention is drawn to the extreme reluctance, or what Dallery calls "antiessentialist paranoia" (Code *et al.* 1989, 62), on the part of cultural feminists to acknowledge their debts to the components of 'woman's nature' as a philosophical concept with a definite history by referring to Barbara Houston's article in defence of Gilligan's theory of moral development. Houston attempts throughout to prove that Gilligan is not "a

moral essentialist" yet her evidence rests on the dual assertion that, first, Gilligan is not speaking of bodies and that, second, she, "Does not *always* take account of the political context in which these characteristics are formed, but from the fact that she often says nothing about the context we can draw no conclusions about what she would say" (Houston 1988, 180).

As discussed in the foregoing, essences do not depend on bodies alone, but on the common, indispensable elements shared by all members of a particular category. These elements cannot be eliminated without destroying the entity or its distinctive character. In fact, in view of the emphasis on distinctive character, predispositions and behaviours may be more central to a consideration of essences than physiology (for example, a woman who has had her breasts or uterus removed for medical reasons is still considered to be a woman). Further, silence may sometimes be a significant political action and speak louder than words. The fact that Gilligan does not address the political context in which her subjects are embedded or the political context in which she analyses her anecdotal data, makes her own attributions, and draws her own conclusions leads her readers logically and directly to the very understandable assumption that 'something in women' produces this particular morality. To deny that this 'something' is her 'nature' is rather disingenuous.

Plainly, cultural feminists do appeal to women's distinct 'nature'. From the foregoing, it ought to be clear that women's distinct 'nature' *requires* women's distinct essence. Gilligan clearly links a distinctive morality to women and French seems to acknowledge 'masculine' and 'feminine' are *essences* rather than embodiments in the specific (French 1985, 92). Further, as I have shown above, neither the notion of women's essential 'nature' nor the notion of essence itself depends on "anatomical differences" in the way Houston believes it does (Houston 1988, 177-178). Sawicki confirms the centrality of essentialist thinking about sexuality to cultural theory:

Feminist commentators have frequently addressed the naturalist and biological determinist tendency in radical feminist[12] theory. Such tendencies...appeal to a form of essentialism in which "male sexuality" is associated with violence, lust, objectification, and a preoccupation with orgasm, and "female sexuality" with nurturance, reciprocity, intimacy, and an emphasis on nongenital pleasure. (Sawicki 1988, 179)

This chapter has demonstrated that categorical universals, determinism based on an innate and intractable nature, significance in terms of proper purpose, and essence are classical elements underlying contemporary cultural feminist notions of 'woman's nature'. The following chapter will extend the argument through a consideration of the 'argument from nature' introduced in Chapter 1.

ENDNOTES

1. I take issue with Frazer and Lacey's suggestion that communitarian theory rejects structuralism (Frazer and Lacey 1993, 3). The functionalism embedded in communitarian notions of what they term "value communitarianism" ("the commitment to collective values, public culture and a concern with the collective aspects of human life") is predicated on the notion that "individual behaviour and action are determined by structures and forces which are not easily observable." Further, what Frazer and Lacey call "social constructionism" is intimately involved with structuralism (despite some tricky word-play on pages 167-181, they seem to acknowledge this association on page 172: "Even on this very simplified characterisation of structuralist developments in social theory, we can see the links between the structuralist reaction to empiricism and the communitarian reaction to liberalism's focus on individual agency at the expense of social structure").

2. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Frazer and Lacey equate feminism and communitarianism: "Feminists emphasise the collective, or communitarian nature of social life, of values, of the processes which disadvantage women and other groups in liberal societies" (1993, 100). However, they do not make the connection between the communitarian emphasis on the collectivity and classical sociopolitical theory, which provided an ideological basis for patriarchy and its necessary oppression of women (I contend that it continues to provide this basis today).

3. Chapter 7 and Appendix I examine socialization theories, particularly the nonscientific cultural feminist notion of 'deep socialization'.

4. In Chapter 3, it was noted that both Amélie Rorty (1990) and Patterson (1991) point out that a 'contrast class' (this is Rorty's term) of nonpersons may be necessary in order to conceptualize, define, and partake in such modern positives as freedom, rights, dignity, and equality. Further consideration of women as a necessary 'contrast class' in early democracies might prove an interesting avenue for future research.

5. Opposition will be discussed in the section entitled Significance, and is further addressed in Appendices II and III.

6. Henshel's use of the term 'internalize' implies to incorporate into the self, a much stronger notion than the cognitive one that suggests girls 'learn' femininity. Internalization is a social-learning notion that deserves more attention in feminist theory, where it is commonly used unmindfully.

7. Regretfully, the impact of Hume's and Kant's thought on the concept of 'woman's nature' cannot be explored in the confines of this paper. A section on these two philosophers appeared in the original draft of this thesis, but was omitted from the final version for space considerations.

8. Feminist criticism points out that rationality is a male construct, and seek a redefinition of the term.

9. The major criticisms of liberal individualism by cultural feminism are presented and discussed in Chapter 6.

10. It lies outside the focus of this thesis, but it is interesting to note that the origin of the *imitatio* tradition seems to lie with Aristotle. His description of the great-souled man, for example, provides a role-model for imitation as a route to perfection. The idea of nature and second nature has interesting implications for the educative process, as has the interplay between nature and artifice that Bantock, among others, has made much of. Second nature, however firmly internalized, does not imply the permanent and unchangeable quality of an entity's true nature. This is reflected in the liberal feminist notion of consciousness raising as a method of divesting women of a false consciousness resulting from their early socialization and of feminist education as a key to liberation. One's second nature is something deliberately inculcated in the service of some external end, frequently with the cooperation of the subject. Although certain behaviour may take on the 'automatic' aspect of second nature, there remains the sense that this behaviour is amenable to being brought into conscious reflexion and open to change.

11. As we have seen, Plato emphasized potential over actuality. This laid the groundwork for the liberal idea that there is one universal human nature held in common by men and women alike. The contradictory stance of Aristotle, which favoured the real and experienced over the abstract and ideal, irrevocably tied the perfection of 'woman's nature' to the way women are in the here-and-now. Aristotle's stance prevailed.

12. See footnote #5: "Elements of cultural feminism (notably separatism and female moral superiority) appear in radical feminism as well."

CHAPTER 5: THE ARGUMENT FROM NATURE

Having looked at 'woman's nature' specifically in Chapter 4, I now turn to an analysis of the argument from nature briefly outlined in Chapter 1. I wish to show how a classical definition of 'woman's nature' and her appropriate interests, behaviours, and traits provides a rationale for patriarchal social arrangements, yet is accepted as given, by cultural feminism.

Three Uses of the Argument from Nature

As discussed in Chapter 1, the argument from nature justifies social inequalities as the inevitable consequence of fixed and ineradicable differences between categories of individuals. These ineradicable differences are, I suggest, equivalent to the *natures* of specific categories of individuals. Using the building blocks 'by nature', 'natural', 'human nature', 'natural rights', and 'natural law', the argument from nature was constructed and used historically in at least two principle ways; that is, both to support women's subjugation and to undermine it.

First, in support of women's subjugation, the argument from nature is most commonly used "to underwrite the relation between men and women and to emphasize sexual difference" (Riley 1988, 35; also Okin 1979, 106; Weiss 1987, 83; Holmstrom 1982, 25; Richards 1988, 53). Sex roles are depicted as natural. By 'natural' is meant that the female sex role and its manifested feminine behavioural, cognitive, and psychological attributes develop automatically, without deliberative cognition or overt training,

out of the innate differences between men and women in talent, virtue, and predisposition. Long after modern liberal political theory extended one common human nature to all, women were still excluded to a great extent from this one common human nature. An example of this classical way of thinking is cited by Favreau, in a statement by my own psychology professor at McGill University in the 1970s, D.O. Hebb. Hebb is suggesting that male faculty members are of more benefit to the university because men's natural, innate predispositions suit them for aggressive leadership, mathematics, tenacious research, and abstraction. Hebb states forthrightly that these are not traits developed during childhood or during the intense socialization into an academic career but are "inborn":

> [Women] have a different pattern of intellectual abilities...From an early age boys are not only more active physically and more aggressive, but also less willing to follow, and in these respects they show a picture that is general in all mammalian species. None of this can be attributed to differences in the way boys and girls are brought up...The inborn male aggressiveness is a factor in research, and so obviously is the greater aptitude for mathematical thinking, and a greater interest in abstract problems. Given two new Ph.D.s, male and female, equally promising as teachers; which is more likely to add to the University's reputation by doing and publishing signficant research? (Favreau 1977, 60)

Hebb is using the the classical argument from nature as a tool to support the patriarchal[1] *status quo*. Simply put, and building on the argument developed in the preceding chapters, the argument from nature suggests that women are not forced or coerced into playing a subordinate role in society by men or by a sexist society. Rather women, by predisposition, gravitate naturally toward this subordinate role because it suits their innate character. The argument from nature suggests that the traditional sexual division of labour is natural and inevitable, given the ubiquitousness of the arrangement in nature, the nature of men and the nature of women, and the insurmountable biological fact of nature that women bear children. If it were possible to begin again, current social arrangements would likely reassert themselves 'naturally'. Further, women's subordinate

role in society does not result from the direct abuse of power by the male sex because it is the inevitable consequence of women's nonaggressive, emotional, nurturing nature. Ultimately, the natural inevitability of women's subordinate role obviates any need for change because the *status quo* is seen to be appropriate in that it serves the proper purposes of each sex and of the larger community. Thus Hebb does not suggest ways in which the purported gender differences may be overcome or evened out. Anchoring this argument in nature emphasizes the intractability of existing social arrangements because that which is universal is seen as enduring, important, significant, and real.[2] Berry suggests that *all* theories of human nature ratify the *status quo*, a position in accord with the prevalent Aristotelian theory outlined in Chapter 2:[3]

> The appeal to human nature amounts in effect to counselling acceptance of the status quo [that] embodies certain universal truths about which it is pointless to complain, let alone attempt to change. Just as 'you can't make water flow uphill' so 'you can't change human nature'. That a status quo favours some more than others cannot be regarded as a conspiracy to keep some sections of the community in their relatively inferior position. Any such differentiation, as between males and females for example, is in tune with reality. The facts of human nature have to be accepted. Thus it follows that political programmes to implement an egalitarian society, to abolish the family, to dispense with hierarchy and so on will founder on the rocks that are human nature. (Berry 1986, 107)

By extension, if women's behaviour and trait set in this male-dominated society appear quite different from that of man's, this must reveal and be determined by her true nature rather than being an artificial result of centuries of subordination and exploitation. For example, "Abstraction in every sense is alien to the feminine nature...Woman's nature is determined by her original vocation of spouse and mother" (Stein 1987, 43, 118), and, "Men are by nature of a more elevated mind than woman...Women, on the other hand, are almost timid by nature, soft, slow and therefore more useful when they sit still and watch over things. It is as though nature thus provided for our well-being, arranging men to bring things home and for women to guard them" (Renaissance document, quoted in

Sydie 1988, 6). Note that the Renaissance document indicates that the dichotomy between male and female natures is functional in advancing the interests of social arrangements of the time ("nature thus provided for our well-being").

Second, and in contrast, the argument from nature is also used by liberal feminists who wish to undermine the moral legitimacy of the patriarchy. The same central concepts of the argument from nature are used, but it is suggested that neither the current sexual division of labour nor 'woman's role' is natural. Rather, these structures are conventional, and either arbitrary or purely 'functional'[4] (to the larger community or to powerful interest groups) arrangements that are not based on fixed innate predispositions. 'Woman's role' and her 'nature' are highly artificial, changeable products of culture maintained without moral foundation by power mechanisms, exemplifying an Aristotelian "Might is Right" rationalization. Further, sex-role differentiation goes against the 'true nature' of woman, as man's full equal. Women's subordination can be seen as a perversion of the natural law of justice, of the natural equality intended by God, and of humanity's potential nature, as it would be in a state of full equality. Thus Mill overtly contrasts nature and artificiality, or culture: "What is now called the nature of women is an eminently artificial thing--the result of forced repression in some directions, unnatural stimulation in others" (Mill 1975, 451).

Therefore, although woman may *appear* to have a separate 'nature', from the liberal feminist perspective, her *true* 'nature' is fully equal to the best of which humanity is capable; obviously there is a Platonic influence at work here. Further, to know the nature of something is to know its potential in a wide variety of environments. We can know nothing of women's true 'nature' for they have only been studied in one particular environment—that of male-dominated society after eons of male authority:

> From the epistemological point of view, the nature of anything is an abstraction; something which can never be seen directly, but can be inferred, if enough care is

taken, by allowing for the influence of the environment... If, therefore, two things appear different, they may not be different in nature at all: they may simply be in different environments. (Richards 1988, 54)

There is a third use to which the above concepts, 'by nature', 'natural', 'human nature', 'natural rights', and 'natural law', are put, and this is my major focus. As suggested in Chapter 1, these concepts are coopted by cultural feminism in order to advance the cause of women as a group, to overthrow the existing social system that is seen as inherently and necessarily patriarchal, and to radicalize the liberal feminist element that, generally speaking, complacently considers a significant part of the fight against women's oppression to have been won. In order to fulfil this agenda, cultural feminism reacts against the prevailing modern *zeitgeist*, rejecting liberal individualism as an intrinsic by-product of male-supremist ideology that lead, sadly and inevitably, to "loss of authority, of stability, of community" (Frazer and Lacey 1993, 30). To prove conclusively that cultural feminist theory is, despite protests to the contrary, essentialist, this chapter will show that a classical definition of 'woman's distinct nature' and her appropriate interests, behaviours, and traits is accepted as given by cultural feminism.

Female 'Nature' as a Male Construct

To begin at the very beginning, then, any idea that women are *thus* must invoke all of the limiting and binding attributes of the classical defining process discussed in Chapter 2 and Appendix II. According to Lerner, "The extant written record of women's thought... in Western civilization, begins in the 7th century A.D." (Lerner 1993, 13). If Lerner is correct[5] then what is known about 'woman's nature' before the seventh century is what men have written down. Obviously, as men were not women themselves, knowledge of women and their 'nature' was in the realm of speculation—at a remove, as it were. Male beliefs and opinions about 'women's nature' had been cemented in writing

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centuries before women set down their own perspective on paper. The authority of these early philosophical writings cannot be overestimated. 'woman's nature' is inextricably rooted in what men think about women: 'woman's nature' is, at its core, a male construct.

What if women, however, wish to define what they are 'as women'? This seems to be the cultural feminist goal. Are the results likely to be more 'scientific', more objectively accurate, less damaging to women? Frazer and Lacey suggest that this may not be the case; that both men and "feminist categories of sisterhood and solidarity define women without their consent, and thereby only perpetuate the kind of oppression women have always suffered from men (who are masters of the art of defining others)" (Frazer and Lacey 1993, 10). This stance is also supported by Spelman (1988). Liberal feminism rejects the notion that women can be defined in *any* sense other than the biological, and specifically denies that they may be defined by their bodies (Denfeld 1995, 145), their cognitive and affective traits (Maccoby and Jacklin 1974; Ackelsberg and Diamond 1987; Deaux and Kite 1987; Hess and Ferree 1987; Kanter 1987; Winter 1988; Mednick 1989), or their roles (Eyer 1992, 9).

Allen states, "Nearly every single philosopher over the first two thousand years of western philosophy thought about the identity of woman in relation to man" (Allen 1985, 1). As discussed in Appendices II and III, the pre-Socratic philosophers constructed their investigations to discover in what ways men and women were opposite, what their distinct functions were, how both sexes related to wisdom, and what the virtues of both were. Note that this heuristic already takes for granted that men and women *are* opposite, that they have *distinct* functions, and that they operate *differently* vis-à-vis wisdom and virtue. Although certain feminist theorists disassociate themselves and other women from dualistic thought patterns, it is unclear how such a disassociation would be possible.

Certainly such binary constructions are not absent from either liberal or cultural feminist literature (except perhaps those written from the postmodernist perspective).[6]

Human nature and the nature of man are identical. Human nature and the nature of woman are different. This has become the position of Western philosophy, according to Okin: "Thus, where philosophers have explicitly discussed women, they have frequently not extended to them their various conceptions of 'human nature.' They have not only assigned women a distinct role, but have defined them separately, and often contrastingly, to men" (Okin 1979, 9-10). Because the relevant enterprises of lexicography, philosophy, theology, and science have heretofore been in male hands, it is reasonable that males have had significant input into any definition of 'woman's nature': "The intellectual gatekeepers have reinforced the ideas that supported the established hierarchy and retained the power to define, a power women have been unsuccessful in attaining up to the present"(Epstein 1988, 2).

The dynamic implicit in definition is one of control over an entity, graphically illustrated by both the theological hierarchy of man at the apex of creation and the contemporary evolutionary hierarchical ranking of beings with man in the ultimate position at the pinnacle of the pyramid of *genera* (see Appendices II and III). It is interesting that the so-called trait theories at the centre of contemporary cultural feminism do not list as uniquely natural for woman any traits that did not earlier appear in trait catalogues derived by males. Daly, for example, embraces even those descriptive epithets commonly considered to be pejorative, such as "crone".

Further Problems With the Defining Process

Appendix II examined several of the intricacies implicit in the act of definition, in general, without addressing the context of specific interest for this thesis—'woman's

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nature'. What are the possible implications of the process of defining (how a definition has been formulated), then, for a consideration of 'woman's nature'?

First, from the discussion in Chapter 2 (and Appendix II), we may anticipate that a definition of 'woman's nature' may not be as straightforward as would seem from the frequency with which the term is employed in common parlance. It was emphasized that, although the common-sense notion of an individual's nature implies that natures are 'read off' reality or, in other words, are primarily descriptive, indubitably natures are intimately bound up with moral and ideological considerations. Thus Midgley suggests that concepts such as nature cannot be considered "reports of fact" without the inclusion of "judgments of value" (Midgley 1995, 177); Berry links the natural with conceptual prescriptions of the good life (Berry 1986, 134), of necessity subjective and evaluative (even normative). There is no reason to believe that a definition of 'woman's nature' is immune from this type of entanglement with complex issues, but simply describes women as they really are. Consequently, if cultural feminist theorists suggest that their portrayal of shared characteristics or shared 'tendencies' of all women are simply descriptive, they are being either naïve or disingenuous.

While scientific study of sex difference purports to offer value-free description, in fact it cannot move beyond a quantitative recording of test results to a consideration of what it *means* to be a woman (Ayer 1956, 7-8) or the knowledge of "the kind of thing a [woman] is" (Owens 1992, 142) or the understanding of woman *qua* woman without "abandoning observation for barren theoretical controversy," in Freud's terms (Gilligan 1982, 24). Any conclusion as to what it means to be a woman or any understanding of the kind of thing a woman is, cannot be merely descriptive and must go beyond the realm of science. When scientific studies move beyond a recording of empirical observation to the kinds of questions listed by Maccoby and Jacklin in Chapter 2 of this thesis,

evaluative notions *must* intrude, for questions as to potential, significance, and "the kinds of lives that individuals of the two sexes may reasonably be expected to lead" are *philosophical* questions involving judgements quite distinct from empirical observation (although they build on empirical observation). Thus the *interpretations of* supposedly neutral empirical data suggesting that women have less need of power than men, for example, have been shown to be spurious (Winter 1988, 510 and 519).[7]

Gilligan, in extrapolating an interpretation of women's moral development from her data, presents an excellent example of a description of '*woman's nature*'. To say that women have a "distinctive psychology" (Gilligan 1982, 168) and to procede to describe that psychology is to say 'Women are *thus.*' The different voice, she states, is "an empirical observation" but her analysis of it is clearly evaluative and presented in terms of a separate female 'nature': "Women...[have] different possibilities for love and for work", they have a particular understanding of life, they speak different languages (Gilligan 1982, 172-173). Gilligan's statements are couched in the terminology of human nature presented in Chapter 2 (and in more detail in Appendices II and III). In other words, Gilligan's statements perform the following 'nature-related' functions: they seek to discern *meaning*; they classify the data into an *oppositional* male-female duality; they select certain *essential or significant descriptors* that characterize women; they emphasize the qualities that *differentiate* women from men; they impose clear *boundaries* on women's psychology;[8] they rank 'woman's nature' *hierarchically* above man's nature;[9] they reflect the *true purpose* of woman;[10] they suggest that particular behaviours and modes of cognition are *causally attributable* to being a woman; they are couched in *universals*, ignoring the exceptional, and described as *law-like*;[11] the qualities described emerge "naturally" and not through fear, coercion, rational assent, and so on; they represent an *inherent disposition or internal drive* to act and think in a particular way;

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they contribute to the fundamental character of woman; they allow a certain *predictabil-ity* to women's behaviour; they represent important, perhaps essential and necessary, qualities.[12] In short, to describe what woman is like or what it means to be a woman is to specify the essential and innate qualities, forces, or properties of woman that are fixed, inherent, and inseparable, giving woman her fundamental character. This is the classical definition of a 'nature' arrived at in Appendix 2. As with all theories of human nature, Gilligan's theory of 'woman's nature' suggests causality and has explanatory power. Further, it contains the seeds of political philosophy, perhaps made more overt elsewhere (Belenky *et al*. 1986, Chapters 9 and 10; Martin 1985, Chapter 7). It is clearly norma-tive in that "the ethic of care" and the "relationship of connection" are held to be particu-larly appropriate for women (Gilligan 1982, 171). Thus attempts to anchor descriptions of the way women *are* in science are misguided. Wittgenstein says, "Philosophers con-stantly see the method of science before their eyes, and are irresistibly tempted to ask and answer questions in the way science does" (Wittgenstein 1975, 18). He goes on to point out that scientific method and philosophical investigation are incompatible. Such descrip-tions are not value-neutral empirical observations but philosophical descriptions of the 'nature of woman'.

The following extract from the popular 'self-help' inspirational speaker Marianne Williamson illustrates a rhetorical technique that appeals to a "coded" 'women's na-ture'—ostensibly read off reality—that, in Berry's terms, attempts to take women's affilia-tive function off the agenda as an open question because it represents women as they *are*. Note that the use of the word "coded" links 'woman's nature' to the inflexible hard-wired codes of the earlier computers, to the DNA codes that are our inescapable life-long genetic heritage, and to Halle's description (in Chapter 2) of apian society that is repro-duced in every detail from generation to generation.

Women keep talking about human connections because we are coded to do so. We came into the world with the memory in our soul that this is our function here. It is not our weakness, our neurosis, or our addiction. It is our strength. And when we are denied the power of a valid voice, it is not only we but the whole world that suffers. (Williamson 1993, 98)

Women, as in the following more scholarly extract, are often represented as possessing feminine characteristics in terms of 'female nature': "An ethic of responsibility may be more 'natural' to most women than an ethic of rights" (Belenky *et al.* 1986, 229). The implicit assumption is that if something is more natural to women, it ought to be heeded, encouraged, and 'valorized'. Yet, as suggested in Note 9 of Appendix III, there is no reason why natural behaviour ought to receive epistemic or moral priority over behaviour that is learned or cultivated. To reiterate a counter-example cited earlier: should Lorenz's theory of natural male aggression prove valid, this validity would still not provide legitimate grounds on which to heed, encourage, and valorize male aggression, except perhaps in very carefully prescribed situations. Even then, the basis for such attention, encouragement, and valorization would not be the 'naturalness' of the attribute, but its usefulness in a given situation. In the Belenky *et al.* extract, unquestionably an ethic of responsibility may be a desirable thing — however, its 'natural' association with women rather than men fulfils no purpose other than the politically-relevant cause of establishing separate male and female 'natures'.

Existing scientific research into sex differences has not proven the existence of sex-linked traits and behaviours (see Appendix I). Anecdotal, self-reported, and self-selected data have questionable validity where ever they may be applied. Prevailing ideologies colour attempts to define natures. Researcher bias and the difficulties inherent in interpreting complex data necessitate scepticism on the part of the reader. These serious methodological problems raise enough questions to justify extreme caution in any ostensibly scientific appeal to 'woman's nature' and what is natural for women.

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At a more basic level—the level of definition itself—because they are not based solely on empirical data and because they are filtered through the lenses of theory and cognition (especially with regard to the judgement of significance), definitions can possess only a pretence to objectivity as documented in Appendix II. To 'define' women in any but a medical sense (that is to say in terms of her anatomy and physiology), one must define "woman's nature". The act of definition concentrates attention on what makes something unique, or *different*. Thus the scientific and classical biases in favour of finding differences and ignoring similarities between men and women, described in Appendix I and Chapter 2, are exacerbated. As shown in Appendix II, any act of definition denies natural continua and concentrates on opposites. If human nature and the nature of man are identical, 'woman's nature' must be that Pythagorean duality or opposite by which both are defined. Any hypothesized 'woman's nature' is vulnerable to the Law of Thought—everything must either be or not be. In other words, by definition, 'woman's nature' is what man's is not. For example, we have seen the preeminent value placed on abstract rationality in the classical perspective. Since rationality is the defining quality of man, by logic, if woman possesses a *separate* 'nature', rationality *cannot* be the defining quality of woman. If, however, woman participates in *the same* human nature as does man, her definition is the same and the law of the excluded middle no longer applies.

Any attempt to describe a separate 'woman's nature' logically requires the acceptance of these two corollaries: (1) 'woman's nature' cannot be the same as man's, and (2) 'woman's nature' must be defined in opposition to man's. This opposition may be conceived as complementary opposites (for example, rational / intuitive, strong / gentle) or as pairs of superior/inferior opposites (for example, rational / irrational, strong / weak). It is tempting to postulate a third corollary: (3) 'woman's nature' must be defined

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as *inferior* to that of man because it is *not* woman who is doing the defining. If, as in the case of cultural feminism, women do attempt to define woman, they have not shown themselves able to work from a clean slate and have adopted man's definition of woman wholesale. Only the third corollary has changed; because women are doing the defining, they define their own 'nature' as superior to man's.

Marcil-Lacoste, in an essay on Père Claude Buffier's *Examen des préjugés vulgaires pour disposer l'esprit à juger sainement de tout (1704)*, suggests that prejudices require an epistemology grounded in binary opposition rather than in multidimensionality:

> C'est au niveau d'un rejet de la logique binaire comme arrière-pays de la pensée philosophique et journalière qu'apparaît la nouvelle philosophie de Père Buffier... Buffier fut aussi l'un des premiers à loger le préjugé au sein même des opérations judicatives, comme résultante des mirages de rigueur et de vérité que les lois d'une logique binaire entretiennent dans l'élaboration de la plupart des jugements humains. (Marcil-Lacoste 1987, 126-127)

Thus she seems to imply that prejudice grows out of a collusion that inextricably fuses logic and culture (Marcil-Lacoste 1987, 128). If the law of the excluded middle applies and if something is either true or false, or black or white, it will be difficult to avoid judgements based on culture-bound prejudice.

To further consider the defining process is to note that any definition sets limits on an entity. Most commonly, modern definitions of one, universal human nature carefully avoid setting bounds by staying vague as to content, centring around a human being's potential (Okin 1979, 10), and leaving the choice of 'the good' to each individual. In accepting a definition of women as anything other than a vague unbounded potential to achieve an individually-determined good (for example, to propose that 'woman's nature' is nurturing and affiliative), simultaneously *by definition* limits are placed on women, appropriate behaviour is circumscribed, and deviance is defined in terms of non-

compliance. The aloof, self-sufficient, intellectual woman must be seen as less womanly, less of a woman. Perhaps she is described as self-deceived, playing an alien role, colonized by men and male values. Cultural feminist Ruddick describes her youthful self similarly (Ruddick 1989, 3-12). As discussed in Chapter 2, Plato avoids limiting women in this way by giving intellectual assent to the empirical observation that, "A good many women... are better than a good many men at a good many things," and opening up the possibility that, "There is no administrative occupation which is peculiar to woman as woman or man as man; natural capacities are similarly distributed in each sex" (Plato 1987, 234). In the *Republic*, Plato avoided setting limits on women's potential capabilities.

In setting limits, definitions do not merely describe, they prescribe. At the inanimate level, it would seem at first glance that this is a false distinction because entities cannot act against their nature. However, as Rousseau points out, even inanimate objects can be forced to act against their nature ("He forces...one tree to bear another's fruit" [Rousseau 1974, 5]), and this can clearly be seen as perverse. The definition of 'woman's nature' is undoubtedly prescriptive and women who do not follow its prescription have long been labelled unnatural. For example, Rousseau condemns bluestocking women as acting against their true 'nature', or "real talents' [Rousseau 1974, 306-307], and Steinem suggests that female high-achievers in academia may be "self-hating... educated and successful women who feel they must separate themselves from other women and get status from being one of the few women among men" (Steinem 1992, 126).

The covert message is that 'woman's true nature' is easily colonized and deformed by the patriarchy and that, in ignoring their true 'nature' and proper purpose, women will incur negative consequences. The silencing of her true voice is one negative

consequence cited by Martin (1985). Others are, "becoming like men" (Friedan 1991, 352) and "a narrative of loss" (Martin 1985, 88); Belenky *et al.* (1986), Ruddick (1989), and Fox-Genovese (1991) provide other examples in this vein.

There is a tendency in cultural feminism towards the separation of the sexes in order to protect and cultivate 'woman's nature' that would have been congenial to Rousseau. For example,

> Radical Feminism seeks to build a womanculture, a new society informed by the radical feminist values of wholeness, trust and nurturance, of sensuality, joy and wildness...They need a womanspace, a space free from male intrusion. In this space, women can nurture each other and themselves. They can begin to practice their own values and become clearer about them by doing so...Feminism has always required a degree of separatism. (Jagger 1983, 270)

In addition, to cultural feminists, 'woman's nature' must be taken into consideration because it inevitably impinges upon and sets a particular direction both to female potential and to the possibility of change in existing social arrangements. This is McMillan's argument:

> Man *is* a natural being whose life is therefore always subject to certain limits and conditions...But we cannot destroy the limited and conditioned aspect of human life without necessarily destroying that part of ourselves through which we remain related to nature and to all other living organisms: life itself. (McMillan 1982, 155-156)

Nature, in this view, sets bounds to individuals that cannot and ought not be transcended. Nature cannot even be ignored, modified, circumvented, or transcended without incurring negative consequences. Illich mourns the passing of "the ambiguous and asymmetric match of a *self-limiting* set of women and men" ([my italics] Illich 1982, 179). This is a classical viewpoint that emphasizes the bounded, defined, limited (rather than the free and self-defined modern notion) nature of human existence and the absolute necessity of natural bonds. Because women *are*, in an ontological sense, their 'nature', they cannot afford to lose this nature or allow it to be colonized or silenced. That is why

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Friedan, for example, turns from her earlier unisex view of human nature and pleads for the affirmation of differences in psychology and values between the sexes (Friedan 1991, 352). We ostensibly look to nature for eternal and invariable "facts which can be no other way" (Berry 1986, 29). To change or distort these "facts" is to corrupt and pervert one's true nature. Although "as many philosophers have put it for a long time, 'ought' cannot be derived from 'is'" (Richards 1988, 64), moral, ethical, and value statements in the classical viewpoint have much to do with natures. Indeed, from a contemporary communitarian standpoint, much is made of the blurred boundaries between "subjective and objective, between descriptive and prescriptive" and the suggestion is that the only possible source of 'ought' *must be* derived from 'is' (Frazer and Lacey 1993, 115 and 117).[13] Thus nature, understood in the Aristotelian sense of the *status quo*, can be invoked as the ultimate authority in support of social norms: "Now in dealing with any phenomena dependent on natural growth we must always look to nature's own norm and not base our observations on degenerate forms" (Aristotle 1962, 33).

Plainly, a definition of 'woman's nature' cannot be 'read off' reality any more than human nature is read off human beings (Appendices II and III support this argument in more detail). 'Woman's nature' seems much closer to that standardized mental image to which Hirsch refers than to "facts" about women (Hirsch 1988). In this case, the standardized mental image may be the stereotypical one of femininity rather than womanliness. Because both the mental image and stereotype of 'woman' are unarticulated, vague, and to some degree personalized and open-ended, it is difficult to separate this standardized mental image from the stereotype that women fought to be liberated from in the first place.[14] For example, in the following extract, Gilligan confounds stereotype and self:

> The repeated finding of these studies is that the qualities deemed necessary for adulthood—the capacity for autonomous thinking, clear decision-making, and

responsible action—are those associated with masculinity and considered undesirable as attributes of the feminine self. (Gilligan 1982, 17)

The studies cited address "sex-role stereotypes," according to Gilligan herself. The above qualities are undesirable as attributes of the feminine *stereotype*—not undesirable as attributes of the female *self* (Mackie 1983, 37; Hammond 1987, 141; Hess and Ferree 1987, 14; Kagan 1989; Ferguson 1993). Putting aside the fact that researchers do not have a reliable mechanism at hand through which to study the self, there are women who consider "the capacity for autonomous thinking, clear decision-making, and responsible action" most desirable as attributes of the feminine self. Such confusion between the stereotype and the self would hardly escape notice if someone were to suggest that the qualities deemed necessary for a business tycoon are the qualities associated with white middle-class managers and considered undesirable as attributes of the black self, or the gay self, or the lower-class self. An 'association' may be an incorrect association and, of itself, offers no valid contribution toward understanding women or other disadvantaged groups. An 'association' proves nothing.

Stereotypes and definitions of 'natures' share key characteristics. They both pick out what is important about, what necessarily 'belongs to', what is not 'accidental' to, and what is common to groups of similar entities (women, in this case). They both enable human beings to respond to women easily by applying a predigested formula. Again, as pointed out earlier, implicit in the selection of these important or essential qualities is the notion of an external agent that is doing the selection. In the case of women, the external agent has been male. When the ruler selects the important characteristics of the ruled, can he but define her in terms of their relationship? It seems astonishing that Plato was able to transcend the parochialism of classical Greece. More congruent with expectations is Aristotle, who remained bound by the sex-role conventions of his time.

In social science, those who investigate 'woman's nature' are commonly termed trait theorists. The tenacity which researchers persist in believing that women and men have separate sets of gender-appropriate traits that can be specified and defined, despite the dearth of objective corroboration described in Appendix I, has led Keller and other liberal feminists to posit a ideological "gender mythology":

> Insofar as [gender myths] are widely held, they take on an ideological function, in the sense that Goertz uses this term—they become "maps of problematic social reality and matrices for the creation of collective conscience."Culturally shared myths about these inevitably...both reflect and shape the realities we observe. (Keller in Rothschild 1983, 130)

Both liberal and cultural feminism can be seen as popular myths about the 'nature of women' that affect behaviour toward women and can potentially affect the behaviour of women. Role theories of identity formation suggest that conflicting or non-congruent roles at the beginning of adulthood may be resolved in favour of what is perceived by the actor to be the more socially acceptable feminine role, whether such a role is 'mythical' or not. Students who have not forged a firm central identity or, in Freud's term, "ego-ideal" may be more likely to be influenced by the feminine stereotype in their lifestyle choices (Cottrell 1969, 559).

Cultural feminists who define themselves as 'Woman' and embrace the stereotype have no platform from which to object if they are treated stereotypically. Young women who are encouraged to pursue their educations in the caring professions, traditionally female job ghettos, could conceivably be pushed further along this path—even in spite of their personal preferences—by those who believe that connection, nurturing, and caring are more natural and appropriate for women than for men. The sex-directed curriculum that liberal feminists sought to defeat in the 1960s is again becoming a reality (see Sommers 1994, for example): women's essential 'nature' ought not to be ignored in the classroom according to Martin (1985), Belenky et al. (1986), and other "women-centred"

cultural feminist theorists. If care is natural for women, those responsible for budget cuts in health and social services have a theoretical basis on which to defend throwing the responsibility for home care back onto women. In Ferguson's words, liberal feminism suggests that care may be equally natural for both sexes but that "patriarchal conditioning has deluded many women into misconceiving their interests to be relational in the self-sacrificing sense of the term" (Ferguson 1993). That is to say that, given the current state of social structures and childrearing practices, it is highly probable that women are cognitively influenced by societal and familial expectations *vis-à-vis* assuming a caring role than guided by their own 'natures' in this respect. Certainly this liberal interpretation acknowledges, as cultural feminism does not, the ambivalence and conflict experienced by women in their role as care-givers (Mendus 1993).

Treating women as though they had a fixed common 'nature', a definition as it were, is logically incompatible with opening up *all* (even traditionally 'male') possibilities to women. As Okin notes, the definition of women is a functional definition that is not inconvenient for the community, does not force or even encourage social change, and does not challenge patriarchal assumptions about women. As all classical definitions of natures, any definition of 'woman' places her meaning for the community above her own self-definition.

The notion that an entity can be labelled by a being at the top of the taxonomic ladder with a definition that allows it to be understood in terms of a 'pre-packaged' set of assumptions about members of that particular category has come to be seen as unjust. Yet, in their attempts to define or understand women, cultural feminist psychologists, social scientists, philosophers, and political scientists have not been able to escape the difficulties imposed by 'male' definitions of 'woman's nature'. Cultural feminist researchers and theorists have simply failed to realize that they may not say that women are

thus without invoking the necessary aspects of a classical definition of nature. These necessary aspects are the following: judging value, prescribing norms, circumscribing what woman *means*, opposing males and females, selecting significant qualities, imposing boundaries on women's psychology, ranking 'woman's nature' hierarchically above man's, reflecting on the true purpose of woman, attributing women's behaviours and modes of cognition to 'being a woman', presenting a universal stereotype of femininity that invalidates exceptional women, concentrating on inherent dispositions and drives, implying that women's behaviour may be predicted (for example, in solving moral dilemmas). In my opinion, this blindness is inexcusable. In turning their backs[15] on the philosophical history of terms such as 'nature' and 'essence', feminist theory has simply reinvented classical solutions to problems they attribute to the liberal political theory underlying modernity.

In summary, it does not seem likely that a cultural feminist definition of 'woman's nature' is likely to be more 'scientific', more objectively accurate, less damaging to women. There are thinly veiled power-based issues involved in defining 'woman's nature' (see Appendix II). In postmodern terms, "The status of the phallus as the signifier of difference ensures that femininity is nothing other than the difference from masculinity" (Sagan 1987, 123). It is not inconceivable that the entire project of defining 'woman's nature' is intrinsically fated to be an oppressive one. At the very least, a value-neutral or objective definition of 'woman's nature' would seem an elusive goal.

Function and Proper Purpose

Also important in defining 'woman's nature' is the classical notion that entities are defined in terms of their external value, the function of the entity in the eyes of the definer, and in the larger interests of the cosmic order. The *telos*, in other words, of a

woman is delimited by her purpose and good, or final cause, according to Aristotle. To return to the popular, contemporary source cited above: "It is a woman's function to mother the world by holding the idea of its possible perfection within her heart" (Williamson 1993, 121).

The purpose of woman, like that of any other class of individual, for Aristotle refers to women as a class (1977, 54), refers to her function in the *polis*, and not to a contemporary purpose like self-development or a liberal purpose like self-preservation (Chapter 2 and Appendices II and III). In the following extract and in the *Politics* (Aristotle 1972, 29), he echoes Plato's notion that the state is prior to the individual:

> Every household is part of a state; and the virtue of the part ought to be examined in relation to the virtue of the whole. This means that the children, and women too, must be educated with an eye to the whole constitution of the state—at least if it is true to say that it makes a difference to the goodness of a state that its children should be good and its women good. And it must make a difference; for women make up half the adult free population... (Aristotle 1962, 54)

It is interesting that, in a contemporary context, American communitarians are reviving Aristotle's notion of moral education in service of the state by suggesting that "improper child rearing has become a 'public health problem'" requiring government intervention and that "the moral confusion of today's youth could be deleterious to our democracy, which draws its sustenance and vitality from new generations of competent and responsible citizens" (Herbert 1996).

As discussed in Chapter 2, the 'nature of woman' must serve the interests of the larger community, just as each member of a ship's crew functions to ensure the safety of the voyage (Aristotle 1962, 107). The interests of the community are also illustrated through the use of an 'organic' simile, in which individuals are compared to the different parts of the body, each with its appropriate function and each useless on its own. To belabour the point, the equality of all human beings, particularly equal rights and equal

functions, would not advance the ordered design of the *polis* (Aristotle 1962, 84). When Aristotle states, "Justice in a community means equality for all," he qualifies his statement immediately: "Equality must be equal for equals" (Aristotle 1962, 128). The state requires dissimilarity—"It is the perfect balance between its *different* parts that keeps a city in being" (Aristotle 1962, 57)—in order to preserve the harmony of cosmic design predicated upon the principle of unity, which in turn rests on the duality of superiority/inferiority: "The state is one of those things in which the substrata may differ in kind and that one may be primary, another secondary, and so on, there being nothing, or scarcely anything, which is common to them all, which makes them what they are" (Aristotle 1962, 103).

All entities, to Aristotle, may be used in more than one way—but, like the members of the well-ordered ship's crew, each has only one *proper* purpose (Aristotle 1962, 41). As discussed above, from the prevailing Aristotelian perspective, women's proper purpose or use is inextricable from her form. She is one of those, "Whose condition is such that their function is the use of their bodies," not their minds (Aristotle 1962, 33-34). Aristotle fully realizes that woman is capable of ruling. He grants that the deliberative faculty in the soul of a female exists but is "inoperative" in the Sinclair translation (Aristotle 1962) and "without authority" in the Jowett translation (Aristotle 1977). "Without authority" seems to imply "without social sanction in Athens." His use of Sparta to illustrate the way a city-state ought not to be run includes a passage describing rebellious Spartan women who were not under "control" and interfered in the smooth running of the *polis*.

> At Sparta women live without restraint, enjoying every licence and indulging in every luxury...In the days of their supremacy a great deal was managed by women. And what is the difference between women ruling and rulers ruled by women? The result is the same...Instead of playing a useful part, like the women in other states, they caused more confusion than the enemy. Now it is not surpris-

ing that from the earliest times lack of control of women was a feature of Laconian society... (Aristotle 1962, 85)

This aspect of control, restraint, and usefulness in the interests of the harmonious ordering of the larger community is characteristic of the classical perspective. Aristotle is concerned with discovering which political arrangements are "advantageous for the good ordering of life in any country or city" (Aristotle 1962, 135). Other possibilities are unnatural, perverse and he calls them "deviations". His moral principle is "the good of the whole state and the common weal of the citizens" (Aristotle 1962, 131).

The importance assigned to order and restraint in the classical *weltanschauung* cannot be overstated. Aristotle identifies "the good and the supreme good" with "the order inherent in [the universe]" (Aristotle 1963, 129-130). Individuals are bound by their obligations to the community, although the restrictions on the ruling or citizen class are brought out far more clearly by Plato than Aristotle, and the interests of the well-ordered community take precedence over the will and desires of individuals. As Jagger points out, the limitations and obligations imposed by one's proper purpose are not seen as oppressive[16] but as a necessary and inevitable requirement of life in a harmonious and well-run state. It is only from the modern viewpoint that "constraints that once were viewed as natural necessities are transformed into instances of oppression" (Jagger 1983, 6). It is difficult to understand Jagger's uncritical advocacy of communitarianist aims with the feminist attempt to liberate women from the limitations and obligations imposed on women by the types of society she seems to see as superior to today's liberal-individualistic one.

As discussed in Chapter 2, from the classical perspective, specialization of function and the division of labour were seen to advance the cosmic order within the affairs of men. An individual's innate nature—not his or her abilities, will, or desire—decided where on the hierarchical ladder he or she belonged. A personal conviction that one's

strength lay elsewhere would have been given little positive attention and probably have been treated as dangerously subversive. Aristotle criticized democracy for its lack of control over slaves, women, and children and for "allowing everyone to live as he pleases" (Aristotle 1962, 244). Similarly, the ability to move from one category or class to another was not seen as an aspect of the highest modern value, personal freedom, but as injustice and the deliberate subversion of the social and natural order. The will, in other words, *had to* serve the reason by conforming to the natural order. Reason was capable of perceiving the order of the universe and of controlling the will in its service to that order. Plato describes self-discipline as, "A kind of order, a control of certain desires...more like some sort of harmony or concord than the other virtues... (Plato 1987, 201) and links it to the acceptance or, "Unanimity in which there is a natural concordance between higher and lower about which of them is to rule in state and individual" (Plato 1987, 203).

The expression "The end justifies the means" may be interpreted as giving less importance to the sentiments, rights, freedoms, and wants of individuals than to the achievement of a particular (social) objective. The 'end'—social harmony—is more important than the means: in fact, in the classical *zeitgeist*, the means have little value outside or apart from the end, which is the teleological perfection of the natural order. The good of the individual *is* the end to which he or she is used. Aristotle goes so far as to suggest that goodness and force are not incompatible providing the ends are just, as follows, "Surely it is in a sense goodness or ability which attains a position of command and is therefore best able to use force.. Force is not without a goodness of its own..." (Aristotle 1972, 35).

With reference to external value and to function, woman's purpose is to reproduce the male by providing "a body and a material mass" (Aristotle 1977, 47) and under-

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take her ordained portion of the rational division of labour in the home. Her status, honour, and dignity, as suggested in Chapter 2, lie in conformity to this role and her *arete* in carrying it out to perfection. Whether or not this is her desire or her happiness, it is her duty, the only rational and possible path to her fulfilment, and the perfection of her virtue within the community.

Natural Rights

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the shift to the modern emphasis on general rights and individualism is so cataclysmic that it eludes easy explanation. It far outruns my limited expertise to attempt to force an interpretation on the elusive facts of history as to how and why the paradigm shift happened. Fortunately, for these present purposes it is unnecessary.

As shown in Chapter 3, general rights have no place in the classical *weltanschauung*, except possibly as a threat to the good order of society (Aristotle 1962, 84). The concept of general rights was developed as a baseline notion to protect the individual against society and against other individuals. Above, it was suggested that that the classical *weltanschauung* provides little rationale for the protection of the individual against society. From this viewpoint, the interests of society are paramount and the instrumental use of the individual is fully, indeed essentially, moral. Further, it is not the case that classical philosophers were ignorant of or too unimaginative to understand the anguish involved in disciplining oneself to fulfil an unchosen, perhaps undesired, life role. The will of the individual clearly had to be wrestled into subordination to the rational goal of the larger order. One of the weaknesses of communitarian theory is its avoidance of the issue of conflict: individuals are seen working together harmoniously for the greater good of the community.[17] More dangerously, particularly in terms of the

cultural feminist ethic of care, communitarianism does not deal, for example, with the possibility that the demands for female care-labour can be oppressive and conflict with a sense of obligation to the self (Mendus 1993).

The implications of the classical position for women are obvious. Their customary life roles are obedient daughter, wife, and mother, in that chronological order. As with any position in the classical hierarchy, each of these roles carries its own duties, obligations, and privileges or rights. Other rights are not women's to claim. They are inappropriate to the female 'nature', the operation of natural law,[18] and/or their proper purpose, and it is unnatural to covet or appropriate them. There is no area of private life in which women are free to do as they wish, in accordance with their own will, with maximum freedom from the interference of others, for the family provides the patriarchal paradigm of authority on which the state is also built. Frazer and Lacey note that "the only realistically envisagable world which is sufficiently homogeneous to keep the communitarian subject together is an authoritarian one" (Frazer and Lacey 1993, 155). All relationships, following Aristotle, are power relationships between ruler and ruled. Most importantly, from the classical viewpoint, masters and slaves are not opposed in a power-domination relationship as they are seen to be from the modern viewpoint. Rather, both master *and slave* are seen to cooperate for the sake of the larger good. Obviously this is salient for the position of woman: their subordination was, historically, not seen as oppressive until they could be considered as possessing a common human nature with man. While rights-talk was central to property-owning males from the Enlightenment on, women were subsumed under the classical *weltanschauung* for at least another century, overtly, and to the present day in some covert residual remnants of the classical belief in women's separate 'nature'.

Underwriting the classical world view is the theory of specific rights, based on the hierarchic categories of individuals and distributive justice discussed in Chapter 3. Woman *qua* woman (in other words, as member of the sex-class or category 'woman') possess these limited and specific rights with the full assent of society because these rights work to further the interests of the social order. As pointed out above, general rights and universal 'sameness' are seen as interfering with the smooth operation of the classical division of labour.

The classical definition of justice is still by-and-large accepted today: those of equal nature ought to be treated the same way. This is an exclusive approach in which limits are drawn around categories. Those who do not fit into a category (in human terms, a social role), as outlined in Chapter 2, are fundamentally nonpersons.[19] In tandem and in contrast, the modern *zeitgeist* extended one category in terms of a nebulous yet sacred equal nature to virtually all human beings. This is an inclusive approach in which theoretically there are no limits and all human beings are entitled to the dignity of personhood. In fact, the legal definition of a person is one with rights and duties (Marcil-Lacoste 1987, 106). The struggle for woman to be recognized as a full person has characterized the past 150 years of jurisprudence and democracy worldwide. Marcil-Lacoste underlines the connection between the classical notion of women's personhood as inextricable from her *persona* or functional role. She notes that the "archaic" functional definition of women's separate 'nature' has been used by nonfeminists to deny full personhood, or membership in the category of full human beings, to women:

L'idée que les femmes seraient des êtres définissables par leur rôle spécifique (généralement inférieur) et que ce rôle correspondrait à leur nature intrinsèque est si répandue qu'on se demande comment les dictionnaires et les encyclopédies, particulièrement les dictionnaires et les encyclopédies philosophiques, peuvent continuer à presenter cet usage fonctionnel du concept de personne comme archaïque. En tout cas, on remarquera ici que les femmes sont, en effet, définies

comme des personnes, mais seulement dans l'usage soi-disant archaïque de «persona». (Marcil-Lacoste 1987, 106)

One of the issues important to cultural feminists is whether equal must always mean 'the same', as in "Must women have the same nature as men to be treated equally to men?" Consequently, cultural feminism may mistrust equality discourse. A definition of equality is as elusive as a definition of human nature. Both terms have been used in a myriad of contexts to imply differing sets of values. For example, Marcil-Lacoste refers to a avalanche of "cent quarante manières spécifiques, thématisées et explicitement définies d'être égaux" in twentieth-century equality discourse (Marcil-Lacoste 1987, 197). It is difficult conceptually to separate notions of equality from notions of sameness. If something applies universally, as Marcil-Lacoste suggests equality does («Si l'égalité peut avoir quelque sense, cette condition d'universalisabilité est essentielle» [Marcil-Lacoste 1987, 114]), it is commonly considered to be the same in all places. For example, if marriage is a universal institution, it follows that it is recognizably the same in significant particulars the world over. Equal but different has been pragmatically and legally (in the 1954 context of separate schools for black and white Americans), shown to be inherently *un*equal and, certainly, it is easier to treat things that are the same equally. Tong, who is sympathetic to what she calls "feminine ethics" agrees that "oppressors cannot treat those they oppress with the same respect and consideration they treat their peers" (Tong 1993, 160). In jurisprudence, the idea of justice depends on the idea of equality (Wiener 1973, 25). In this regard, it is pertinent that equality, in fact, is not seen as an inherent property of entities. Rather equality seems to be a matter of judgement, on the part of the one doing the 'treating', involving the selection of significant properties. For example, a daughter and a son may be different but in treating them equally, one would be treating them *as though they were the same*. This is not the same as saying they do not have differences, that their differences are not important, do not

matter, or are not real. Rather, for the sake of a particular activity, for example, their differences would be put to one side and their samenesses would be significantly relevant in this context. The significant characteristic of 'sameness' might be that they are both one's offspring. It is not accidental that this last resembles the judgement of significance in the discernment of natures. To phrase it alternatively, equal treatment of son and daughter may require that a blind eye be turned to their 'insignificant' differences and they be treated as though they were, in fact, absolutely identical. This is not to deny their inherent differences but to recognize, as Plato did, that in this particular context, specific differences are irrelevant and ought to be treated as though they did not exist. After all, it is not only Plato who would avow that outside the abstract sphere of mathematics there are few identical entities in this imperfect world. From another perspective, Singer suggests that equality depends on equal consideration of interests, which does not depend on personal qualities at all:

> The principle of equal consideration of interests prohibits making our readiness to consider the interests of others depend on their abilities or other characteristics, apart from the characteristic of having interests...The basic element, the taking into account of the person's interests, whatever they may be, must apply to every-one, irrespective of race, sex or scores on an intelligence test (Singer 1979, 20)

Liberal feminists argue for the recognition of their capabilities, not as members of the sex-class category 'woman,' but as individual human beings. Again according to Singer, sex-class differences cannot preclude the equality of individual interests because "We must assess people as individuals, not merely lump them into 'female' and 'male' if we are to find out what they are really like" (Singer 1979, 33). The implications of being part of a sex-class are more fully addressed in the following section. While they do not repudiate their feminine side, liberal feminists demand to be treated as though their femininity were irrelevant in many life situations and as though they have identical potential to males, as Plato had long ago suggested. In other words, they want equal

treatment. They do not see any good reason for their exclusion from anything on the basis of their sex.

In attempting to defend their position, liberal feminists have long minimized sex differences and emphasized similarities with men, thus leaving themselves open to the cultural criticism that they were becoming 'little men'. In the fight for rights and equality, cultural feminists feared that what was uniquely feminine was being lost. In addition, Marxist feminists have suggested that the fight for equal rights is, in fact, a bourgeois tactic used by privileged white women to usurp the feminist movement (Ferguson 1993), whereby:

> A rising class [bourgeois, white, educated liberal feminists, in this case], though themselves a minority, when they challenge the supremacy of another class, try to gain popularity by using arguments that appeal to the people generally. They try to make the interest of their class look as if it were the interest of all...Rights that could...be exercised effectively only by the wealthy and the educated were claimed for the whole people... (Wiener 1973, 40)

Thus Eisenstein can criticize Mill and Taylor's liberal feminism in the following Marxist terms, which simplistically conflate mathematical equality (identity), equality of potential, equality of opportunity, and equal treatment while implying that mathematical equality of employment is the only true equality:

> Mill does believe that individual women who want the opportunity to choose a life other than motherhood and marriage should have the freedom to do so...The exclusiveness of Mill's argument emerges: change the laws to enable gifted women who wish to experience alternatives to be able to do so. But most women will remain within the home. Individual choice and development remain a possibility for only a few women. The promise of individuality becomes an exclusionary patriarchal individualism. (Eisenstein 1993, 137)

However, liberal feminists use the same framework to undercut the sex-class 'woman *qua* woman' premise of cultural feminism by accusing cultural feminists of falsely extending their own self-portrait to all women. For example, "The description of what we have in common 'as women' has almost always been a description of white middle-

class women" (Spelman 1988, 4) and "Mary Daly, for instance, has been accused of 'erasing' the special oppression suffered by poor women, colonized women, and women of colour by assimilating their suffering to that of white, middle-class women" (Jagger 1983, 118).

Woman *Qua* Woman

The phrase 'woman *qua* woman' refers to an individual woman who is considered as, or behaving in the character of, a 'generic'woman. This somewhat enigmatic phrase refers to what many liberal theorists consider to be outdated or pathological stereotyping; for example, a woman may be considered to be woman *qua* women when she is passed over for a job on the assumption that she is not as ambitious, aggressive, or dedicated to the job as her male counterparts. Riley objects to this categorization as being "objectified as a distortion," stating, "It's not possible to live twenty-four hours a day soaked in the immediate awareness of one's sex" (Riley 1988, 97). Many feminists, on the other hand, consider that the experience "of being treated or acting as a woman...is an element of experience which has particular social and political consequences" and suggest that this experience is the very basis of feminism (Frazer and Lacey 1993, 11). Indeed, Frazer and Lacey support the notion that such experiences "make the category 'women', and hence feminist discourse and politics, legitimate" [Frazer and Lacey 1993, 132]).

Liberal feminists, in general, consider the implications of being treated specifically as a woman to be negative, in that stereotypical conceptions of woman tend to be limiting and circumscribing, referring as they do to 'woman's nature'. Liberal feminists would not be averse to dispensing with the notions implied in being treated 'as a woman' altogether. Cultural feminists, in general, valorize the notion of womanhood as a category (or, more frequently, 'sex-class') because they posit sets of specific male and specific female traits: "Some single type of conflict-free female essence, which all women share, but which patriarchy has denied, crushed or distorted" (Sagan 1987, 128). For example, passivity, emotionality, intuitiveness, nurturance, vanity, gentleness, and timidity are commonly felt to be female traits. Courage, aggression, mechanical aptitude, ambition, rationality, and seriousness of purpose are commonly felt to be male traits.

The following quotation illustrates this categorization, although from a nonfeminist perspective:

> If there is one thing the teacher, particularly the female teacher, is not, it is an engineer. Indeed it is difficult to think of two world views further apart than those symbolized by the Golden Rule on the one hand and the slide rule on the other. The one calls to mind adjectives such as romantic, warm, tender-minded, naive; the other calls to mind adjectives such as realistic, cold, tough-minded, efficient (Oettinger 1970, 116).

Although lip-service may be paid to a slight overlap in trait sets between the sexes, male and female are held to be two diametrically opposed categories: "Cultural and radical feminism do retain a faith in the integrity of 'women' as a category. Some proffer versions of a female nature or independent system of values, which, ironically, a rather older feminism has always sought to shred to bits" (Riley 1988, 2).

The argument from nature is based on the assumption that every woman can be subsumed into the category 'woman' because all women share the same essence, or nature. Liberal feminism rejects this categorization, preferring to suggest that women have similar common concerns to all less-powerful or 'lower' entities in the patriarchal hierarchy but share no common core of 'woman's nature' that differentiates them from men (hence the "decategorization" referred to by Frazer and Lacey [1993, 79]). Further, the influential French postmodernist feminists Cixous and Irigaray "reject any definition of woman, any representation or categorization of woman, any Platonic universal" and refuse to "subsum(e) the feminine under some *generic* term, such as 'woman'" (Code *et al.* 1989, 63).

As suggested above, women in the classical category 'woman' both share in the same essence of perfect womanhood to different degrees and fail 'by nature' to attain the same standard of perfection as men. As used by the patriarchy, the understanding of and appropriate behaviour toward individual women could be achieved on the basis of her

membership in that category or, in Marxist feminist terms, sex-class. Individual women, *qua* Woman, fit into the "ordered web of life" (Glacken 1967, xv) in one particular way, preordained as natural perfection. Other possibilities were not to be seriously considered.

As seen in Chapter 3, the ultimate rational perfection of the ordered universe came to be seen as less convincing or important than individual freedom and self-expression, particularly in the writings of Hume and Kant. The former reduced this classical notion of rational perfection to mere "custom" and the latter suggested the groundless nature of that order as an epiphenomenon of human cognitive processes. The dilution of the cosmology underpinning the notion of 'woman's distinct nature' gave rise to new possibilities for individual women, as the individual was increasingly seen to transcend social categorization, even from Bloom's conservative viewpoint:

> There may indeed be a feminine nature or self, but it has been definitively shaken loose from its teleological moorings. The feminine nature is not in any reciprocal relation to the male nature, and they do not define one another...Women do have different physical structures, but they can make of them what they will—without paying a price. The feminine nature is a mystery to be worked out on its own, which can now be done because the male claim to it has been overcome. (Bloom 1989, 105)

In nature categorical divisions do not exist (see Appendix II). In nature there are no dualities of polar opposites, but continua. Under close scrutiny, categories formerly held to be rigid may more accurately be seen in current research as arbitrary constructions of white male researchers. An excellent example, which has direct implications for those who study 'woman's nature', is that of race. Social scientists developed measurement instruments (brain size, IQ, genealogies, physiological [skull and other] dimensions, skin colour, self-reported census data, and so on) in an attempt to construct objective racial classifications. Reliable evidence is elusive, according to recent media reports, even at a genetic level race is difficult to identify and classify. Racial patterns have been recognized as tools of oppression and much negative press accrues to those who persist in

taking them seriously. This sceptical stance exemplifies modern empiricism, in which great value is placed on anomalous data in developing theory. The classical emphasis on pure rationality tends to disregard exceptions in the formulation of grand general laws.

To liberal feminists, it is anathema to suggest that women may categorically possess a distinct and particular 'nature'. They acknowledge that female life experiences are not congruent with male and that female and male sexualities appear to be experienced differently. However, they are reluctant to tie these disparities to any categorical natural differences in, for example, traits, behaviours, and cognitive and affective styles. With de Beauvoir, they would suggest that the "erotic drama" and other "peculiarities that identify her as specifically a woman get their importance from the significance placed upon them" (de Beauvoir 1989, 727-728). In other words, like Plato, they emphasize that all differences between men and women are not equally significant and that, indeed, the significance of any difference is largely a political and potentially oppressive construct.

Spelman puts the case against the "metaphysical nugget of pure womanhood that defines all women as women" eloquently:

> Is it really possible to learn about or identify with "women in general"? There are multitudes of persons all correctly referred to as "women," but it doesn't follow that there must be something we all have in common that explains what "women in general" means, nor does it follow that if we learn something essential about one woman we thereby learn it about all women. (Spelman 1988, 110-111)

In addition, there is a confluence of ideology and the categorical 'woman'. Woman *qua* woman does not usually represent the wife of one without power but, as pointed out above, the bourgeois wife supported by her property-owning husband.[20] For example, Plato speaks of women and of slaves, but not of slave women (Spelman 1988). The nineteenth century ideal of the Angel in the Home is an white upper- and middle-class ideal that ignores working women in the fields, factories, and mines: "Reverence for maternal 'influence' and the domestic virtues stood at the very centre of middle-class

morality" (Lasch 1991, 61). In addition to providing a moral foundation for the oppression of women and their relegation to the private sphere, the reification of the essential idea of women's perfection has been closely associated with the development of capitalism.[21] In a Marxist analysis, the nuclear family is cemented by the desire to pass material goods down to one's own children. Women's function is to provide for the well-being of the household material goods and the children, thus ensuring the transfer of goods from one generation to the next. Lange, as a cultural feminist, accepts that women probably do not operate under the same masculine values of capitalistic self-interest as do men. Therefore, she posits that women cannot be integrated into the corrupt reality of capitalist society on the same footing as men. (Lange 1981).

This latter stance, predicated on the necessity for the separation of the sexes, exemplifies the subtext of "Otherness" in cultural feminism. The insistence on a completely separate trait set for the sexes, coupled with an emphasis on the moral superiority of the female, results in the preference for 'opting out' of the public sphere as the site of male hegemony and an inappropriate arena for women. In cultural feminism, this tends toward the radical and/or lesbian feminist rejection of virtually all the works of civilization as male (for example, the canon of liberal education) and the self-conscious attempt to create a "womanculture" and "womanspace" (Jagger 1983, 270; from a critical perspective Denfeld 1995, 167-168).

There is a definite sense that the concept of woman *qua* woman is politically conservative. An appeal to 'woman's essential nature' can rationalize existing injustices to women and has the corollary that, since women's natures cannot be changed, all social reforms designed to liberate women are doomed to failure (for example, Holmstrom 1982, 29 and Mednick 1989). Accepting categorical female traits simultaneously defines deviance, as pointed out in earlier chapters. If there are certain female traits, it would

certainly behoove women to find out what they are and cultivate them. Even Martin, a cultural feminist, acknowledges the danger:

> We run the risk of being accused by those who themselves commit the fallacy of the false dilemma of looking backward: of placing women in the home, in the fashion of Rousseau; of making domesticity women's work, in the manner of Beecher. (Martin 1985, 177)

Further difficulties are contingent on the cultural feminist insistence on viewing women's connection to motherhood categorically and monolithically. This obviously places women who have never given birth at an epistemologic and ontologic disadvantage—there is an important, some would say inseparable, part of their 'nature' that they may not experience, or experience second-hand. Given the cultural feminist position on the lived experience of the body as a wellspring of 'woman's nature' (Chapter 7), the implication is that women who have not borne children are not true women. Ruddick provides an example of this way of thinking when she writes of "maternal thinking" as the distinctive thinking of "a person who takes on responsibility for children's lives and for whom providing child care is a significant part of her or his working life" (Ruddick 1989, 40). While this rhetoric acknowledges that maternal thinking may be possible for a man, it denies the possibility of such thinking to women who are not primary childcare providers.

From a cultural feminist standpoint, McMillan accuses liberal feminists of pushing motherhood to the periphery of modern life. She criticizes them for ignoring the reality of the mother-child bond that makes women's life experience so fundamentally different from that of men: "There are certain inexorable facts about human life which it is wise to take into account" (McMillan 1982, 90). Women's lives cannot be like men's and women's role in child rearing absolutely precludes the possibility of equivalence and

equality between the sexes (McMillan 1982, 106). The same theme is pursued by Mumford in his criticism of what Lasch calls "Progressives:"

> They sought to free mankind from all manner of hardship and adversity, from the boredom of domestic drudgery, and from natural processes in general...They had created a race of men and women who 'deny because of their lack of experience that life has any other meanings or values or possibilities'. (Lasch 1991, 79)

In other words, by denying the enormous impact of fertility, birth control, menstruation, conception, pregnancy, childbirth, lactation, and childrearing, liberal feminists may be attempting via *technique* to create a new race of women who do not derive human fulfillment from these natural processes. This begs the question whether all that makes life truly worthwhile is being sacrificed in the name of freedom. From a communitarian, cultural feminist viewpoint, the bonds that tie women to their bodies cannot be severed without repercussions for society and for individual women.

From the liberal perspective, however, women are not essentially mothers. Motherhood, as McMillan points out, may even be depicted as a condition from which women ought to be liberated in order to obtain the freedom to develop their true selves. The birth control pill and the legalisation of abortion provide concrete evidence that women have sought to liberate themselves from motherhood.[22] Further, the experience of motherhood varies widely from individual to individual. There are some women who have borne and raised children, yet have never 'mothered' them in accordance with the cultural feminist notion of what this involves. There are men who, to all intents and purposes have mothered children (Ruddick 1989, 44). There are women who reject or abandon their children. There are women for whom their children primarily constitute a relationship like any other relationship—who do not make a career of mothering and who have rejected the ethic of care for one of mutual support and mutual autonomy. The synthesis of two personalities that makes such an arrangement possible is rare but not

unknown. Motherhood does not have to be that messy, all-absorbing, antirational power-struggle that Rich (1976), for example, describes. For some women, childbirth is an epiphany, while for others it is a temporary hiatus or detour in the progress of their lives (on the order of an operation, for example). Mothering, as presented by Ruddick (1989), is the stereotypical "Motherhood with a Capital 'M'." Pragmatically, mothering can be experienced in a variety of ways (Sagan 1987, 139-145, for example). It can be as violent as it is nurturing, as intellectual as it is emotional, as peripheral as it is all-absorbing. This is Firestone's point, when she argues for artificial wombs. There are women who want to be liberated from childbirth and child rearing because they see it as incompatible with their own aims and ultimately oppressive. There are women for whom an identification with mothering and mothering virtues would be anathema and there are times in the life of all women in which children are not a prime source of joy or self-esteem, indeed may be burdensome and stand in the way of other goals. According to Eyer, "Our understanding of the relationships of mothers and children rests far more on a set of ideas that are shaped by our culture than by empirical evidence" (Eyer 1992, 99). She suggests that motherhood was deliberately reconceived as a "total way of life" following World War II (Eyer 1992, 116-128) and offers the following analysis of contemporary perceptions of motherhood:

> How we perceive motherhood and infancy, whether our means of knowing is a religion or science, is also a means of conceptualizing the goals of society. The idea that biological and psychological factors of motherhood and infancy will redress the complex social, economic, political, and cultural problems of poverty, corruption, pollution, violence, and nuclear threat is a means of trying to transcend those problems. It is also a form of scapegoating, of blaming relatively powerless groups for the sins and fears of the whole. Although ideals are necessary in every society, when they are far out of touch with the realities of peoples' lives, they are dysfunctional. (Eyer 1992, 128)

Many women in Western society successfully combine work outside the home with childrearing. Historically, childrearing has never been a full-time job. The upper classes have a long history of abandoning their children to alternative care systems, including nannies, foster homes, wet nurses, boarding schools, and knight-apprenticeships at neighbouring castles. There was a widespread feudal arrangement that required children to be "put out, both males and females to hard service in the houses of other people...and few are born who are exempted from this fate, for everyone, however rich he may be sends away his children into the houses of others, whilst he, in return, receives those of strangers into his own" (Ariès 1962, 365).

Further, women of the lower classes, including the slave underclass, have laboured outside the home and away from their children throughout history. According to Pomeroy, Athenian women, even some of the upper classes, performed "slave work": "Poorer women, even citizens, went out to work, most of them pursuing occupations that were an extension of women's work in the home...as washerwomen, as woolworkers...as vendors...as nurses of children and midwives" (Pomeroy 1975, 72). In Roman times, Pompeiian women were dealers in beans, sellers of nails, commercial entrepreneurs, physicians, owners of a brickmaking operation, construction workers, waitresses, and domestics (Pomeroy 1975, 201-202). Women are now supposed to have taken an active part in the erection of the great cathedrals of Europe as plasterers, cementers, and masons (Gimpel 1961, 77). In contemporary society, a child is in school full-time at age six, leaving the mother more-or-less free to take up paid work outside the home. In a professional working life that numbers forty years, a ten-year break for childcare responsibilities would leave thirty years for a career focus.

Mendus provides an excellent summary of the cultural/liberal feminist debate over motherhood:

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Proponents of the ethic of care tend to vacillate uneasily between the claim that women's biological nature as child bearers renders them especially sensitive to considerations of care and compassion, and the claim that women's status as child carers makes them more conscious of those considerations. But either way feminist politics is jeopardised, for the former account renders women prisoners of their own biology, and the latter advocates for all women a single, defining role which in fact only some women occupy...a deep and defining connection between an ethic of care and women's identity. For her, the specification of women's identity contains essential reference to birth, care, and the raising of children. The same is not true of men. (Mendus 1993, 19-20)

In subscribing to a definition of woman *qua* woman, of necessity one must also subscribe to the limiting qualities of any definition, to essences, to the subjectivity of significance, to hierarchical classification, to dualities of opposites (whether complementary or hierarchical), to all of the above-noted complexities inherent in the defining process. Consequently, a prescriptive and normative set of traits are reified that can be applied to suggest the deviance of nonfeminine women. Further, in order to preserve sexual differentiation, the rejection of the world of men and sexual apartheid may be mandatory and must at least be suspect.

'Woman's essential nature', or woman *qua* woman, seems indistinguishable from the stereotype of woman. Poullain de la Barre (1988) terms stereotypes mere "opinion" and dismisses them; Wollstonecraft (1967) makes the same judgement. If women are petty, vain, and domesticated, it may be because men have made them so (Richards 1988, 65). Even Rousseau admitted that strong-willed, learned bluestockings existed—although they were not to his taste. A deconstructionist critique of the category 'woman' would insist, in Derrida's terms, upon "the 'undecidability' of woman" (Riley 1988, 1), the inversion of defining binary opposites (Sarup 1989, 59), and the abolition of any teleological first principles like order and natures (Sarup 1989, 40). The sought-after post-structuralist goal, according to Riley's reading of Foucault, is the dissipation of

identities rather than the search for their basis in fact (Riley 1988, 5). We cannot know, as Richards and Mill point out, what the 'nature' of woman is—we can only see what millennia of male subjugation have made her. As Margaret, Dutchess of Newcastle, stated, "We are as Ignorant of our Selves, as Men are of us" (in Riley 1988, 30).

Problems With the Methods of Defining 'Woman's Nature'

There are four basic investigative methods used to discern the common core of human nature (Appendix III). The first of these is the search for similarities. As it pertains to 'woman's nature', clearly the ubiquitous similarity of women's subordination over time and through space was taken as an indication of its 'naturalness' and authenticity in that it was 'meant to be' from the origin. As discussed above, the Platonic view that an entity's nature has little or nothing to do with its body and everything to do with its potential for perfection in the best of all possible worlds had the power to liberate women from their traditional social functions. The Aristotelian viewpoint prevailed, however, and 'woman's nature' was tied irrevocably to the empirical realities of the *status quo*.

Although, from a classical, communitarian viewpoint, it is difficult to disavow the 'goodness' of the *status quo*, two conceptual devices allowed such criticism—The Golden Age and Natural Man (Appendix III). These, however, were not devices commonly used to challenge existing social arrangements as they affected women. Rousseau, for example, located his Golden Age after the foundation of the patriarchal family as the basic social unit. Christine de Pizan, however, made passing reference to the mythical kingdom of the Amazons and the Amazon myth may have provided a useful feminist substitute for the Golden Age (de Pizan 1992, 11). There does not seem to be an analogous hypothesized Natural Woman *per se* whose virtues underwrite a critique of

civilized woman, though female *enfants sauvage* appear in the literature alongside references to male (Shattuck 1980, 205). A weak case could almost be made for Mrs. Poyser and her ilk, but they lack that subversive element referred to by Ryan (1973, 17).

It is possible, however, to view current cultural feminist interest in a postulated, but largely speculative, prehistoric matriarchy as a Golden Age device used to advance its own agenda, as in the examples below:

> [Before patriarchy] there was a garden, and in it we gathered fruits and vegetables and sang to the moon and played and worked together and watched the children grow. For the most part life was good, and we made art and rituals celebrating our participation in the glorious spectacle and process of life within nature. We were bound to the goddess who was immanent in nature, in the vegetation and the moon, mistress of the animals, who fed us freely—most of the time. Death was terrible, but in it the goddess received us again, and we returned to the process of eternal recurrence, still part of the chain of life...In the beginning was the Mother; the Word began a new era, one we have come to call patriarchy. (French 1995, 63-64)

Similarly, Williamson provides no citation for the "archaeological evidence" supporting her optimistic description of a Golden Age of matriarchy:

> Archaeological evidence now argues for the existence of a twenty-thousand-year period of history when men and women lived as equals, with neither sex dominating the other. The earth flourished. The so-called feminine qualities of compassion, nurturing, and nonviolence were shared by men and women alike and were the most vital elements of social structure. (Williamson 1993, 16)

Neither does French offer a research basis for her description of the violent overthrow of the original matriarchy, in which males were "marginal in community life" and "women did everything" (French 1992, 14-17). Denfield comments critically on the contemporary cultural feminist revival of "goddess religion" (1995, 133-142), noting that because "there aren't any written records to prove the existence of goddess cultures...feminists have to

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rely almost exclusively on speculative interpretations of archaelogical remains to uphold their theories" (Denfield 1995, 135).

To imaginately reconstruct an historical epoch in which human beings lived in accord with guiding principles other than those currently accepted allows both a criticism of and a disassociation from prevailing social arrangements (Appendix III). References to women's pre-patriarchal original innocence (the "Garden of Eden" of the cultural feminist context) and their undeviating faithfulness to their original purposes of "harmonious interconnection" are archetypal and possess great ideological influence (the quoted terms are from Denfeld 1995, 164) for, as Stevenson points out, all theories of human nature present their own versions of history as an integral part of their cosmology and theories of man (Stevenson 1987, 4). As the Noble Savage allowed social theorists of an earlier epoch to see what man was *really* like, so do these utopian cultural feminist reconstructions allow one to observe natural women, free of the falsely stunting veneer of patriarchal 'civilization', uncorrupted by social institutions, true to their innate qualities, completely free, cooperative, nonhierarchical, caring, and peaceful.

As a second aspect of the search for similarities, advocates of a separate female 'nature' have been criticized for minimizing, even silencing, the experiences of women who are not white, middle-class, and educated in their emphasis on the similarities between women. For example:

> A tendency in dominant Western feminist thought to posit an essential "womanness" that all women have and share in common despite the racial, class, religious, ethnic, and cultural differences among us...It obscures the heterogeneity of women and cuts off examination of the significance. (Spelman 1988, ix)

Recognizing woman *qua* woman (or, 'woman's separate nature') necessitates the conceptualization of a categorical that Williamson calls "this collective feminine shadow

self" (Williamson 1993, 4). The previous section discussed some of the difficulties implicit in this notion.

The second method used in defining a human nature is to find, not the similarities between humans, but what differentiates them from other species (as discussed in Appendix III). In the same way, the technique of a search for differences has been used in the denotation of 'woman's nature'. This search for differences is no more straightforward a task than the search for similarities. To define a distinct 'woman's nature' using the 'differences' strategy, two basic methods have been used. The first is that used by Aristotle who, as mentioned above, compared females to males in the light of his belief in opposition as the primary organizational principle of the *kosmos* and his conviction that the male embodied the perfection of both sexes. The logical inconsistency of this second belief with Aristotle's own world view was suggested in the previous section of this chapter. Naturally, the evaluation of the ruled by the ruler sets up a power imbalance that would seem to virtually guarantee that any differences in 'woman's nature' are depicted as inferior. The concept 'human nature' describes what is most important about human beings to whoever is using the concept (Appendix III). 'Woman's nature', therefore, describes what is most important about women, to men.

The second method is to compare both men and women to non-human species. This search led the classical philosophers to conclude that reason was the single most important defining quality of man (see Appendix III). The amount of rationality available to each individual varied, from the classical perspective, allowing individuals to be ranked hierarchically. Similarly, human pursuits varied in the amount of rationality they required. Thus activities could be ranked in terms of status.

The implications for women are, again, negative. Traditional female 'activities' seen as natural (for example, childbirth, childcare, housekeeping, nursing, sexuality) are

labelled less rational than traditional male activities (for example, politics, philosophy, warfare). Women's rationality, following the Aristotelian rather than the Platonic interpretation of natures, is compared to man's and found wanting. Rather than taking the exceptional woman as exemplifying the perfection of 'woman's nature' as did de Pizan, the exceptional woman was classified as an unnatural, hence perverse, anomaly or described as going against her true 'nature'. Indeed, if the nature of man is the standard of perfection for both sexes, a woman—as 'not man'—would certainly have to act against any separate 'woman's nature' in order to achieve perfection. This is another reason why Ruddick, who supports a distinct 'woman's nature', describes feeling uncomfortable ("threatened," "disqualified," "dissociated," "fraud," "disloyal" are some of the negative words she uses [Ruddick 1989, 7]) in her pursuit of reason. If there were only one universal vague notion of human nature or no conceptualized human nature at all — the modern liberal stance — Ruddick would have no reason to feel alienated in the traditional classroom as long as the teachers did not make her sex significant to her experience there.

Despite the cultural feminist assertion that education "place(s) females at a disadvantage *when educational methods are determined by what works with males*" (author's italics, Martin 1985, 23), statistics show that women are the majority in the classroom (52.2% of full-time university students are female according to *The Montreal Gazette*, August 9, 1995) where they outperform men (Mickelson 1989 and Sommers 1994, for example). Evidently it would seem that educational methods work with females as well. Cultural feminists, according to Richards, are regardless of the opinion that, "Women are less rational and more dependent on feeling than men...Women really are so by nature, and much the better for it. Rationality, like other things male, is something we are better without" (Richards 1980, 31).

If there were no 'woman's nature' to 'go against' in pursuit of abstract rationality, Ruddick's anecdotal account would have a probable causal attribution outside her 'being a woman'. A conflict sociologist may point out that all minority groups experience the same alienation. For example, Martin documents the similar experience of a Spanish-speaking male (Martin 1985, 187-199). A university counsellor may suggest that Ruddick transfer to a course of study in which she felt less alienation and incompatibility with the subject matter. A psychologist might possibly urge her to work on self-esteem issues related to her childhood. My point with these speculations is that behaviour has a variety of causes, which largely remain a mystery to us. Our causal attributions, however, may influence our future actions.[23] To embrace female 'nature' as the reason for one's difficulties at school tends to reinforce the unlikelihood that one will succeed and that effort will be futile because one's female 'nature', by definition, cannot be altered and ought not to be abandoned because so doing implies deviance. Richards (1980) and Sommers (1994) draw attention to the danger of repudiating rationality as male, or as 'a different voice' to that of woman's.

In the context of defining 'woman's essential nature', it may sometimes be appropriate to emphasize that a definition of 'woman's nature' is not identical to a definition of 'woman'. The defining characteristic of woman[24] is her corporeal biological inheritance (the genetic structure, sexual organs, and hormonal system she was born with): without these, a woman is no longer a woman. Further, the inescapable biological fact that women bear children ties them to their corporeality more than men, who can simply walk away unchanged after the sex act. "It is woman's biological specificity, her reproductive capacity, that is the reason for her association directly with the world of animal nature" (Sydie 1988, 3). The traits loosely associated with biology, such as nurturing, affiliation, and emotionality, are not defining characteristics of woman *per se*, as women who dis-

play none or few of the elements of a traditional feminine trait set are still defined as women. If the position is that woman have a separate 'nature', then something other than 'woman' must be defined. Further, it must be ascertained whether it is conceivable that a woman could exist who did not have a 'woman's nature'. Elizabeth I of England is alleged to have indulged in this type of rhetoric, saying for example, "I may have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a man." If the belief is that a certain fixed set of characteristics apart from her biological affiliation at birth make an individual a woman, there are little grounds on which cultural feminism can reject essentialism; for the grounds on which to base this set of characteristics are an ideologically-based description of the ideal or perfect woman.

* * * * *

Based on the foregoing chapters, I suggest that any validation of separate natures within an epistemically prior collectivity is an utopian political device and functions as a critique[25] of the *status quo* in much the same way as did The Golden Age[26]: "The ideal of the social as a secular greater-than-that-which-cannot-be-thought'—as a potential earthly heaven which is open to the play of perpetual transformability because of its very apartness from the individual who is 'in' it" (Riley 1988, 49). Like all utopian ideals, communitarianism does not stand up to intense scrutiny as a practical solution to the types of problems that have faced women in the past. Perhaps this does not disturb feminist writers like Tong, who notes that "a feminist approach to ethics is fundamentally political," in the sense that justifies potentially questionable ethics because "an extreme, all-or-nothing approach is the best way to shock people out of what amounts to a moral stupor—a sleepy inattentiveness to women's concerns," but in the interests of a rational understanding of the goals of cultural feminism, I believe it is essential to note the shortcomings of its communitarian, classical underpinnings (Tong 1993, 160).

This chapter suggests some of the implications for women embedded in the classical *weltanschauung*, both as this unstated ideology influenced the oppression of women and as it has been problematically appropriated and used in a failed attempt to 'validate' women by cultural feminists. The immensity of such an undertaking cannot be brought to closure here but some points have been raised that, in feminist literature, have simply been stated and dropped. Two further examples of this cursory treatment are are the following: first, Jagger's statement that, "One of the fundamental problems that I have identified in liberal theory is its incapacity to provide a substantive conception of the good life..." ignores that the avoidance of codification of the good life has not been a problem for, but a strength of liberal theory. The notion briefly discussed in Chapter 3, that all individuals are free to determine what the good life is for themselves, and not for others, has liberated women from their instrumental use by the community. If the good life is codified, let us say by Skinner who attempted this very same project in *Walden II*, any means including mind control can be entertained as legitimate toward securing that end. It also begs the question that can be asked of MacIntyre, "Whose 'good life' shall be accepted by all?" As Berry points out, no single vision of the good life that is logically or emotionally compelling has yet been outlined (Berry 1986, 134) and it is rather difficult to suppose that any philosophical position may arrive at such a vision that remains congenial to all, unless that vision remains as vague as the liberal formulation that every individual has the right to define the good life for him or herself, providing his or her pursuit of this self-defined good life does not impinge on the rights of others.

Second, the false dilemma used as a rhetorical tool by cultural feminists merits closer examination. For example, in saying that "Unmitigated individualism is a death-wish" (Midgley 1983, 224), Midgley certainly seems to be repudiating individualism and suggesting that either we have it or we have life. However, a closer reading points out

that there are extremely valuable aspects to individualism that have served women well. *Unmitigated* individualism may be bad, as may be *extreme* individualism to which she refers on page 222, but then any unmitigated or extreme thing is quite probably bad. Moderate individualism, as outlined in Chapter 3, is by no means necessarily "a death wish" or "exploitative." In presenting liberal individualism this way, cultural feminists are not only constructing a straw man but indulging in the worst sort of either/or, dichotomous thinking that they accuse (male) liberal individualists of (for example, Sherwin 1988, 25). Further, with the implication that in rejecting individualism all will go well, Midgley dismisses concepts (rights, reason, equality, and freedom, for example) that women may wish to retain, at least in some form, and avoids dealing with the serious problems for women posed by organic societies of former times. According to Dwyer, Sommers suggest that writers ought to take some moral responsibility for the consequences of their views (Dwyer 1996). If the rhetoric of cultural feminism would lead to a repudiation of modernity and a return to classical communitarian notions, the consequences may be most undesirable for women, indeed. The following chapter looks at the cultural feminist critique of liberal feminism in detail.

In conclusion, all theories of nature are far from straightforward and are, in fact, ideology-based. The cultural feminist position is congruent with a definition of 'woman's distinct nature'. The argument from nature, and the concept of 'woman's distinct nature', which are "representative of the whole Western tradition regarding women" (Okin 1979, 100), cannot be dismissed wholesale by contemporary liberal feminism for the following reasons: first, the argument from nature and 'woman's distinct nature' are validated in terms of the philosophical and scientific tradition that decrees an ordered cosmos in which natures cannot be separated from proper purpose, hierarchical status, and natural

law. Second, these concepts underlie the notions of communitarianism that are currently ascendant in feminist theory (Frazer and Lacey 1993; Tong 1993,182).

The following chapter begins by supporting my statement earlier in this chapter that cultural feminism does itself, and women, no good service by turning a blind eye and remaining imperceptive and, seemingly, unaware of the 'male' roots of their communitarian, nature-bound philosophy. In my opinion, this blindness is inexcusable. In turning their backs[27] on the history of terms like 'nature' and 'essence', feminist theory has simply reinvented classical, communitarian solutions to problems they attribute to the liberal political theory underlying modernity. As Frazer and Lacey, amongst others, point out, communitarian solutions carry with them their own set of problems. The following chapter concludes by linking cultural feminist theory to nature-based classical communitarianism.

ENDNOTES

1. By which is meant the systematic oppression of women predicated on the authority of the father in the familial structure.

2. See Chapter 2 for a discussion of universality.

3. And with the discussion of human nature in Appendix III.

4. Functional in the modern sense of being *useful*, not in the classical sense of function, which entails being essential to the larger society through the perfection of cosmological design, as described in Chapter 2.

5. She acknowledges her dismissal of the early writings of the Greek poets (Sappho and Erinna, for example) but not her neglect of such early female philosophers as Aspasia (440BC), Melissa (300-200BC), Myia (200-100BC) and so on (Allen 1985).

6. The construction of early languages, Sumerian for example, shows that the female specific was a modification of the male word. The word for son was *dumu* and the word for daughter was *dumu.mi*, or 'son woman' (Tannahill 1982 ,59-60). The male principle seems already to be the central preoccupation, with the female principle represented by the addition or insertion of a particular syllable. One may speculate that the male was the standard and the female was a modification thereof as long ago as 3000BC.

   The book of Genesis (1:27), dated between 900 and 700BC (Tarnas 1991, 446), describes God creating "man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them". In this passage, it seems clear that man is the generic term for humanity and that there are two sorts of human beings—male and female—that are formed in the image of God. To male and female alike, God gives dominion over the earth. Evidently, Genesis Chapter 1 does not differentiate between the sexes, nor does it delineate anything but a common human nature.

   Genesis 2, however, initiates the well-established tradition of defining 'woman's nature' in subordinate relation to man. God is now described as creating man first, then forming woman from his rib as a helpmeet for him. Clearly, man is presented as God's primary interest. Eve becomes the instrument of man's fall from grace and her subordination is made manifest: "Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (3:16). The next detailed reference to a woman occurs in Chapter 12: Abram's wife Sarai, "a fair woman to look upon" (12:11), was taken by Pharaoh and subsequently returned with the words, "Now, therefore, behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way". Thus, this woman is referred to as an object to be taken by one man or another, seemingly without discussion on her part.

7. This line of argument is explored further in Appendix II.

8. It is not assertive and aggressive (Gilligan 1982, 167), it is organized around affiliations and relationships (Gilligan 1982, 169), it is "entwined with an ethic of care" (Gilligan 1982, 171).

9. "Woman's development delineates the path...to a less violent life" (Gilligan 1982, 172).

10. The women studied "depict their identity *in* the connection of future mother, present wife, adopted child, or past lover" while they "regard their professional activities as jeopardizing their own sense of themselves" (Gilligan 1982, 159).

11. Statements like "Women not only reach mid-life with a psychological history different from men's...but also make different sense of experience" (Gilligan 1982, 172) are not qualified in terms of "some women" or "it may seem" or "under current social arrangements."

12. The italicized terms are discussed in Chapter 2, and Appendices II and III.

13. Frazer and Lacey refer to Taylor's moderate interpretivist stance as "genuinely interpretive," yet they note he "conceives the self as having the capacity for reflection and hence some measure of distancing, as well as access to insights which are not exclusively internal to dominant social practices" (Frazer and Lacey 1993, 158).Such an interpretivist stance is, indeed, so moderate that perhaps it is hardly interpretivist at all.

14. With reference to sex stereotypes, the following student essay was submitted by a student (who must remain anonymous) writing the new Ministerial Examination of College English (the so-called English Exit Exam, without which no DEC is to be granted from 1997 onward).

> "The gradual elimination of the stereotypical roles now present concerning men and women will not occur overnight for a number of reasons. Firstly, the deep rooted roles that are now present in society have taken thousands of years to develop. These values have been accepted for centuries and it will take a similar amount of time to totally change them. The first and most important step in changing stereotypes is informing the public that they exist. By informing people of their existence, they can choose what type of life they want to live. Some people may not want to change, but generally individuals would like to be more well-rounded. The media has helped inform the public about the existence of these stereotypes and changes in society can already be noted...Ideally, no stereotypes would exist and both women and men would have the same blend of emotion and goal orientation in the way they live. A transformation towards this has been occurring for a couple of decades now, however it will take much longer than that before this "perfect-blend" exists. Today's generation is living in the period of transition and it is our duty to try our best and not pass on stereotypical roles to our children. There will always be people opposed to this, but so long as we try to eliminate the stereotypes in the media and in schools, the world years from now will be a better place to live in."

In saying that "women are *thus*," cultural feminists are telling students like this one that some 'stereotypes' are real. They are stopping the elimination of prejudice in its tracks and suggesting that blending masculine and feminine emotions and goal orientations is an unworthy goal as it leads to the loss of the female voice and the production of inauthentic womanhood

15. The refusal to site philosophical terms in their historical context is supported in the introduction to the following chapter.

16. Though, as pointed out earlier, the data available to us do not allow us to make this assessment. Individuals in classical times may well have viewed the exigencies of their ordained social role as oppressive, but this oppression was in no way incompatible with the moral obligation to conform and perform their requisite duties to the best of their abilities. It would be better to say that these individuals realized their class membership was inescapable and governed themselves accordingly.

17. For example, in tying the power struggle to the means of production, Marxism ignores or minimizes other (family- and relationship-centred) sites of conflict.

18. The predictable tendency, noted by Aristotle, for men and women to display separate sets of traits and behaviours led easily to the notion that the sexes possessed separate natures. Since men and women were physically different, it was logical to expect them to want different things, exhibit different behaviours, and have different traits. However, as the philosophical dependence on natures as the motive or causal force behind an entity's actions waned, a new emphasis on natural law arose as an explanatory device. The motive force for behaviour was no longer seen as emanating from within the entity or individual. Rather, the entity or individual was seen to modify his or her actions in harmonious accord with or in opposition to natural law. As discussed in Chapter 3, the classical notion of the ordered cosmos was retained, while allowing the development of a certain freedom to the individual in search of the best way in which to mesh with others in the harmonious design of nature. This freedom was to develop into liberal individualism. Rousseau's *Emile* provides an excellent example of this transitional phase between the classical and the modern *zeitgeists*.

The concept of natural law has been one of the cornerstones of the repeated attempts to justify the continuing subjugation and curtailment of action of the female sex. For example, "Moreover, the law of nature bids the woman obey the man" (Rousseau 19xx, 370).In the absence of a fixed 'woman's nature', imposed natural laws, and a divinely-ordered cosmos, the rational support for woman's subordinate position evanesced. Things no longer were as they were of necessity. Political systems, including the patriarchy, were mere human invention. Social arrangements concerning sex roles were not necessarily as they were for the best. Change for the better was imaginable, even possible.

19. For example, stateless refugees.

20. This hypothesis can be extended to posit that the category woman *qua* woman also refers specifically to sexually-active pre-menopausal married women who have borne children.

21. Illich seems to take the opposite tack as he accuses capitalism of de-gendering women and producing gender-neutral shadow-workers (Illich 1982).

22. However, an alternative critical framework is suggested by the cultural feminist perspective that the science of birth control is yet another masculine aspect of the patriarchal attempt to control and harness female sexuality for its own anti-woman purposes.

23. There is a considerable amount of research, including feminist research, in attribution theory suggesting that the amount of effort expended is correlated to the attributional locus of a particular outcome (summarized in Glover and Ronning 1987, 227-228).

24. This definition is restrictive in that it takes no notice of pathology at birth. There is some literature on problems surrounding sex categorization of hermaphroditic infants but this is an issue outside the scope of this paper. Additionally, the qualifier "at birth" is used to exclude women who have had sexual organs removed for medical reasons, and transsexuals. In addition, some scholars make the case that biological sex is, itself, fluid, socially-constructed, and negotiable. With the possibility of sex surgery and hormone therapy (not excluding the use of hormones to avoid menopause), Rothblatt's stance (1994) seems increasingly realistic.

25. Perhaps this is the only possible critical avenue open to those who embrace the communitarian goals of cultural feminism because the *status quo* is seemingly invulnerable to questions of value, since all values are seen to arise from the *status quo*.

26. See Appendix III for a discussion of The Golden Age as an aspect of the argument from nature.

27. The refusal to site philosophical terms in their historical context is supported in the introduction to the following chapter.

CHAPTER 6: THE CULTURAL FEMINIST
CRITICISMS OF LIBERAL FEMINISM

This chapter presents the main communitarian, cultural feminist criticisms of liberal feminist theory and locates them within the classical framework. According to Grimshaw, the cultural feminist platform implies that, "All men (or all those mothered by women) have a sort of natural affinity to abstract individualism or political liberalism, and that all women have had a tendency, at least tacitly, to question these" (Grimshaw 1986, 168). This chapter proceeds with the suggestion that, rather than springing fresh from the source of women's unique 'nature', the communitarian[1] affinities of cultural feminism are a direct derivation of the overwhelmingly-male unstated synergistic bias that privileges the group over the individual.

The more recent well-springs of cultural feminist theory (communitarianism, socialism, and theoretical sociology) furnish cultural feminism with an ideological infrastructure in the classical mode, in that they reintroduce the classical concepts of natures presented in Chapter 2 into a contemporary academic context.

Liberal Individualism Under Siege

The demise of liberal philosophy as a valid basis for feminist theory and politics has been argued by, most notably, Jagger in *Feminist Politics and Human Nature* (1983), Fox-Genovese in *Feminism Without Illusions: A Critique of Individualism* (1991), and Eisenstein in *The Radical Future of Liberal Feminism* (1993).The following representative

quotations may both serve to set the stage for subsequent discussion and establish the vigour with which cultural feminism assails liberal individualist theory. The arguments underlying these extracts will be taken up again in this and the following chapters.

In the following extract, although ratifying the liberatory aspects of individualism, Fox-Genovese accuses liberal feminism of disregarding the needs of the collectivity by privileging the egotistic needs of the individual. Further, according to Fox-Genovese, if women are recognized as a distinct group (with a distinct nature, within the framework of this thesis), as they ought to be, such recognition cannot be aligned with the principles of liberal individualism. As Fox-Genovese and Eisenstein both construct their argument on the necessity of recognizing women as a distinct group, the rejection of liberal individualist premises logically follows (Eisenstein 1993, xiv).Through the use of such formidable words as "spectre", "condemned", and "dead", Fox-Genovese conveys an extreme antipathy to "individualistic principles" that neglect "the prior rights of the collectivity" (Fox-Genovese 1991, 8). For those rights grounded in the sameness of that one common human nature belonging to individualism's "abstract individual" (the abstract individual is discussed subsequently), she wishes to substitute "the collectivity's commitment to honour and [protect] difference":

> Following the principles of individualism, modern Western societies have determined that the persistence of slavery in any form violates the fundamental principle of a just society. But in grounding the justification in absolute individual right, they have unleashed the spectre of a radical individualism that overrides the claims of society itself. To the extent that feminism, like antislavery, has espoused those individualistic principles, it has condemned itself to the dead ends toward which individualism is now plunging...Women...understand that justice must derive from a collectivity that grounds its deepest principles of individual right in the collectivity's commitment to honour and protected (sic) difference. (Fox-Genovese 1991, 241)

In the following extract, King echoes Fox-Genovese's tribute to the emancipatory aspects of liberal individualism. She then emphasizes the limitations of liberal feminism as an

elitist and exclusionary movement that, in its pursuit of sameness, denies the common womanhood that is the basis of sisterhood:

> Liberalism, with its assertion of 'liberty, equality, and fraternity' provided the conceptual tools for feminists to argue that no people are naturally meant to rule over other people, including men over women. This rationalization of difference has worked for women...because it calls into question the idea of any 'natural' roles or destinies. In a liberal framework 'difference' itself must be obliterated to achieve equality. In other words, if women were educated like men they would *be* like men. To argue that women are capable of mindful activity—that women reason and think—was and is a liberatory argument...By and large, liberal feminism is a white middle-class movement, concerned with the extension of male power and privilege to women like themselves, not the fate of women as a whole...Liberal feminists, since Harriet Taylor Mill and John Stuart Mill, have emphasized the similarities of women to men as the basis for the emancipation of women. But trying to maintain this stance in a contemporary context leads liberal feminists into absurdly unsisterly positions. (King in Jagger and Bordo 1989, 119-120)

In the following extract, Eisenstein reiterates King's more subtle suggestion of the centrality of "women as a distinct group" with 'natural' role affinities. She explicitly draws attention to the incompatibility between the individual and communitarian theories of liberal and cultural feminist theory, respectively. Note that she equates feminism *per se* with collectivism:

> The radical recognition of "women as a distinct group" destabilizes the individualist stance of liberalism...[xiv]The contradiction between liberalism (as patriarchal and individualist in structure and ideology) and feminism (as sexual egalitarian and collectivist) lays the basis for feminism's movement beyond liberalism.[3]...The ideology of liberal individualism and the social reality of sex-class oppression — cannot be fully contained within the same politics successfully. (Eisenstein 1993, 179)

Jagger, in the following passage, picks up on Fox-Genovese's tribute to liberal feminism. However, she rejects the liberal conception of one universal human nature based on the abstract individual, and calls autonomous rationality into question on the marxist basis that "individual desires and interests are socially constituted" (Jagger 1983, 44):

> Feminism owes a great deal to liberalism...In spite of liberalism's contribution to feminism, I believe that the liberal conception of human nature and of political philo-

sophy cannot constitute the philosophical foundation for an adequate theory of women's liberation...I have pointed out a number of problems with the liberal theory of human nature. My criticisms have been organized around the overlapping topics of normative dualism, abstract individualism, and rationality...What is clear, however, is that an adequate answer [to questions concerning the good life and "genuine human needs"] can never be found so long as one retains the assumptions of abstract individualism and the view of rationality as morally and politically neutral. (Jagger 1983, 47-48)

Midgley and Hughes use the same strong language as Fox-Genovese to condemn individualism: "depressing", "extreme", "exploitative", "unmitigated", and "death-wish", in the following extract. Their criticisms similarly center around the egoism and self-absorption of the liberal individualist stance.[2]

We have come to the end of the road for sex-linked individualism...The idea that every man should properly look out only for himself, while every woman should stand staunchly and obediently behind him as he does so, is not sensible and will not wash once attention has been drawn to it...We can either extend the individualism which has been almost a religion in the West since the eighteenth century consistently to *both* sexes, or we can admit its limitations, treat it with much more caution, and put it in its place as only one element in a more realistic attitude to life for everybody...The depressing fact that extreme individualism is exploitative... Unmitigated individualism is a death-wish. (Midgley and Hughes 1983, 222-224)

In the following passage, Sommers recapitulates cultural feminist criticisms in the words of Jagger and Young. Note that Young conflates violence and individualism:

It is now commonplace for feminist philosophers to reject the Enlightenment ideals of the old feminism. According to the University of Colorado feminist theorist Alison Jagger, "Radical and socialist feminists have shown that the old ideals of freedom, equality and democracy are insufficient..." Iris Young...echoes the contemporary feminist disillusionment with the classically liberal feminism of yesteryear, "Gynocentric feminism defines women's oppression as the devaluation and repression of women's experience by a masculinist culture that exalts violence and individualism." (Sommers 1994, 23-24)

In summary, cultural feminism rejects the central liberal tenets, equality, impartial or disinterested reason, autonomy, individuality/individualism, and rights, and substitutes a platform build on difference (in terms of the complementarity of the sexes or the superiority

of the feminine), emotion/intuition/ecology, determinism/socialization, unified sex-class/community, and caring/ obligation as diagrammed below:

Liberal Feminism	Cultural Feminism
Equality	Difference
Impartial Reason/The Mind	Emotion/Intuition/Ecology/The Bo
Autonomous Rationality	Connectedness/ Determinism/ Socialization
Individuality/Individualism	Unified sex-class/Community
Rights	Caring/Obligation

At the risk of begging my own argument, even the aforementioned cultural feminist critics of liberal feminism bury affirmations of liberal feminism in their anti-liberal rhetoric. Thus, where Jagger states that the contradictions in liberal feminism must "shatter its own philosophical foundation" (Jagger 1983, 28), she also says the following in support of liberal feminism:

> Feminism owes a great deal to liberalism...It is certainly true that the earliest feminists were inspired by liberal ideas of human dignity, autonomy, equality and individual self-fulfilment...These ideals must remain in some way part of feminism... (Jagger 1983, 46)

> If the conception of objectivity...is used to evaluate the various contemporary feminist theories, one theory emerges as clearly superior. That one, of course, is liberal feminism. (Jagger 1983, 357)

Where Fox-Genovese states that individualism (one of the cornerstones of liberal feminism) "actually perverts the idea of the socially obligated and personally responsible freedom that constitutes the only freedom worthy of the name or indeed historically possible" (Fox-Genovese 1991, 7), she also concludes that feminism—even cultural feminism—"is itself the daughter of that (male) individualism which so many feminists are attacking" (Fox-Genovese 1991, 243). Similarly, Eisenstein's *The Radical Future of Liberal*

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Feminism can be read, against the author's own purpose, as a paeon to the enduring validity of liberal values (for example, "The liberal underpinnings of feminist theory are essential to feminism" and "At the core of *all* the differences remains 'the' liberal feminist recognition of woman as an individual with 'rights' to freedom of choice" [Eisenstein 1993, 5 and xiii]). It seems as though there is a deeply-rooted ambivalence toward the premises of liberal individualism on the part of feminist theorists. I began this thesis with the notion that I could perhaps understand this ambivalence, and perhaps make up my own mind whether liberal theory remained a wise and viable rationale for my own feminism, through an exploration of the origins and consequences of the anti-modernist stance of contemporary cultural feminism

I believe, and this thesis contends, that liberal feminism can withstand the arguments against it and provide a still-viable basis for the construction of a better world (if not the elusive best of all possible worlds) for both women and men. To this end, this chapter draws attention to the state of seige in which traditional, or mainstream, liberal feminism finds itself as we draw close to the millennium. There is a tendency, perhaps mythological, toward *fin-de-siecle* conservatism — exaggerated by the milestone that is the approaching year 2000—that may be exerting its influence over society at large today. For example, Gailey suggests that currently society is more open to cultural feminists Gilligan, Daly, and Chodorow's "evangelical notions about women as the more caring sex" because it tends to ratify the *status quo*, than it is to "research reporting similarities between the sexes" (Gailey 1987, 83). My own bias, shared with de Beauvoir, is that cultural feminism, despite its claims to radical subversion of the *status quo*, must by definition serve pragmatically and politically to justify existing social arrangements, marginalize women, and keep them "in their place" (de Beauvoir in Mednick 1989, 1121). In Chapter 1, it was suggested that liberal feminism acted on the socially-liberating implications of one common human nature, undifferentiated by sex. It is suggested, indirectly in Chapter 2 (and Appendix III), and more overtly in Chapters 4

and 6 that, in espousing the notion of an "eternal female nature," or "an equal but opposing female consciousness" (Fox-Genovese 1991, 236), or claiming sex-class status, in marxist terms, cultural feminism adopts a mode of discourse that is communitarian and conservative, specifically in the sense of being anti-liberal (Fox-Genovese 1991, 32 and 33-54). Thus it becomes susceptible to the many criticisms levied against other communitarian political philosophies (Frazer and Lacey 1993, 130-162). Further, because the cultural feminist position builds on the concept of a separate 'female nature', it is vulnerable to the considerable methodological and philosophical difficulties involved in any investigation of natures. Indeed, I have suggested that natures are elusive of scientific discernment because they are inseparable from considerations of ideology and the *status quo* (Appendices I through III, and Chapter 4).

The Contentious Issues

The following discussion relies heavily upon Jagger (1983) because hers is the most straightforward and systematic of the cultural feminist critiques of liberal feminism.[3] Further, in the literature on feminist theories, Jagger is cited as the socialist-feminist authority on 'woman's nature'.[4]

The main cultural feminist criticisms of liberal feminism, according to Jagger (1983), are the following: first, that the reality of woman as a sex-class with a separate female nature is incompatible with the unsexed universal human nature on which liberal feminism bases its claim to dignity, equality, autonomy, rights, and self-determination; second, that the abstract individual is a chimera; third, that in advocating autonomy and rights, liberal feminism underwrites rampant egoism and lack of care for others; fourth, that the division into private/public realms sets up a false dichotomy that undervalues the world of women, potentially destroys family and community, and results in the denigration of traditional female tasks, traits, and values; fifth, that "The disinterested and detached spectator"

(Jagger 1983, 378) is a logical impossibility; hence there can be no universals and no vantage point from which to evaluate competing conceptions.

A Separate Female Nature

First, cultural feminists believe that the reality of woman as a sex-class with a separate female nature is incompatible with the unsexed (Platonic) universal human nature on which liberal feminism bases its claim to dignity, equality, autonomy, rights, and self-determination. In other words, to obtain these listed claims, woman must give up her separate 'nature' and become like man. Further, as Riley states, it is dishonest to "suggest that 'women' don't exist—while maintaining a politics of 'as if they existed' (Riley 1988, 112). In other words, liberal theory, despite its ostensible emphasis on equality and so on, has not succeeded in dethroning males from their position of privilege nor has the promise of female rights unseated patriarchy.

From the cultural feminist viewpoint, in the thirty years since *The Feminine Mystique* popularized liberal feminism, the problems that women face have diminished but not disappeared (Okin 1979, 3-4, for example). Although sex-directed education has largely been replaced by unisex education, legal barriers to female equality have almost disappeared, corporations and the professions have accepted a number of women into high-level occupations, and daycare has become more available, these and other changes have made a difference only for a very small group of privileged women.

Further, in the fight for equality with men, women have had to sacrifice some of their rights claims based on difference. For example, women have sacrificed their traditional entitlement to stay at home with young children in exchange for the equal right to employment outside of the home. In claiming reason as their own, the women quoted by Belenky *et al.* and Martin fear that they may have mislaid their own voices, or essential 'nature', becoming 'little men' in academia and the workforce. In the search for autonomy,

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self-determination, and individuality, liberal feminism may have caused or at least precipitated the death of the traditional family and played into the patriarchy's denigration of traditional female strengths. In their insistence on rights, women may have been led to neglect their responsibilities to family and community.

These are some of the genuinely troubling aspects of liberal feminism. When considered from a liberal feminist viewpoint, these problems are often sited in the transitional period between oppression and liberation. In other words, it is liberal feminism's hope that, over time, women will be able to freely choose the lives they wish to live—at home as well as at work—and obtain the full cooperation of an enlightened society and an enlightened spouse as they progress toward full equality. However, as the twenty-first century approaches, this visionary ideal seems disappointingly beyond reach, especially since this transitional period is lasting longer than anyone, including Mill, could have imagined (Mill 1975, 434). There is a degree of disenchantment causing some feminists to think that women have progressed as much as they will be able to progress: perhaps wage equity, better maternity leaves, more humane daycare centres, and stronger laws against sexual harassment are the best women can hope for, given the long, slow process of social change and the tendency of those in power to tenaciously cling to privilege. These problems, if indeed they are problems, have all been taken up and answered by cultural feminism in its manifestations from ultra-conservatism to radical separatism.

I suggest, with Okin (1989) and Epstein (1988) that injustice to women results from the categorization of women and not from their decategorization, as Frazer and Lacey suggest (1993). Liberal feminism decategorizes women through its emphasis on equality, reason, individualism, and rights. This emphasis and the fact that the liberal feminist argument is couched in these terms does not, of necessity, imply that the cultural feminist values of Difference, Emotion/Intuition/Ecology, Connectedness/ Community, and Caring/Obligation are opposing values, in the sense of being incompatible with or diametrically

opposed to the values of liberal individualism. In fact, in proposing such a dichotomy, cultural feminists are falling into the same dualistic pattern of thought that they attribute to males. For example, it is not inconceivable or logically impossible to posit a theory of rights that encompasses notions of caring and obligation (Mendus 1993, for example) or, "A theory of the individual that recognizes the importance of the individual within the social collectivity" (Eisenstein 1993, 5).

In 'decategorizing' women and accepting one human nature, the fear for cultural feminism lies in the uncritical acceptance of a violent, immoral world that has been constructed in accordance with those so-called male values; for example, "a world filled with unconnected, uncaring, emotionally impoverished people. Even if it were egalitarian, it would be a sorry place to live" (Martin 1985, 191). To the cultural feminist, women's proper purpose is to reform the world as part of her "predisposition toward connection" (Belenky et al. 1986, 18), because her experience of "the everyday practice of mothering provides the basis for resistance to militarism" (jacket quote by Joel Kovel, Ruddick 1989).

This leads back to an emphasis on woman as a completely separate category of human being, actively disclaiming responsibility for any significant role in constructing the world as it now appears. In a world built around female values, there would be respect for the ecology, pacifism, universal caring. Male (read 'selfish, militaristic, authoritarian') concerns would be utterly rejected and the world would reorient itself toward nurturance and an ethic of care.

However, the above position depends, on its own terms, on the reality of woman as a sex class with a separate female nature discussed in the previous chapter. Cultural feminists acknowledge that the ratification of a female sex-class is incommensurate with liberal individualistic goals. To substitute 'woman's true nature' within a communitarian utopia for the values of liberal idealism seems somewhat dangerous, given that, with Segal, there is insufficient evidence to base a separate female nature on anything more 'real' or

substantial than ideology: "It is not impossible that there is some fundamental difference in the way women and men experience the world, but we have nothing beyond faith and the assurances...of like-minded feminists that this is so" (Segal 1987, 30).

As the first cultural feminist criticism of liberal feminism, above, points out, it is the unsexed universal human nature on which liberal feminism bases its claim to dignity, equality, autonomy, rights, and self-determination (the embodied nature of the communitarian self is addressed below). To repudiate that unsexed universal human nature is to give up those 'goods' that are its consequence. By redefining the dignity of the individual as the loss of communitarian values, equality as 'colonization' into an inferior male morality, autonomy as neglect of family and community, rights as egotism, and self-determination as selfishness, cultural feminists may have forgotten how precious these values have been to women, whose early experiences of a form of slavery gave birth to these notions in the first place. In focusing on the enduring nature of the patriarchy, despite over a century of liberal feminist political activity, cultural feminisms may have forgotten that women no longer *have to* live a traditional female life, in accordance with stereotypical feminine traits, roles, behaviours, if they do not wish to. Because of liberal feminism, women have choices they simply did not have before, they have rights that do not depend on the good-will, fellow-feeling, or community responsibility of others to ratify. The choice to live a life other than that of traditional femininity may not be an easy one but to deny that it is possible, even to those women of colour or from the working classes, is to undervalue the real achievements of women who have explored options previously closed to their sex: "Women owe an incalculable debt to the classically liberal feminists who came before us and fought long and hard, and ultimately with spectacular success, to gain for women the rights that the men of this country had taken for granted for over two hundred years" (Sommers 1994, 17).

In disclaiming all things 'male', cultural feminists lock themselves into that self-same dualistic or dichotomous thinking that they characterize and reject as a male mode of expression[5] and force themselves to present their political platform as an 'either/or' choice: either the selfish individual or the caring community. Clearly there are women today who combine freedom and familial responsibility; autonomy and connectedness; rationality and the gentler emotions; home and career. To represent them as victims of false consciousness, little men, divorced opponents of family values, or secretly unhappy victims of the 'superwoman' syndrome is to diminish them and play into a classical hierarchical way of thinking that would allow them to be classified as inauthentic women.

The Abstract Individual is a Chimera

Second, Jagger challenges liberal feminism's assumption that "essential human characteristics are properties of individuals and are given independently of any particular social context" (Jagger 1983, 42). This formula is more commonly phrased, "The individual is prior to society" and is a basic liberal individualist article of faith. As discussed in Chapter 3, individualism arose in direct opposition to classical collectivism, which places the interests and welfare of the collective group ahead of that of any individual.

Cultural feminist critics suggest a radical reorientation from an emphasis on individual rights, grounded in the very being of the abstract individual, to collective rights grounded in the necessary interdependencies between community members. Fox-Genovese, in particular, recognizes that abstract rights claimed on the basis of sameness undermine both community and difference. In *Feminism Without Illusions: A Critique of Individualism*, she blames liberal feminism for the decline of "communitarianism" (Fox-Genovese 1991, 54): "Feminism has mightily contributed to the collapse of communities" and "The path that feminism is treading leads inexorably to the final erosion of community"

(Fox-Genovese 1991, 51 and 53). Communitarianism has been held up as the new ideal for feminist social action (Fox-Genovese 1991, 51-54).

Because, from a liberal individualist viewpoint, individuals are not seen as formed completely by society, the possibility of conflict between individuals and society retains its logical coherence. Jagger's objections to this stance are twofold. First, that the abstract individual is an impossibility because research into the differences between the sexes has proven that these differences are socially constituted. Consequently, there can be no essential human characteristics that exist apart from society: "The members of any society are likely to learn to want just those things that the society provides" (Jagger 1983, 43). As a corollary, she challenges the possibility of autonomy, given that "a reliance on the authority of individual judgment" is problematic (Jagger 1983, 44). Second, Jagger relies at length on a speculative hypothesis by Scheman that it is "impossible to conceive of individuals as feeling emotions, expressing wants, and defining interests outside any system of social organization" (Jagger 1983, 43) thus seeming to imply that individuals cannot 'own' their own emotions and desires, and that these may only exist psittacistically in humans as a reflection of a type of group or collective mind.

These two points, she believes, are enough to annihilate the liberal feminist position: "An adequate answer can never be found so long as one retains the assumptions of abstract individualism..." (Jagger 1983, 48).

From the discussion in Chapter 3, it ought to appear that individualism is rather more complex than Jagger's definition: "Abstract individualism [is] the assumption that the essential human characteristics are properties of individuals and are given independently of any particular social context." It should also be noted that individualism, as a political philosophy, has much common-sense appeal and has done a great deal to further the feminist cause over the years—even its cultural feminist critics reluctantly acknowledge their debts to liberal individualism, as pointed out above.

Human Characteristics and Society

Let us now turn to Jagger's criticisms one by one. First, she takes issue with the notion that any human characteristics exist apart from society. In liberal philosophy, this is termed abstract individualism, and was described in the preceding section. Because the ramifications of Jagger's argument are so germane and far-reaching for the feminist movement, the following discussion is rather lengthy. Needless to say, it is beyond the scope of this thesis and the ability of this student to resolve the complex debate over abstract individualism. However, the following section serves to draw attention to a few of the intricacies and implications in the argument that Jagger glosses over.

The Abstract Individual

Jagger's questionable basis for rebutting the conceptualization of the abstract individual is that science has shown that sex-differences in emotion and cognition are not the result of innate abilities but depend on environmental factors. She takes this as confirmation that there is no human nature *per se*, that human beings are *tabulae rasae*, and that "individuals' desires and interests depend on the social context in which they are reared and from which they learn their values" (Jagger 1983, 42). In fact Maccoby and Jacklin amongst others have merely pointed out that false conceptions of femininity were what was disproved by science, and bad science at that (see Appendix I). Researchers were not looking for any 'human nature' *per se*, in the studies Jagger cites nor for human desires and interests in any broad sense. Whether women chose to embrace a stereotypical notion of femininity that governs their actions or whether they reject that role as limiting does not logically lead to the conclusion that there are no common human desires and interests that transcend culture and history. The truth is that we still do not know whether there are or are not universal human desires and interests endemic to the human species.[6] Neither science nor philosophy has arrived at a definitive answer and scientific speculation is that this

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question must remain unresolved in the absense of data acquired through the so-called "forbidden experiment" (the total isolation of a new-born human being for life)[7]. Her argument needs no further rebuttal. It is plainly not true and intellectually dishonest.

Further, if human beings are infinitely malleable to social pressures it becomes rather difficult to explain what Midgley refers to as, "The great difficulties which parents everywhere find in moulding their children to the pattern which their culture requires." Midgley goes on to state that if there is no human nature, however vaguely understood, it makes no sense to describe any society as "inhuman." If individuals are constituted solely by their culture, the notion of an inhuman society or a society that does not respect human beings would be logically impossible. Thus it would be entirely fair, for example, to restrict the freedom of women because it is more convenient, more efficient, for society as a whole.

> Many influential thinkers have concluded that there is no such thing as human nature at all. On this view, human babies come into the world entirely plastic, infinitely adaptable to any cultural pattern which may be stamped on them—"blank paper at birth"... If we call the life portrayed in *Brave New World* an inhuman one, we imply that its inhabitants had a certain definite nature which was being distorted by their conditioning, even though they themselves had no idea that there was anything wrong with their society. (Midgley 1988, 554)

Primarily because her argument is taken up by so many other critics of liberal feminism, it would seem that Jagger's confidence in presenting this scant evidence as "a serious empirical challenge to abstract individualism" (Jagger 1983, 42) must have another, more convincing foundation. I suggest that this covert foundation is the communitarianism of the classical *weltanschauung*. When a theoretical position is uncritically accepted as dogma, it is worthwhile—even essential—to explore its origins and, to use a poststructuralist term, metatheoretical implications.

Further, it is a misconception or at least an oversimplification that individualism denies that we are social animals, and that the group and the individual have a reciprocal affect one on the other. That Jagger herself recognizes this fact and minimizes it for the sake

of her argument is evident from the following: "Underlying these superficial differences is a certain fixed human nature *which is modified but not fundamentally created by social circumstances*" (Jagger 1983, 125, italics my own). Even that arch-individualist, J.S. Mill, insisted that individuals are integrally bound in social relationships:

> The social state is at once so natural, so necessary, and so habitual to man, that, except in some unusual circumstances or by an effort of voluntary abstraction, he never conceives himself otherwise than as a member of a body, and this association is revealed more and more, as mankind are further removed from the state of savage independence." (in Adams 1992, 444)

The liberal individualist wishes to emphasize that there is an element of thought which is not culturally determined and to focus attention for political reasons on that element of cognitive autonomy. The individualist contends that people are not absolute *tabulae rasae* to be written on as society determines, nor are they merely captives of the definitions of others:

> We should not be misled into thinking...that the entire make-up of the thinking done by the individual is furnished by others. The individual is just as much a member of society as are his associates, and only individuals can think...There is no Corporate Mind, no Social Mind. If the attitudes of others are necessary to the thinking by an individual, then his attitude may also condition their attitudes. It is a two-way affair. (Miller 1967, 41)

If the above extract brings to mind the symbolic interactionist school of sociology, it is no accident. Mead, the father of symbolic interactionism, is cited by critics of individualism (notably Lukes 1973, 151-52) because of his contention that individuals are constituted by and reflect the social process. However, a key point in Mead's philosophy is the resilience of the individual against social norms and the value he gives to individual predispositions that react in opposition to those norms. Note also that it is the social *process* (the cognitive give-and-take of interaction between the individual and the community) and not society itself that shapes the self, according to Mead. The strong cognitive element in Mead's theories of the self and his radical emphasis on the self as responsible agent in the

socialization process counters the cultural feminist deterministic, automatic, and largely non-scientific description of socialization (see Appendix I). In Mead's view, individuals are formed as much by their reaction to or rejection of prevailing social norms as by their internalization of such norms.

Further, in a complex and pluralistic society, there exists a mystifying variety of conflicting norm systems. Consequently, elements of choice and chance complicate issues of ego formation, which must remain in the realm of speculation because they currently elude scientific methods of investigation (Wilson 1993, 242; Kagan 1989). Individuals, to the symbolic interactionist, are not created by autonomous roles, institutions, and social structures (Hewitt 1976, 151). Rather, these systems and mechanisms are constantly recreated anew by individuals. As Mead says:

> A person may reach a point of going against the whole world about him; he may stand out by himself over against it...We can reform the order of things...We are not simply bound by the community...We are continually changing our social system in some respects, and we are able to do that intelligently because we can think. (Mead 1934, 168)

Liberal individualism, like all political philosophies, attempts to set forth ways in which individuals can *live together* harmoniously. Arguably, individuals living in isolation have no need of political philosophy. Those theories of rights central to individualism are only necessary insofar as there is an implicit recognition of the necessity for human beings to live together comfortably with other human beings. Because, through introspection, we can imagine human beings abstracted from society and also imagine an ahistorical and transcultural 'essential human being' does not mean the same thing as saying that human beings can actually bring themselves up, live and thrive in complete isolation. While the former retains rational coherence as a concept, plainly, the latter is an absurdity and must have been recognizable as such at least since the 'discovery' of Vincent d'Aveyron, the feral

child who so affected Rousseau and the other proponents of the Natural Man. As Miller points out,

> We cannot separate the social component of the self so as to have only the behavioral and subjective components left. This would be like trying to separate the stone from its mass, from what it is, in part at least. The social component is not accidental to the self...(Miller 1967, 41).

Jagger, and other critics of abstract individualism reject what might be termed representative or moderate individualism's position that the self is constituted by the 'given' characteristics in terms of a vague notion of basic human nature *plus* whatever it is that is unique to that individual (the personality) *plus* the influences of society. Most communitarians believe, in accordance with Durkheim and Marx[8], that our essential humanity is constituted by the group alone: "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness"(Marx *Preface to The Critique of Political Economy* 1968, 182). In adopting this position, Jagger (1983, 55) acknowledges that Marx was deliberately opposing himself to the individualist viewpoint but, in fact, it is far from obvious in the following extracts that even Marx, who is held up as the prototypical anti-individualist by cultural feminist critics, rejected a notion of a basic abstract human nature shared by all human beings (Jagger 1983, 52-53). Marx was no more privy to the scientific solution of the 'nature/nurture' question than was Durkheim, Hobbes, or J.S. Mill.

Even in the extract that Jagger cites, Marx sees the individual as having "a purpose of his own" (Jagger 1983, 53). A quick glance into the *Selected Works* produces the following: "The materialist doctrine that men are products of circumstances and upbringing... forgets that it is men that change circumstances" (Marx 1968, 28). This emphasis on the individual as change agent reflects the definitions of individualism given in Chapter 3. Marx is quoted by Lukes as writing that humanity's "own self-realization exists as an inner necessity, a *need*" (Lukes 1973, 71). This is completely at odds with Jagger's

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beliefs about "the social perversion of human need" which implies "that individual preferences cannot be taken at face value" (Jagger 1983, 44). To Marx, then, individuals have needs which come from within ("an inner necessity") and which do not seem to be socially perverted, but authentic. Further, one of these needs is the necessity of self-realization. Ironically, self-realizationism in common parlance (viz. *Webster's*) is "the ethical theory that the highest good for man consists in realizing or fullfilling himself usually on the assumption that he has certain inborn abilities constituting his real or ideal self." Surely a good case, via selective quotation, can be made for the belief that Marx was an individualist!

Jagger's belief that the individual cannot be conceived of in isolation from society from the viewpoint of the individual has been examined. Now let us turn to a consideration of the same subject from the perspective of society. In most university papers, it is common to expect a term to be defined, if not exhaustively and conclusively, then at very least as a 'working definition'. Yet it appears none of the critics of abstract individualism have provided us with a definition of that 'society' from which the individual cannot be conceived in isolation (for example, Frazer and Lacey 1993, 153).

Defining Society

The word 'society' has been used to mean a multiplicity of different things (Lukes 1973, 21). To avoid a common tool of rhetoric in begging the question, I turn to Marx in search of a definition of society rather than to a liberal philosopher because Marx shares many of cultural feminism's communitarian affinities and because he also reacted against the prevailing liberal *zeitgeist* of the nineteenth century. To preserve the integrity of the argument, this section cannot present only liberal definitions of society and argue from that perspective that the liberal conception of society stands.

To Marx, society seems to be "a complicated arrangement... into various orders" or classes. In other words, society is a large-scale compartmentalized organizational structure

with particular ends. Whether those ends are oppression and exploitation or order and social control is irrelevant at this point. Marx repeatedly refers to men "entering into"[9] various relationships that characterize the relations of productions: "The relations of production in their totality constitute what are called the social relations, *society*, and, specifically a society at a definite stage of historical development" (Marx 1968, 81: italics mine).

In an early liberal context, Diderot's *Encyclopedia* (1752-72), society is also described as something entered into voluntarily (Lukes 1973, 75). Reliable *Webster's* provides a common-usage definition of society as follows:

> 2. a voluntary association of individuals for common ends; esp: an organized group working together or periodically meeting because of common interests, beliefs, or profession 3a: an enduring and cooperating social group whose members have developed organized patterns of relationships through interaction with one another b: a community, nation or broad grouping of people having common traditions, institutions, and collective activities and interests

Webster's common-usage definitions 3a and 3b seem close to a marxist use of the term 'society'. It seems fair, since common-usage (albeit Western, male-dominated, primarily liberal common-usage), communitarian, and Enlightenment-liberal sources have been consulted, to list the characteristics of society as follows: usually voluntary to an extent, though may be coerced; complex; large scale; various divisions; particular, common ends; organized interactions; common traditions, institutions, collective activities, interests; since voluntary to an extent, may be withdrawn from, to an extent.

Some cultural feminist critics refer to "*particular* social context" (Jagger 1983, 42) rather than society. Grimshaw, a liberal feminist who critiques abstract individualism, states: "Abstract individualism is the doctrine which assumes that it is possible to think of human nature as 'given', of human beings as possessing fundamental characteristics or desires which can be abstracted from *particular social circumstances*" (my italics, Grimshaw 1986, 165). That is, human beings are not imagined as being free from *all* social circumstances but

from *particular* social circumstances. These particular social circumstances may be read as those which satisfy the eight characteristics of society listed above.

These eight items are very specific attributes. In considering a set of particular social circumstances from which liberal feminists and other philosophers can imagine abstracting an individual, it must be clarified that they are not talking about *all* social relationships, including the basic care-giver of childhood. Even Jagger acknowledges that liberal individualism "does not force liberals to deny that the presence of a social group may be an empirical prerequisite for an individual's learning to exercise her or his capacity to reason" (Jagger 1983, 29) and notes that, "of course, liberals recognize that human individuals in fact engage in all kinds of interactions with each other and with non-human nature" (Jagger 1983, 355). A mother-child dyad is not society. Liberal feminism is not talking about abstracting an individual from 'life' itself but about imagining that individual removed from society.

The complex, large-scale, organized society with various divisions, common traditions, institutions, collective activities and interests, and particular, common ends sounds like a society from which it is not that difficult intellectually to imagine a human being removed. We can quite easily conceive of children growing up like those in *The Swiss Family Robinson*, *The Blue Lagoon*, even (though less readily) *The Jungle Book*.

Individuals who develop a society through interaction bring their own personal tendencies, genetic and other, to the group and through both conflict and cooperation work out more or less functional patterns of social organization. This is more or less the liberal theory of the origins of society. Isolation from society might not be everyone's Thoreauesque ideal but real people have survived in isolation—and in far more horrendous circumstances. Further, it is not impossible to imagine that an isolated situation like this might have its own benefits: no oppression by human agency, freedom to do as one wishes

given the albeit often considerable constraints of nature, peace, all the food one needs providing one is energetic enough to catch or grow it.[10]

It is disingenous, further, to contend that the individual and society are one and the same thing. 'Society' is a reification—a way of thinking of a group of individuals.[11] The individual and society are plainly two separate things, conceptually, and can easily and logically be thought of as different one from the other. It has been mentioned above that, scientifically, we are unable to prove or disprove the primacy of the individual or the primacy of society. Therefore, these notions are *concepts* and it is only conceptually that we can discuss them. Concepts are tools of thought, abstract ideas generated through a mental process of generalization inspired by universal patterns in specific observations (Appendix II). Concepts do not, in general, require scientific confirmation to be valid. A concept may still be useful, as an explanatory device, in the absence of proof. It is possible to think in the abstract of an individual as being a different entity from society and living apart from society or pre-socially, in a conceptual thought-experiment. Plato, Hobbes, and Rousseau did so and, whether one agrees with their conceptualization or not, there seems little basis on which to argue that such conceptualization is impossible.

Properties of the Individual

Jagger's second argument against abstract individualism is that it is "impossible to think of individuals as feeling emotions, expressing wants, and defining interests outside any system of social organization" (Jagger 1983, 43) thus seeming to imply that individuals cannot 'own' their own emotions and desires.

Basing her objection on the scientific nature of Scheman's paper is questionable, and Jagger acknowledges this when she says, "*If* Scheman's argument is correct" (Jagger 1983, 43). In fact, Scheman's argument is just another theory. It has not been proven. We do not know if it is true or if it is false. As such, Jagger has no intellectually honest basis on which

to say, "This argument cuts... deeply against abstract individualism" (Jagger 1983, 43) and a rebuttal need continue no further.

Grimshaw, who also criticizes abstract individualism, effectively rebuts Scheman's argument (1986, 162-186). However, she accepts with qualifications what she calls Scheman's Wittgensteinian contention that "I cannot identify what I feel as 'anger' or 'love' without socially acquired capacities" (Jagger 1983, 164). The meaning of this proposition — while interesting — is unclear, for although anger and love are commonly understood to be social emotions, it is possible that isolated primates may feel anger against an imprisoning cage when the food source is outside. The infant mother-deprived monkeys in the famous sociobiological experiment exhibited what could be identified as love for the wire and blanket mother-surrogate. The scientific evidence is speculative, at this date, both because it is impossible to separate the psychological projections of human researchers from specific genuine emotion felt by their subjects and because accurate labelling of internal psychological states is beyond the competency of contemporary science. However, from a philosophical viewpoint, anger and love are terms commonly used in a social context. Indeed, it is hardly a radical insight to point out that anger and love contain an important social component and that this social component is contained within the common-usage definition of the words. What Scheman seems to be saying, then, is that social emotions cannot be identified without social interactions, or tautologically, that social emotions depend on social interactions.

It may be, however, that it is the *identification* of these feelings that is the key issue. In other words, an individual conceived of in the abstract as being outside of society could possibly feel anger or love but could not, in any sense, recognize them for what they are or reflexively identify them in her- or himself. This seems logical if the abstract individual is seen as a complete isolate, removed from language and any social contact whatsoever. The development of language does, indeed, seem connected with the ability to interpret mental

states. But we must remember, as shown above, that the concept of the abstract individual does not call for an individual reared in isolation from birth. Even Jagger, who is highly critical of abstract individualism, fully acknowledges that the postulated abstract individual is seen to develop language and reason, for example, through interaction with others (Jagger 1983, 29).

The Abstract Individual as Universal Man

Modern theories of human nature, as presented in Chapter 3, tend to be deliberately indefinite and apply to as many individuals as may fulfil whichever lose definition of personhood is being appealed to. As discussed in Chapter 3, the notion that virtually all human beings possess *the same* nature allows a particular rational basis for equality and universal rights. On the grounds of this essential sameness, in terms of nature, the battles for abolition, female suffrage, even social welfare were fought. Underneath their superficial differences, blacks, women, and 'the poor' could be seen as 'the same as us' and thus deserving of the same goods. For example:

> I believe the vulgarest Cockney crowd, flung out millionfold on a Whit-monday, with nothing but beer and dull folly to depend upon for amusement, would at once kindle into something human, if you set them to do almost any regulated act in common. And would dismiss their beer and dull foolery, in the silent charm of rhythmic human companionship, in the practical feeling, probably new, that all of us are made on one pattern, and are, in an unfathomable way, brothers to one another. (Carlyle *Shooting Niagra: and After?* 1867, reprinted 1958, 167)

The notion that all human beings share a common core, particularly vis-à-vis what pleases them and what causes them pain, and other questions of value, makes possible the idea that social status and social roles can be oppressive. Extrapolating from Mill's suggestion, when our shared human nature permits a fellow-feeling with another individual and one can imagine oneself occupying that individual's role, it becomes possible to sense the uncon-geniality of that role (Mill *Nature* 1874, reprinted 1958, 341). Slaves who are slaves by

nature do not provoke the sympathy as do slaves who are slaves by convention. In the first case, their basic essence or nature is different. Thus it is possible to see their role as appropriate, their reactions to it different from those of a superior nature who happened to become a slave through conventions such as those employed in classical Greek warfare (Aristotle 1963, 386). Much cruelty has been justified through the expedient of disassociation on the basis of the intrinsic or natural difference of the poor, Afro-Americans, and other oppressed groups. Wollstonecraft, for example, drew attention to the plight of the poor, "treated like a creature of another species" (54) without "even the chance of being considered a fellow creature" (56) by those of "superior nature" (Wollstonecraft 1798 reprinted 1975, 54-56). In excluding Jews from the common human nature, Hitler made it possible to think of them as having alien values and sensibilities; in thinking of them as 'other', even "sub-human" it may have been easier to oppress them. The following extract is from an Israeli government publication prepared by the *Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority*. It is presented here as a dramatic illustration of the appalling extent to which anti-universalist notions of human nature have been taken in the past.

> According to Nazi theory, humanity is not a homogeneous unit, and the human race has no common denominator. Those who spoke of the unity of the human race were intent upon falsifying the truth, as they denied the existence of races and refused to recognize the constant conflicts between them. Phrases about the common destiny of mankind were ridiculous, as absurd as talk of a partnership between men and insects. (----- *The Holocaust* 1977, 14)

Communitarian theories of human nature, and cultural feminist theories of the 'nature of woman' tend toward contextualism (Okin 1989, 15). In other words, they depict human nature as formed by its peculiar historically- and geographically-grounded social context. Consequently, human nature loses its universal quality and it becomes possible to think of Englishmen as being completely different from Frenchmen, for example. Similarly, it becomes possible to think of the lower-classes as partaking in a different human nature than that of the upper classes. As discussed in earlier chapters, classical theories of human nature

were considered to be universal, in the sense that they belonged to *all* individuals in a particular category. Yet it seems apparent that these classical theories of human nature were also contextualist, in that slaves and masters participated in *different* human natures.

Where true contextualism departs from classical theory is in the notion that human nature is not fixed and innate but acquired through social interaction, particularly through the use of language. Berry cites Herder as an example of a contextualist philosopher who contends that "those who speak the same language share the same experience. This experience is what makes them what they *are*, gives them their identity, and what thereby distinguishes them radically from others" (Berry 1986, 70). He then points out that, when human nature is seen to be specific as to time and place, the value of universalism is denied. People are not fungible. One human being cannot stand in for another. What is true about one individual cannot be held to be true about another by virtue of his or her common, universal human nature. Thus is becomes possible to consider that others, the lower classes perhaps, are not like 'me'. Their needs, desires, virtues, and purposes may not be congruent to my own because we share no common core of human characteristics. The abstract individual no longer has any credibility and Marx in fact mocked the abstract individual by characterizing him as an English shopkeeper.

Contextualism deliberately sets out to undercut concepts of human nature and it could be suggested that a contextualist human nature is not a theory of 'human nature' at all except for the following ingenious argument. Contextualism rejects the universality of the abstract individual thus:

> A Constitution...that was made for all nations was in reality made for none. To use the empty abstraction 'Man' as the basis for political theory is to indulge in idle speculation and to use it as the basis for political practice is (literally) to do violence to the particularity of a society's institutions...Man's nature is constituted by the specific cultural context within which is ineluctably to be found...(Berry 1986, 72)

Yet, as Berry points out, the contextualist argument must be couched in univeralist terms because it contests that "*all* humans are contextually constituted" (Berry 1986, 74).

> [Further,] It is meaningless to hold...that 'men' are so different in different times and places, that there is no common core, because without this core how would we know enough in the first place to know that others were different! The ability to identify differences presupposes some basic agreement because without that agreement it is impossible to judge whether others do have beliefs or conceptual frameworks different from ours... (Berry 1986, 72, 74, and 76)

Thus, according to Berry, contextualism is not a logically defensible position.

According to Jagger, the first two objections to liberal feminist theory outlined above are the most powerful arguments cultural feminism can bring to bear against the prevailing Western liberal ideology, that rejects a separate female 'nature'. As discussed, debts owed to liberal philosophy by women are many: the vote, equal rights before the law, sexual emancipation, daycare, access to higher education, equal pay for equal work, and so on. One might think it would require heavier ammunition to overturn and repudiate a philosophy that has so obviously benefitted women. As presented above, the pseudoscientific basis on which Jagger and others can point to the end of liberal philosophy as a justification for feminism is not inviolable nor immune to criticism itself.

The liberal feminist stance works well as an abstract exegesis and vindication of women's potential for equality and freedom. Where individualism fails is the point at which the goals of feminism are no longer equality and freedom, but something else altogether. That 'something else' is the political platform of cultural feminism. It ought to be necessary, however, for cultural feminism to admit that its goals are not congruent with those of liberal feminism. This admission is not made. Rather the cultural feminist argument is couched in terms of the inadequacies and pernicious dangers of liberal feminism.[12]

Whereas equality and freedom may be the utopian goals of a so-called static or closed society, it may be that connection and duty to others are the visionary aspirations of an open society. Communitarianism, in this way, supports the notion that "the evaluation of

what is a proper moral stance will vary according to circumstances of time and place" (*Communitarian Manifesto* [1991]). It is logical, from this perspective, that the feminist stance may change over time. Liberal feminism was born at the same time as liberal democracy. Liberal democracy, according to Miller, "Is based on the assumption that no man's hopes and aspirations are to be laid down by another, that every person has the right to stipulate the kind of person he wants to be, that institutions and governments exist for the sake of individuals" (Miller 1967, 59). If, as some believe, these democratic rights have been at least partially secured, and our Western society has become more open to some extent (especially if compared to, for example, the *anciens régimes*), it may be appropriate to acknowledge that an influential branch of feminism has begun to pursue another vision of utopia than that held by liberal feminism. Thus Frazer and Lacey can state, "Liberalism has made an important and distinctive contribution to the cause of women's liberation, but from where we stand at the moment liberal analysis, critique and vision seem exhausted from a feminist point of view" (Frazer and Lacey 1993, 100).

According to Machan, "Concepts that figure in moral and political theory depend for their meaningfulness or validity in part on the way they are related to concepts in a more basic system of principles and facts than those of the moral or political principles themselves" (Machan 1989, xxvi). In other words, the cultural feminist critique of liberal theory may depend on more than scientific 'proof' for its validity. I have suggested that there is inadequate scientific basis on which to ground the key cultural feminist theory of a separate female nature (Appendix I). Cultural feminist theory depends, not on science, but on ideology—on the "more basic system of principles" that exists in opposition to the goals of liberal theory. The "more basic system of principles" on which cultural feminism depends is specifically the communitarian ideology of the classical *weltanschauung*.

It is highly unlikely, however, that cultural feminism deliberately rooted its philosophical and political platform in classical philosophy. In its opposition to patriarchy,

cultural feminism could not appeal to a traditional set of values and beliefs about human nature that historically provided a rationale for female oppression. Yet these classical values are a part of the cultural feminist platform, as this thesis attempts to demonstrate. This link is somewhat uneasily noted, for example:

> Cultural feminists can sometimes come up with notions that sound disturbingly Victorian and non-progressive: that women are inherently (biologically) "kinder and gentler" than men and so on...While various sex differences might not be biologically determined, they are still so thoroughly ingrained as to be intractable. (Moore 1995)

Through the medium of the new 'science', sociology, as pointed out by Riley (1988), and through the anticapitalist socialist predilections of sociology, classical notions attained a renewed and pseudoscientific respectability (for example, Riley 1988, Ch. 3). Influenced by Marx, Compte, Owen, and Durkheim, the British socialist Fabian movement and the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science at the turn of the century co-opted women as particularly suitable for sociological research, social work, and social science (Riley 1988, 48-54).[13]

As stated above, cultural feminism fails to acknowledge its own roots. An excellent example of what sometimes appears to be feminist intellectual dishonesty is the tendency to ground its claims for essential female traits, strengths, and behaviors in a spurious science of socialization when, in fact, it is a specifically Durkheimian and early marxist notion of socialization that underlies the type of passive, inevitable absorption of femininity cited by cultural feminist scholars (there is a more complete discussion of socialization theory in Appendix I). This specific notion of socialization suggests that human nature is formed psittaceously by social arrangements, by roles, and by involvement in certain practices — motherhood for example (Ruddick 1989). It suggests that society forms, produces, and creates individuals and manufactures their thoughts and feelings. It suggests that the hegemony of ideology is absorbed wholesale by individuals. It suggests that materialist determination produces individuals. For example, "People operate out of a set of assump-

tions that accepts (or as Lukács maintained, "reifies") conditions and ideas as they are received, without seeking explanations or understanding of the origins of those conditions and ideas" (Ozman and Craver 1995, 344). The cultural feminist understanding of socialization is discussed in the next chapter.

One of the problems with contemporary feminism is that it seems to be schizophrenic: for example, the current agenda calls for women to support abortion based on the liberal individualist human right to control one's own body and at the same time to value women's closer connection to nonviolent nurturing based on the notion that women must be different from men in terms of their different 'experience database", complementary function, and specific role (motherhood) in life, embeddedness within the community, and orientation to relationships. Women are, at one and the same time, called upon politically to be *the same as men* and to be *different from men*. That this logical incoherence is the result of feminism developing in two distinct ways— following the liberal path of Wollstonecraft and J.S. Mill, on the one hand and the classical path, mediated by the communitarian influence of nineteenth-century sociology on the other—ought to be fairly clear at this point in my argument. The following chapter and Chapter 8 present some of the implications that classical, communitarian theories hold for feminism in general.

ENDNOTES

1. Let me remind the reader that communitarianism may be very simply defined as a sociopolitical theory holding that the interests and welfare of the collective group are of greater importance than the interests and welfare of any individual (*Encarta*). Frazer and Lacey identify communitarian themes as the social nature of life, the individual as embedded within the community and a mesh of relationships, the individual as embodied, values that are produced by the community and not invested in "the individual subject as the ultimate originator and bearer of value" (Frazer and Lacey 1993, 2).

2. The liberal feminist perspective would follow the first of Midgley and Hughes' suggestions and work to extend individualism consistently to both sexes.

3. In addition, her *Feminist Politics and Human Nature* has long been the women's studies textbook of choice and is often uncritically quoted in CEGEP and undergraduate papers as the bible of feminist theory.

4. For example, "The latter set of books [including Jagger's *Feminist Politics and Human Nature*]... expands and deepens feminist thought rather than constraining and reducing it" (Code, Mullet, and Overall 1988, 16); "One of the best accounts of the [problematic] relation between feminism and socialism is provided by Alison Jagger in *Feminist Politics and Human Nature*" (Grimshaw 1986, 262); and, "More detailed discussion is to be found in Alison Jagger's systematic treatise" (Stevenson 1987, 138).

5. For example, "In particular, some influential feminists are rejecting all of our assumptions about knowledge on the grounds that they represent an oppressive and outmoded 'binary thinking'—a way of thinking that rests on the delineation of difference as the foundation for all knowledge and therefore promotes hierarchy" (Fox Genovese 1991, 4).

6. For example, the popularity in historical research (for example, *Centuries of Childhood* and *Mechanical Baby*) of the notion that children had little value to their parents apart from their ability to contribute to the family's survival until comparatively recently suggests that even the love for one's child may be culturally determined. However, a contrary interpretation has also been made and there exists at least an equal number of historical documents supporting the obverse position (for example, Sappho writes of her daughter, "I have a lovely child, whose form is like/Gold flowers, my heart's one pleasure, Cleis/For whom I'd not give all Lydia..." [in Pomeroy 1975, 54]). Studies of remote tribes are cited to prove that, for example, jealousy or anger are not essential to the human condition. However, it is important to ascertain whether these emotions still exist, but are expressed far differently than in Western cultures (for example, if the Japanese smile when angry this does not allow us to presume that anger is foreign to their culture).

7. Though, since human nature is usually defined in terms of potential and predisposition and presumably an entity needs a social environment in which to achieve that potential and unleash those predispositions, it is possible to see the forbidden experiment as another blind alley insofar as human nature is concerned.

8. Although my knowledge of Marx is not deep enough to pursue this chain of thought, it deserves mention at this point nonetheless. Marx and Durkheim share a communitarian vision. However, the psychology of collectivism is presented in more detail by Durkheim. The class struggle that is an inextricable focus of Marxism does not have that centrality for Durkheim. If individuals are created by their society, in the way that both Marx and Durkheim suppose, it is difficult to see how the notion of oppression develops in the Marxist underclass. Perhaps this is why Marx describes it historically rather than psychologically.

9. If men can "enter in" to these relationships (or society, as Marx sees it), can he not "opt out" or be conceived of as not entering in?

10. This is the situation that philosophers like Rousseau and Locke imagined when they speculated why people would give up these benefits to live in an aristocracy where they were plainly not free, not at peace, not well-fed, and so on. Presumably, we could all "opt out" of society and walk away to Walden's Pond, perhaps taking our families with us. In fact, thousands of Europeans put such a vision into practice when they left for the New World.

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11. Durkheim's notion of the social mind represents an extreme communitarian position and conceives of society as more than the sum of its individual parts, almost as a living entity distinct from (yet composed of) the individuals that comprise it.

12. For example, when Midgley and Hughes conclude their book by stating that, "Unmitigated individualism is a death-wish" (Midgley and Hughes 1983, 224) they intentionally link liberal feminism to suicide. It is only logical to point out that 'unmitigated' *anything* can be conceived of as leading to suicide (unmitigated eating, unmitigated dieting, unmitigated sex, are a few examples). Further, a parallel statement may be, "Unmitigated collectivism is fascist totalitarianism."

13. Marxism is a communitarian philosophy developed in reaction against, even opposition to, the Enlightenment liberal individualism that characterized bourgeois society. Thus Engels could write, "We know today that this kingdom of reason was nothing more than the idealised kingdom of the bourgeoisie" (Marx and Engels 1968, 400). As suggested above, Marxism/ socialism shares many classical beliefs about human natures, most notably the notion that human nature is a collective artefact. From its origins, sociology has been communitarian in its view of human nature. It is not surprising that a communitarian foundation sustains sociology, for its focus is collective, or social, action. Ozman and Craver trace the origins of socialism back to the tradition of natural law discussed in Chapter 5. The beliefs that human nature is not fixed but malleable, that the historical means of production forms human nature, and that human nature is a product of social life were espoused by Marx and the nineteenth century sociologists. By changing social conditions, human nature will be changed. These teachings do not lie far from the Deist notion of ensuring progress through harmonizing social arrangements to natural law. The theories of Charles Fournier, an early socialist, similarly influenced Marx:

> Charles Fournier believed in human perfectibility and called for new forms of social organization based on his theory of "perfection by association," a notion derived from Newton's law of gravitation. He believed that progress would occur through proper human association, the base unit of association being anchored in a community of interest. (Ozman and Craver 1995, 323).

> Contemporary sociology, as influenced by Marx and Durkheim, is predicated on the search for natural laws. Although this foundation is not overtly acknowledged today, it is attested to by the proliferation of statistical and quantitative research in the field. Natural laws, as noted in Chapter 3, tend to reify "custom". Lukács and Gramsci, both Marxists, develop the notion of reification as "taking prevailing capitalistic ideas about the nature of society as the way things *must* be" (Ozman and Craver 1995, 333), yet it is suggested above that reification—of society and of human nature, for example—is an ideological tool used by communitarian as well as bourgeois individualist societies.

CHAPTER 7:

IMPLICATIONS OF COMMUNITARIAN THEORIES
FOR FEMINIST THEORY

Having outlined the weaknesses in Jagger's 'scientific' argument against abstract individualism and briefly located the foundations of cultural feminist theory in anti-individualist, classical communitarianism, this section focuses on a concise if rather fragmentary evaluation of the consequences for women of taking the communitarian, anti-individualist stance. If liberal feminism is dead, as Jagger and other cultural feminist theorists contend, and feminist theory must take the other, communitarian, path—requiring the acceptance of woman as a distinct category with a separate 'nature'—some consequences may be the following.

Contextualism and Deterministic Socialization Theories

First, since from a classical, communitarian perspective there are no "essential human characteristics that are properties of individuals and are given independently of any particular social context," all desires, thoughts, emotions, needs, interests and so on must be circumscribed by society. This leads easily into the deterministic conviction that we are creatures of our environment and cannot be other. The autonomous agent who makes rational choices is seen to be "an erroneous assumption" (Bell 1993, 32) because, in fact, individuals act unconsciously or "automatically" (without reflection) in accord with social norms that they acquire through socialization (Bell 1993, 38-39). The cultural

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feminist movement tends to depict human beings, and by contraction women, as schools of fish, changing direction automatically in unison. Both the unique value of personhood or personality (individuality) and the universal values derived from the possession of a common human nature (rights) are deprived of a *raison-d'être*.

Insofar as feminism is concerned, the implication is that women passively and inevitably conform to sex-role stereotypes. Further, since there are no essential universal human characteristics that transcend gender, males and females must be completely differently constituted because the effects of sexism are so pervasive. Just as all bourgeois can be lumped together through their common experience, so can all women. There is no robust core of unique personality nor is there a common core of human nature. Presumably individuals subject to identical experiences since birth will be identical. If there is no nucleus of self, then there is nothing that needs to be protected against oppression. Indeed, the concept of oppression becomes problematic, if individuals are constituted by society. Even Jagger seems to imply that oppression is a purely liberal concept, the corresponding marxist concept being alienation (Jagger 1983, 5, 317).

This is a dangerous stance for women to take. It undercuts the possibility of social change and individual non-comformity: carried to extreme, it suggests that one can have no thoughts or desires unless they are inculcated by society. The implication is that one *is* one's social role and cannot be other. Bell suggests that choice is illusory and casts doubt on the possibility that we are "conscious subjects deciding between various ways of pursuing some goal" because life-paths are the result of 'accident' or 'slipping into things' (Bell 1993, 40-42). Thus, one is born into the role of daughter, and becomes a wife "unreflectively." From this communitarian perspective, it is difficult to justify the willed rejection of this constitutive feature of identity:

> I can try to reject those values and social practices which 'keep [women] down', but I couldn't entirely escape the grip of my femininity...There's more to being a woman than the subordination built into the social construction of femininity, much of which lies at the level of unconscious behaviour, so it would be foolish even to imagine the possibility of ridding ourselves of the entire repertoire of learned feminine values and behaviours. (Bell 1993, 226)

Indeed, to reject the "constitutive community" of women is dangerous for women because "there are some [attachments] that are so fundamental to our identity that they cannot be set aside, and that an attempt to do so will result in serious and perhaps irreparable psychological damage" (Bell 1993, 10). There is some suggestion that "constitutive communities" may even be "exempt from evaluation and possible rejection" because they operate in the background, noncognitively (Bell 1993, 115).

The picture of socialization presented by cultural feminism (in Chapter 4) derives from the ideological conception of personhood embedded in communitarianism. "Distinctive cultural traits" are absorbed noncognitively from the constitutive community very early in life and remain difficult, if not impossible to change (Bell, for example, suggests that "distinctive cultural traits have already been stamped in at 3 months of age" 1993, 162).

Difference Destabilizes Equality

Second, the acceptance of a differently-constituted 'woman's nature' undercuts the accepted rationale for equality and universal rights that is rooted in sameness. The battle for emancipation has been won on many counts through the appeal to these universal characteristics. It is possible to consider that many aspects of women's lives and personalities may be influenced by her sex without diminishing the importance of her essential sameness, anchored in her common humanity with man. The concept of an abstract, unsexed individual makes it possible to think of others being different, yet *like*

ourselves. In other words, despite superficial differences there is a core at which we are all the same. If I could not endure the misery of a Victorian workhouse or the indentured slavehood of a contemporary Middle-Eastern carpet factory with equanimity, how could it be possible for Oliver Twist or an Indian child-labourer to do so? If a man could not endure his exclusion from higher education, the physical violence of his spouse, the loss of dignity resulting from sexist discrimination, how then could a woman endure such things, possessing a common human nature?

The principle of distributive justice discussed in Chapter 3 requires that those who fall into the same category must be treated equally and that those who fall into different categories must be treated unequally (Peters 1967, 51). If all individuals, by virtue of their very existence, participate in one common nature then all individuals must receive equal treatment. This equal treatment is commonly expressed as those baseline rights (Rawls 1971, 136-142) or insurance policy (Rorty 1990, 22) derived to preserve individual dignity and autonomy; to defend the individual from being used instrumentally; to protect individuals against other individuals, against the collectivity, and against the political power of the state. Thus one can appreciate the enormity of Fox-Genovese's realization that liberal feminism, the general rights of the individual, and sameness are essentially opposed to cultural feminism, collective rights, and difference (Fox-Genovese 1991, 241).

In the extract cited in Chapter 1, Fox-Genovese concludes by suggesting, "Women... understand that justice must derive from a collectivity that grounds its deepest principles of individual right in the collectivity's commitment to honour and protected [sic] difference" (Fox-Genovese 1991, 241). It is difficult to see a satisfying pragmatic application of such a vision of justice. Patriarchy has long been committed to honour and protect the difference between women and men, but this has not led to the achievement

of feminist goals, either liberal or cultural. It is difficult to see how principles of individual right can be grounded in difference; rights based on difference are *different* rights, of necessity. If otherwise, it would be unnecessary to recognize differences. Different rights are not baseline rights common to everyone; they provide no line of defense against those who would seek to define us as 'different'. Further, a commitment to honour and protect difference can degenerate into "an expression of privilege" because it is rather more complex than it seems to achieve a true appreciation and understanding of those who are different from ourselves (Spelman 1988, 178-183): "We cannot demand that they make themselves available to be known simply because we have a need that has to be satisfied. That is not apprenticeship but imperialism" (Spelman 1988, 185). Paying lip service to the fine qualities of Uncle Tom did not guarantee his individual rights. Finally, in honouring and protecting the differences between blacks and whites, males and females, and so on, is there not the reciprocal danger that their commonalities may be forgotten?

Individual rights, based in the abstract individual, destabilize the community because social roles can no longer be perceived as appropriate to individual natures (King in Jagger and Bordo 1989, 119-120). With liberal feminists, I see this as a positive thing, though it is held to be negative by cultural feminists. Further, rights guarantee protection against the instrumental use of the individual through the imposition of a role advantageous to the collectivity. I see this as positive also, though it is held to be negative by cultural feminists. Communitarianism provides little foundation for the rejection of oppressive roles:

> Communitarians and many feminists abandon the disembodied, liberal, choosing self as both theoretically flawed and patriarchally constructed. But in doing so, we risk finding ourselves in the arms of the radically embodied communitarian self, a determined product of her or his circumstances, social conditioning and community culture. The situation of a being whose consciousness is determined

by structure, communities, and institutions seems to be that of a helpless subscriber to the dominant conception of value. Arguably, the communitarian conception of personhood hardly deserves the name. (Frazer and Lacey 1993, 152)

On the basis of general rights it can even be contended that motherhood is incidental, even oppressive, to womanhood because what *really matters* is not women's role, body, value to the community, or social conditioning and internalization of normative social values, but their individual personhood as presented in Chapter 3.[1]

Relativism

Third, since there is nowhere 'outside' the prevailing ideology from which to derive or evaluate values, desires, and interests, human beings lack free will and autonomy. Ultimately, this stance leads to cultural relativism, a moral stance with which many may be uncomfortable. Unfortunately, this issue cannot be addressed within the scope of this thesis. I feel it is critical for feminism that the notion that "values [are] rooted in communal practices" (Frazer and Lacey 1993, 2) rather than in the abstract individual receive further analysis.[2]

Because there is no individual locus of rationality there can be no individual moral responsibility.[3] If we are constituted by society, we must reflect society's values. The value placed on reason as a way to discern truth and achieve salvation, for ourself, by ourself, is wiped out. The foundation of independence is the ability to make our own decisions—because independence is not a communitarian virtue, rationality must be viewed as suspect. This stance also implies determinism and, ultimately, nihilism (there is no abstract 'good'), but finds common expression in our society as pluralism: the belief that every culture and every lifestyle is equally good, and the adoption of one set of ideals is merely expediency.

The mirror image of this nihilism is reflected in the communitarian notion that the morality derived from our own constitutive community deserves our allegiance. Thus the emphasis is on developing a "unified moral front," resulting in our children hearing the same moral messages from their parents, teachers, law inforcement personnel, even government. (Herbert 1996). The "character education" movement is one response and it is endorsed by President Clinton (Character Education Partnership 1996). Although the *Communitarian Manifesto* states that shared values and shared aspirations "must be judged by external and overriding criteria, based on shared human experience," its over one hundred named endorsers (including feminists Betty Friedan, Mary Ann Glendon, Jean Bethke Elshtain) have no suggestion as to whose criteria will be applied in judgement. Interestingly, from the point of view of this thesis, they link these unnamed moral criteria to human nature, a concept that is strongly — if not exclusively — ideological.

These perspectives are also dangerous for women. Through history, what Okin (1979) calls a functional viewpoint of woman has determined her nature from how best she may serve men. If women cannot use their own rationality to stand outside social norms and expediency, how can they judge the prevailing ideology unfair? Indeed, this very stance on the part of a few courageous women (for example, the Suffragettes, and Margaret Sanger) seemed to have changed the destiny of women for the better. If women are not held accountable for their own actions but are seen as passive cogs in the machinery of society, why will they wish to change things? And how can they?

Scheman, whose views were presented in Chapter 6, is aware that her cultural feminist perspective undercuts liberal feminist theory, on the basis of which much positive social change has already been accomplished:

> A view of human beings as socially constituted, as having emotions, beliefs, abilities, and so on, only in so far as they are embedded in a social web of

interpretation...would in fact seem to be incompatible with a social and political theory that sees social groups as built on the independently existing characteristics of individuals (Scheman in Grimshaw 1986, 167).

Scheman seems to imply that there cannot be individual mental states (hence no personhood) at all: "The question is...not just...what to call it (the group of complex psychological and introspectible states), but at the level of there being an 'It' at all" (in Jagger 1983, 43). Grimshaw supports this interpretation. If human beings are created by society and if mental states cannot be ascribed to individuals certainly there are no grounds for 'respect' for the individual on a liberal philosophical basis. The 'self' becomes as nebulous as it was in classical times: "If there is no self prior to or independent of its social constitution, it might be argued that the very idea of personhood becomes incoherent" (Frazer and Lacey 1993, 152). Human beings who are merely the creations of society and the interdependent cells of a thinking social body are not in a position to claim rights, set their needs against those of the collectivity, or rise up against oppression. Hence, the following section.

Conformity

Fourth, conformity is the only possible answer to social pressures; social change is problematic unless it comes from shifts in society itself (example, Darwian evolution, Compte's progressivism, marxist spontaneous proeletarian revolution). Indeed, cultural feminism has been accused of conservativism and bolstering the status quo (Mednick 1989, and Frazer and Lacey 1993, for example).

Durkheim is aware that, "from the moment that the human person is and must be considered something sacred, over which neither the individual nor the group has free disposal, any attack upon it must be forbidden" (Durkheim 1954, 337). This 'sacred' aspect of the human person is expressed in the abstract individual. If the individual is not

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logically prior to society, there is no point in putting a higher value on the individual than on society. In fact, the needs of society will outweigh or be prior to the needs of the individual (Strauss 1971, 182). This is, in fact, the communitarian root of communism, the original Israeli *kibbutz*, Walden II, Herland, the socialist state and other forms of purposefully anti-liberal society. In the *kibbutz* as it was originally conceived, if the community had need of a doctor it would send the student with the best marks to medical school. It was of no consequence that the student in question had no personal ambition to become a doctor and wished to become a teacher instead, because the needs of the many outweighed the needs of the few. The *kibbutz* structure has now, by and large, changed. Collective solutions are government solutions (McElroy 1982, 20) and do feminists want to place control in the hands of a government which is plainly inextricably involved with male dominance? Bell refers to contemporary "loneliness, deracination, divorce...alienation, rootlessness, the lack of shared projects," (a list to which cultural feminists may add "decategorization as to gender") and, from a communitarian per-spective, suggests that government ought to be solving these problems with "plausible and justifiable measures which may conflict with (what will look like) liberalism's absurd and counter-intuitive restrictions on the legitimate functions of government" (Bell 1993, 12-13).

In moving away from the modern emphasis on the individual, communitarianism goes to the opposite extreme. Indeed, this was the impetus that set Durkheim, Marx, and Engels to set pen to paper.They wrote expressly to draw attention to the dangers of individualism. However, just as liberal individualism may be criticized, communitarianism can also be negatively characterized as requiring conformity and lack of self-expression, enforced by rigid institutions (Miller 1967, 44). Social control, in the form of state legislation and powers, extends to all facets of life, even the home and

school. Propaganda and education are inseparable (Ozman and Craver 1995, 340). There is no concept of negative liberty (privacy). Thus, communitarianism "appears to commit feminism to the view that there are no moral limits on proper state action" (Frazer and Lacey 1993, 74).[4]

This form of collective organization characterized society prior to the rise of liberal individualism, and it is the paradigm characterized as an idyll by Marx (Marx and Engels 1968, 37). Burke, for example, expresses the pre-Enlightenment viewpoint that for his time was conservative, even retrogressive, that only society is 'real' or important when he says, "Individuals pass like shadows; but the commonwealth is fixed and stable" (in Lukes 1973, 3).[5]

The belief that civil society is prior to the individual "led to the view that the primary moral fact is duty and not rights" (Strauss 1971, 183). Here we see reflected cultural feminism's "ethic of care" and social responsibility. But one of the consequences of basing the social structure on care and duty rather than rights has historically been the 'dumping' of social responsibility on the shoulders of women. Cultural feminists do not acknowledge the conflictual, oppressive aspect of care and duty (Mendus 1993, 26). They ignore the negative, potentially frightening power aspects of caring. They disregard the pathologies of connection with others, for example symbiosis and the undifferentiated self (Grimshaw 1986, 181-183). They do not acknowedge that one's 'duty' has historically functioned as an ideological mechanism forcing women to cooperate in their own oppression, particularly as regards limiting their life choices in the interests of their familial obligations. Nor do they address the extremely powerful argument that it is far more dignified to receive welfare as one's basic right to subsistence than to survive on the philanthropy of others, however 'caring'.

The Embodied and Situated Self: The Lived Experience of the Body

Cultural feminism refutes charges of essentialism with an appeal to "the lived experience of the body." Briefly, this notion involves the idea that, in travelling through life experiences in a female body, women encounter a distinct and separate set of experiences that form their psychology in a different mode than that of men. Liberal theory is commonly criticized for what Jagger calls its "metaphysical dualism," or the denial of bodily claims in favour of reason: "Liberals view human beings as essentially rational agents and deny that the physical basis of the capacity to reason, if there is one, is part of the human essence" (Jagger 1983, 17).[6]

The tendency to consider the self as something apart from the body is deeply engrained in Western culture: for example, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Romans 8, 7-8). The lived experience of the body, in theory, reunites mind and body as equal participants in the self, suggesting a marxist perspective whereby individuals are created through their social interactions. The 'lived experience of the body' theory suggests that gender traits, behaviours, and cognitions are created through praxis early in life and characterized by "relative rigidity... once established" (Jagger 1983, 126):

> Our 'inner' lives, as well as our bodies and behavior, are structured by gender; that this gender-structuring is not innate but is socially imposed; that the specific characteristics that are imposed are related systematically to the historically prevailing system of organizing social production; that the gender-structuring of our 'inner' lives occurs when we are very young and is reinforced throughout out lives in a variety of different spheres; and that these relatively rigid masculine and feminine character structures are a very important element in maintaining male dominance. (Jagger 1983, 127)

The approach is contextualist and, therefore suggests that individuals can only be understood within the ontological framework provided by their environment. Further,

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their emotions, values, and cognitions are purely social constructs.[7] This viewpoint seems, at first glance, difficult to align with the cultural feminist emphasis on 'woman's essential nature', traditionally conceived to be innate and intractable. However, the differences between the lived male and female experiences, derived from and contingent on the experiences accrued through a lifetime spent in a particularly-sexed body, are held to be so significantly disparate that they inevitably produce separate, intractable or "relatively rigid" gendered natures early in life. Ruddick phrases this in Marxist terms, as the notion that individuals involved in a particular "practice" (her concern is the practice of motherhood) develop a "distinctive way of knowing" because "thought does not transcend its social origins" (Ruddick 1989, 15). In other words, men and women, through being involved in different practices through the experience of differently-sexed bodies, will inevitably, involuntarily, and unconsciously develop separate 'natures' that are reflected in separate ways of thinking and knowing.

While it may be intuitively appealing to claim a commonality of experience based 'on the lived experience of the body', the concept is problematic and has been attacked by women of colour and women living under the poverty line for conflating their problems with those of white, middle-class, educated Americans:

> Paradoxically, in feminist theory it is a refusal to take differences among women seriously that lies at the heart of feminism's implicit politics of domination. The paradox dissolves when we consider that both the assertion of difference and the denial of difference can operate on behalf of domination. The assertion of differences among women can operate oppressively if one marks the differences and then suggests that one of the groups so differentiated is more important or more human or in some sense better than the others. But on the other hand, to stress the unity of women is no guarantee against hierarchical ranking, if what one says is true or characteristic of women as a class is only true or characteristic of some women: for then women who cannot be so characterized are in effect not counted as women. (Spelman 1988, 12)

Indeed, it is difficult to posit the 'lived experience' commonalities of, say, female

university professors in urban North America, female agricultural labourers in Pakistan, and female sex-workers in the Philippines. Spelman suggests that it may be easier to generalize commonalities between men and women of the same class and race than between women of different classes and races (Spelman 1988). If the case being made is that women and men live in completely different environments, surely the commonalities between female and male university professors in urban North America outweigh the commonalities between female university professors and female agricultural labourers in Pakistan.

It is not difficult to accept that men and women have disparate experiences based on their corporeality and their respective places in the existing social order. However, the issue of *significance* discussed in Chapter 2 must be addressed. Whether the empirical differences in data acquired through living in a female body are significantly different enough than the empirical differences in data acquired through living in a male body to produce two distinct male and female natures is open to question. How significant must a band of data be before it produces a 'woman's nature' that is fixed, universal, and cognitively intractable? Given what has been said about the fixed, universal, intractability of natures in the preceding discussion (and Appendixes I, II, and III), an attempt to anchor a cultural feminist notion of categorical, essential, 'natural' sex differences in the lived experience of the body can, on the contrary, be interpreted as being much more closely aligned to the cognitive, negotiated theories of socialization that underlie the liberal feminist conceptualization of a negotiable feminine overlay that is amenable to rational reflexion, superimposed on one common vaguely-defined human nature.[8]

Similarly, the notion of "woman's voice" as proof of the existence of 'woman's nature' rests on thin ground, objectively. Gilligan, for example, states that she interviewed no men. Gilligan's is a particular viewpoint of a particular type of cultural

feminist theorist, for which there exists specious proof and much underlying ideology (as discussed in Chapter 5). Although "women's ways of knowing" and "woman's voice" may be politically expedient and *useful* concepts, their ideological origins and functions ought to be acknowledged.

Finally, the notion of the 'lived experience of the body' in fact undercuts the rational acceptibility of the distinct 'woman's nature' favoured by cultural feminists because, if women and men encounter two completely different environments throughout the life experience, there is probably only one underlying human nature, distorted 'against its nature' as it were by external influences. This is the liberal feminist view and is summarized by Richards as follows:

> From the epistemological point of view, the nature of anything is an abstraction; something which can never be seen directly, but can be inferred, if enough care is taken, by allowing for the influence of the environment... If, therefore, two things appear different, they may not be different in nature at all: they may simply be in different environments (Richards 1980, 54).

One common method of deriving an entity's nature, earlier mentioned, is the subtraction of all differences including gender differences, leaving behind a common core nature that is gender-neutral. It is this common core 'disembodied' nature that underlies liberal feminist theory (the so-called 'abstract individual' that is discussed in Chapter 6). That this paradigm is also ideologically-influenced ought to be clear from the foregoing discussion, which is supported by Wilson as follows:

> Such a ['unisex' ideology], the roots of which may be largely unconscious, demonstrates a fear of difference in itself which, cannot, I think, be due solely to the fear that differences may provide grounds for oppression. It has perhaps something to do with the tacit idea that, in default of any acceptable hierarchy or agreed authority which would differentiate roles and powers on rational grounds, the only safety lies in homogeneity. (Wilson 1993, 239)

In other words, Wilson notes that once the classical concept of the teleological universe in which every entity has its own proper function that works rationally to further

an ordered design came to be seen as oppressive, once it was recognized that 'agreed authority' could act in its own self-interest, and once the 'acceptable hierarchy' became unacceptable, the only choice lay in a completely level playing field, upon which all natures could be considered to be homogeneous. That this notion is ideological, rather than 'factual', rests on my preceding argument.[9]

According to Bleier, there is no universal 'woman's nature' that woman is moulded into conformity with or that is her innate legacy of womanliness:

> It is because *woman's nature* has been defined biologically to *be* a mother and wife that the rest of the social construct of woman "naturally" follows...The category *woman*, like that of *man*, is a cultural category, not eternal (Wittig 1980) ...Dominant cultures create confusion about what is *given* and what is *consequence*...Woman's nature is seen to be the *given*; her roles and functions are the results. In fact the situation is quite the reverse...In short, the roles or functions are actually the *given*; women's *natures*, the social consequences. The *natural woman* is a cultural invention that insures the loyalty and bondage of women to the roles and functions the patriarchal social order has assigned to her. (Bleier 1984, 73)

Thus there is no innate 'woman's nature' that functions as a 'given' and underlies prevailing social arrangements. What is seen as 'woman's nature' is, rather, a cultural product. The sum total of her life experiences in a female body, that "is necessarily unique for each person," is brought to each situation and combined with social pressures to conform to femininity (Bleier 1984, 73). However, Bleier takes pains to point out that this is not an unconscious or automatic imprinting, internalizing, or conditioning but a cognitive process mediated by each woman's unique history. Rejecting the notion of 'woman's nature', she describes the processes through which many women will demonstrate feminine behaviour because of social processes such as physical intimidation, legal enforcement of conformity, and ideology. Further, she emphasizes, "Many women, of course, do not conform, often at great cost to their energies, creativity, productivity, sanity, or health" (Bleier 1984, 73), and,

Every person does not, after all, conform to the stereotypical expectations that the dominant culture holds for the social category of which she is a member. Our intelligence and ingenuity ensure that neither genes nor culture can necessarily produce the lumbering robots that Sociobiologists would have us believe we are. (Bleier 1984, 75)

If femininity is a social invention, depending on the lived experience of the body, it still does not follow that becoming a woman in this sense is inevitable: "If being a woman is something one can become, then it also is something one can fail to become" (Spelman 1988, 66). Thus, de Beauvoir and Wollstonecraft can speak, in positive terms, of the masculine woman and Friedan, in *The Feminine Mystique*, of the woman that is emancipated from the demands and oppressions of femininity. This echoes earlier discussion about the active, negotiable, cognitive aspects of the socialization process as it is now understood.

The myth of woman...projects into the realm of Platonic ideas a reality that is directly experienced or is conceptualized on a basis of experience; in place of fact, value, significance, knowledge, empirical law, it substitutes a transcendental Idea, timeless, unchangeable, necessary...If the definition provided for this concept is contradicted by the behavior of flesh-and-blood women, it is the latter who are wrong: we are told not that Femininity is a false entity, but that the women concerned are not feminine. (de Beauvoir 1989, 253)

Martin suggests that, "Sex and gender are fundamental aspects of our personal experience..." (Martin 1985, 195). Again, this seemingly factual statement bears closer scrutiny. There is the possibility in socialization theory, and less-commonly in theories of the self, that gender is a fundamental and perhaps necessary organizing category for young children (for example, Kohlberg 1969, 431-432). However, the fundamentality of gender for one's personal experience throughout the lifespan is not a quality that it is possible to quantify. Indubitably, gender is an important part of our personal experience, but it shares this importance with a myriad of other "fundamental aspects".

Formation of the self-concept is a topic of interest for cognitive psychologists but

as of this present time we do not know how the self is formed, nor what components are of "fundamental" importance. The importance of gender may seem to diminish as the individual ages and this may be an argument for the early relevance of gender as a developmental concept. Further, mature individuals may be seen to form a "master status" or primary identity that is not necessarily built around gender (Mackie 1983, 37), for example, "intellectual", "career woman", "socialite" (Hammond 1987, 141), even "gender outlaw". In contrast to cultural feminist theories of gender socialization, gender is not passively accepted. Rather individuals seem to attempt to come to some understanding of what the gender roles expect of them (Hewitt 1976, 74) and can form their identities around the rejection of, as well as internalization of, prevailing cultural norms. That there are conflicting demands of women today ought to be obvious, given that this thesis can address two such opposing theories about women as the cultural and the liberal. In short, cultural feminism accepts and gives preeminant value to the centrality and inevitability of fixed, intransigent gender roles and attributes that is not merited by what little is known about the self:

> The awareness of change and inconsistency within individuals as well as between them has rendered traditional theories of socialization based on assumptions of internalization and compliance obviously inadequate... Recognition of how people do not become what they are expected to be has produced growing criticism of functionalist ideas embedded in the concepts of "sex role" and "socialization." (Hess and Ferree 1987, 14)

Allen draws attention to the way in which the adoption of the term 'gender' buys into the notions of conditioning and conformity implicit in a Durkheimian understanding of socialization:

> The use of 'gender' to refer only to the psycho-social aspects of a woman's or a man's identity tends to posit gender as something outside the self, or distant from the self, which is objectively determined and then imposed on the self... Such an approach may not be able to provide the basis for an adequate philosophical methodology which involves more of a subjective thinking about various aspects

of the human situation, and which demands a certain personal involvement in the issue itself. (Allen 1993, 15)

'The self' is a complex entity, so much so that some would prefer to call it a process (Kagan 1989), some a cluster of multiple selves and counter-selves, and some a self with multiple aspects "in ambivalent and uneasy relation to each other, since they may involve contradictory values and meanings (Ferguson 1993). To treat the self simplistically, as though the current state of knowledge were more than speculative and as though the construction of the self were merely a matter of internalization of imposed sex roles and differences, is not to give one's readers the respect they deserve.

The liberal feminist position does not deny the importance of the lived experience of the body but denies that by living her life in a female body a common female nature manifested through a fixed set of traits, behaviours, and cognitions will inevitably be absorbed. To call the set of characteristics that tend to be acquired by women in our society their *nature* invokes the notion that this set of characteristics is rigidly and non-cognitively conformed to or absorbed; further, it cannot or should not be changed without emperilling that which is characteristic of and distinctive about women. Rather,

> Each person brings to a particular behavioral response or personality characteristic her unique and continually changing set of past and present circumstances, experiences, motivations, and emotions as well as anatomical and physiological qualities. In short, there is no universal or individual *innate* nature or behavior that exists beneath or outside of the cultural context of each person's life and history. (Bleier 1984, 71)

The concept of the lived experience of the body as productive of a distinct female psychology, trait set, and range of behaviours is the reification of woman *qua* woman, of women's essential or 'perfect' 'nature', of *man's* definition of woman. That is why it is a dangerous concept for cultural feminists to embrace. As discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, particularly with respect to the elements of the definition of 'woman's nature' suggested

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in Chapter 4, the lived experience of the body seems to have little substantial basis in 'fact' or certainty.

The Mind/Body Problem: Metaphysical Dualism

At this point, I return to the perceived fusion between woman and the body, introduced above. To the liberal feminist, as to Plato, "A difference in bodily features is not necessarily a sign of a difference in nature; what is crucial is whether two people have the same mind or soul: 'A man and a woman who have a physician's mind have the same nature'" (Spelman 1988, 21).

The false dichotomization of the mind and body is attributed to the modern liberal individualist *zeitgeist*. Descartes made this distinction,[10] "Thus this self, that is to say the soul, by which I am what I am, is entirely distinct from the body" (Descartes 1971, 32), but Plato had long before emphasized the sexless nature of the soul. While it is problematic to divorce one from the other, the centrality of body to the formation of the personality or the 'self' is moot. There are those who consider that the 'self' itself is a modern concept invented by Hume, according to whom it was "the permanent spiritual substance which is the unifying foundation of changing impressions" (Krąpiec 1983, 73) or Kant, who understood it as the human faculty that united "sensory cognition" and "rational cognition" by means of judgement (Krąpiec 1983, 73). As discussed in reference to an entity's nature, the concept of one universal human nature, which is defined primarily in terms of rationality from the liberal viewpoint, picks up on significant and/or important aspects of an entity. This is not to say that other aspects do not exist but to give them less importance in terms of the frame of reference of the definer. Further, as previously discussed, the centrality of the body to identity-formation remains, as of this writing, an open question.

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Thus it becomes interesting to speculate why human nature or, more specifically, man's nature came to be defined in terms of the pre-eminence of mind and the transcendence of the body. According to Frazer and Lacey, "Feminists have frequently argued that the desire to transcend bodily being is (in western culture) a peculiarly masculine desire" (Frazer and Lacey 1993, 53).[11]

First, given the vast influence of religion on Western philosophy, the notion that the soul survives death must have been influential. Whether or not that soul was to be reunited with the body upon the sounding of the last trump, the intimate aquaintance our ancestors had with the corporeal facts of death must have provided an immensely puissant antithesis between soul and body. Identification of the self with the body ultimately led nowhere but the grave.

Second, it is not difficult to understand how, particularly in the centuries before medicine reached its current state, the body came to be seen as instrumental in serving first the demands of human life for sustenance and, subsequently, the will of the individual. In other words, hunting, foraging, and subsistence farming were labour-intensive occupations that required a strong body. Blindness or lameness, as Dickens and other earlier writers illustrated, were tragic occurrences. As for the instrumental uses of the body, Christie Brown, Ireland's poet laureate, documented in his autobiography the incredible frustrations his physical handicap caused him. Fashioned, to some extent, by these bodily empediments, his life was nonetheless characterized by the utter transcendence of his mind over his body and the superhuman refusal of his will to live his life as a embodied vegetable. The richness and rewards of the life of the mind, and the triumph over the body similarly symbolize the lives of Helen Keller and Steven Hawking. Certainly the woman who has carried a child inside her for nine months and nurtured it at her breast is familiar with the instrumental use of the body as 'natural'. On a more

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dispiriting note, if woman was inextricable from her body, there would be no conflict over abortion—for abortion could be construed as the consummate triumph of reason over the body, an impossiblity unless the mind and body were discrete, and often warring, entities.

In our body, we are limited. The fact of physical death, even if nothing else, limits us. Childbirth puts limits on women that men do not have (McMillan 1982). However, the *extent* to which women are limited by childbirth varies from woman to woman. Obviously, women who can afford a nanny will not be as limited as working class women who cannot even afford contraceptives. Marx, whose viewpoint in many ways is congenial to the cultural feminist, realizes the limitations of the body and their consequences:

> Man is directly a natural being. As a natural being and as a living natural being he is on the one hand equipped with natural powers, with vital powers, he is an active natural being... On the other hand, as a natural, corporeal, sensuous, objective being he is a suffering, conditioned and limited being, like animals and plants... man is a corporeal, living, real, sensuous, objective being with natural powers... To be sensuous is to suffer (Marx in McMillan 1982, 154)

There was an attempt, early in the history of educational psychology, to correlate intelligence with high levels of sensory response and discrimination, thus linking body and mind:

> The only information that reaches us concerning outward events appears to pass through the avenue of our senses; and the more perceptive the senses are of difference, the larger is the field upon which our judgment and intelligence can act. From *Human Faculty (1883)* by Galton (Jensen in Glover and Ronning 1978, 68)

Needless to say, this path proved a dead end—along with attempts to link brain size, cranial bumps, and facial features with intelligence. Still, the experiment demonstrates that so-called male science in the modern empirical tradition did not view the mind and body as completely unrelated.

An additional sense in which mind and body may be separated concerns 'woman's erotic body' and whether female eroticism makes women radically different from men. The renewed emphasis on sexuality and female bodily functions (Sommers 1994, 103-104) found in cultural feminist theory is another facet of the 'lived experience of the body' theory combined with the notion that equates female sexuality with women's 'inner essence' or 'body electric':

> A source of individuality and identity' [that] completely submerges any notions of sexuality as a type of communication, understanding or relationship...(92) [The] essentially autonomous, gentle and pure sexuality of women when uncorrupted by heterosexual imperatives... (Segal 1987, !29)

Biologically, if nowhere else, it is unquestioned that woman is (usually) man's primary sexual focus. That man awards a central place to physical sexual attractiveness in his definition of 'woman's nature' ought not to surprise anyone. Liberal feminists have fought to have *other* aspects of women recognized, so that they are at liberty to become other than Rousseau's doll-like Sophie or Norman Mailer's "deep-chested, full-breasted, narrow-hipped, dancer-legged" seductresses (Greer 1971, 192). For cultural feminism to claim a central place for women's sexuality and their exclusively female bodily functions may seem to be dangerously close to the stereotype foisted upon women by men (Denfeld 1995, 144-145). For example, "When a woman has scholarly inclinations there is usually something wrong with her sexually" (Nietzsche 1976, 279). Riley protests, "It's not possible to live twenty-four hours a day soaked in the immediate awareness of one's sex" (Riley 1988, 96).

Sexually, the ideal object of desire (the perfect woman in this case) is most commonly different from oneself, even opposite. Sexual ideals play into the notion of 'woman's distinct nature' as presented in this thesis:

> The soul of a perfect woman and a perfect man ought to be no more alike than their faces. All our vain imitations of your sex are absurd; they expose us to the

ridicule of sensible men, and discourage the tender passion we were made to inspire. (Rousseau, *La Nouvelle Heloise*, in Riley 1988, 36)

If reproduction is a biological imperative and heterosexual sexual behaviour is a drive, sexuality is unquestionably a part of human nature. Because of the structure of the female body, women no doubt experience sexuality, coitus, and reproductive functions in a different way than do men. However, the *expression* of that difference is culturally determined (for example, women may be no less sexually aggressive than men but may express it differently). Furthermore, sexuality is commonly a private and complex part of life, and is replete with ambiguities. Consequently, it is difficult to categorize, even to study, *a* particular unconflicted female sexuality—still less the pure, autonomous, gentle notion of female sexuality that Segal attributes to cultural feminism. Further, the equation of women's immanence in the lived experience of the body and the opposition of the notion of women's corporeal transcendence is a matter of interpretation that, in feminist literature, has been remarkably one sided. I have not encountered the notion that women have epistemological privilege *vis-à-vis* the separation of mind from body or the transcendence of mind over body, which could be constructed on the basis that marital rape can be seen to have characterized sexual relations historically. In evidence, the notion that concensual sex in marriage ought to render marital rape a crime punishable by law is a remarkably recent one. As long as relations of dominance (power relationships) are implicit in sexual relations, women will have first-hand experience of the separation of mind and body, predicated on the notion oft-encountered in fiction that ownership of the body does not necessate ownership of the mind.

As suggested earlier in this thesis, the *significance* of sexuality for woman is also extremely important in any consideration of 'woman's true nature'. From a modern liberal feminist perspective, the specificities of women's sexual and reproductive

considerations can be treated as peripheral to their nature as full citizens and equal participants in one universal human nature. Indeed, this is what many liberal feminists seem to want. Consequently it is illegal to ask, in a job interview, if a woman plans on having children and what her sexual orientation is. Plato has shown us that the capacity to do a job is what ought to be significant, in a political context.

Also, if women's souls are ungendered and their true nature is equal to that of man, the liberal feminist position that both sexes have feminine and masculine aspects and can respond sexually in feminine and masculine ways, becomes viable. Androgyny, or the freedom to express both the stereotypical 'masculine' and 'feminine' traits and behaviours is the aim of many liberal feminists; the genderless society, in which no social differentiation of the sexes is *assumed* is another (Okin 1989 170-176). However, cultural feminists reject androgyny as an "adequate moral ideal" and a "totally inappropriate" political objective because "as Adrienne Rich puts it, androgyny 'fails in the naming of difference'... obscures the necessity of struggle and is simply a form of 'cheap grace'" that denies "the need for separatism and a polarization of the sexes" (Jagger 1983, 88). That the "need for separatism and a polarization of the sexes" are accepted as given testifies to the ideological power of the cultural feminist ideal.

Riley has some interesting insights on the intimate connection between woman, sexuality, and nature:

> In the broad traditions of Christian theology, even though woman's being may be dangerously close to the body, carnality is not restricted to the feminine, and the soul is relatively unscathed by its sex. But a newer and relatively secularised understanding of that person—in particular the woman, who became an ambulant Nature—represents a differently constructed ensemble altogether (Riley 1988, 18).

According to Riley, this historical change represented "the slow loss of the sexually democratic soul" (Riley 1988, 18). At first a vague concept, with Plato the soul

came to be seen as "unstable and full of internal conflicts" between "appetites and reason" (Riley 1988, 20). Yet these oppositions did not carry over to gender and Plato did not differentiate between the souls of men and women. On the other hand, Aristotle seems to carry over his emphasis on the hierarchy of souls from slaves to women, thus implying the inferiority of female souls while avoiding overt and explicit categorization. As long as religion clung to vestiges of the Platonic equality of soul, women had a claim to equality.

Riley takes issue with what she sees to be, "The history of an increasing sexualisation, in which female persons become held to be virtually saturated with their sex which then invades their rational and spiritual faculties" (Riley 1988, 8) and reminds her reader that women, "Are seldom 'a woman' through-and-through... [Rather, femaleness is] a state which fluctuates for the individual" (Riley 1988, 6). By taking this stance, she provides a lone voice against the cultural feminist emphasis on the body, which are epitomized by the writings of Adrienne Rich on motherhood.

It is obvious that man has never been defined as body, pure and simple. In the struggle to transcend the body, religions and sciences have pushed humanity in the direction of Cartesian dualism. Why then, are women, or ought women to be, more connected to the body? As discussed previously, in the classical hierarchy of activities, women's work was classified below that of the more rational man; indeed, it was the same work as performed by slaves. Further, the reproductive consequences of her sexuality bound her more firmly to the exigencies of nature through menstruation, childbirth and breast feeding. To McMillan, nature *is* the body—that set of "inescapable human realities," "the immutable facts of birth and sex that must be taken into account" by society and by individuals (McMillan 1982, 81).

Following Rousseau, Riley maintains, "The associations of 'women' with the

natural were magnified to a point of mutual implication" (Riley 1988, 36). So closely was woman connected with corporeality in Rousseau's vision, that she became "infused [with] the state of being a woman... [such that] no neutral enclave of the person remained unfilled and unoccupied by femininity" (Riley 1988, 36). This exemplifies what Riley terms the increasing sexualization of the person during the Enlightenment. Thus, Rousseau was able to write, "The male is only a male now and again, the female is always a female, or at least all her youth; everything reminds her of her sex" (Rousseau 1974, 324). However, as stated earlier in this thesis, it remains uncertain to what extent women's corporeality permeates their lives. Empirically, I must side with Riley (1988) who pleads the impossibility of being 'a woman' one hundred percent of the time.

* * * * *

I have mentioned just a few of the serious implications of the communitarian goals of cultural feminism and the alleged death of liberal feminism. The modern notion of objectivity, or, "the disinterested and detached spectator" is the final item in the list of criticisms with which Chapter 6 began. This criticism is taken up in the concluding chapter of this thesis, which presents the difficulties in evaluating competing paradigms. Chapter 4 began with a definition of 'woman's nature' and attempted to judge whether 'woman's nature' is a realistic and worthwhile notion for women. Regardless of its verisimilitude, the concept 'woman's nature' has been a *useful* one for cultural feminism. I believe it is time, however, to recognize that liberal and cultural feminisms are two completely separate feminisms with separate—even conflicting—aims and dogma, each of which must ultimately rest on faith.

ENDNOTES

1. Hence, in the current abortion debate, it becomes a logical possibility for the state to force a woman to become a mother against her own nature as an autonomous individual with the right to self-determination.

2. For space considerations, I have removed a chapter from this thesis that addresses the social constructivist viewpoint, as addressed by Durkheim in its infancy. I believe that classical, communitarian ideals infiltrated contemporary feminism through the branch of 'sociological feminism' that attained wide-spread social approval in early 20th century England.

3. Thus the criminal is excused from her or his crime because social forces (poverty, coming from a "broken home", etc.) made it inevitable that she rob the convenience store and shoot the clerk. A woman can claim that she never became a doctor because she was born in the 1950s. A mother can commit infanticide without being accused of murder.

4. As a single parent, I have first-hand experience of the potential for abuse when the 'moral majority' decides to express its disapprobation of 'alternative' lifestyles. Contemporary liberalism sanctions state intervention in the so-called 'private sphere' in extreme cases. However, it is rightfully reluctant to interfere in family matters. The rigorous interventionist strategies of the nineteen-fifties and earlier sanctioned such government initiatives as forced schooling of young aboriginal Canadians in locations remote from their families. There have been enough 'movies of the week' to document the past mistakes of child welfare workers who removed children from their parents for unconventional, yet benign, childraising methods. In wishing to return to a society in which those who are assured of their own morality "should not hesitate to speak up and express [their] moral concerns to others when it comes to issues we care about deeply and share with one another" (*Communitarian Manifesto*) communitarians may wish to return to the moral tyranny of the masses that characterized the McCarthy era.

5. Durkheim would have agreed: his vision of the collective consciousness is an entity unto itself, surviving and evolving from generation to generation. Burke's expression of the need for conformity, even against the wishes of individuals, that this perspective demands ("Society requires (that) the inclinations of men should frequently be thwarted, their will controlled, and their passions brought into subjection" [in Lukes 1973, 4]) is echoed by Durkheim. For example, "Our whole nature has a need to be constrained, bounded, restricted" (Durkheim, *Moral Education*, 113).

6. The notion that there is a physical basis for rationality is an interesting one, that Jagger ought not to gloss over in this way. Jensen, for example, has cited some controversial research in this area, that most liberal individualists reject as racist (Glover and Ronning 1978, 68).

7. In a later (1989) article entitled *Love and Knowledge*, Jagger herself seems to backtrack or, at least, qualify her stance on the social constitution of emotions and cognitions: "Like everything else that is human, emotions *in part* are socially constructed" (my italics, Jagger and Bordo [eds.] 1989, 159) and "...the hegemony that our society exercises over people's emotional constitution is not total" (*op. cit.*, 160). This moderate viewpoint mirrors more exactly a liberal interpretation of the construction of the self.

8. Note also, that if it were to prove correct that gender is a developmentally-linked aspect of self-definition (the centrality of which diminishes as the subject ages), it may undercut Allen's theory because it would seem that the *more* data acquired through the lived experience of the female body, the *less* impact these data have on the exercise of rationality.

9. Note also, that an ideological nature is as useful as, or more useful than (for it may be formed to particular uses), an alleged 'real' nature.

10. Though Descartes also said, "Man *as a compound of body and mind* cannot but be sometimes deceived by his own nature" [my italics] (Descartes 1971, 123).

11. Given space considerations, I regret that it is impossible to give further consideration to the countervailing notion that not encountered the notion that women have epistemological privilege *vis-à-vis* the separation of mind from body or the transcendence of mind over body, which could be constructed on the basis that marital rape characterized female sexuality in, perhaps, the majority of marriages before divorce became a viable alternative for women. This is an area I intend to explore in the future.

CHAPTER 8: COMPETING PARADIGMS

Having established that cultural feminism is essentialist because it builds on a classical concept of 'woman's nature' and having examined the cultural feminist, communitarian criticisms of liberal feminism, this concluding chapter considers some of the complexities implicit in feminism as a result of its theorists drawing upon two *weltanschauungen* that are incommensurate. The chapter concludes with a summary of the correspondences between cultural feminism and the classical world view oriented toward separate natures.

In conclusion, there are fundamentally two ways to think about women: either they share a different nature than do men, or they do not.[1] The latter is not to say that men and women are identical but that they are *ontologically* the same and without *significant* difference. To claim that women share a different 'nature' than that shared by men is to invoke a chain of reasoning that I have suggested may have undesirable consequences for women. Science cannot answer whether a 'woman's nature' *really* exists because it does not have the tools to do so. Judgements of significance and ontological sameness are not amenable to scientific investigation, as presented in previous chapters. Be that as it may, the preceding discussion attempts to demonstrate that this conceptual dichotomy develops from another idea that is metatheoretically prior to a consideration of natures: either society is more important than the individual (communitarianism), or the individual is more important than society (individualism).

As suggested in Chapters 2 and 3, there are two expansive and mutually exclusive ideological paradigms that Western civilization has devised or evolved to understand this

conundrum that is the human condition, particularly as it finds expression through the search for a viable way for individuals to live together. In this thesis, these ideologies are designated the classical and the modern perspectives. Like all ideologies, they are largely left unstated but contribute to the sometimes murky underpinnings of abstract philosophy and pragmatic social life. The following section addresses some of the complexities and difficulties implicit in a study of paradigms.

"The Best Available Theory of Women's Liberation"

In what is most widely accepted to be the definitive explication, Alison Jagger undertook a critical analysis of feminist theories in search of what she terms "the best available theory of women's liberation" (Jagger 1983, 355). She rejected liberal feminism for reasons presented in Chapter 6. She compared her choice of socialist feminism as, "The most adequate of the feminist theories formulated to date" to the choice a "rational consumer" makes between rival brands (Jagger 1983, 354). Thus, a generation of women, introduced to feminist philosophy and politics by Jagger, may have accepted that it is intellectually lucid to position competing paradigms on a value-neutral scale and conclude, with epistemological integrity, that one paradigm represents "the best available theory of women's liberation."[2]

Any evaluation of what Jagger terms "rival" paradigms that purports to be objective is highly suspect for the following reasons: first, because Jagger and other cultural feminists who adopt a socialist epistemology reject the liberal notion of disinterested, objective knowledge, it is curious that they themselves remain able to discern "the best" theory. According to what Jagger terms the "structuralist Marxist" theory of truth:

> The main criterion of theoretical adequacy is the comprehensiveness and lack of contradictions within a particular system of thought...Practical or interventionist Marxism proposes a pragmatic criterion of truth. It suggests that the ultimate crite-

rion of theoretical adequacy is its usefulness in making a revolution. (Jagger 1983, 362).

Yet, as presented in Appendix III, all theories of human nature involve "closed systems" (Stevenson 1987, 15) that are self-referential. Self-referential systems can seamlessly answer questions within their own particular frame of reference. Not surprisingly, "lack of contradictions within a particular system of thought" is a criterion that *any* comprehensive theory of human nature, whether it be existentialist, Marxist, Judeo-Christian, or liberal, can fulfil. As a "main criterion of theoretical adequacy," it is inadequate. Further, "theoretical adequacy" is not truth and cannot be passed off as such.[3]

From another tack, Jagger asserts that only the proletariat will be able to approach any 'true' or valid knowledge (Jagger 1983, 363): "Because it reflects the interests and values of the working class, which are thought to be those of the totality of humankind, Marxist theory provides the most-unbiased and objective available representation of social reality" (Jagger 1983, 363). The proletariat has shown itself to be but marginally concerned with issues such as feminist theory, hence is rather unlikely to point the way to true or valid knowledge in this respect. That Jagger's self-identification with Marxist theory fails to support her alignment, as a Director of Women's Studies at the University of Colorado (Sommers 1994, 52), with the proletariat need not concern us here. However, her theoretical stance that individual rationality cannot be the judge of 'goods' such as truth, rights, freedom, and so on calls into question the purity of her own motives in advocating her own (socialist) version of cultural feminism as "the best available theory of women's liberation." Sommers draws attention to intimate connection between liberal feminism and autonomous rationality expressed as the authority of individual judgement (Sommers 1994, 258). She notes that Jagger herself concedes that a collectivist perspective neutralizes or renders impotent the authority of individual judgement: "Central to the concept of autonomy is the idea of self-definition, a reliance on the authority of individual judgement. If individual

desires and interests are socially constituted, however, the ultimate authority of individual judgment comes into question" (Jagger 1983, 44).

Consequently, individual women's judgement that they are being oppressed is problematic. In the absence of individual judgement, who is to be the decision-maker? To Durkheim, the moral arbiter is society itself. To Etzioni, morals arise from shared "values of the heart" that are endorsed and actively affirmed by the community (1993, 25). Those who may not share such values invite "explicit" community sanctions (1993, 261). Cultural feminism does not follow this train of thought to its logical conclusion. If individuals cannot be relied upon to determine 'the good' for themselves, one viable alternative that immediately suggests itself in these post-holocaust times is for a demagogue to determine it for them. This seems to be the message that Jagger delivers to cultural feminists:

> [Socialist feminism must recognize] the ways in which certain historical circumstances allow *specific groups of women* [my italics] to transcend at least partially the perceptions and theoretical constructs of male dominance and in which this feminist "raised consciousness" can inspire and guide women in a struggle for social change. (Jagger 1983, 150)

Thus, just as proletarian interests and values are held to be more authoritative, more revelatory of the human *essence*, Jagger believes that those cultural feminist demagogues who may be epistemologically privileged as uniquely capable of seeing truth through their own particular sensitivity to women's authentic abilities "must" be recognized as having particularly valid leadership abilities *vis-à-vis* the masses of women colonized by "the perceptions and theoretical constructs of male dominance." This plays into the socialist belief that the oppressed may be epistemologically privileged, thus more able to see clearly what those enmeshed in the hegemony cannot: "Only those who have been the victims of domination and subordination can have the moral vision to create an ethics that transcends such an abuse" (Tong 1993, 228); also Frazer and Lacey (1993, 127-128); Sommers (from a critical perspective; 1994, 74-75). There is no 'proof' that this is so, but it accounts for the

cultural feminist belief that women are in a particularly privileged position to critique society and social theory. From the discussion in Chapters 2 and 3, it should be clear that this stance is a direct derivation of natural rights theory whereby a wise elite is able to prescribe, with justice, "what is by nature good for the other" (Strauss 1953, 147). Natural rights theories that privilege the community suggest that some individuals may not be capable of knowing what is best for them. This is the very root of the patriarchy, and conflicts with the liberal-individualist notion that "Neither one person, nor any number of persons, is warranted in saying to another human creature of ripe years that he shall not do with his life for his own benefit what he chooses to do with it" (Mill 1985, 142).

Paradigms

It seems germane, then, to take a closer look at ideological paradigms (patterns) with the aim of discovering what makes it particularly difficult to evaluate them.

Paradigms are *internally consistent* ways of ordering the experience of reality, by definition. They answer questions within a particular frame of reference that must be accepted on faith. For example, within the behaviourist paradigm it is axiomatic that individuals act because of prior association to avoid pain and maximize pleasure, despite evidence of altruistic behaviour. Within a religious paradigm it is axiomatic that good behaviour will ultimately be rewarded. Within the Marxist paradigm it is axiomatic that social classes arise out of the relations of production. Paradigms only 'work' if their basic (usually unproveable) premises are accepted.

Tarnas expresses some of these same concerns in the following passage, although the paradigms he, like Kuhn, addresses are scientific ones:

> We can now also suggest a resolution to that fundamental problem left by Kuhn—the problem of explaining why in the history of science one paradigm is chosen over another if paradigms are ultimately incommensurable, if they cannot every be rigorously compared. As Kuhn has pointed out, each paradigm tends to create its own

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data and its own way of interpreting those data in a manner that is so comprehensive and self-validating that scientists operating within different paradigms seem to exist in altogether different worlds. Although to a given community of scientific interpreters one paradigm seems to be superior to another, there is no way of justifying that superiority if each paradigm governs and saturates its own data base. (Tarnas 1991, 439)

The answer Kuhn suggests is that, given the impossibility of a "neutral algorithm," it is "the community of specialists rather than its individual members that makes the effective decision" (Kuhn 1970, 200) between incommensurate paradigms. In a feminist context then, the emergence of a dominant paradigm has much to do with the community of feminist scholars through an unspecified mechanism, a list of which might include power politics, consensus, the oppressive use of force, natural evolution, or *gestalt*. Tarnas elaborates along Durkheimian lines that the dominant paradigm emerges because, "It is recognized as superior, as true and valid, precisely when [it] resonates with the current archetypal state of the evolving collective psyche." This line of thought bears further investigation from the feminist and philosophical viewpoints but lies outside the scope of this thesis.

Ultimately, Jagger seems partially correct: there may be no objective or scientific criteria by which to evaluate paradigms. However, to exempt her own judgement from this understanding insinuates duplicity. Paradigms cannot be easily evaluated by the usual methods scholars use to evaluate other things, such as theories. They are not testable hypotheses but "closed systems." Macintyre suggests that the notion that paradigms cannot be evaluated is a characteristically modern one:

> What I earlier picked out as the distinctively modern standpoint was of course that which envisages moral debate in terms of a confrontation between incompatible and incommensurable moral premises and moral commitment as the expression of a criterionless choice between such premises, a type of choice for which no rational justification can be given. (MacIntyre 1981, 38)

"Incommensurable moral premises," in this present context, may characterize the choice between liberal and cultural feminism. However, I disagree that such a choice is

criterionless and at a remove from rationality. A valid choice between paradigms, or moral premises in MacIntyre's terms, may be made if their congruence with one's own aims for women is evaluated. Individual judgement can weigh paradigms according to whether they accord with an individual's experience, have goals that the individual views as important, and support the values that are aligned with those held by the individual.[4] However, in order to make a rational judgement, the conceptual framework on which opposing feminist paradigms rest must unequivocally be made explicit, along with the implications of that framework for women. It may be appropriate to note at this point that an authentic choice, from the existentialist perspective, is intensely personal and seldom clear-cut in a rational sense.

Paradigms, by analogy, hold up a mirror that reflects a segment of our world unidimentionally and from one specific vantage point. Almost by definition, a paradigm must be flawed—coherent and beautiful in its harmoniousness in terms of its own frame of reference, it shatters when viewed from another angle. To extend the analogy, a paradigm is like a kaleidoscopic mirror.[5] The observed world, viewed through the lens of paradigm, appears fragmented yet patterned rather than chaotic. If the lens is rotated (to the Marxist, the liberal, or the existential position, perhaps), the fragments of the *same* observed world appear to reorganize themselves into quite a different pattern.[6]

To reject one of the two paradigms, classical and modern, presented in this thesis as irrelevant to or 'bad for' feminism is not a matter of science and objectivity, though it may be a matter of logic and of reason. Both paradigms describe the 'objective' or 'real' world as it is; and neither does. The goals of the classical paradigm are communitarian and those of the modern paradigm are individualist. If one paradigm is accepted, the other must be rejected.[7] But both are true and neither is real. It seems as though sometimes philosophers and feminist theorists lose sight of this. Yet it is possible that there are some questions (the mind/body problem and the problem of consciousness are two problems discussed in this thesis that are given as examples of unsolvable problems by Krellenstein) that cannot be

answered definitively because "Our own consciousness is thus in some sense trapped within itself: it cannot look inward well enough to completely explain its own internal mechanics" (Krellenstein 1995).

Perhaps the key lies in admitting that, for feminism, it is sometimes politically expedient to adopt the stance that women have the same nature as men and sometimes to claim that women have a separate nature. As Riley suggests, "Now we will be 'women' —but now we will be persons, not these 'women'" (Riley 1988, 113). This middle ground is ultimately unsatisfactory. I am guided in my own choice of liberal feminism by the preeminence it places on the individual and by its acknowledgement that individuals can be harmed by others, both individual and collective, and by being slotted into a particular social role because of the category to which they are seen to belong. 'Society', which after all is but the reification of an abstract notion, does not need protection in the way that real individuals do. As discussed in Chapter 3, the conventional rights theories embedded in the modern viewpoint support the notion that the individual needs protection from others. Liberal feminism arose out of the notion that fairness to individuals matters more than social harmony, cosmic order, natural laws, and community responsibilities. This notion did not spring fully-grown in the abstract from the head of Zeus (or from the 'lived experience' of women), but arose through the painful, pragmatic pre-Enlightenment experience of the real oppression lived by those *not* at MacIntyre's apex of "the Great Chain of Being."

The justification of oppression is grounded in difference. As discussed in Chapter 3, distributive justice permits unequal treatment of unequals. The potential for oppression exists whether that oppression is rendered through 'care' or 'might is right'. In Martin Luther King's terms, judging individual women as though they were categorically different from men, even if that difference is seen as, for example, moral superiority, means that they are no longer judged on an individual basis by "the content of their character." King could clearly see that the traits ascribed to black Americans corresponded only to an ideologically-

sustained stereotype of 'The Black Man'. To make assumptions about an individual on the basis of difference is pernicious, from a liberal feminist standpoint. Thus, "The hallmark of legal discourse, whose very symbol from ancient times has been the blindfold, is to deliberately disregard the particular traits that make one human being different from another" (Glendon 1991, 172-173). Glendon, from a communitarian standpoint, offers a critique of 'blind justice' but glosses over the dangers implicit in a stance that validates difference at the expense of that which we all hold in common. Cultural feminists conflate the ideologically-sustained stereotype with what is 'true about women', or, 'woman's true nature'. In the following example, Tong supports the "feminine" (what I call cultural feminist) approach to ethics by appealing to the stereotypes of masculinity and femininity:

> Even if some men actually value their communal relationships more than their personal rights, and even if some women actually value justice more than caring, Western culture does seem to associate traits like strength of will, ambition, courage, independence, assertiveness, hardiness, rationality, and emotional control with men, and traits like gentleness, modesty, humility, supportiveness, empathy, compassion, tenderness, nurturance, intuitiveness, sensitivity and unselfishness with women. (Tong 1993, 222)

This is similar to saying that, even if some Americans of colour actually value working rather than collecting unemployment insurance, and even if some whites would actually prefer to be on welfare rather than at work, Western culture does seem to associate traits like laziness and social irresponsibility with blacks and traits like industriousness and social responsibility with whites. The correct response, in this case, might be "so what"? That archaic stereotypical assumptions survive today is not news to anyone. But this sad fact ratifies nothing. It cannot provide a solid anchor for the notion that "men's and women's moral perspectives differ at least at the level of norms and symbols if not also at the level of empirical fact" (Tong 1993, 222).

Stereotypes anchor and sustain prejudice. According to Marcil-Lacoste, prejudice came to be seen as erroneousness, ignorance, superstition, or irrationality following Bacon

and Descartes. She examines Buffier's treatise on prejudice, written in 1704, in pursuit of the notion that prejudice is the inability or refusal to examine one's self and one's own values, and reminds the reader that prejudices were relegated by philosophy to the level of "croyances insuffisamment validées" (Marcil-Lacoste 1987, 125-126). The proof that 'woman's nature' is intimately bound up with stereotypical femininity is that both the stereotype, (which could be thought of as man's definition of woman) and 'woman's true nature' (which could be thought of as women's definition of 'woman'), contain the *identical* set of characteristics.

As Martin Luther King realized about black Americans, whether women have a separate nature or not it is morally indefensible to judge them and treat them differently on the basis of that assigned nature. Before the law and in the classroom, I believe it is morally wrong to assume certain things about an individual because she is a 'Woman'. I would not like such assumptions to be made about me. It is difficult to see what good these assumptions would do and earlier feminist writers have documented the bad they have done.

'Woman's Separate Nature'

In the previous chapters of this thesis, the history and uses of the concept of 'woman's essential nature' were addressed to demonstrate the following: cultural feminism represents woman as having a distinct nature, separate from that of man; all theories of nature are far from straightforward and are, in fact, ideology-based;one objective universally-accepted human nature does not describe scientifically-verifiable reality, but instead describes what is most important about human beings to whoever is using the concept; one objective universally-accepted 'woman's nature' does not describe scientifically-verifiable reality, if indeed such a description is a viable possibility, but instead describes what is most significant, useful, and important about women; the defining process itself poses power-based difficulties for women; the weak conclusions at which the scientific investigation of

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'woman's separate nature' arrives cannot possibly provide an iron-clad foundation for the objective ratification of the female nature; the cultural feminist explanation of sex-role socialization has been rejected as inaccurate but nonetheless the biological, identification, and social learning theories of sex differentiation have been incorporated into an Durkheimian view of society and an ideologically-driven myth of 'woman's separate nature'; female sexuality and women's physical role in reproduction provide the only possible foundation for a distinct female nature. Further, the extent to which women's experience is sexualized is debatable and the only possible stance *vis-à-vis* 'woman's nature' is the admission that we cannot know (a) whether or not there *is* a 'woman's nature', and (b) if there is one, exactly what it consists of.

Additionally, I suggest that the idea that women share an essential 'nature' did not arise *ex nihilo*, as some cultural feminist writers would have it believed. Given the paucity of scientific evidence after a century of research, it is not illogical to surmise that support for this idea rests elsewhere than a straightforward reading off reality. This support is provided by the classical perspective. This is a perspective, fathered by males of exceptional genius, that has a rich and challenging history behind it. Pivotal thinkers like Plato, Marx, Durkheim, and Etzioni have successfully developed the classical perspective and maintained it in vigorous intellectual confrontation.

By piggy-backing their political platform on top of the classical vision, cultural feminism musters an already phenomenally impressive arsenal of communitarian scholarly argument. That is why, in my opinion, Sommers describes the success and rapidity with which cultural feminism has overtaken the academy. Further, by using classical communitarian notions (such as connectedness, community, caring, contextualism, and essence) as ammunition against liberal feminism, cultural feminism has launched a volley that cannot be returned by the opposing team because the classical and modern world views are each self-referential "closed systems" with frames of reference that *cannot* be answered in each

other's terms. The modern viewpoint rests on the conviction that individuals create society and that individuals and society can oppose one another; the classical viewpoint rests on the conviction that society creates individuals and that society and individuals cannot oppose one another. One option cannot be proved to be true, except at the expense of the other.

Praxis

If one espouses the position that woman has a 'unique nature' (as, for example, did influential elements at the UN's Women's Conference in Beijing, August 1995, according to a report in the *Montreal Gazette* [August 30, 1995]), this premise will affect how one interacts with women— particularly if one is a teacher. Currently, the notion is returning to education that female students will perform better in sex-segregated classrooms, perhaps in single-sex schools. Further, there is a strong message that female students ought to be receiving a different education than that which male students receive; for example,

> To teach women in precisely the same way that one teaches men, without taking into account the fact that women have been socialized in ways that men have not, does not give women an education equal to men's. Rather, it requires them to think like men in order to succeed. (Tong 1993, 180)

Martin (1985) echoes the cultural feminist notion that male culture is completely separate from female culture and that women ought to maintain their traditional position outside the world of men, including the coeducational liberal arts classroom, because the world of men is "bad" for women, as the following short extracts attest:

> It does place females at a disadvantage when educational methods are determined by what works with males...When an identical education by males and females consists of methods of teaching and learning that are male-based, equality of role occupancy is not assured. (23) ...Implicitly, then, this [liberal arts] curriculum is the bearer of bad news for women. (197) This "same" education may validate one sex at the expense of the other...The methods used will not work equally well for both sexes. (Martin 1985, 35)

> Under these two wholly masculine influences (the incentive of self-interest and the competitive system) we have made the educational process a joy to the few who

successfully attain, and a weary effort, with failure and contumely attached, to all the other...To feminize education would be to make it more motherly. (Gilman, quoted in Martin 1985, 164)

The cultural feminist perspective rejects liberal feminist advocacy of coeducation in the ideally gender-neutral classroom because, "This access to a male dominated culture may equally be felt to bring with it alienation, repression, division, and a silencing of the 'feminine,' a loss of women's inheritance" (Belenky et al 1986, 199). In other words, if women immerse themselves in the productive sphere (including, according to Belenky, the classroom), they run the risk of losing their essence, their unique character, their female integrity, their femininity, their 'woman's nature'.

Martin contends that the subject matter of a liberal education "give(s) pride of place to male experience and achievements and to the societal processes associated with men" (Martin 1985, 197), yet, surely, there is a crucial and central element in most literature and philosophy that transcends notions of male and female, black and white, upper and lower class. This element of universality, or that which all human beings share through our common human nature, is what makes cross-cultural communication possible, and what allows us to read Plato and Aristotle and make some sense of what they were trying to impart two and a half thousand years ago. The element of universality, as the foregoing has attempted to indicate, has been de-emphasized by the classical belief in a hierarchy of human natures and by the cultural feminist concentration on those gender-specific (or "sex-class") experiences and gender-stereotype traits that deny the commonality of emotions, themes, cognitions, and behaviours.

In 1963, Betty Friedan pointed out that philosophers of education who held to the idea that men and women had different natures were perniciously limiting women to their very specific, politically-expedient stereotype of femininity. The consequence had been sex-directed education for the role of wife and mother. The Feminine Mystique was a liberal

feminist protest against the sexism that tied women to the feminine stereotype and limited her potential. In the following extract, she describes "the sex-directed educator" in terms that would fit a cultural feminist:

> The sex-directed educator equates as masculine our "vastly overrated cultural creativity," "our uncritical acceptance of 'progress' as good in itself," "egotistic individualism," "innovation," "abstract construction," "quantitative thinking"—of which, of course, the dread symbol is either communism or the atom bomb. Against these, equated as feminine, are the "sense of persons, of the immediate, of intangible qualitative relationships, an aversion for statistics and quantities," "the intuitive," "the emotional," and all the forces that "cherish" and "conserve" what is "good, true, beautiful, useful, and holy. (Friedan 1963, 151)

By 1991, Friedan has adopted a radically different, cultural feminist stance and speaks of, "Embracing rather than denying biological differences between the sexes" and "Affirm[ing] the differences between men and women" (Friedan 1991, 342 and 352). The rationale for sex-directed education was originally the significance given to sex differences and the recognition of "the fact that women are the people who give birth to children" (Friedan 1991, 353). Friedan now seems to say, in 1991, that women have no grounds on which to protest sexism because, if women are judged to be a certain way (nurturing, unambitious, connected to others, for example) because they *are* women, this must no longer be seen as pernicious but as embracing and affirming the truth about women.

The belief that women have their own separate 'nature' plays out pragmatically in terms of how participation in the workforce is explained, as well. For example, "Canadian psychologist Doreen Kimura, one of the leading sex difference researchers in the world" is quoted by Pool as saying, "The idea that men and women should be equally represented in all occupations and all professions is simply ridiculous given the data we have on their different ability patterns" (Kimura in Pool 1994, 9).

Kimura has used a classical, communitarian, cultural feminist rationale in defense of sexist hiring practices. What personnel officer would take a chance on hiring a female

engineer, when it is accepted that women's "different ability patterns" do not suit them for such work? There is meagre likelihood that a particular woman does not participate in 'woman's nature'; in the trait set of her sex. To demonstrate her engineering ability, a female candidate for this job may feel constrained to adopt a particularly masculine demeanour to prove to potential employers that she is capable of acting 'against her nature'. A liberal feminist would not attribute the sex imbalance in employment to causes *within* women—to 'woman's nature', in other words. Rather this sex imbalance would be causally attributed to such external factors as inadequate daycare facilities, male 'gatekeepers', sexist hiring practices, and sex-directed guidance counselling in high school. The notion that women's special 'nature' ("the sex difference in interests does not have to be created—it exists almost from the time a child is born" [Pool 1994, 251]) renders them fit for nurturing occupations in teaching and nursing simultaneously implies their lack of fitness for such "tough-minded" professions as medicine, science, and engineering. Pool goes on to suggest that affirmative action programs for women may be misplaced and rather than "push[ing] more women to become doctors... many would argue that we, as a society, should not try to change it" (Pool 1994, 249).

When a cultural feminist testified at the trial of the American Equal Employment Opportunity Commission against Sears, Roebuck, the outcome ruled against the women in question on the grounds of "a congeries of 'female' values that included their preference for an assured lower, over an uncertain if potentially higher, income and their commitment to family responsibilities" (Fox-Genovese 1991, 71):

> Rosenberg's testimony thus reinforced the popular feminist view that women's distinct values govern their choices in employment...In effect, all she had done was to draw logical conclusions from many feminists' own favorite premises about gender difference. Those who do not share the premises need to challenge Rosenberg's argument at its root, *but surely they owe her respect for furthering rational discussion by insisting that one cannot, if honest, draw individualist political conclusions from a scholarship that emphasizes women's collective identity and culture as women, or vice versa.* [my italics] (Fox-Genovese 1991, 17)

The essentialism embedded in the cultural feminist perspective lends itself all too easily to the support of traditional sex roles and traits. As discussed above, an essentialist theory of the nature of woman assumes that particular role affiliations and traits will develop automatically (independently of rationality, will, choice, or social influences) within each woman.[8] For example, nurturing can be said to be natural for women in that it is a genetically-hormonally produced inevitable trait. If a combination of organically-based (for example, pre-menstrual tension, menstruation, menopause, childbirth, lactation) and genetically- or hormonally-based differences (for example, nurturance rather than aggression) produce a separate female nature, then, "It is accordingly argued that it is futile for feminists to hope to achieve sex equality in work and public life". (Sayers 1987, 74). Mc-Millan takes a similar stance: "Feminists are trying to escape from the fact that woman will always be related to animal life because she is indissolubly linked with the life processes through, among other things, her reproductive role" (McMillan 1982, 153).

The nature of woman, or 'woman *qua* woman', or woman as a sex-class are all concepts that lend themselves to providing what superficially appears to be scientific support for the cultural feminist notion that women are intrinsically more suited to stay at home and look after children. If women are compelled by their biological heritage toward the home, it ought not to come as a surprise that they occupy a subordinate position to men.[9] Further, if these essential aspects shared by women are ignored or tampered with, women risk destroying their distinctive character, their fundamental identity. In classical terms, their 'nature' will be perverted and lost.

Had the implications of 'woman's true nature' been traced to their theoretical source and followed to their logical implications, Rosenberg would not have been surprised at the outcome of the trial. If women embrace difference, they ought not to be surprised if they are treated differently. Fox-Genovese, in the quotation above, seems rather naive in her contention that the cultural feminist view of 'woman's true nature' and purpose cannot be applied

to the imperfect, patriarchal world in which we live today— particularly as the social constitution of women's collective identity and culture as women were formed in that self-same world. As Sommers and Dwyer note, political and philosophical theorizing about women does not exist in a vacuum and, to an extent, theorists must take responsibility for the social consequences of the views they seek to advance (Sommers 1994; Dwyer 1996). Individualism, in reaction against the classical *zeitgeist*, championed the right of the individual to be judged on his or her own merits, not as a member of a class or the occupant of a fixed and destined social role. To assume that individual women possess a certain constant, essential set of attributes is to deprive individual women of the opportunity to fulfil their potential, which Plato clearly saw to be equal to the potential of the male of the species. Further, the notion of womanculture isolates women in their own separate sphere—the same sphere that they once fought to escape.

Congruencies

There are two final points that must be confirmed and they are the following: first, that the classical *weltanschauung* is approximately congruent with the cultural feminist platform and, second, that the cultural feminist platform is communitarian.

In my opinion, the congruence between the cultural feminist position and the classical perspective is virtually absolute. Considered in this way, Aristotle, Etzioni, Durkheim, and Jagger share a common world view that is played out in theories of nature, roles, law, justice, rights, and personhood. Theirs is a teleological world view that requires separate natures, including those of women and men, for the perfectly harmonious operation of its communities.[10]

Because the liberal feminist position fully acknowledges its foundation in the modern *weltanschauung*, there is no need to present a detailed summary of congruencies. However,

since the cultural feminist viewpoint has not laid bare its classical roots, the findings until this point are summarized briefly in the following section.

The Classical Weltanschauung and Cultural Feminism

Ehrenreich and English, like many cultural feminists, looked back to a Golden Age of "full, productive lives" before capitalism and industrialization caused "the ancient powers of women" to be expropriated, and "shattered irrevocably" the unity of work and home. The extent to which the following description is build upon the classical world view is virtually total:

> To a degree that is almost unimaginable from our vantage point within industrial society, the Old Order [before the Industrial Revolution] is *gynocentric*...Women of the industrial world would later look back enviously on the full, productive lives of their foremothers...It was not only women's productive skills which gave her importance in the Old Order...All women were expected to have learned, from their mothers and grandmothers, the skills of raising children, healing common illnesses, nursing the sick. Woman's work was cut out for her; the lines of authority that she was to follow were clear. She could hardly think of herself as a 'misfit' in a world which depended so heavily on her skills and her work. Nor could she imagine making painful decisions about the direction of her life, for, within the partriarchal [*sic*] order, all decisions of consequence would be made *for* her by father or husband, if they were not already determined by tradition (Ehrenreich and English 1978, 8-9)

MacIntyre comments that "medieval thinking was not only a part of [the Aristotelian tradition], but marked a genuine advance in the tradition of moral theory" (MacIntyre 1981, 168). In the Middle Ages, according to Durkheim, the common bonds that united individuals to their community were particularly strong, providing a "very well-spring of moral activity" (Durkheim 1984, xliii). As noted above, in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Marx uses the word *idyll* in relation to the feudal system (Marx and Engels 1968, 37). These three male thinkers share a common vision with cultural feminists that finds expression in an idealized, ideologically-anchored Golden Age that depends on very partic-

ular aspects of the Middle Ages. These aspects also epitomize the key elements of the classical perspective summarized below.

First, this thesis establishes that the classical position depends on the teleology of proper purpose, hierarchy, and the ordered unity (through opposites) of the cosmos as germane to the human condition. According to Taylor, the modern notion of good as the maximum happiness, discernable to the individual, obviated "any appeals to a Law of Nature, or the 'Law of Reason, Right Reason, Natural Justice, Natural Equity, Good Order', or the like" (Taylor 1989, 321). Influential modern thinkers (Descartes and Kant, for example) emphasize the pre-eminence of the value of human dignity and autonomy over the curtailment of the will in the interests of conforming to a social role that affirmed the place of the individual within the hierarchical cosmological order. According to Nietzsche, that 'good order' purported to be God's will or the intrinsic perfection of nature was, in fact, the will of the oppressor at the apex of the hierarchic ladder:

> While you pretend rapturously to read the canon of your law in nature, you want something opposite, you strange actors and self-deceivers! Your pride wants to impose your morality, your ideal, on nature—even on nature—and incorporate them in her; you demand that she should be nature "according to the Stoa," and you would like all existence to exist only after your own image. (Nietzsche 1966, 206)

Cultural feminists, in remaining silent on cosmology, espouse by default the prevalent modern concept of a more-or-less mechanistic universe (given the recent popularity of chaos theory, it is best to qualify this) with no knowable goal, purpose, or ultimate cause. To a large extent, the reification 'society' has taken the place of the ordered cosmos. Thus, instead of women fulfilling their proper purpose in the service of 'nature', 'natural law', God, or the perfection of the cosmos, contemporary cultural feminism suggests that women's proper purpose serves the solidarity of community and society. The so-called *Communitarian Manifesto* refers directly to parenting as "proper status and function."

Second, parallelling the classical vision of a variety of separate natures, the cultural feminist perspective suggests a two-class, male/female dichotomy of natures that are complementary but with a moral advantage on the side of the female nature. The modern notion that all human beings theoretically share the same human nature is rejected.

Third, both the classical and the cultural feminist stance suggest that the collectivity has pre-eminent priority over the individual. For women, their role as wife and mother is crucial for their self-determination. Responsibility to the collectivity and the environment are bound to 'woman's true nature'. The modern value placed on the individual is viewed negatively and held accountable for contemporary social ills (the prevalence of divorce, the perceived crisis in education, problems with violence, and so on).[11] Rootlessness and alienation, selfishness and aggressive competition (even the rising divorce rate) are the results of liberal individualism (Bell 1993,3 1).[12] Cultural feminism looks back to a time when, "Woman's work was cut out for her; the lines of authority that she was to follow were clear" (Ehrenreich and English 1978, 9).

Fourth, from both the classical and the cultural feminist viewpoints, society is not seen as open or meritocratic. The modern idea that opportunities should be available to all, despite their sex, is dismissed as an empty ideologically-based promise. To preserve their integrity *qua* Woman, women cannot allow their true 'natures' to be colonized by the patriarchy by striving to participate in it fully and take advantages of the opportunities now open to increasingly many of them. To rise in our society, women must deform themselves, lose their authenticity, and become 'little men'. Thus the Aristotelian vision of woman, derived from the *status quo*, takes precedence over the Platonic vision, anchored in potential.

Fifth, from both the classical and the cultural feminist perspectives, women must preserve and develop their genuine essence through involvement in women's true interests. This confirms the value of conformity in the classical *weltanschauung*, for 'women's inter-

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ests' are shared by all women. Determinism is expressed from the classical viewpoint in the notion that individuals possess particular, innate and unchangeable natures. From the cultural feminist viewpoint, an individual's gendered nature is attributed to the socialization process, which produces a distinct trait set and psychology that are the categorical quintessence of woman.

Sixth, because the classical viewpoint tends toward communism and views all resources as the property of the community, it is other-directed and emphasizes responsibilities rather than rights. The needs of one's fellow citizens are to be answered through duty and charity. This closely resembles the importance, for cultural feminism, of connectivity and the ethic of care; also the repudiation of rights as selfishly egotistic.

Seventh, similarly, to cultural feminists the individual is seen as enmeshed in a web of others to whom the self is connected in terms of loving obligation. This parallels the reciprocal hierarchy of privileges and obligations in the classical mode and stands in contrast to the modern emphasis on rights as a way of protecting the self against undue interference from others.

Eighth, the locus of control lies within the rational individual in the modern position. To the classical philosopher, the locus is external. Cultural feminism attempts to align these two opposing notions: the locus of control is seen to be within the individual, but only in the sense that social expectations are internalized such that the subconscious conforms to the female nature. The idea of the individual as a rational agent is challenged by cultural feminism (see the following section on the commonalities shared by communitarianism and cultural feminism).

Ninth, both the classical and cultural feminist perspectives allow that the end justifies the means by refusing to differentiate between them. Further, the privileged "distinctive epistemological standpoint" of woman as an oppressed group (Jagger 1983, 371) suggests that theory serves an end and does not represent 'truth' through the perspective of "the

neutral disinterested observer" (Jagger 1983, 370), as the modern viewpoint would have it.
[13]

Tenth, the classical *zeitgeist* favours the rational, abstract, universal, and essential over the empirical, the particular, and the exceptional. Cultural feminism rejects abstraction, but in so doing accepts Aristotle's method of perceiving the perfection of an entity in the observed world around him, and rejects Plato's abstract thought-experiment that allowed him to perceive women's potential. Unusual women and their traits are not factored into the description of 'woman's nature' offered by cultural feminist theorists.

Eleventh, the modern theory of conventional rights is repudiated by the collectivist nature of the classical *weltanschauung* and cultural feminism. Those general rights guaranteed by membership in one universal human nature are treated as suspect.

Finally, the modern viewpoint has it that natural laws are "custom" only. Thus, they may readily be changed if they are oppressive. Kant's notion that laws are imposed on the external world by human psychology further undercuts the idea that existing social arrangements are the way they are for good reason. Cultural feminism does not take an explicit stance on this subject. However, it seems closer in spirit to the classical viewpoint in that it insinuates the natural connection between 'woman's nature' and the absolute centrality of her role as wife and mother.

Thus, there appears to be a strong congruence between the classical and cultural feminist viewpoints as demonstrated in the foregoing chapters.

Communitarianiam and Cultural Feminism

Chapter 4 presented the following elements of communitarianism: the community and not the individual is the source of value; the identity of human beings depends completely on their social context (it is impossible to think of an abstract human being, a universal human being, or a universalized 'human nature' that applies to all humans), hence

individuals are determined by their environment; the individual is an embodied individual (the body cannot be transcended because mind and body cannot be conceived as separable); related to point one above, values and virtues arise out of particular practices; communal and public goods are central, consequently individual rights are unimportant (if not suspect); contrary to the empirical tradition, ought may be derived from is. In the following section, I will briefly correlate each element shared by communitarianism with the cultural feminist theory of 'woman's nature'.

First, from a communitarian viewpoint, the community and not the individual is the source of value. This element has been adopted wholesale and, by and large, uncritically, by cultural feminism. Coupled with the second element of communitarianism presented in Chapter 4, the notion that the identity of human beings depends completely on their social context, cultural feminism calls into question the 'abstract individual' as the proprietor of values such as dignity, rights, autonomy, self-sovereignty. Since it is impossible to think of an abstract human being, a universal human being, or a universalized 'human nature' that applies to all humans, individuals are determined by their environment and find scant basis from which to critique it, let alone rebel against it. Jagger, for example, states "If individual desires and interests are socially constituted...the ultimate authority of individual judgment comes into question" (Jagger 1983, 44).

Additionally, if human beings are formed by society, as suggested by the afore-mentioned fourth element of communitarianism, values and virtues arise out of particular practices. Thus cultural feminism suggests that there can be no commonalities between the sexes, which are seen to be engaged in completely separate practices engendering completely separate trait sets, cognitions, and behaviours. Further, women who seek to throw off or repudiate oppressive aspects of their femininity (for example, society's requirements that they nurture the young and elderly in the home; provide sexual and housekeeping services for their husbands; and behave in a manner appropriate to their social function) are

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seen to be casting off something that is uniquely valuable and acting in an unauthentic manner, as "social males."

The third element of communitarianism, that the individual is an embodied individual and that the body cannot be transcended because mind and body cannot be conceived as separable, is also a key element in the cultural feminist platform. As discussed in Chapters 4 and 7, this robust conviction grounds cultural feminism's belief in a postulated, but problematic, separate 'woman's nature' acquired through the lived experience of the body.

The fifth element, the preeminence of communal and public goods over individual rights (in particular the right to 'negative liberty') is expressed in cultural theory by the notion that the community, through 'shared values', may determine what is good for all. Thus the *Communitarian Manifesto* advocates that "we ought to teach those values Americans share." Even Fraser and Lacey, who express an affiliation with communitarianist goals, perceive that there are "repressive implications of life in unitary value-generating communities" (Frazer and Lacey 1993, 200). A dissolution of private life within the traditional community is redolent with echoes of *Brave New World, 1984, Walden II, The Republic,* and *Herland*—none of which present an utopian ideal with which all may be completely in comfortable agreement. The Communitarian Manifesto suggests that individuals who neglect their children, and do not assume the care of other "vulnerable community members," must be "explicitly considered poor members of the community" by means of verbal castigation ("we should not hesitate to speak up and express our moral concerns to others when it comes to issues we care about deeply and share with one another").[14]

The sixth element of communitarianism suggests that, contrary to the empirical tradition, ought may be derived from is. This harks back Aristotle's ratification of separate natures through the *status quo*. An ought that may rest nowhere 'outside' the prevailing social norms is difficult to align with liberal feminism's use of the rights-talk embedded in liberal individualism's conception of the person to fight against the almost universal oppres-

sion of women during the Enlightenment. I believe, for the reasons in the foregoing chapters, that it is a deeply problematic position for any woman to espouse.

Gender Mythology

In conclusion, the notion that women share a common 'nature' is an ideological one,[15] a communitarian one, a classical one. Neither science nor philosophy is capable of knowing the essential, constituent components that comprise an alleged separate female nature. If 'woman's special nature' is but an artificial and changeable construct of the patriarchal gender belief system *via* classical communitarianism, then it can be transcended, radically transformed, or minimized through education or by altering the power-relations and social arrangements that characterized past millennia. Consequently 'woman's nature' implies little or nothing about women, as a group or individually. Such an ephemeral construct provides a dubious foundation for cultural feminism:

> If the male-female difference is not in the genes, then the assumption is that it must be a matter of social environment; if this is the case, then the traits that we attribute to women and men must be seen as mutable. A change in socialization, or eduction, or social circumstance would produce different gender identities or no such identities at all. However, if gender identities and the cultures that go with them is historically a matter of social construction, then any political ideology based upon them, such as cultural feminism, seems less secure than if based upon an immutable construct such as biology. (Donovan 985, 61)[16]

In Deaux and Kite's phrase, notions that suggest women are *thus* belong to a "gender mythology" that, like all mythologies, involves a traditional way of thinking derived from a particular world view, with heuristic properties amenable to providing an uncomplicated and relatively unexamined explanation of practice and belief (Deaux and Kite 1987, 94). Cultural feminism's insistence on a non-physical 'natural' dichotomization of the sexes in terms of traits, cognitions, and behaviours provides a useful cognitive and ideological[17] structure within which to understand why men and women should act, and often do act, in certain

ways. In the teleological cosmos, the individual sought fulfilment in moulding him or herself to a destined social role, for which he or she was suited by nature. The perfection of the individual was in the approximation to that ideal role, not in exercising infinite potential to become whatever the individual wished to be. Curbing one's will and limiting one's desire to one's proper purpose was not necessarily an easy or congenial task but it was made worthwhile in the knowledge that this was the moral end to which all living beings aimed. To liberate the male half of humanity from the demand that it stay within prescribed bounds while requiring the female half to remain restrained cannot be justified unless women do not participate, with men, in full personhood through one common human nature—a position I reject. Lukes, in the following extract (quoted earlier, in Chapter 3), reminds us that the respect due a woman's personhood is called into question "when we allow our attitudes to [her] to be dictated solely by some contingent and socially defined attribute of [her], such as [her] place in the social order or [her] occupational role...to restrict the range of alternatives between which [she] can choose..." (Lukes 1973, 133-134). Further, to cite community as moral authority for such voluntary bonds is to forget too easily that woman's oppression is rooted in collective society and traditional family.

ENDNOTES

1. If women do not share a common nature, this does not require them to share the same nature as men. The third possibility—that there are no natures—is left open.

2. In the same vein, Frazer and Lacey suggest that, because it is imperfect and vulnerable to criticism, liberalism "cannot be used, unmodified, to engage in critical political and social thought" (Frazer and Lacey 1993, 214), despite their acknowledgement of the gains for women under the agency of liberal political theory and the rights and freedoms claimed under one human nature. They conclude that "liberal analysis, critique and vision seem exhausted from a feminist point of view" (Frazer and Lacey 1993, 100).

3. For example, "Flat-Earthers" (whether chronologically pre-circumnavigation or present-day) present a comprehensive and seamless theory that is untrue and wrong. Behaviourism is a comprehensive and seamless theoretical system of thought that is wrong, in my opinion. In Russell's opinion, Christianity is a comprehensive and seamless theoretical system of thought that is wrong (Russell 1957).

4. Although MacIntyre and others, including Peters, imply that 'the best' choice can be made through the rational discernment of those intrinsic qualities that belong to the paradigm itself, this position has not been convincingly demonstrated (for example, Grimshaw 1989, Chapter 3).

5. Midgley uses the simile of a map: "Exactly the same thing happens in 'factual' disagreements — say between two economists, psychologists, or historians of different schools, or between a Marxist and a Freudian account of motives. Nobody supposes that these failures are logically necessary, that the disputants are not really discussing the same world. They possess distinct conceptual schemes, which have not yet been properly related, but ought to be. (Midgley 1995, 187).

6. This interpretive process works on a very simple level as well: If one believes that humanity is essentially good, one will work through life on that basis and discount contrary evidence as exceptional, as misperception, or as inadequately understood. If one believes that humanity is essentially flawed, the self-same human experiences will be viewed very differently, but still coherently.

7. Some combination of both positions, benefitting both the individual and society, ought to be possible but receives but vague attention in the literature.

8. Or, commonly, following Hume's lead, in a statistically significant number of women. Tendencies are briefly discussed in Appendix II.

9. Maccoby and Jacklin's examination of over 1,400 research studies discovered little to support the notion that women's biological heritage is linked to a specific nature, in terms of cognitive and behavioural traits. For example, nurturant behaviour is commonly associated with women. Yet a 1974 study by Parke and O'Leary, cited by Maccoby and Jacklin (1974, 221), seemed to show that fathers from both well-educated and working-class families "engaged in *more* nurturant interaction with the infants than did mothers." Similarly, David G. Winter reports evidence from both original and prior research that there are no differences in need for power between males and females: he suggests that gender is irrelevant to power needs and that gender is not a consistently valid explanation of personality traits (i.e., it is not valid to assume that women are uninterested in obtaining power inside or outside the home) (Winter 1988, 510 and 519).

10. The congruence between the liberal feminist position and the modern is absolute, but this comes as far less of a revelation because they are twin siblings born of the same mother, the Enlightenment, in a reaction against the oppressions inherent in the classical perspective. The modern and liberal feminist positions both require belief in either one universal, nebulous, and ungendered human nature, in which all individuals participate equally, or the rejection of nature concepts altogether.

11. The Communitarian Manifesto suggests that "widespread divorce, when there are children involved, especially when they are in their formative years, is indicative of a serious social problem."

12. Demaine points out that the communitarian viewpoint endorses the traditional two-parent family (Etzioni 1993, Chapter 2) using the strategy of characterizing the children of divorce as categorically damaged (Demaine 1996, 9). This utopian emphasis on family solidarity ignores the fact that women who are reluctant or unable to divorce, for whatever reason (including social or familial disapprobation), may suffer greatly. Demaine also makes the point that single-parents have forged closer community ties in their search for emotional and logistical support than traditional two-parent families: thus Etzioni seems to criticize those closest in spirit to his own vision of community (Demaine 1996, 10).

13. Challenger seems to suggest that social science "if it is to become a part of the solution instead of part of the problem" must abandon any pretense at objectivity and become an "ethically engaged" hybrid "as a form of public philosophy" (Challenger 1994, 210).

14. As an aside, my father was asked not to use the public library toilet facilities when the Pointe Claire community preschool group was in session. He walks more than five miles a day all year round and stops in to use the library 'facilities' half way through his walk. On the basis of his gender, his age, and his reticence, he incurred the suspicions of the community. In liberal terms, my father had every right to use the public washroom. In communitarian terms, the playschool mothers had an obligation to ensure the safety of their children. The result was felt, by my father, to be hurtful and oppressive because he felt as though he were being judged on the basis of his membership in the category 'elderly male loner' rather than on the basis that his needs were equal and the same as those of anyone else (for example, the needs of a motherly woman in her thirties). The notion that the expression of moral concern may be oppressive in itself is not addressed in the *Communitarian Manifesto* or in Etzioni's *The Spirit of Community* (1993, 32-38). Etzioni favours labelling undesired behaviour "something a decent person would not do" (1993, 35). A liberal defense of my father's continued use of the toilet might be worded in terms of rights: he has the right to use the toilet. A communitarian offense might suggest, in the words of the *Manifesto*, that "the community must be allowed to take effective measures" to curb child abuse.

15. In Chapters 1 and 2, I suggested that the concept of 'woman's nature' is ideological. The following elements of an ideology were introduced: ideologies are affiliated with a description of human nature that is realistic but skewed in a particular direction or incomplete; second, ideologies are self-referential; third, ideologies are beliefs that do not require scientific proof to be useful and effective; fourth, ideologies justify and preserve particular social systems and institutions (such as capitalism, socialism, democracy, the school system, and so on) through group norms, values, and moral standards; fifth, from a Marxist viewpoint, ideologies mystify reality by hiding power and domination behind a screen of false consciousness that coopts subordinates in their own oppression, using the tool of opposites to force unrealistic choices by depicting the world in black and white (evil bourgeois/virtuous proletariat, benevolent liberal/malevolent communist, dammed/ saved, and so on). In the following section, I will briefly correlate each element shared by ideologies with the cultural feminist theory of 'woman's nature'.

First, ideologies are affiliated with a description of human nature that is realistic but skewed in a particular direction or incomplete. Although it resonates with many women's own experience, the cultural feminist depiction of 'woman's nature' expresses the desire women, as well as men, have to see themselves in a certain way (for example, Fraser 1989, 7 and Tong 1993, 99). To accomplish this, specific elements of womanliness or womanhood are selected as significant. Other aspects are silenced. Hence the cultural feminist depiction of 'woman's nature' conforms to the first descriptive element of an ideology.

Second, ideologies are self-referential. As discussed above, the premises and infrastructures of cultural and liberal feminism are irreconcilably disparate. In this way, cultural feminism's notion of 'woman's nature' is also ideological.

Third, ideologies are beliefs that do not require scientific proof to be useful and effective. The search for scientific 'proof' of a separate 'woman's nature' is a spurious one. As Jagger points out, 'woman's nature' is a useful concept for political reasons (also Tong 1993, 160; King in Jagger and Bordo 1989, 119-120; and Eisenstein 1993, 179), whether or not it has 'proof'. Jagger clearly demonstrates that the cultural feminist notion of 'woman's nature' has an effective ideological function.

Fourth, ideologies justify and preserve particular social systems and institutions (such as capitalism, socialism, democracy, the school system, and so on) through group norms, values, and moral standards. The cultural feminist conviction

that socialization through the internalization of group norms forms a resilient and fixed female 'nature' is inherently conservative, as pointed out by Mednick (1989), Denfeld (1995), Segal (1987), Frazer and Lacey (1993), and others. Nature-talk, following Aristotle, has to a great extend relied on the *status quo* for its delimitation of proper purpose, *arete*, and social role. Although men have thrown off the limitations imposed by 'natures' because they provided a rationale for oppression, women have not. In co-opting the concept of different natures, cultural feminists run the risk of enforced separatism, at least, and cooperation in their own oppression, at worst. Further, if there are no abstract rights, no universal standpoint from which competing social arrangements may be critiqued (which is the communitarian, and cultural feminist, position), there are no grounds to complain that any given sexist, even patriarchal, social arrangement is oppressive. In the sense of being conservative and providing justification for existing social arrangements and institutions, then, a cultural feminist belief in 'woman's nature' is also ideological.

Fifth, from a Marxist viewpoint, ideologies mystify reality by hiding power and domination behind a screen of false consciousness that coopts subordinates in their own oppression, using the tool of opposites to force unrealistic choices by depicting the world in black and white (evil bourgeois/virtuous proletariat, benevolent liberal/malevolent communist, dammed/saved, and so on). Unquestionably, cultural feminism requires a choice. Either women express themselves in a truly 'womanly', 'feminine', or 'feminist' way, or they become unauthentic women (Frazer and Lacey commend MacKinnon's phrase "socially male" for those women who do not ratify the cultural feminist party line [Frazer and Lacey 1993, 97]), unauthentic feminists (Dworkin, in an internet publication, labels women who disagree with her anti-pornography alliance with the moral majority "feminists" in quotation marks), or 'little men'. Further, by suggesting that women are more virtuous than men, cultural feminists continue to use the 'male' tool of opposites to depict the world in black and white (Segal 1987, ix). Thus the cultural feminist perception of 'woman's nature' is also ideological in these ways.

Thus, there appears to be a congruence between the cultural feminist understanding of 'woman's nature' and ideology.

16. Donovan does not consider a third alternative, that woman's distinct nature may be the result of the interaction of genetic predispositions with the social environment.

17. Ideology is defined and discussed in Chapter 2.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I:

THE SCIENTIFIC FOUNDATIONS OF WOMAN'S NATURE

Because my thesis is that the cultural feminist theory of woman's essential nature rests on a pre-Enlightenment ideological basis rather than on what could be termed scientifically-verifiable reality,[1] it is necessary to examine the foundations of the belief that women and men have distinct natures. In other words, if it should prove convincing that women as a category can be proven to share significant sex- or biologically-based differences in psychological, cognitive and physical abilities that are "purely innate and absolute" (Henshel 1973, 1), this thesis may flounder because women could then be said in truth to share a unique and separate nature from men distinct from ideological considerations.

Primarily, there are three loci of discourse that address the notion of woman's nature: science, philosophy, and theology. This chapter documents the problematic nature of the search for support of the idea that women have separate natures in scientific (biological, psychological, and social science) investigation. The main body of the thesis addresses the hypotheses of philosophical speculation.[2]

Some Difficulties With a Scientific Investigation of Natures

First, it is far from obvious what the attributes of a nature are. The denotation of the word, juxtaposed with the ways in which it has been used, is more comprehensively developed in Chapter 3. In summary, as a working definition in this present context, the word 'nature' contains the notions of a distinct essence or inherent character; an internal disposition, innate predisposition or tendency to act in a certain way as a result of nonrational impulses (spontaneous attitudes, drives, inner forces).

In view of my contention that a scientific investigation of sex differences is intimately bound up with ideological notions of 'natures' (both human and female), it is interesting that scientific investigators of the differences between men and women do not, as a rule, concern themselves with definitions of human nature or female nature. Rather, as Maccoby and Jacklin (1974) for example, they study 'sex differences' as the observable manifestations of male and female natures through testing and observation much in the same way as research on other entities has been done since Bacon's time. It is also important to note this near exclusive concentration on the study of sex differences, rather than sex similarities (Mackie 1983, 45):

By and large, *only* positive findings of sex differences are reported and

published in the scientific literature, and many of them are faulty or of dubious significance. There is, however, no field of "sex similarities". (Bleier 1984, 94)

It is rare to encounter research studies designed to prove that men and women are fundamentally the same in terms of their actions, affects, and cognitions (despite their differential biological heritage). Nonetheless, similarities have been uncovered by many studies designed to prove difference (Maccoby and Jacklin 1974).

Scientific method is ostensibly characterized by exclusive concentration on externally-observable factors through which it might be postulated that distinct natures may reveal themselves. In other words, insight into a notion ('natures') that is imperceptible by the senses must be deduced from sensory observation. The process of deduction is a cognitive one, involving rational subjective evaluation and judgement. Scientific research into natures, then, begins at a remove from empirical reality in that what is observed (behaviour, test results, survey responses, and so on) is projected onto what cannot be observed (natures). Accordingly:

> The study of nature is a study of artifacts that appear during an engagement between the scientist and the world in which he finds himself. And these artifacts themselves are seen through the lens of theory. Thus, different experimental conditions give different views of nature. (Holton in Kagan 1989, 2)

Although inquiries into natures and essences begin with the sensory perception of the external object, natural substances are difficult to explicate because human judgment is involved. The complex notions of truth and doubt will be briefly touched upon in the following chapter. Additionaly, conclusions generated by empirical data as to that above-noted internal disposition or tendency to act in a certain way ought to be approached with caution because valid empirical observations may generate conclusions that are far from scientific.

For human beings, inherent character and nonrational internal dispositions may most obviously be taken (in this secular society) to be biologically-based; less obvious, but nonetheless interesting, is the attribution of such tendencies and impulses to deeply-rooted precognitive socialization:

> There are basic differences between the sexes...They are a product of social conditioning (typically set early in life) or lodged in the differing psyches of the sexes by the psychoanalytic processes that create identity...[These] differences are deeply rooted and result in different approaches to the world...[that] benefit society and ought to be recognized and rewarded. (Epstein 1988, 25)

There are many complexities involved in a serious consideration of the socialization process and this sociological concept has not received the philosophical attention that it has merited despite its widespread and imprecise use. As will be supported in Chapters 2 and

3, the inherent, internal, and non-rational bases for behaviour proposed in the use of the term 'nature' imply that the decisions productive of behaviour cannot be unadulterated free will decisions based on reason and logic (in other words, to act in a certain way or display certain traits according to one's nature does not imply that cognition—a reasoned weighing-out of alternatives, for example—is involved): because they are non-rational, they are difficult (if not impossible) to change; because they are inherent, they are inseparable from the very make-up of an individual; because they provide internal causation, they cannot be external in the sense that peer pressure is. Nor does it seem likely that this "adamantine chain of destiny" (Wollstonecraft 1976, 71) is a result of a cognition-based socialization process (see below, and Chapter 8 on 'the lived experience of the body') that is amenable to modification throughout the lifespan, yet the power of society to cause these deeply-rooted unchanging traits and behaviours is largely unquestioned by those cultural feminists who attribute to it the development of a so-called female voice.

Sex is a biological fact, depending on the chromosomal arrangement and the presence of certain hormones, especially oestrogen and testosterone. Although there are biological exceptions, it is not difficult to tell new-born human males from females. In fact, male or female are virtually the only labels that can be applied to an individual from the moment of birth: it is even difficult to identify the race of the new-born. It is important to note that female nature cannot be held merely to be a chromosomal arrangement resulting in physical body parts different from the male because this, in itself, is no guarantee of those empirically-observable differences in behaviour implicit in the above-mentioned tendency to *act*. In a scientific investigation of natures, it is not the biological fact that is being investigated: in fact, certain researchers suggest that biological sex characteristics have little to do with a male or female nature, as in the case of transsexuals whose opposited-sexed nature may be trapped within an alien body.[3]

As mentioned above, the scientific investigation of woman's nature does not focus on biological sex, in the sense of chromosomal and hormonal differences, but on differences in cognition or cognitive style, affect, and behaviour (Maccoby and Jacklin 1974; Block 1984; Bleier 1984 for example). Observable differences in these areas are often termed 'gender differences' and are notoriously difficult to isolate from what is normatively described as appropriate behaviour for males and appropriate behaviour for females: in a consideration of sex traits, the perspective of the researcher seems central to the theses developed. Maccoby and Jacklin (1974), Favreau (1977), Deaux and Kite (1987, 68-91), and Sommers (1994), provide telling examples of the imposition of researcher bias on data.[4]

Even when the statistics are not distorted, the interpretation placed on data by the researcher cannot be value-neutral. Favreau draws attention to "the necessity of examining what meaning can properly be attached to statements about sex differences" (Favreau 1977, 63). Recent studies cited in the media draw attention to what is felt to be teachers' lack of interaction with female students in the classroom:[5] For example, newspapers in England, the United States, and Canada picked up on the following story:

In one study financed by the National Institute of Education, field research-

ers... found that male students received more attention from teachers and were given more time to talk in class.Although boys are more assertive than girls—they are eight times more likely to call out answers—the Sadkers found that teachers also called on boys more often and gave them more positive feedback. (Fort Lauderdale *Sun-Sentinel*, August 8, 1989)

The following causal interpretation given these observations is clearly influenced by the notion that girls are at a disadvantage in the traditional classroom due to gender bias, whereas boys are not:

Girls generally do worse at mathematics than boys because they do not seek as much attention and their teachers tend to ignore them...Inspectors found that girls were often seated along the sides and back of the classroom while the boys were at the front and in the middle. Teachers were more likely to direct questions at the boys, who were also more likely to volunteer answers.(London *Daily Telegraph*, December 14, 1989)

In fact, there is no evidence linking the amount of teacher interaction with student success. Williams, in a Canadian university context, states,

A review of the literature on gender bias in the post-secondary classroom reveals that...women students do not participate in class discussions as much as men students. Cause and effect cannot be determined from these studies... Future research is needed to determine the cause and effect relationship between specific classroom variables on women's classroom participation... (Williams 1990, 29)

As Sommers (1994) and Mickelson (1989) remind us, despite media reports to the contrary, girls are doing well in school—much better, in fact, than boys are. In 1983, Benbow and Stanley did not find "substantial differences between boys' and girls' attitudes [toward mathematics] or backgrounds [in terms of previous mathematics courses]." Neither did they find that "sex differences in mathematical reasoning ability arise mainly from differential course taking." Nor did they find that sex differences in mean SAT-M scores became significantly larger during high school as a result of "intensive social pressures" during adolescence. In other words, they reject the notion that small sex differences at the upper range of performance occur because of intense adolescent sex-role socialization (Benbow and Stanley 1983, 46-49). In the popular-culture context of our media example here, Linn and Hyde's studies were accurately quoted in the Montreal *Gazette* (January 16, 1989) as proving that "gender differences in almost all measures of ability have become negligible" and "differences between men and women in mathematical and spatial reasoning ability have declined almost to zero".

The ideological basis of value-free science would have one believe that researchers allow the data to speak to them directly because they approach them with an open mind, working from the observed specifics toward a more general law. Kagan (1989), Kitcher (1985), Kuhn (1970) and others demonstrate that researchers approach the data with a more

or less tentative hypothesis in mind, thus moving from a more general (if often poorly articulated) law to those observable specifics in the empirical world which support their argument. Watts suggests this more realistic description of scientific methodology:

> It is commonly understood that one's predispositions and perceptions, among other influences, affect the manner in which research problems are defined and data are interpreted; indeed, it is difficult to maintain, particularly in the social sciences but also in the natural sciences, that substantive findings exist in an ethereal realm unguided by human purposes and visions, and even limitations and tendentiousness. (Watts 1984, 2)

Primary data are notoriously vulnerable to inaccuracy, particularly as regards the type of anecdotal, self-reported, self-selected opinion poll and interview questionnaire methodologies commonly used in the human sciences. The objective scientific value of such methods of data collection is low (Phillips 1972, Kagan 1989, Sommers 1994).

Deaux and Kite remind us that, in any investigation of sex differences, "the term itself suggest(s) the conclusions that are often sought"(Deaux and Kite 1987, 92). Even if scientists were capable of approaching their data without a preconceived pattern of results in mind, "the interpretation of research data is further perverted by the assumption of the inevitability of sexual inequality when results inconsistent with this belief do not lead to the revision of this assumption" (Sayers in Deaux and Kite 1987, 68). Favreau points out that the language used in reporting results tends to exaggerate sex differences by ignoring overlap and degrees of difference. She gives the following example:

> We say "Learning disabilities are more frequent in boys', not 'Boys do not learn as well as girls" [but] on the other hand, one does hear "Girls are more passive than boys", rather than the probably more appropriate "Passivity occurs more frequently in girls". (Favreau 1977, 64).

Medical biologist Anne Fausto-Sterling states that cause-and-effect relationships in sex difference studies are impossible to prove because, "Simply put, correlation does not necessarily imply causation" (Fausto-Sterling 1985, 130).

Further difficulties arise when conclusions affecting pedagogical practice are drawn from raw data: For example, researchers may consider that the finding above (crudely and inaccurately stated as women are worse at math then men) is proof of a biological trait. If this were the case, it would be a difficult, even impossible, trait to eradicate and might suggest that educators ought to realistically make less demands on their female students to excel in math class—perhaps even substituting a verbally-oriented class for math. Favreau extends this by facetiously suggesting men may well be excluded "from almost all occupations except perhaps boxing, wrestling and hockey" on the basis of their innate aggressiveness (Favreau 1977, 63). Further, Maccoby and Jacklin note that the types of intervention desired by cultural feminists that attempt to "match instructional techniques to the specific aptitudes and learning styles of specific groups of students" are questionable because "to date there is no evidence that an individual learns better if an instructional

program is geared to his areas of strength" (Maccoby and Jacklin 1974, 366).

Biological Theories

Physiology

Our genetic make-up consists of 46 pairs of chromosomes, half from each parent. Although one of these pairs is the 'sex' determinant, it is the hormones secreted by the endocrine system that visibly 'masculinize' or 'feminize' us and allow us to reproduce. There are indisputable differences between male and female bodies. The sexes differ in the following ways: sex organs and secondary sex characteristics, the ability to bear children (restricted to the female), physical size and strength (males are larger and stronger), higher basal metabolism (males have a higher rate), maturity rate (females mature earlier), longevity (women live longer), mortality (males do not live as long and infant males are less likely to survive) (Maris 1988, 163-164). Even though differences ought not to blind us to the incontrovertible fact that women and men are more similar biologically to each other than to any other entity, biologically speaking, men and women seem to have separate *physical* natures.

However, as noted above, physical differences cannot provide a complete foundation for distinct natures. Even in the nonhuman sciences, the nature of something is not delimited by its physical composition alone. For example, the nature of water is not merely its composition of two molecules hydrogen, one molecule oxygen. As evidence, the nature of ice differs from the nature of steam. Rather, the nature of water also includes the way it behaves. This is sometimes put in terms of the natural laws that water follows (this point is further pursued in Chapter 5). Thus it is in the nature of water to run downhill, to seek its own level, to freeze at 32°F. Further, women who have had their physical nature altered through the removal of their reproductive organs by hysterectomy and/or mastectomy do not lose their status as women or, presumably, their 'woman's nature'. It is unknown whether transsexuals change their natures when they change their physical sexual characteristics or whether they are freed by social gender expectations to allow the *expression of* their individual natures to change: indeed, it is difficult to conceive how this would be amenable to proof. Homosexuals and transsexuals have commonly been seen either as unnatural or deviant, flawed, *lusus naturae*, a third sex, or as failures of the normal socialization process. The connection between homosexuality, transsexuality, and natures has received minimal attention in the literature but would be an interesting avenue for future study.

The above-listed physiological sex characteristics (size, longevity, and so on) do not seem to have any link to the abilities required by today's world or to the intelligence of either sex. However, it is possible to speculate that physical traits have had a relationship to social role in that men's size and strength may have better suited them historically for the role of provider and protector, while women's earlier maturity rate and lower mortality rate may have helped to ensure survival of the species by maximizing the number of healthy childbearing years. Alternatively, categorically greater strength and size may have made it possible for men to exert their power over women in forcing them to accept a subordinate

social role. Perhaps even more significantly, anatomical differences pertaining to sexuality, menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, and lactation have a direct impact on how men and women experience their sexuality and the sex act itself. Women have a variety of experiences related to reproduction that are simply unknown to men and, additionally, are forced to realize the consequences of sexual encounters in a way that men are not. It is unclear, however, whether these differences are sufficient to constitute a separate woman's nature. To link biological specifics with specific distinct natures, however, is problematic. To give one example, it is not postulated that those born severely physically challenged possess a specific nature that is distinct from that of other human beings, although their lived experience of the body must be overwhelmingly different to most of the population.The implications for 'woman's nature' are the focus of Chapter ??.

Biologically-Based Psychological Differences

Sociobiologists have postulated, though by no means proven, that other less evident but highly significant sex differences in the psychologies of men and women have evolved. Sociobiologists have sought insight into human sex differences in the lower forms of animal life. The following passage from the works of E.O. Wilson, pioneer sociobiologist, illustrates this approach:

> If a man were given total freedom to act, he could theoretically inseminate thousands of women in his lifetime. The resulting conflict of interest between the sexes [results in the fact that]...males are characteristically aggressive...It pays males to be aggressive, hasty, fickle, and undiscriminating. In theory it is more profitable for females to be coy, to hold back until they can identify males with the best genes...Human beings obey this biological principle faithfully. (in Kitcher 1985, 166-167)

The animal-human analogy, however, has been called into question (Stevenson 1987, 130; Rose et al. 1984, 6-10). Kitcher's analysis, for example, invalidates the animal-human analogy below, both mathematically and with evidence from other species, including hyenas, baboons, and birds (Kitcher 1985, 173-176). Additionally, deductions based on speculative reconstruction of the lives of early man remain largely in the realm of conjecture.

Some also believe that women's hormones make them more nurturant, while men's hormones make them more aggressive; although hormone injections do not increase nurturing behaviours in males and foetal exposure to testosterone has not been shown to masculinize females (Rose et al. 1984, 136; Holmstrom 1982, 31).[6]

It has also been suggested, though by no means proven, that women process verbal and visual-spatial information on both sides of the brain, while men process verbal information with the left and visual-spatial information with the right cerebral hemisphere. This argument has been used to suggest that women's biological nature directly affects her reasoning style and abilities but all that can, in fact, be said is that there may seem to be "anatomical differences in brain structure...no more and no less interesting than the fact of

anatomical differences in genitalia between the two sexes... Just what hemispheric differences mean is simply unknown" (Rose et al. 1984, 146).

Recent findings show that the few formerly accepted categorical or biology-based cognitive differences between males and females are disappearing. Even Allen who, as a feminist philosopher, ratifies sex differences, states that sex differences do not seem to arise from a differential in cognitive abilities:

> There has been no scientific evidence that shows that one sex or the other, by virtue of sex, is limited either to discursive or to intuitive reasoning. In fact, it has become clearer that women and men have potentially the same capacity for discursive and intuitive thinking. It would seem to follow from this, then, that women and men are equal with respect to their reasoning capacities. (Allen 1985, 11)

It is important to emphasize that *significant* (the issue of significance is addressed in Chapter 2) cognitive differences in intelligence and cognitive ability have never been measured, though certain areas of slight advantage for each sex have been identified:

> Evidence from meta-analysis and process analysis indicate that (a) gender differences on cognitive and psychosocial tasks are small and declining, (b) gender differences are not general but specific to cultural and situational contexts, (c) gender differences in cognitive processes often reflect gender differences in course enrolment and training, and (d) gender differences in height, physical strength, career access, and earning power are much larger and more stable than gender differences on cognitive and psychosocial tasks. These trends imply that small gender differences in cognitive and psychosocial domains be deemphasized... (Linn and Hyde 1989, 17)

In conclusion, "Humanity cannot be cut adrift from its own biology, but neither is it enchained by it" (Rose et al. 1984). Researchers have been unable to identify or measure significant and unambiguous differences between male and female cognitive functions and behaviour. Sociobiology has been shown to be a blind alley into human nature by those more competent than this student (Kitcher 1985, Rose et al 1984). Even those researchers who favour the biological explanation acknowledge that biology seems to have little impact on cognitive functioning (Leder 1985, 304) and, despite the fact that the debate continues today, the cognitive equivalence of male and female pupils has largely been accepted since the turn of the century (Hacker 1983, 39).

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, the physical composition of an entity is by itself an inadequate basis for knowledge of its nature. Although the physical composition of male and female human beings differ, this is not in itself valid grounds on which to defend the notion of separate natures. Clear and unambiguous sex-linked patterns in cognition and action that are causally related to bodily or hormonal functions have not been identified in well over a century of vigorous research. There is currently no clear scientific proof for the cultural feminist notion that there is a separate female nature.

With reference to the impact of biology on women's separate nature, cultural feminists themselves are divided. McMillan, for example, supports the biological limitations surrounding childbirth as the source of a separate nature; Holmstrom, on the other hand, rejects any biological explanation of woman's nature in favour of socialization theories: "It seems then that there probably are not differences in male and female natures—so long as natures are understood to be biologically based and immutable" (Holmstrom 1982, 33). The liberal feminist position seems to be that any claims for a distinct female nature are rooted not in biology but in the power structures of patriarchal society. Liberal feminists support the position that men and women are two sexes within the same species, far more similar in nature than different. Insofar as they are studied under present conditions, it remains impossible to say whether male-female differences have intrinsic or extrinsic causes.

Cultural Theories

Culturally-Derived Sex-Linked Traits

Maccoby and Jacklin and others have also cast doubt on the validity of genderized personality traits that are not indubitably linked to biology, including aggression, power, and nurturing. Such traits, although not causally attributed to human physiology, are associated with physiology in that they spring from within a sex-category of the species rather than being a result or reflection of an individual's predisposition or existing social arrangements. For example, Lorenz's association of aggression with testosterone and Ruddick's association of nurturing with childbirth both presume the inevitability of an intrinsic drive associated with sex-category. However, even if one considers that there may be sex-linked traits, their manifestations are vague, situation-specific, and inconclusively tied to biology.[7]

Biological theories of gender differentiation neglect the contribution of society at large to the moulding of behaviour patterns and locate the mechanisms that produce gender inequalities at the micro level, within the individual. Biological theories suggest that, because of some unspecified internal mechanism, qualities or traits belonging to the essential nature of a man or woman will result, and males and females will consequently come to differ in thought, feeling, and behaviour. There is no clear and unequivocal evidence that biological differences provide an adequate foundation for separate natures.

Socialization

In locating the ambiguities implicit in the notion of socialization, this section circumvents the discussion of natures in the following four chapters. This results in the weakening of the argument presented below but permits me to uncover the pseudo-scientific use of the term 'socialization'.

Although natures are not anchored in biological differences, there is, however, another possible source that Mednick (1989) terms "deep socialization." Although new-born infants may not differ radically in thought, feeling, and behaviour, through the internaliza-

tion of societal values and expectations, adult men and women are described as coming to exhibit a sex-specific set of attributes. As with biological theories, the mechanics of the process are not detailed but are attributed to socialization. The socialization process is not necessarily understood as a cognitive one and, indeed, intuitively human beings seem to acquire numerous attitudes through osmosis, as it were, that seem illogical and even counter-productive once brought into the light of reason.

Many theories of socialization into gender roles—how boys and girls "fit into" their appropriate, socially determined roles and acquire suitably "masculine" or "feminine" traits and behaviours—have been suggested. It must be stated forthrightly that no one theory of socialization is universally accepted as *the* correct theory. Socialization theories range from immutable theories of fixed masculinity and femininity to the notion that sex roles are purely artificial: "The 'normal' sex roles that we learn to play from our infancy are no more natural than the antics of a transvestite" (Greer 1970, 29). However, current research, as outlined in the following section, emphasizes the active, rational participation of the individual in the socialization process. As pointed out above, however, there is a persistent belief in the noncognitive mechanisms of socialization in common usage and cultural feminism.

The liberal feminist position suggests that sex-role socialization can be an oppressive force that curbs self-expression and sets socially-appropriate limits on the behaviours of women and men. So-called feminine traits acquired through early socialization have frequently been seen, from this perspective, as counter-productive and potentially harmful for women (in the earlier works of Friedan [1963] and Greer [1970], for example). The most benign liberal interpretation is that femininity and masculinity are rather superficial expressions of congruent mental processes. A more trenchant analysis may suggest that femininity is no more than a role played to please men and "a male myth about the nature of femininity" (Spelman 1988, 69). Through education and 'consciousness-raising', it is seen to be possible for women to avoid or transcend the boundaries imposed by socialization and expand the alternatives open to them, from the liberal feminist standpoint. In a real sense, the 'woman's liberation' movement that began in the 1960s represented liberation from the stereotype of femininity that may be internalized through the socialization process.

That cultural and liberal feminists differ in stance is brought into focus by under-standing their attitudes to socialization. To cultural feminists, the femininity absorbed through socialization is a positive value (nurturing, connectivity, pacifism, eco-sensitivity, and emotionality are examples of the cultural feminine virtues) that ought to be developed, even exalted, rather than transcended (Tong 1993, 90). Although many liberal feminists retain the importance of these so-called feminine traits, they acknowledge their limiting aspects and encourage the development of so-called masculine virtues as well. For example, while recognizing the importance of caring, Mendus (1993) draws attention to its potential for conflict and oppression. Wollstonecraft urged women to acquire "manly virtues, or, more properly speaking, the attainment of those talents and virtues, the exercise of which ennobles the human character" (Wollstonecraft 1792 reprinted 1967, 33). Although she valued many of the traditional feminine virtues, she felt strongly that women ought not to be restricted to those virtues considered appropriate to her sex.

However, transcending femininity to a liberal feminist can mean, to the cultural feminist, the abandonment of woman's true role and nature. For example, "This access to a male-dominated culture may equally be felt to bring with it alienation, repression, division—a silencing of the 'feminine,' a loss of women's inheritance" (Belenky et al. 1986, 199). The processes of education and consciousness-raising that the liberal feminist hopes will impel women to question the self-limiting attitudes absorbed through their upbringing have no place in cultural feminism. In telling women that they can be 'more than' housewives and mothers, the liberal feminist seems to betray what cultural feminists portray to be the superior values of traditional femininity. In cultural feminist terms, liberal feminism encourages its followers to become 'little men'. Indeed, liberal feminists often equate feminine traits with traits exhibited by any minority—particularly any oppressed minority (Ackelsberg and Diamond 1987, 515; Kanter 1987).

Further, the relevance or immediacy of the culturally-appropriate trappings of femininity to the self or soul is open to question. It is possible that the superficial aspects of femininity—like manners of speech, personal adornment, traditional pass-times, and courtship behaviours—absorbed through socialization may be retained while the more central aspects limiting woman's potential to the home are rejected. For example, there are many current media examples of women who continue to wear makeup and feminine clothing while pursuing traditionally male high-powered careers. One has only to think of Hilary Clinton, Margaret Thatcher, Benazir Bhutto, and Marcia Clarke. Similarly, a 'feminine' manner of demeanour and speech has not prevented many women from attaining prominence in the predominantly male world of academia, though many may have felt the pressure to rid themselves of it.

Additionally, there is a largely unexplored possibility that femininity is a developmental stage, related to the biological pursuit of a mate. Early research into oestrogen therapy for menopausal women inferred that supplementary hormone treatments would restore an attractive femininity to tragically 'masculinized' menopausal women. At least some scientists and a proportion of North American society did not see many women over a certain age as feminine. Sociologists like Goffman and philosophers like Sartre suggest that we play a variety of roles and follow a variety of scripts in the presentation of self in everyday life. Sartre takes pains to emphasize that these roles are not the *self*. It is possible that femininity is a role: Indeed, there have been times in the experience of this student when she has consciously played that very role. And times when she has chosen not to.

Issues of the self are extremely complex issues that require more comprehensive treatment than they have received in feminist theory. We do not know how the self-concept is formed and sustained. To attribute the self to socialization alone, in this simplistic way, is an extreme example of Locke's *tabula rasa*. Even Locke himself allowed for predispositions on the part of the individual and emphasized the ability of the mind to act on experience (Tarnas 1991, 334, 340).

In search of a female nature, cultural feminist theorists tend to confound femaleness and femininity. Elderly women are indisputably female but have been culturally consigned

to sexual neutrality, even masculinity. Those of us women raised before the 1970s can remember being instructed in femininity by our parents and teachers. Elementary school girls were taught how to sit and walk in a feminine manner. Certain activities were regarded as unfeminine and discouraged. Some accepted these lessons and others scoffed at them. Education into femininity fails as an example of deep socialization largely inaccessible to the rational faculties. These lessons were not passively absorbed but the subject of lively debate by their subjects, even in a pre-Women's Liberation era. Indeed, the notion that sex-role are learned infers that they may be unlearned—as are may other lessons that have been inculcated in children (for example, early lessons that homosexuality is 'disgusting', that members of a particular religion are 'bad', that a particular political party is 'deluded', and so on, may be unlearned when countered by further learning). Rousseau's description of the education of a young girl, for example, emphasizes constraint, submission, and checks to behaviour: "This habitual restraint produces a docility which woman requires all her life long" (Rousseau 1974, 333). There would be no checks to behaviour if femininity were seamlessly and passively internalized. Rousseau describes not the cultivation or inculcation of a female nature but the forced imposition of a hegemonic overlay. Woman of every era have rejected aspects of femininity. It is tempting to posit that femininity lacks even the pretence to objectivity that 'woman's nature' claims and is, in fact, 'the way men want women to be'.

Despite the failure of a century of research to find clear-cut support for basing female cognitive style, traits, and behaviours on biology, the grassroots conviction is that there are essentially male and essentially female traits (Deaux and Kite 1987, 97; Hess and Ferree 1987, 12; Mednick 1989, 1122). For example, "Parents—particularly mothers—believe in sex-stereotyped ability more strongly today than they did in the mid-1970s..." (Keegan 1989). It is far from unusual to read in the popular press that:

> Boys are competitive; girls are cooperative. Boys often prefer individual work; girls do better in groups. Boys seek leadership roles; girls are more willing to be led. Boys believe that they earn high grades, while girls more often attribute their success to luck. (Keegan 1989)

Note that the author uses a qualifier ("often") only once. Gender differences are listed as though it were a fact that *all* boys and *all* girls possess these traits. This emphasis on deep socialization (or socialization largely inaccessible to the rational faculties) seems to be derived from the sociological theories of Marx and Durkheim and is not scientific, but ideological, in origin:

> This unremitting pressure to which the child is subjected is the very pressure of the social milieu which tends to fashion him in its own image, and of which parents and teachers are merely the representatives and intermediaries. (Durkheim 1964, 6)

It is important, for the argument pursued herein, to emphasize at this point that distinct sex roles, distinct feminine and masculine traits, and distinct male and female behaviours have not been scientifically linked to physiology. Yet, if these differences are to

provide an adequate underpinning for a separate female nature, then they must be shown to be 'more than' arbitrary social classifications developed to serve, for example, the functional operation of society or the needs of men. Those who cling to the notion of a separate female nature consequently turn to the 'soft' social sciences, in the absence of hard data, in search of the distinct female essence or inherent character, the internal disposition or tendency to act in a certain way as a result of nonrational forces.

The major theoretical approaches to socialization gleaned from the literature (Mackie 1983; Gaskell and McLaren 1987; Hess and Ferree 1987; Goslin 1969; Block 1984; Denzin 1977; Glover 1987; Hewitt 1976; Maccoby and Jacklin 1974), are identification theory, social learning theories, and cognitive development theories.

Socialization is, "A complex learning process through which individuals acquire the knowledge, skills, and motivations for participation in social life" (Mackie 1983, 83). Additionally, "Socialization implies that people acquire traits through internalization" (Epstein 1988, 76) and, "Psychological differences between men and women are due to differences in their socialization" (Holmstrom 1982, 30). In contrast to biological theories of male-female differentiation, socialization does not depict the differences between the sexes as determined in any of the physiological ways outlined in the section above: Sex differences are not something individuals are born with, or develop automatically as they grow up as a result of their physiological nature, but something individuals must learn in order to participate in social life.

Because there is remarkable consistency in the way individuals come to acquire common knowledge, skills, and dispositions, some may postulate that free will is not in evidence and that there is an inevitable or deterministic aspect of human. Thus,

> The individual is perceived as responding in more or less automatic and stable ways, as a consequence of prior experiences, to configurations of stimuli coming both from the external environment and from within the learner himself. (Goslin 1969, 3)

Socialization involves learning 'rules' or guidelines for socially acceptable behaviour (for example, a 'rule' might be that it is socially acceptable for women to take primary responsibility for childrearing). However relaxed many of our social rules may be, it is an inescapable fact that conformity to the norms of society is pervasive: "Societies and groups would not be possible without an extraordinary degree of conformity by group members to commonly held expectations regarding what constitute appropriate behaviours, attitudes, and values" (Goslin 1969, 2).

Of course, the concept of normative behaviour was first arrived at by observing that individuals tend to follow certain behaviour patterns, so this is a circular or tautological argument. Further the 'society' which seems to impose these rules is a reification that seems more closely bound to theories of the social mind or collective consciousness than to a 'scientific' investigation of a mental process. [8] The 'how' of the socialization process has not been resolved thus far. Indeed, the mechanisms of gender socialization through which we

acquire a degree of conformity to commonly-held gender expectations is a matter of theory. The most influential theories of socialization are presented below.

Identification Theory

Identification theory states that "becoming male or female occurs at one fell swoop, once the crucial identifying link has been formed. In addition, they assume that this global process does not require reinforcement" (Mackie 1983, 107).

Like the biological theory above, the identification theory does not rely on learning or thought. Rather than being a gradual process requiring observation, imitation, reinforcement, and so on, children acquire their gender role and identity suddenly and, once a gender identity is acquired, it is fixed for life. Elements of Freud's thought, as well as that of Chodorow (1974 and 1978), are related to identification theory.

Unlike the biological theory, identification theory posits that individuals are born gender-neutral and that it is only through spontaneous identification with the correct parent that we become 'masculine' or 'feminine' and display the specific corresponding sets of traits and behaviours. Although an external agent, in the sense of a parent or parent-substitute, is necessary to the process, identification theory supports the idea of a woman's distinct nature because the attributes of femininity are internalized and become an inherent, fixed aspect of the individual's psychology. In Freudian terms, these deeply-embedded subconscious elements elude consciousness and are inaccessible to rationality and reflexion.

Scientifically speaking, identification theory fell out of favour decades ago and, consequently, it is particularly interesting to note its cultural feminist renaissance. There is no scientific basis of support for identification theory. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine how it may be proved. As discussed above, the large body of research reviewed by Maccoby and Jacklin refutes the existence of male and female sets of traits, capabilities, and behaviours—whether acquired through the process of identification or biologically determined. The same arguments that apply to biological theories also defeat identification theory. According to Mackie, "We can conclude that the proposition that girls learn to be feminine by identifying with their mothers and boys learn to be masculine by identifying with their fathers is far too simplistic" (Mackie 1983, 107). I argue in the closing chapters of this dissertation that identification theory has been resurrected to serve the ideological purposes of cultural feminism.

Social Learning Theories and Behaviourism

According to social learning theorists, individuals develop their gender roles and traits gradually, "through the influence of a wide variety of models" (Mackie 1983, 108), because there are incentives from the external social environment to learn these roles. Like identification theory, social learning theories are noncognitive and occur, without involving individual judgement, through the mechanisms of behaviourism, associationism, and

hedonism. Thus, should this set of theories be validated, they would support the belief that women, under these current social arrangements that support sex differences, have a separate nature and will continue to have a separate nature until such time as social arrangements for the sexes change (with a corresponding and inevitable change in the socialization process for women). This type of global change is highly unlikely, given the noncognitive character of socialization posited by the social learning theories of socialization (this criticism is also discussed by Tong 1993, 100, 165).

Behaviourism discounts all bases for action except observable phenomena (Mackie 1983, 108) and is strictly non-cognitive, insisting that science "rid itself of psychic fictions" (Kratochwill and Bijou 1987, 139) like thought and feeling. Watson stated that "the human person was in fact a machine" that could be programmed to become anything that the scientist wanted the child to become (Ehrenreich and English 1978, 203-204): industrial worker, doctor, phobic, manager and so on. In other words, the socialization process was described as occurring completely outside the control or understanding of the child. The child was seen to 'automatically' or 'unconsciously' perform behaviours, providing the correct stimulus and reinforcement were used, and cooperatively take its appropriate place within the social order.

Associationism refers to the stimulus-response link (also called operant conditioning) that is central to the behaviourist notion of learning. Cognition plays no part in operant conditioning. Individuals will, with absolute certainty, display certain behaviours as a result of prior experience "automatically" like Pavlov's dog. The assumption is that all behaviour has an antecedent cause: consequently it cannot be held that individuals act in pursuit of future rewards, through free will, on random impulse, because of their own desires, or for any other reason outside of a causal chain extending back into the past. Interestingly, in terms of this dissertation, Kitcher refers to this causal sequence as the "order of nature" (1985, 409).

Hedonism sees the motivation for behaviour in terms of rewards and punishments. Rewarded behaviour will increase while behaviour that is punished will decrease and eventually be extinguished. This concept rests on Hume's concept of human nature, that individuals act to maximize pleasure and reduce pain.

These three concepts (behaviourism, associationism, and hedonism) provide a possible mechanism by which socialization 'works'. Feminine behaviour is rewarded and, thus, perpetuated in the following example from a college-level sexuality textbook:

> Very early parents reinforce the behaviours deemed acceptable to their child's sex with such remarks as "What a good, sweet girl!" or "What a big, strong boy!" accompanied by smiles and nods of approval and pleasure. There is no doubt that most, if not all, the forces of socialization in our culture...encourage different behaviours in boys and girls. The resulting sets of traits are what we call masculinity and femininity. (Greenberg 1989, 375)

Note the inevitability implied by the use of the adjective "resulting" in the final sentence: a set of specific feminine traits will result 'automatically' or 'unconsciously' because of early socialization. Boys and girls are not described as learning social expectations for girls and boys in the same way as they learn other ideas in the factual or moral realms. There is an inevitability implied here that is absent from notions of, for example, moral training and the inculcation of content areas in an educational context.

By and large, the conditioning model of socialization is the model favoured by cultural feminists. For example, "In view of his own *conditioning*, we have little reason to believe that Plato would perceive sex stereotyping..." (Martin 1985, 24); "The total degradation of women brought about by brutalization and *conditioning*" (Grimshaw 1986, 126); "If stories portray women as irrational and immoral, will not students of both sexes *come to believe* that males are superior and females inferior human beings?" (Martin 1985, 26); Daly refers to socialized women as "fembots" unable to think for themselves (Daly 1979); Grimshaw draws attention to, though does not support, the strand in feminist theory that depicts women as "totally victimized, conditioned or indoctrinated" (Grimshaw 1986, 134) and "...a state in which one is a mere pawn, a non-person, a puppet who is simply manipulated by strings pulled by other people" (Grimshaw 1986, 158).

Operant conditioning ("wherein a consequent stimulus strengthens a class of behaviour on subsequent similar occasions" [Kratochwill and Bijou 1987, 138-139]) is central to the social learning perspective: "A viable explanation of sex role acquisition [must demonstrate] that parents and other socializers differently reinforce and punish boys and girls in accordance with sex-role standards" (Mackie 1983, 109). In fact, Maccoby and Jacklin conclude that the sexes are not trained very differently when young, thus calling into question the social learning emphasis on differential reward-punishment between the sexes (Maccoby and Jacklin 1974, 362).

This non-cognitive view of the socialization process is simplistic and ultimately unsatisfactory (Mackie 1983, 110). The philosophy, for thus Skinner (1974, 3) describes it, of behaviourism has fallen into disfavour today. It is hardly necessary to defend what has become a truism: behaviourism negates human dignity and free choice—at very least it muddies, rather than clears, the waters and avoids addressing these issues with the seriousness they deserve (see, for example, Stevenson 1974, Rose *et al.* 1984, Kitcher 1985). The noncognitive theories of socialization delineate a process over which individuals have no control, that takes place in childhood and is thereafter cast in stone. Kitcher restates this perspective: "Desires and intentions are imposed upon us and...we are, in consequence, not free. For the cultural determinist, people are so plastic that their goals are entirely the product of the environment in which they are reared" (Kitcher 1984, 410).

This interpretation of gender acquisition neglects the resilience of individual differences, personality, and personal autonomy. In fact and in experience, social learning theories of socialization have not been proved correct: women "are not mere captives of the definitions of other people" who will inevitably be subsumed by their socially-sanctioned gender roles (Shibutani 1961, 309). Wartime experiments in mind control using behaviourist

and other (even more insidious) methods demonstrated the resilience and obduracy of the human mind: It is simply not that easy to 'program' human beings (Ulrich 1966). Theories of internalization deemphasize, even ignore, the complexities involved in creating the self—how we become who we are.

It is clear that the social-learning theory of socialization is at the opposite pole to the biological theory. Whereas biological theorists propose that sex roles and traits exist prior to experience, social learning theorists believe we come into the world as *tabulae rasae* to be written upon by experience. Such a polarization avoids considering the possibility that the truth may reside in the linking of these two approaches. This is the nature/nurture controversy in a nutshell and obviously it will not be resolved here. However, although not 'natural' in the sense of inborn, deeply socialized traits and behaviours become, as it were, second nature to those who favour identification and social learning theories of socialization.

Cognitive-Development

The behaviouristic basis of social learning theories has largely been replaced by a cognitive basis, though behaviourism lingers in the popular imagination. Social science has rehabilitated "internal mental processes" (Hilgard 1987, 422).

To the cognitive-development theorist, the learner strives to make sense of the environment by "making choices, seeking out new roles, and deciding as well as being unconsciously induced to acquire new skills or alter behaviour" (Goslin 1969, 3). The entire process is seen as a cognitive and active process rather than a passive one. The child is perceived as socializing itself (Kolhberg 1966) because gender is seen as one way in which the young child can organize his or her world. It provides a taxonomic organizing category into which all children can fit and on which they can build an initial form of identity (Kohlberg 1969, 431-432).

Through observation, the child builds a notion of what 'boy' and 'girl' means, or what is appropriate behaviour, dress, and so on for each sex: peers and the media are the primary reference group (Mackie 1983, 111-112), not parents (Bandura 1969, 215). The process is selective and reflexive because "Observers do not function as passive video-tape recorders which register indiscriminantly" (Bandura 1969, 215 and 249-250). Further, cognitive theories of socialization accommodate changes in socialization patterns and acceptable sex roles because they allow the individual an active role in the selection and rejection of behaviours to emulate (Bandura 1969, 250).

Individuals do not develop a self-concept in isolation. The process of socialization helps form the self-concept, as do notions of gender. For example, the question "Who am I?" may first be answered in terms of sex. The centrality of gender to self-image and the perception of socialization as operating under some degree of personal control is a question largely ignored by researchers (Maccoby and Jacklin 1974, 360 support this statement), however, the centrality of gender to personal identity that Kohlberg postulates for young children seems to diminish, in many cases, as the child grows. This may be an argument for

believing that the gender-centred self-concept is a developmental stage that may be outgrown. Further, a cognitive view of socialization is compatible with the liberal feminist belief that the accuracy of the traditional feminine stereotype can "be disconfirmed by the actions of a target" and that "this disconfirmation feed[s] back to the original belief system" (Deaux and Kite 1987, 106).

Cognitive theories of socialization do not support the idea that there is a separate female nature, as traditionally conceived and elaborated in the following four chapters. They do not endorse the notion that woman's nature is innate, fixed, and immutable. The sex roles and behaviours that individuals adopt or reject are clearly not innate but derived from the outside world; they remain external in the sense that they do not, of necessity, become an inherent, non-negotiable, and intractable part of the self-concept (although there remains the likelihood that individuals vulnerable to social pressure may 'buy into' their feminine role more than some think they ought to [see Friedan 1964, for example]). Maccoby and Jacklin illustrate this approach as follows: "It is reasonable to believe that 'masculinity' and 'femininity' are essential self-defining attributes for some people but not for others" (Maccoby and Jacklin 1974, 360). For example, single fathers have been documented as expressing so-called feminine traits despite their traditional upbringing (Risman in Steinem 1992, 279). Above all, socialization is seen as a process that is amenable to rationality and can be over-ridden, although with varying degrees of difficulty.

Nature Vs. Nurture

Until this point there has been little mention of the nature vs. nurture controversy. Indeed, the topic has been avoided largely because it is without resolution, given the present state of scientific and philosophical investigation. In presenting the human being as developing in accordance with either inborn tendencies or external influences, the nature/nurture controversy forces an unrealistic dichotomy of mutually exclusive choices. It would seem that any hope for an answer lies in a multiplicative relationship between the two whereby innate predispositions are influenced and given or denied opportunity for expression by the environment. Further, the nature vs. nurture controversy is a red herring in the pursuit of human nature for the following reason: Human nature cannot be divorced from the conviction that there are certain innate dispositions and behaviours that would remain constant although the environment changed (this statement is supported in the following four chapters). Thus, those who espouse the cause of human nature are logically bound to accept that human beings are not *tabulae rasae*, infinitely malleable and without limits as to their social arrangements and personal capacities. However, this is not to say that a belief in human nature necessarily denies the vital importance of individual personality, social interaction, education, power structures, socialization, and other potent forces that impact on the individual.

As discussed above, the nature/nurture controversy is significant in socialization theory. Theories of deep (noncognitive) socialization propose that the infant is *tabula rasa* and may be conditioned to internalize societal norms (for example, identification theory and

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social learning theories of sex-role socialization). Thus these theories seem to place more value on culture. However, although the infant may arrive in the world without an innate female nature, feminine traits are acquired early, without cognition, and thereafter are fixed. Thus, as described above, these theories are more easily aligned to some elements of the notion that women share a separate nature, although a traditional view proposes that a nature is innate.

On the other hand, cognitive theories of socialization place the emphasis on self-socialization as a negotiated cognitive process that continues through life. These theories place more emphasis on an innate human nature that is very loosely formulated and common to all human beings, or on the notion that there is no human nature as traditionally conceived. Rather than reflecting current social norms, the innate dispositions in this formulation of human nature may simply be the very basic Kantian drive to understand through categorization, the Platonic drive to rationality, and the twentieth-century need for understanding the self, combined with the type of role affiliation posited by Goffman, and the reciprocal construction of the self hypothesized by Mead and the social interactionist school.

However, whether innate or deeply socialized early in life, human nature once fixed is difficult or impossible to change and political and social arrangements must take its boundaries into consideration. Cognitive theories of socialization imply a much less rigidly specific human nature that consists more of mental models and a certain affinity for the type of liberal virtues that will be discussed later in this dissertation. Cognitive theories of gender acquisition do not lend themselves to the support of a distinct female nature, as natures and female nature have traditionally been defined. Female traits, cognitions, and behaviours would be acquired through interaction, self-selection, and negotiation; they would be amenable to change or extinction through the rational faculties; they would not be fixed for life; they would not be uniformly and universally adopted; and so on. As emphasized in the following chapters, these characteristics are not congruent with the ratification of a shared 'woman's nature'.

The notion of human nature similarly incorporates flexibility in the notions of 'second nature' (meaning the absorption of excellent models such that they become an integral part of one's self, as though they were part of one's nature from birth) and of acting against one's nature. The philosophy of education is replete with exhortations to perfect one's nature through a lengthy and arduous process of refinement and the acquisition of wisdom. Theology supports this transcendence of the natural state through faith, grace, adherence to the offices of the Church, and *imitatio Cristi*. The evolving meanings of natural and artificial in the educational context have been explicated by Bantock (1986). This line of investigation, however interesting, is tangential to my main argument and must receive short shrift for the following reason. Natures, including human nature, as traditionally understood and as presented in this dissertation, are the 'givens'. In other words, an entity's nature is fixed and present from its origins. Thus Lorenz, for example, could suggest that the superficial overlay of civilization may be shattered violently at any moment by the eruption of the true or basic aggressive human nature. Worded differently, Lorenz's suggestion is that

the civilized appearance of mankind is second nature and the aggressive baseline is mankind's basic nature. Second nature has traditionally, particularly in the Western tradition, been held up as a model for human beings that would allow the transcendence of base nature. However, as presented in Chapter 1, Bantock points out that second nature has always been understood as artificial, although without the negative connotations that the word has, for example, for Rousseau: "The delineations of second natures which transcend the raw, primitive impulses of unregenerate man" (Bantock Vol. 2 1986, 350). In the context of this dissertation, from a liberal feminist viewpoint basic human nature is unsexed and femininity shares the attributes of a second nature.[9] Femininity, as presented earlier in this appendix, is considered as a social or normative ideal held up for young women to emulate and is indisputably a learned attribute that ought not to be mistaken for an intrinsic female nature (Richards 1980, 156).

Conclusion

At the beginning of this appendix, it was suggested that, if it should prove convincing that women as a category possess significant sex- or biologically-based differences in psychological, cognitive and physical abilities, my thesis might flounder because women could then be said in truth to possess a unique and separate nature from men distinct from any ideological considerations.

Categorical sex differences in psychology and behaviour do not emerge unequivocally and with replicable reliability. Further, it is impossible to isolate a male and female human being from all social contacts, in what is termed the 'forbidden experiment', in order to test for a priori sex differences. Even cultural feminists admit that "no research has yet been done that shows conclusively that being female affects the way one learns" (Martin 1985, 19). If, in the future, differences between the abilities and traits of men and women are found, the cultural feminist perspective of a separate female nature may still remain unresolved: it must be proven that the differences are so significant that the female nature, being a "distinct essence" "inherent" and an "internal disposition(s)" cannot be seen to be continuous or blended with male nature; cannot be impermanent or accidental; cannot refer to the appearances of a thing (for example, how women appear under those current social arrangements known as the patriarchy) but to its underlying, unadulterated or real self.

In observing women in the world around us, it would be disingenuous to avoid the conclusion that men and women seem to act rather differently one from another in many of the situations in which we encounter them. However, science and social science do not establish that observed differences between the sexes are inevitable (in other words, universal in all situations and at all times) or biologically determined because, as traditionally conceived, natures are not amenable to scientific proof. The non-cognitive socialization theories cannot rest on a firm scientific foundation. Cognitive theories of gender socialization emphasize the voluntary and negotiable aspects of taking on or rejecting the attributes of femininity and locate female nature in the mechanisms of social control[10] which could always be other than what they are. In other words, a cognitive perspective on

socialization views what superficially, or from a certain perspective, seems to be a distinct female nature as rather "the product of arbitrary social stereotypes that could be changed if society itself changes" (Maccoby and Jacklin 1974, 1).

Even those cultural feminist theorists who are highly critical of the liberal tradition point out that "the human sciences do not constitute a reservoir of factual knowledge, uncontaminated by values" (Jagger 1983, 21). Rather, science and social science are based on a variety of models that have, at their core, a largely unstated and unexamined theory of human nature. If "the meaning of a construct is determined only by the theoretical network in which it participates" (Kagan 1989, 35), it seems as though it may be impossible to resolve the question of woman' separate nature scientifically. There is no science that is not *political* science: In other words, science is not removed from the total complex of relations between human beings in society.

Thus far, the contention that woman's separate nature has not been proved *per se* rests unshaken by the evidence, so Chapter 3 proceeds to demonstrate that much of the cultural feminist theory of woman's essential nature rests on a pre-Enlightenment basis that is possibly ideological rather than on what could be termed scientifically-verifiable reality.

There is one further avenue of exploration for the origins of a separate female nature unaddressed in this appendix. Cultural feminists have suggested that this female nature may develop automatically, in a similar way to the way they suggest that socialization operates but independent of exterior forces, through the myriad of unique female experiences derived from the occupancy of a female body and the reactions of the totality of the encountered world to that female body. This they term 'the lived experience of the body'. Because this theory has not been investigated scientifically but philosophically, it will be addressed in Chapter 6.

ENDNOTES

1. The notion of a scientifically-verifiable reality has a complex history of its own and has been repeatedly called into question in an epistemological context. Kagan, for example, proposes that science will "approach, but never reach, the least adulterated form of the phenomena whose understanding is being pursued" (1989, 50). This debatable and provisional proposal is acknowledged at this point, however the problematic nature of certain knowledge and scientifically-verifiable reality cannot preclude *per se* a search for female nature in empirical phenomena.

2. Regrettably, a serious study of the theological implications for human nature and women's nature lies outside the capabilities of this student and is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, with Clement and Origen, this student believes that philosophy is a divine gift that informs and serves theology such that the two are not entirely separate undertakings (Burkill 1971, 66, 69).

3. Thus, as Jan Morris (the travel writer who described his sex change in *Conundrum*) points out, those who do not believe in a separate female nature are forced to conclude that the transsexual is simply deluded or insane.

4. To give one example, in a questionnaire administered by the Commonwealth Fund and Harris and Associates, only 5% of both men and women responded that they felt depressed "most of the time". However, the findings were summarized as follows: "Survey results indicate that depression and low self-esteem are pervasive problems for American women" (Sommers 1994, 247).

5. Although not a reputable source for academic research, these newspaper quotations are important because they demonstrate the tenacity with which the general public equates females and males with sets of separate genderized traits.

6. It has even been thought that women have become more beautiful due to natural selection (those who appeal to the opposite sex have more chance of reproducing and passing along their physical attributes). Since our concept of beauty could be said to rest, to an extent, on the physical differences between the sexes, it could consequently be said that women and men are becoming *more* different due to natural selection.

7. As will be developed in the concluding chapters of this dissertation, genderized personality traits seem to be culturally derived rather than inevitably tied to the organism. For example, biologically-speaking it cannot be held that women are predisposed not to want high-level jobs and, thus, are rejecting them or failing to pursue them (Winter has concluded that career-oriented women and career-oriented men exhibit the same power needs [1988, 512]) because that would be counter to direct observation of our contemporary world. Similarly, it has not been substantiated that women are genetically equipped for nurturing, caring, and emotionality and hence ought to devote their lives to the domestic sphere. To posit a gene or specific brain structure for every observed behaviour is rationally indefensible ("One is surely not at liberty to invent genes with arbitrary and complex properties for the convenience of theories" [Rose et al. 1984, 135]).

8. I believe that Emile Durkheim's sociology has been extremely influential in the development of cultural feminist theory. Unfortunately, the length of this dissertation requires that I omit my interpretation of Durkheim's notion of the collective mind as it builds on a classical notion of natures.

9. Richards suggests that a list of feminine attributes contains "what is thought *proper* for women as opposed to men" and "what it is thought that the sexes *ought* to be like" (Richards 1980, 156-157). This supports the argument presented in Chapter 4 of this dissertation, whereby a traditional or Classical notion of an entity's nature incorporates normative notions of the perfection of an entity's nature *viz.* its proper purpose. Thus it might be supposed, as suggested earlier in this appendix, that femaleness (or female nature) and femininity have been confounded in the traditional notion of woman's nature.

10. For example, in Durkheim's unremitting pressure of the social milieu.

APPENDIX II: THE CONCEPT OF 'NATURES'

This appendix takes a close look at 'natures' in pursuit of a deeper understanding of the term as it has been used in traditional philosophy.

If a close examination of natures, as in 'an entity's nature,' is to support the contention that that cultural feminist theory of woman's nature rests on a pre-Enlightenment ideological base rather than on a scientifically-verifiable description of reality, this dissertation must convince its readers of the following: First, that all theories of nature are far from straightforward and are, in fact, ideology-based. Second, that the cultural feminist position described in Chapter 1 is congruent with a definition of woman's nature. Third, that the biological, identification, and social learning theories of sex differentiation (described in Appendix I) have been incorporated into this ideologically-driven myth of woman's separate nature. This appendix examines the notion of natures in more detail to expose some of the fundamental assumptions and difficulties implicit in defining the term and to support the first assertion above, *viz.* that all theories of human nature are far from straightforward. The ideological base of nature theories is addressed at the beginning of Chapter 2, and the second and third assertions above are supported in Chapter 4.

Defining 'Nature'

The process of analytic philosophy rests on the hermeneutic that terms must be broken down into their component concepts[1] in order for clear understanding and reasonable dialectic to be possible: It has been suggested that the business of philosophy is to study meaning in the linguistic sense (Ayer 1956, 8; Joad 1939, 254-256; Hospers calls the meaning of words the "vestibule of philosophy" [Hospers 1956, 86]). Questions as to the nature of something may be considered in the light of an investigation into the meaning of what it is to be that thing. Questions as to the nature of human beings, of men, or of women may be considered appropriate to an investigation into the meaning of what it is to be a human being, a man, or a woman (Ayer 1956, 7-8).

It is possible that scientists (and feminists) may, in fact, be arguing semantically over the meaning of female nature because they take it for granted that they are using the term to mean the same thing. Few feminist (or other [Berry 1986, ix]) thinkers have taken the analytic step of designating clearly what they are looking for in a nature and why they wish to find whatever it is that they are looking for. The following section, then, turns to a consideration of the meaning of a nature, examined from the point of view of those who hold to the validity of such a concept.

Definitions

Above all, natures have to do with definitions. Indeed, common usage makes the link explicit: "**definition** 2: a word or phrase expressing the essential nature of a person or thing" (*Webster's*). Thus, a definition is a type of shorthand for the nature of an entity.[2] A definition could also be seen as closely connected to or depending on an entity's essential attributes (Fromm and Xirau 1968, 4-5). The concept of essence will be addressed below.

Logically, it would seem as though the point of departure of any definition is the external object as it is perceived through the senses. A definition must describe the external object as it is experienced. Therefore, a definition of an external object that does not correspond in any way to apparent empirical realities is invalid by definition. However, there are undeniable complexities involved defining something so that this seemingly ordinary act becomes a very complex epistemological one. Simply perceiving an object without cognition does not lead directly to its correct definition, for appearance and reality can differ, for example (Ayers summarizes these problems 1956, 84-133; Hospers 1956, 86-214).[3]

The act of defining is of particular significance philosophically. According to a very basic source, the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, "The problems of definition are constantly recurring in philosophical discussion, although there is a widespread tendency to assume that they have been solved..." (Edwards 1967). In a very fundamental sense, naming something can be considered in the same light as defining it. Nott points out that naming is a primitive form of classification, as when Adam named the animals, and draws attention to the idea that naming, defining, and classifying facts, data, and things is becoming increasingly complex:

> The philosopher alludes to the human data but largely ignores difficulties in isolating them and contraditions in defining them...Moreover, in [even] the strictest sciences there is always some kind of pre-selection of what is interesting and relevant. For instance sciences have a taxonomical stage... [and] the principle of selection depends on a structure of relevance, a formal relation of some kind detected among the particular features; and the "data" themselves are never absolutely "given", as they might appear to the abstractly logical observer. Interest, general and particular, enters in to the matter and produces choice...Obviously it is going to be more difficult in the description of human "nature" or "behaviour" to leave out personal bias, or the more deceptive bias of "schools", let alone to decide among phenomena, what is what. (Nott 1970, 58-59)

Although there are positive aspects to defining even beyond the linguistic goals of accurate symbol transmission and the philosophical goals of cognizance, the act of definition has connotations that can be seen as somewhat less positive, as well. To define is inextricable from precisely delimiting, setting the limits of, something:

> This [constraint and limitation] is a standard understanding of the meaning of
> 'nature'. The nature of x is what makes it x and not y: simultaneously it is its
> nature that prevents it being y. It is literally a matter of definition; to define is
> to establish a limit or demarcate a boundary. (Berry 1986, 104)

In a sense, to define what an entity *is* and how that entity will behave is to gain some small measure of control over it. If we cannot define an entity, we are at a loss and we do not know how to respond to it appropriately. Further, the act of definition can be an invasive one. Bacon advocated "vexing" nature in order to expose what it *is*, how it behaves and, consequently, understand it. Entities can be taken apart, broken down into composite parts, placed in various environments, and subjected to stress (even inanimate objects are put through 'stress tests'—for example, aeroplane structures; concepts can similarly be 'stressed' through dialectic and debate). Again, a definition is necessary so we can label; we label so we can understand and so we can communicate our common understanding about an entity. By labelling, we can 'pin down' an entity and know something about it in order to treat it appropriately.[4] These power-associated aspects of defining are so particularly vulnerable to a cultural feminist critique of reason that it is tempting, at this point, to abandon my own bias in favour of the liberal perspective on reason (i.e., that it is a neutral tool) and embark on an exegesis of the inseverable connection between definition and oppression. Such an undertaking would be a fruitful area for future research.

There are unresolved problems in 'knowing' that have a history in that aspect of philosophy known as epistemology. Regretfully, due to this complexity and to my inexperience in this area, the following section remains jejune and incomplete. Further complicating the issue is the large variety of epistemological frameworks (for example, skepticism, phenomenology, nominalism, etc.), each with its own set of premises. Ayer, for example, stresses the difficulties in rebutting the skeptical stance that we can know nothing (Ayer 1956). My purpose here can only be to draw attention to some of the problematic elements underlying what seems to be the commonplace task of definition.

In science, one defines an entity in relationship to sense data (appearance, composition, and observed behaviour) but definitions do not rest firmly on sensory apprehensions alone. For example, it is possible to define an imaginary being that is inaccessible to the senses. Consequently, it cannot be said that definitions are restricted to an enumeration of what can be perceived about an entity through the senses. Further, the unreliability of sense data has been remarked by philosophers; for example, Aristotle (1963, 70-71), Descartes (1971, 62, 75), and Hume (1969, 132). In fact, definitions seem closer to the standardized, intangible 'mental image' that we have of an entity than to external reality. Thus, the definition of a bird seems to involve a mental image of a sparrow rather than an ostrich or penguin, though both are categorized as birds (Hirsch calls these prototypical images "an essential feature of our mental life" [Hirsch 1988, 50-60]).

Empirical knowledge of an entity (in other words, what we *know about* an entity) may *not* necessarily be the entity itself. Some philosophers suggest that we seem to be able

to know some things about objects and ideas, but not those ideas or objects themselves (for example, Joad 1939 and Hospers 1956). When we describe an object, we refer to sense data that 'belong to' or are associated with an object. Therefore, perhaps all we can know about that object is its description. Some descriptors that belong to an object are significant (Joad calls these qualities "class words," Hospers "defining characteristics," and Dennet "essential" [Dennett 1995, 36]), while others are "accidents" (Joad 1939, 305) or what Hospers (1956) calls "accompanying characteristics": Whatever makes an object that type of object is the quality it and only those other objects in the category have in common and, as a corollary, that same quality differentiates this object from other objects not in the same category. Owens, for example, describes Aristotle proceding from "scattered individuals," or indeed houses or other external things, to the concept of their nature by abstracting away temporal and spatial conditions so their common nature, "the kind of thing an individual is," is discernable to the intellect (Owens 1992, 140-142).

According to Hospers (1956), because of the open texture of language it is notoriously difficult to separate defining from accompanying characteristics (or "accidents"). For example, if a dog is defined as a four-legged furry domestic animal that barks, what would we call a 'dog' with three legs? Barking might be a defining characteristic, except that seals also bark. To use Locke's example, would we have to agree that a certain indefinite number of accompanying characteristics of gold add up to a defining characteristic, in the absence of which a substance would no longer be gold? (Locke 1959, Vol. II, 71). There are more problems here than there are answers but it can be seen that a definition has both inclusive and exclusive qualities, and that it requires a judgement of significance to separate substantial qualities from accidents.

Further, the classifications into which entities are sorted by their defining characteristics are not derived from external nature[5] but nature provides the raw material that makes classification possible through cognition, in what Hospers terms its "regularly recurring combinations of characteristics" (Hospers 1956, 20).[67] In epistemological terms, things like a being's nature are concepts, and it is reasonable to suggest that these sort of things elude direct sensory perception (for example, "As abstracted they cannot be sensibly perceived or imagined, though they are always known in a sensible image" [Owens 1992, 153]). Concept empiricism holds that all concepts arise from experience, concept rationalism suggests that "we do have some concepts which are either innate or somehow a part of the fundamental structure of the mind" (Hospers 1956, 87).

A common method of defining what something is, is by stating what it is *not*. When a large group of entities is divided into subcategories, the emphasis is on the difference between the two things (although there may be more similarities than differences). This seems to be a derivation from the second of the logical *Laws of Thought*, enumerated by Joad (1939, 142; though derived from Aristotle [see Aristotle 1963, 58-59, for example]) as follows:

(1) Laws of Identity — What ever is, is.

(2) Laws of Contradiction — Nothing can both be and not be.

(3) Laws of the Excluded Middle — Everything must either be or not be.

In other words, the Laws of Thought deny the empirical reality that, in nature (meaning the natural world around us) entities have no definitions and there are no clear boundaries. Further, we ignore ambiguities occurring in nature and easily accessible to the senses. In language, an artificial system, boundaries are clearly drawn that have no reality in nature. For example, in defining 'hot' we reject the qualities inherent in something 'cold' because everything must either be hot or not be hot: In nature, a continuum runs between hot and cold, and there is a whole range of temperature wherein it is difficult to say where hot ends and cold begins. On a cold day, a heat pump can still extract warmth from the air, for example. By implication, the Laws of Thought require that hot and cold are defined in opposition one to the other. Thus, as Aristotle confirms, logic tends to define some things in terms of opposites: this thing is an X, this other thing is *not* an X (Aristotle 1963, 150-153). Further, these opposites are paired (hot 'goes with' cold) in a sense that they never are in nature. In the case of entities without opposites, an opposite can be manufactured with the aid of the Law of the Excluded Middle. For example, a tree could be defined in opposition to that which is *not* a tree.

Concepts like opposite are difficult to trace to their origins.[8] Riley attributes the genesis of these dualities to Pythagoras who linked them "without explanation," but Allen and Philips suggest that they date back at least to the opposition of the four elements noted by Anaximander (Riley 1988, 25; Allen 1985, 17; Philips 1973, 573) . It is also interesting that Plato and other early philosophers attribute to opposites the life-giving generation of all things (Plato 1951, 17; Allen 1985, 19). Pythagoras was seeking a geometrical structure in nature. In other words, the idea of opposites is predicated on the notion of order. Although order in the universe is not clearly written but characterized by ambiguities, complexities, even the type of chaos that arises as a result of natural disasters, certainly it is not impossible to conceive of an imposed structure arising from what Kant would term "the highest legislation of nature...our understanding" (Kant 1902, 81). The idea that nature has a ordered structure accessible to humanity, particularly through the mathematical models of geometry, coupled with the mystical, creative power of Plato's generative opposites, is an interesting one that deserves a more complete treatment than given here but the subject resurfaces briefly in Chapter 5 discussion of Natural Law. For these present purposes, it is sufficient to point out that defining opposites, as artificial (in the sense of being human creations) dualisms have no *a priori* basis in nature, in which the continuum is more commonly observed. As Bleier states,

> The dualistic mode defines science itself, describes and prescribes participants as well as objects of study and orders and explains the world that science purports to analyze and explain. Not only is the dualistic mode of organizing thought a cultural construction, but the oppositions and universals it poses are themselves culture-bound concepts... [The dualistic mode of thought] structures the world itself in an *a priori* fashion and imposes, as premises, dualisms and dichotomies, onto the natural world that do not exist. (Bleier 19xx, 200-201)

The aspect of a nature that corresponds to a definition, then, is complex and contains subjective elements. Further, it is subject to error that is only correctable upon repeated scrutiny of the perceived object (Owens 1992, 354). This process of scrutinization is presumably ongoing, though probably not infinite.

Significance

Although we look outward to the entity as the genesis of its own definition, there is a sense that, by defining, we can make an entity what we want it to be through the selection of its significant elements. Human beings, after all, are the definers, not the entities themselves. Thus, although sense impressions of things as they exist may form a basis of our knowledge, we may also, correctly or incorrectly, base our thinking on "things as they exist cognitionally in human thought, or on things and thought as they are expressed in the interpersonal medium of language" (Owens 1992, 338). There is room for subjectivity in interpretation, even erroneous interpretation, in decoding language and in cognizing. Intellectual penetration requires a cognitive agent as well as a thing perceived.[9] How a foetus or a dolphin is defined makes an important difference in the way it will be treated. Defined as a person, the foetus will be a certain kind of thing. Defined as a part of its mother's body, it will be another. Defined as a fish-like mammal, the dolphin will be a certain kind of thing. Defined as an intelligent mammal, it will be another. What is identified as significant is a matter of judgment. Although an entity's *nature* will not change, our *definition* of that nature is open to interpretation, even error. Errors of the will, mistaken belief in spurious authority, incorrect inference, the complexities of language, and reliance on false premises are a few of the factors that may hinder the search for truth (Owens 1992, 90 and 267-285). As Midgley points out, the conceptual scheme or mind-set intrudes into the process of classifying data, such that "there are no wholly neutral facts":

> There is no neutral terminology. So there are no wholly neutral facts. All describing is classifying according to some conceptual scheme or other. We need concepts in order to pick out what matters for our present purpose from the jumble of experience, and to relate it to the other things that matter in the world. (Midgley 1995, 6)

In biology, organisms are commonly reclassified to correct earlier misperceptions; that which was earlier held to be insignificant is now seen as of vital significance. The same entity will be treated differently, in accord with its changed definition. By selecting as significant those qualities a dolphin has in common with mankind, for example, it can be classified, understood, and treated as a more developed species than heretofore.

As briefly mentioned above, defining involves selecting those qualities that are, in the mind of the definer, essential to the very being of the entity involved. In other words, the definition contains that which is most important about the entity. Other qualities are, of course, rejected as insignificant. The process of selecting is one that requires judgement on the part of the observer: The characteristics that are selected are not necessarily the most

immediately obvious. To recount a hoary example, the defining quality of a swan is not its colour. Even though its pure white appearance may be its most remarkable aspect, the discovery of black swans in Australia reduced colour to an accidental property.

Although the scientific search for truth seeks objectivity in its rendering of judgements of significance, from a particular viewpoint the judgement of significance can be seen to have as much to do with the person making the judgement as with the actuality of the entity in external nature: Something is always important *to* someone or *for* something. In other words, it is difficult to divorce subjectivity from the judgement of significance.[10] For example, What is the most significant thing about a foetus? What is most essential to its very being? Some may answer, "That the foetus is alive is its most significant thing, essential to its very being." Others may answer, "A foetus's dependency on its mother is most essential to its very being, for it requires her to give it life." Descartes supports this position when he points out that there seem to be two meanings to the word nature: (a) nature "is something actually found in objects", or (b) nature "is a term depending on my own way of thinking... it is something extrinsic to the object it is ascribed to" (Descartes 1971, 120). In a contemporary scientific context, Singer states, .

> Stephen Clark, professor of philosophy at Liverpool University, and R.I.M. Dunbar, professor of biological anthropology at University College, London, have both argued recently that the way in which we divide beings into species does not reflect a natural order of things, or a reality out there in the world, but rather the subjective judgements of those doing the classifying. (Singer 1994, 178)

Holmstrom further supports this argument: "The *significance* of... biological differences depends on social, historical facts, and, moreover, is maintained in every society by complicated social practices" (Holmstrom 1982, 32).

Unavoidably, perhaps, the definer approaches that which is to be defined with a particular theoretical orientation: "It is often impossible to tell what differences are important without a theory" (Holmstrom 1982, 28; see also Phillips 1971, 52-55, and Berry 1986, 32). Theoretical orientation can influence the selection of significant defining qualities. Ideally, this possibility that the cognizer may be led in a certain direction can be subjected to the further use of reason to eliminate bias. However, as Holmstrom points out, theoretical frameworks are frequently absent from or, more correctly, not made explicit in research studies and, in their absence, "It is impossible to determine whether... differences... are sufficiently important to constitute differences in natures" (Holmstrom 1982, 34).

Once differences are selected, the difficulty (if not impossibility) in describing them accurately and without distortion must also be considered, particularly if they concern non-tangible qualities such as states of mind:

> The main difficulty here is objectivity. One has to be sufficiently free from inner compulsion and self-deception to do more than just off-load one's own preferred descriptions or interpretations onto other people. This is hard even

for trained clinical psychologists (particularly if in the grip of some theory). (Wilson 1993, 37)

In addition, the methods themselves that are used to define an entity are in contention. Even in the fairly objectively-scientific realm of biology, taxonomists disagree whether *all* beings within a biological classification must partake in *all* the characteristics of that group or whether the commonalities are statistically significant (Holmstrom 1982, 28). Statistical significance itself is also open to question and interpretation (see, for example, Phillips 1971 and Kitcher 1985), although scientists strive to achieve the most accurate results. According to Gillies, statistical significance and probabilities began to replace categorical definitions derived from induction based on a finite number of examples in response to Hume's scepticism. He points out that the black Australian swans mentioned above were first observed by Europeans shortly after Hume's *A Treatise on Human Nature* became well-known. The idea that definitions could be seen, not in absolute terms but in terms of probabilities, Gillies states,

> Appears first in the second half of the eighteenth century... [when philosophers wondered] could not the new mathematical calculus of probability be used to explicate inductive inference, and provide rational answer to Hume's scepticism about induction" (Gillies 1988, 179-180).

The application of statistics to the definition of natures is an interesting one but it lies far outside the competencies of this student. For these present purposes, it is sufficient to note that there is ongoing contemporary controversy as to the methodologies and interpretation of quantitative data as applied to the observables of human behaviour that are magnified many-fold when applied to the less tangible aspects of human nature to which this dissertation refers.

Further, there are many possible taxonomic classifications into which it is possible to group entities. According to Singer, "The boundaries between species are not laid down by nature; they reflect our ways of classifying living things" (Singer 1994, 178). The patterns observable in nature are interwoven, not distinct, and any one entity can share commonalities with a myriad of other entities. As Locke points out,

> The species of things to us are nothing but the ranking them under distinct names, according to the complex ideas in *us*, and not according to precise, distinct, real essences in *them*...We shall find everywhere that the several species are linked together, and differ but in almost insensible degrees (Locke 1959, Vol. II, 63 and 68).

Where an entity is classified can depend on which differences or similarities are more important, or a better 'fit', or more significant in terms of the particular thesis being advanced. Even the less-complex, lower species are difficult to categorize. Currently, according to Holmstrom, taxonomic species are not exclusively defined in terms of similarities and differences (Holmstrom 1982). Obviously there can be greater variety within what are accepted to be the same species (Chihuahua/St. Bernard) than between species (dogs/

wolves) (this example is Holmstrom's [1982, 26] but Locke or Engels [1968, 349] could provide us with several more):[11]

> There are a lot of different ways of sorting human beings. If we look at that variety, we of course see that sorting along one dimension cuts across another... Any given individual will be included in any number of divisions, and no individual will be included in only one. Why there are the sortings there are depends among other things on the goals of the sorters and the point of the sorting. (Spelman 1988, 101)

Further complicating the issue is the idea that, once an entity is classified, it is ranked hierarchically, as Locke reminds us: for example, living things are ranked from simple to complex, with *homo sapiens* at the apex of the triangle. The rank ordering of entities has much to do the above-mentioned feminist critique of science and with that particular *weltanschauung* herein termed the Classical and described further in Chapter 6.

Until this point, a method of definition derived from empirical science has been described. Ostensibly, this method of definition involves a close examination of things in the outside world by an observer who, as a neutral agent, is capable of objectively selecting those inherent features of a thing that express its nature. Some of the ways in which the contemporary scientific defining process may fall short of its own goals have been pointed out above. There are covert complexities involved in the defining process, specifically the inbuilt bias toward difference (particularly mutually-exclusive opposites), the problems in reasoning-out which aspects of an entity are to be judged significant, the ambiguities in classifying entities through similarities and differences, and the impossibility that the definer remains merely a dispassionate, infallible observer of external reality. This sceptical outlook leads ultimately to the notion that "How we group words into kinds will depend on the aim of the classification,—and on our own inclination" (Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations I*, 18). Thus, classification is a function of purpose.

However, the above-described method of defining is a comparatively modern one, a product of Bacon's "commerce of the mind with *Things*," by ordering particulars for the purpose of control and power through knowledge (Bantock 1986, 178). Before the scientific revolution, there was a different sense in which entities could be defined. The following section demonstrates that the observation that entities held things in common led the classical philosophers to the conclusion that there were 'essences' in which entities participated.

Natures

Having introduced some of the complexities inherent in the definition process, we turn now to a brief exploration of the meaning of the words 'nature' and 'natural'. Linguists underline the obvious—that language is a symbol system in which certain aural *phones* have come, in common usage, to stand for certain experiences. The phone 'nature' has entered common usage in phrases such as, "It's only human nature," "She's going against her nature," "It's unnatural," "Nature will out," and so on. This type of usage is so common that

the fact that biblical Hebrew has no word for nature in this context (Ernst 1973, 61) surprises us.

In philosophy, 'nature' and 'natural' encompass various complex assumptions that are left unexplored in common and scientific usage. This complexity has not gone unnoticed: As early as 1706, Pierre Boyle explicated eleven different meanings of the word 'nature' as it appeared in I Corinthians alone. In *A Free Inquiry into the Vulgarly Received Notion of Nature* (1744), Robert Boyle stressed the ambiguities in eight distinct meanings of the word 'nature' in science, religion, and philosophy (Willey 1961, 2). In 1935, A.O. Lovejoy explored sixty-six senses in which the word 'nature' was used (Wiener 1973, 351). Today, the complexities involved in defining nature are no simpler and, "It is obvious that a complete theory of human nature stretches beyond the findings of any single discipline" (Jagger 1983, 19). We may expect that the challenges noted above in defining any entity will also apply to a definition of natures both human and female.

Philosophers (particularly political philosophers) use the words 'nature' and 'natural' extensively, as the following brief extracts illustrate:

> Moral philosophy, or the science of human nature, may be treated after two
> different manners.. [Some philosophers] regard human nature as a subject of
> speculation; and with a narrow scrutiny examine it, in order to find those
> principles, which regulate our understanding, excite our sentiments, and
> make us approve or blame any particular object, action, or behaviour. (Hume
> 1977, 1-2)

Here, Hume is drawing attention to the idea that a nature provides the basic ground rules or "principles" by which a human being may be considered to operate. He also emphasizes what some may see as the conjunction between natures and morality. Finally, he points out that natures must be regarded with "narrow scrutiny". In other words, care must be taken to accurately discern human nature. The implication is that human nature may be difficult to perceive and require close examination, possibly beneath surface appearances. Further, human nature has a causal relationship with an individual's emotions, cognitions, and actions: It "regulates", "excites", and "makes us" do certain things.

> No less an intellect...than Aristotle, held this opinion without doubt or mis-
> giving; and rested it on the same premises on which the same assertion with
> regard to the dominion of men over women is usually based, namely that
> there are different natures among mankind, free natures, and slave natures...
> (Mill 1975, 440)

In this passage, Mill is interpreting Aristotle. He draws attention to the Classical notion that there may be more than one type of human nature. This notion will be discussed in Chapters 3 and 4. Further, he links the notion of natures to that of "dominion". In other words, some relations of power (the Latin word *dominium* refers to ownership or absolute power over another) may be implicit in a hierarchical ranking of natures.

Behavior, however, is still attributed to human nature, and there is an exten-
sive "psychology of individual differences" in which people are compared
and described in terms of traits of character, capacities, and abilities. (Skin-
ner 1971, 9)

In this extract, Skinner points out that behaviour is causally attributed to human nature; this
goes contrary to Skinner's own argument. By extension, some may see human nature in
operation through people's behaviour and human nature may provide a causal explanation
or motive force underlying behaviour. It is unclear from the context whether Skinner is
opposing the concept of human nature to the "psychology of individual differences" or
superimposing the latter on the former, as his intent in this passage is to critique both as
leading to the false "attribu[tion] of human behavior to intentions, purposes, aims, and
goals" (Skinner 1971, 8). However, it is clear that some consider human nature to be
causative and, thus, capable of determining behaviour.

Again, the male is by nature superior, and the female inferior; the one rules,
and the other is ruled; this principle, of necessity, extends to all mankind
(Aristotle 1977, 51)

Aristotle is saying here that the superiority of the male and inferiority of the female is
justified "by nature." He seems to suggest that the inherent character and basic constitution
of man renders him superior to woman. This inherent character is an internal cause of
superiority not to be understood as, for example, conventional, contractual, or negotiated
superiority. The man is superior by virtue of what he *is* by nature and not through external
forces such as the number of armed men he can muster or through the exemplary virtuous-
ness of his actions (though these two examples may contingently relate to his nature). Thus
this superiority is not likely to change in the future nor to be different in other cultures. The
Latin root of the English word 'nature' is *natura*, which reflects the following notions:
"Blood relationship, natural affinity, birth, ...natural constitution, character, ...order of the
world, course of things" (Traupman 1966, 191). In Aristotle's words, it is possible to see
mirrored the notion that man's nature is an innate quality present from birth that reflects the
course of things. In the *Ethics*, Aristotle contrasts "by nature" with "by habit" and "by
training". Characteristics acquired "by nature" are fixed since, in general, "none of the things
with natural properties can be trained to acquire a different property" (Aristotle 1963, 303).
By appealing to man's nature, Aristotle seems to be saying that man's superiority is not
learned or acquired through custom ("habit") or assumed without valid grounds.[12] Nor is it
ephemeral or an epiphenomenon of transient social arrangements or the usurpation of power
but has an enduring and legitimate anchor in the very constitution of man. Perhaps it is the
preoccupation of this student with natures but Aristotle's words seem to imply that 'by
nature' is a powerful justification for what may otherwise be seen as an arbitrary social
arrangement.

In addition, Aristotle suggests a categorical approach to natures because the superi-
ority of men is not qualified by use of a limiting adjective like 'some', 'a few', or 'many'.
Men as a category are said to be superior to women as a category. Because natures are

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categorical, they are universal and may seem law-like. If men are superior "by nature" in Athens, they may be predicted to be superior "by nature" in Delphi also.

> This amiability is natural to her sex when unspoiled. Woman is made to submit to man and to endure even injustice at his hands. (Rousseau 1974, 359)

In this passage, Rousseau uses the phrase "is natural to". This can be seen as being analogous to saying 'by nature, women are amiable'. The quality of amiability develops spontaneously, Rousseau implies here, without coercion or education. As in Aristotle's words above, there is a predictive quality in the categorical use of the word sex. In other words, all those of the female sex may be predicted to have a tendency toward amiability, though in 'spoiled' cases it may have become attenuated or been extinguished. This suggests the notion of acting against one's nature: the enduring quality of a 'natural' attribute can be obscured by contrary elements such as neglect, education or miseducation, practice, and so on. If not 'spoiled', however, a natural attribute is destined to emerge spontaneously from within the individual; it may reveal itself even without purposeful cultivation or intent.

Despite the ambiguities inherent in the word 'nature,' it would be disingenuous to avoid the conclusion that those who use the term have a direct and fairly specific experience or set of experiences in mind. Indeed, the richness of allusion and complexity implicit in the word 'nature' result both in the elusiveness of a universally-accepted definition and in the utility of the word in philosophical pursuit.

Nonetheless, a working or stipulative definition of 'nature,' as in 'human nature,' 'the nature of woman,' and 'by nature' must be arrived at to ensure a common ground with the reader. In stating how this term will be used in this dissertation, however, common-usage must be respected so that 'nature' is not used incorrectly or as an arbitrary symbol. Hence the following appeal to the lexical definition. According to Hospers, there are two further reasons to stipulate a definition of a term that is already listed in the dictionary. First, if that term is ambiguous and, second, if the word is not usually used precisely or clearly (Hospers 1963, 52). As noted above, ambiguities and imprecision are not unconnected to uses of the word 'nature' in scholarly writing. For the purposes of this thesis, I have chosen to base a stipulative definition of 'a nature', of 'human nature', and of 'woman's nature' on the reportive definitions of these terms, as they have been used traditionally.[13] However, since common usage of human nature is also unreliably vague and ambiguous according to the following extract from Nott, a stipulative definition follows at the end of this section:

> Like a great many of our concepts and ideas [human nature] belongs to practice and use; it is understood without definition in particular situations of communal exchange. It defines itself tacitly and according to our need of the moment, in the handling it receives from the parties to the conversation. At the same time it is understood as a generalisation, it covers a number, or rather a complex, of undefined characteristics. (Nott 1970, 54)

The *Oxford English Dictionary* provides the following: "The essential qualities or properties of a thing; the inherent and inseparable combination of properties essentially pertaining to anything and giving it its fundamental character." *Webster's Collegiate* provides a common-usage starting-place so apt that it is quoted at length:

> **Nature: 1 a:** the inherent character or basic constitution of a person or thing: ESSENCE **b:** DISPOSITION, TEMPERAMENT **2 a:** a creative and controlling force in the universe **b:** an inner force or the sum of such forces in an individual **3:** a kind or class usually distinguished by fundamental or essential characteristics... **4:** the physical constitution or drives of an organism... **5:** a spontaneous attitude (as of generosity) **6:** the external world in its entirety **7 a:** a man's original or natural condition **b:** a simplified mode of life resembling this condition **8:** natural scenery.

Thus, the word 'nature' contains several notions that bear separate examination; for example, that of a distinct defining essence introduced above; an inherent character; and an internal disposition or tendency to act in a certain way as a result of nonrational (spontaneous attitude, drives, inner force) impulses. To give two further examples:

> For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do **by nature** the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves. (Romans 1:27)

This Biblical example clearly contrasts an inherent disposition, or nature, with the external authority of the law. Finally, an example suggested by Aristotle uses the phrase "by nature" to mean by virtue of an individual's innate equipment (Aristotle 1963, 144): If, by nature, one is a good athlete, this talent would not have been developed through hard work alone against innate disposition. Rather, one's original physical and mental 'givens' would have made the development of athletic skill easy, suitable, and almost inevitable. Conversely, the naturally indolent individual who has made a rational decision to transform an uncoordinated, flabby, overweight body into that of a successful marathon runner for extrinsic reasons overcomes her natural limitations to achieve a level of ability at odds with her own nature.

It is already clear that the concept of natures contains some interesting notions that are elaborated in the body of this dissertaion.[14]

From *Webster's*, we can also glean the idea that this essence, inherent character, or disposition which we call an entity's nature is linked to a simplified, original state of nature that is distinct from the artificiality and lack of freedom imposed by civilization and society. This aspect of our definition would be congenial to Rousseau, who reflected on the Golden Age of Man, and one may speculate that this like-mindedness testifies to the impact of Rousseau's Deist ideas about nature on Western civilization.

In addition, there is the sense in which nature implies, "The defining characteristics of X, those characteristics in the absence of which we would not call the thing an X... Those characteristics are the characteristics which constitute 'the essence' of X" (Hospers 1956,

34). In other words, questions about the nature of something are really questions about defining characteristics, in the absence of which the thing defined would cease to be itself.

We have seen some of the complexities involved in the act of definition in the previous sections, however it must be understood that the definition of an entity is not the same as the definition of *the nature of* an entity for the following reason: An entity can be defined without reference to its actions but an entity's nature cannot. According to Owen, for example, "Stones, trees and animals exhibit specifically different kinds of activity, thereby indicating different natures" (Owens 1992, 47). A reasonable definition of a woman might be, "A physiologically mature female human being." This definition tells us virtually nothing about *the nature of* woman. We know what an entity is *really* like by observing it in action. From an Aristotelian viewpoint, extension and *change* are the starting points of the philosophy of nature (Owens 1992, 295).[15] By nature, an entity will *be* a certain way and an important method by which we may ascertain what an entity will *be like* is to see how it *behaves*. If there are patterns in this behaviour, they may afford clues as to that entity's nature. It may be particularly difficult in animate beings (though this holds true for many inanimate beings, computers for example) to discern an entity's true nature without observing its actions because there is a sense in which its (possibly hidden) nature is reflected in what it *does*, its function in other words. A computer may be thought to share the same nature as a television until it is seen in action. In a human context, a king may be thought to have the same nature as a slave until he is seen in action. Thus Montaigne seeks knowledge of his own human nature through detailed observation of even his most mundane actions because, "The conduct of our lives is the true reflection of our thoughts", though his stated emphasis on "deeds not words" is difficult to align with the volume of his writings (Montaigne 1958, 76).

As with any complex concept, the term 'nature' contains a number of key elements. From a linguistic viewpoint, the definition of a complex idea or concept contains a stipulative component, a reportive component, and an analysis of its component parts (Edwards 1967, 321). Having examined common usage (the reportive component), it remains to turn to stipulation and analysis. The stipulative definition is found at the end of this section. An analytic discussion of the constituent components ensues.

First, an entity's nature is located *within an entity as a basic part of its makeup*; an entity's nature is distinct from any external force (for example, coercion, manipulation, incentive, deliberate repression) and implies immanent causality.[16]

Second, an entity's nature is universal. Owens, for example, notes that abstractions are built upon that which is *not* specific as to time and place; in other words, on universals:

> The disregarding of temporal and spatial conditions and of the individuating features has from medieval times on been given the technical name "abstraction"...What, then is the object that has been drawn away or abstracted in this fashion? It seems to be the *kind* of thing that each of the individual objects is...If the term "nature" may be used to designate the kind of thing an

individual is, it will allow one to say that the object abstracted in the nature that the individuals are seen to share in common. (Owens 1992, 140)

An abstraction of an entity's nature has not traditionally been seen as transitory or changeable by the individual entity itself or by external (human) forces; it remains constant over time and place; of necessity, its nature is thus and not other. For example, "The theories are taken to imply that these natures cannot change and also that one ought not even try to change them" (Holmstrom 1982, 25). If it were possible to define an as-yet-unknown entity as completely adaptable and flexible, or as utterly chameleon-like, or as pure potentiality,[17] this would not be considered an entity with a discernable or definable nature. Natures are fixed and intractable, not protean (Fromm and Xirau 1968, 7; Nott 1970, 40). Locke quotes Bishop Butler as saying, "The only distinct meaning of the word natural... is *stated, fixed, settled*" (Locke 1959 Vol. II, 352). Natures may have "a rather dreary fixedness about them because they can lead one to infer that nothing can be done to improve the performance in question" (Favreau 1977, 64). According to Lehmann,

> [A living creature's nature]...bears both the eternal finality of nature and the inexorable inevitability of evolution...(33) [because as "natural" it is] inevitable and ideal...It 'cannot' be eliminated, and therefore it should not be contradicted. To do so would be illegitimate, a violation of natural law. (Lehmann 1994, 53)

The essences introduced above are seen as "timeless, unchanging" and thus able to define an entity's fixed nature (Dennett 1995, 36).

As noted above, however, it is possible to act against one's nature. The implication is, however, that such an action will involve a struggle. Further, one's nature can be neglected, deformed, or 'spoiled' as in the extract from Rousseau's *Emile* above, by external forces. Hence, although an entity's nature is fixed, it may exist only as undeveloped potential for a particular set of attributes or be perverted from its true course.

It is difficult to trace the connection between unchanging and transitory (the constant and immutable heavens contrasted with the cyclical rhythms and decay of life on earth) and the higher value placed on the former. The value of the unchanging is suggested to have arisen spontaneously because "value and duration form a couple which seems to many men to require no explanation;" that which is unchanging being more valuable (Wiener 1973, 347). Strauss posits a connection with "the philosophic quest for first things":

> [First things] are always or are imperishable [and] are more truly beings than the things which are not always...Beings that are always are of higher dignity than beings that are not always, because only the former can be the ultimate cause of the latter, of the being of the latter, or because what is not always finds its place within the order constituted by what is always. Beings that are not always, are less truly beings than beings that are always... (Strauss 1953, 89-90).

Perhaps the roots of the value accorded to the unchanging were as mundane as the observance that material things tend to go from health to decay to corruption at death. The metaphor of God as the 'Unmoved Mover' suggests a human preoccupation with change, though as pointed out above, today it is difficult to align evolutionary theory with the value of constancy. According to Tarnas, Plato gave ultimate value to the "changeless and eternal, and...therefore static" world of Ideas that were "immortal and therefore similar to gods" (Tarnas 1991, 9).

Similarly, the value accruing to the universal over the particular is not easily explained. It seems to have developed through the observation of consistencies but the etymology of the prescriptive element in the universal is difficult to grasp—why should what is 'right' be universal and what is universal be 'right? Chapter 5 explores the concept of Natural Law: Perhaps the appeal of universality is that the predictive nature of universal patterns permits mankind (the illusion of) control over entities in the natural world. The morality of the universal is more difficult to pin down. There seems to be a belief that ubiquitous behaviour is natural and inevitable. Surely if it is so, it cannot also be destructive and perverse.

Third, although an individual can claim many insignificant qualities 'by nature', an entity's nature expresses its dominant or most important qualities because they are those "individually necessary and jointly sufficient characteristics which constitute [the entity's] essence" (Holmstrom 1982, 26). Without those qualities, the entity would nonsensically not conform to its own definition and cease to be itself. These dominant qualities locate an entity within a distinct category of entities such that it could be said that all members of that category possess that same nature. Although its nature may pertain to the physical makeup of the entity, it may also depend on those internal drives that make it act.

Therefore, fourth, an entity's nature has to do with the ways it acts, with its behaviour in a variety of environments (particularly in its 'natural habitat') and circumstances. The disposition or tendency to act in a certain way renders the entity predictable. In this sense, a nature is a cause—it can be seen as the determinant of an action. As that which determines an action, an entity's nature is a non-rational drive; it is a spontaneous attitude (not a result of external causes in the sense of pressures, prompting or constraints; neither a result of rational deliberation—in other words, unrestrained). Thus, in the above extract from Romans, the Gentiles were seen to act "by nature" in accord with a law they did not know, without prompting, coercion, education, or rational deliberation. Again a question arises as to the value assigned to the spontaneous and non-rational. It is obvious that an action resulting from an attitude brought about by fear or other negative (even positive—Skinnerian reinforcement, for example) pressure is less authentic in the sense of being a true reflection of the nature of that entity. As Aristotle put it, "Compulsion... means that the principle of action is external, and that the doer... contributes nothing of his own" (Aristotle 1963, 316).[18]

Fifth, an entity's nature comprises "those characteristics in the absence of which we would not call the thing an X," in Hospers' words. In other words, its nature represents the

most necessary, basic, and essential elements of an entity. The following discussion focuses on the notion of basic elements in terms of the simple building-blocks that compose an entity. The idea of necessity will be taken up later in this discussion (Chapter 4).

Scientific thinking places a premium on simplicity. The "save the phenomena" position suggests the following:

> Judgements of the value of a scientific theory should be made in terms of only two criteria: the ability of the theory to save (account or predict) the pheonomena and the theory's simplicity. Among the criteria viewed as inappropriate is the realist's claim that a theory must be true. (Crowe 1990, 69)

The relevance of this position to natures, and to this dissertation, is its association of the search for truth with the delineation and comprehension of the most basic and least complex elements of an entity's nature. In a human context, the high levels of complexity both of modern social system and the self-regulating system that is the human brain do not lend themselves easily to explanations that Davies calls "theories of everything, or final theories" (Davies 1995, 20). Consequently, it seems to this student, many early religions expressed tension between 'the one' and 'the many'. The divine was associated, in many systems of theology, with 'the one'. Tarnas reminds his readers of the significance of "primary substances" endowed with "divinity or intelligence" (Tarnas 1991, 20): "True reality by logical necessity is changeless and unitary", according to Parmenides and the Ionian philosophers (Tarnas 1991, 20). The value placed on unity and simplicity inspired the atomist school of philosophy in the ancient world and underlies contemporary reductionist science. Davies presents this as follows:

> The physical universe seems so complex and bewildering, it might appear a hopeless task for human beings to make any sense of it. Yet the enterprise called science is predicated on the audacious belief that, in spite of appearances, nature is both ordered and intelligible to us. Scientists assume that hidden beneath the surface complexity of the world lies a harmonious law-like simplicity....[There is a] prevalent belief that the quest for this bottom level of reality is indeed the proper way to uncover the "fundamental" workings of the universe...According to this extreme "ontological" reductionism, once we know enough about elementary particles and forces, we have in effect explained everything in the physical universe. (Davies 1995, 20)

In human terms, the quest for simplicity and for 'first things' has led to an investigation of 'the way things *really* are' (for example, during an imagined Golden Age, as will be discussed in Chapter 4) underneath the surface complexities of human life. The idea that there are a few simple laws that, once discovered, will explain everything was as popular in Enlightment science as it is, according to Davies, in the contemporary world view. This point will be taken up in Chapter 5's discussion of Natural Law. For our present purposes, it is enough to note that the explanatory and causal powers of simplicity and unity are extrapolated, conjectured, and inferred from nature through the mechanisms of human thought.

They are not *in* nature, in the sense of being 'out there' and ready to be discovered through simple observation.

Finally, an entity's nature is linked to a simplified, original state of nature in which it freely flourished and achieved full expression before being cloaked by civilization's palimpsest. This aspect expresses the tensions between the natural and the artificial noted in Chapter 1.

In view of the above analysis into component parts, and taking into account its reportive meaning through common usage, the word 'nature' shall be defined as, or stipulated to mean, *the essential and innate qualities, forces, or properties of a thing that are fixed, inherent, and inseparable, giving it its fundamental character.*

This definition can be used to explicate the representative philosophical quotations with which this section began. Aristotle's quotation is used as an example:

> Again, the male is by nature superior, and the female inferior; the one rules,
> and the other is ruled; this principle, of necessity, extends to all mankind.
> (Aristotle 1977, 51)

In light of the above definition, then, the seemingly universal social arrangement whereby the female is subservient to the male is not causally attributable to brute strength, political power, or the expediencies of social structures, for example (Mackie 1983, 61). Rather, it is the inevitable result of the separate makeup of the two sexes, such that (even if social arrangements were to change) the division of power would reoccur without recourse to force, manipulation, coercion, repression, reasoned assent, or external incentives. The behaviour falling under the rubric 'rules' and 'is ruled' will exhibit such consistency that all males and all females could be thought to have a disposition or innate tendency to act in a congruent manner with others of their sex. Neither will these actions be the result of reasoned deliberation and judgement: Rather they will happen spontaneously and as though an instinct or drive were causally responsible. Should these actions fail to happen, one might posit that the entity had been wrongly classified, for all males and all females must express this behaviour. Finally, for the clearest evidence of this behaviour, one must look back in time before the artificialities of culture veiled natural actions with an synthetic and stunting overlay.

Appendix II points to the weaknesses of scientific proof for a separate female nature. This appendix demonstrates that there are genuine difficulties in defining 'a nature' of any sort. These difficulties most probably underlie the failure of science and social science to come to grips with a universally-accepted delineation of the meaning of an entity's nature. Thus, one of the goals set on the first page of this appendix has been achieved: All theories of nature, by definition, are far from straightforward.

The next appendix lays a foundation for achieving the second part of that goal: to substantiate that all theories of nature are ideology-based. 'The nature of X' is a concept—an abstract idea generated through a mental process of generalization inspired by universal patterns in specific observations. Concepts do not, in general, require scientific

confirmation to be valid. A concept may still be useful, as an explanatory device, in the absence of proof. To give a simple example, there are many who adhere to the concept of God despite what many see as a lack of scientific verification of His existence. The concept that there is a distinct female nature does not require proof to be a useful device—however, as will be developed in the following appendix, concepts without proof belong to the sets of notions commonly labelled belief or faith (Owens 1992, 280-281; Robinson suggests that faith requires belief "no matter what the evidence might be" [Robinson 1972, 140]). Beliefs are amenable to ideological use.

ENDNOTES

1. Some cultural feminist critics characterize (and repudiate) analytical methods as 'masculine' (for example, French 1985, Martin 1982, and Belenky *et al.* 1986). This is not my own position for reasons related to the discussion in Chapters 6 through 8.

2. The word 'entity' is used to stand for all nouns, including concepts.

3. Plato drew attention to the distinction between sense-perception and scientific knowledge —sense knowledge could lead only to approximate knowledge "which is after all, at best, probable opinion" (Taylor 1955, 31).

4. In the didactic novel *Sophie's World*, Gaardner says, "The day you see something you are unable to classify you will get a shock. If, for example, you discover a small whatsit, and you can't reallys ay whether it is animal, vegetable, or mineral—I don't think you would dare touch it" (Gaardner 1994, 112).

5. Although Kant and Hirsh, for example, seem to suggest that they are natural in the unrelated sense that they are innate mental models that human beings 'by nature' impose on the world in order to understand it.

6. The problem of generalization and universality raised by Hume (and discussed in Chapter 5 of this dissertation) suggests that classifications that are immune from "breaking down" through the discovery of counterexamples are a logical impossibility. This skeptical position can be seen to undercut a belief in fixed natures, in universal classification, and perhaps ultimately in the doubt that "any coherent picture of the physical world is possible" (Nott 1970, 32).

7. In view of the subsequent discussion of the Classical approach to human nature (Chapter 4), Taylor's interpretation of Aristotle on the arbitrariness and subjectivity of the taxonomist's grouping of kinds of things is key. Taylor suggests that, to Aristotle, categories of entities must be divided correctly because "Nature herself has made certain hard and fast divisions between kinds which it is the business of our thought to recognise and follow... In a philosophy like that of Aristotle... a true classification must...conform to the actual lines of cleavage which Nature has established between kind and kind" (Taylor 1955, 25-26).

8. Interestingly, Owens points out that, epistemologically, contradictory opposites are a principle of essences. Existence "actuates its subject in a way that necessarily excludes the opposite" (Owens 1992, 257).

9. Whether or not they coalesce is a matter of philosophical debate but the external object is seen to "exclud[e] from the object any basic contamination by the cognitive agent" (Owens 1992, 352). Hence, any cognitive apprehension of an external object including its nature, cannot simply be mapped onto or projected onto that external object as though it could be read off the object alone. "Only in cognitional existence, do percept and percipient have identical being" (Owens 1992, 353). Thus, although grounded in the existence of the external object, that existence itself "is attained everywhere through judgement... The existence... fades out... when one undertakes to examine them solely on a conceptual screen. When the problems of cognition are approached through a neutralistic sense datum or through the conceptual content of the phenomena, they become insoluble" (Owens 1992, 354-355). What this dissertation argues is that cultural feminism may be misperceiving the nature of woman as separate from that of man because of a failure of scrutiny that mistakes the superficial for the real.

10. "One can cause assent by one's own decision in cases where the assent is not caused by the existence as apprehended in the object... Where the existence as apprehended does not necessitate assent, the human will can enter and cause the assent given to judgments based on probability. But there is a price. The assent caused by the free decision of the will can be erroneous... It brings to the fore the problem of error" (Owens 1992, 271).

11. Holmstrom's article, although interesting, is based on the difficulties in separating species in biology. It must be noted, however, that male and female are *not* considered to have separate natures in biological taxonomy. Even "Aristotle's own *Metaphysics*... held that men and women could not be assigned to different species" (Riley 1988, 24). Therefore, her argument cannot be directly extrapolated to a male/female situation without some qualification (that is absent from the article).

12. However, Aristotle notes that "natural faculties" are first obtained "potentially, but it is only later on that we make them fully active"; and that virtues do not exist "by nature" except as a potential and must be perfected through actions and by training or habit (Aristotle 1963, 303).

13. There have been attempts to redefine human nature, particularly from the marxist "contextualist" perspective, as that which is not innate but develops in social interaction with others. That is a *redefinition* and not the traditional definition of the term will be substantiated in Chapter 5.

14. : To give an example, in the above hypothetical situation, why should natural tendencies be considered more valid *a priori* than hard work and self-improvement when both obviously count? Possibly, we feel that any amount of hard work cannot equal natural talent. Possibly, we feel that the formerly lazy individual may be doing him/herself harm or disservice in changing the original order of things: Those who are not suited by nature for a particular activity may not be meant to do that particular activity well. There may even be unfortunate consequences in ignoring one's nature. We would not be surprised if the individual in this example were to have a heart attack because she is not meant to be a marathon runner, by nature. This, of course, begs the question, "Meant for by whom?" The multifarious complexities implicit in the term 'nature' begin to surface.

15. "From observed effects in the sensible world [the philosophy of nature] reasoned to matter and form" (Owens 1992, 297).

16. Yet it is important for the description of the teleological cosmos in Chapter 4 to mention that this immanent causality, in terms of an entity's nature, is associated with a belief that some transcendent, organizing force or 'mind' such as God or Nature, has endowed each entity with an appropriate nature. In other words, the immanent causality of an entity's nature is not seen as random or chaotic, merely emanating from a particular structure of atoms, for example. If this were the case, the universals in the second point of this definition would not be observed.

17. Berry suggests that a nature that is pure potential is a contradiction in terms: "a potential that has never been actualized is a mystical item" (Berry 1986, 115). He points out that human nature cannot be potentially "just anything" if the concept is to retain intelligibility. While Owens notes, "In regard to existence the nature is the potentiality," he also suggests that the potentiality is that of actualizing the *specific* nature of the particular thing under consideration and not of a completely open potentiality (Owens 1992, 174). This latter would infer that any being may have the potential to become some other type of being, which Berry holds to be nonsensical.

18. Why, though, should it be thought that this type of non-deliberative action is more deeply ingrained in human beings than deliberate rationality and the cultivation of attitudes? Why should it be more praiseworthy or deserving of more importance? A classical example is the honour accruing to a brave man: Why should the brave actions of a natural coward receive less value? These questions, of course, remain unanswered (but interesting, nonetheless, in the context of this dissertation.

APPENDIX III: HUMAN NATURE

The intent of this appendix is to validate the statement that the one universally-accepted human nature (or Nature of Man)[1] to which philosophers appeal does not describe 'reality'.[2] In other words, human nature is not easily and disinterestedly 'read off' human beings through experience. The goal in so doing is to continue the attempt begun in Appendix II to establish that the cultural feminist theory of woman's nature rests on a pre-Enlightenment basis that is quite possibly ideological rather than on scientifically-verifiable reality (or what could be termed objective fact).

This appendix begins with a consideration of the larger classification, *human* nature, because the contention is that no theory of nature applied to a member of the genus *homo sapiens* or any gross division thereof is factual (although any theory of human nature must contain some factual elements). If human nature is fictitious, it would seem unlikely that a separate woman's nature is fact. This appendix concludes that our modern *zeitgeist* has largely dispensed with the classical notion of Human Nature,[3] although the concept lingers post-Enlightenment in a deliberately diluted and generalized rendering.

Upon referring back to the first page of Appendix II, the reader may be reminded that the first task toward this end was to present a convincing argument that all theories of nature are far from straightforward and have ties to ideology. This project was partially realized in Appendix II by exposing substantial difficulties implicit in all theories of nature, and this appendix continues in the same vein by demonstrating that theories of nature are not amenable to proof. Theories of human nature are analyzed by their opponents for the truth of the meaning of humanity that they contain. However, truth is a complex and difficult judgement about which there are many theories. It is quite probable, nonetheless, that the quest for the truth of any theory of human nature begins with an appeal to the external object, the individual human being itself in this case. However, it is not always easy to see whether judgement conforms to experience and assent is usually given to the truth of a particular theory of human nature that is *probably* true. Science is often enlisted in the search for the truth of theories of human nature. Appeals to science, in this view, are most probably anchored in the scientist's expertise in scrutinizing external objects:

> Since the eighteenth century...knowledge of Man and society appears to lag behind that of the earth beneath and the heavens above. There has been accordingly a predisposition to turn to science for an answer as to the nature of Man. Given the prestige of science, these answers will have great cultural authority. (Berry 1986, 97)

As presented in Appendix II, however, science seems to have examined the same external object (woman, in this case) and come up with conflicting data. Further the judgements generated by the data themselves, in terms of the conclusions drawn from the data, are inconsistent and even contradictory. There are some scientific data that serve as proof *of* a woman's nature and some scientific data that serve as proof that woman does *not have* a separate nature. It may be seen that *the same* data may even generate contradictory judgments. There are grounds for doubt, in this case. Proof of a theory of human nature seems similarly elusive, as Berry points out:

> [Today] we have to settle for a depiction of human nature as a 'reasoned proposal' that emanates from a philosophy of mind. This philosophy however will be disputable as will the emanation from it: it is a matter of 'opinion' not 'demonstration'... There is no definitive answer to the question, 'what is human nature?' (Berry 1986, 136-137)

Therefore, although it is possible to suggest a definition of the *term* 'human nature', it is not likely that this definition will present one true and definitive account of human nature. For example, the rationality of human beings is a key element of human nature from most philosophical viewpoints but Behaviourists, even Freudians, may suggest that rationality is an illusion or epiphenomenon of other noncognitive mechanisms. By and large, however, it is accepted that human beings have a nature, what having one would imply, how one would go about finding one, and so on, but the content of human nature is either left open or specified and vehemently defended by particular groups (Berry 1986; Stevenson 1987). Whether or not one particular version of human nature heretofore proposed is true remains a matter of personal judgement, heated debate, opinion, and belief. It is difficult to see how one particular theory of human nature could be accepted as *the* theory of human nature, particularly given the complexity of *homo sapiens*.

It should also be noted at this point that theories of human nature are not necessarily mutually exclusive because all theories of human nature can be seen to provide some useful insights into the human condition, depending on the situations in which they are invoked. Stevenson (1987) describes seven comprehensive theories of human nature — Plato's elitism, christianity, marxism, Freudian theory, existentialism, behaviourism, and sociobiological theory — that are frequently combined in various lucid ways; for example, christian socialism. Further, it is possible for an individual to selectively apply contradictory theories of human nature as the situation requires; for example, in common parlance it is not unusual for those who disagree with a sociobiological theory of human nature to speak of a specific human motivation as an 'instinct'.

There is tension between the notion that there probably *is* a human nature and the practical difficulties of determining what it *is*, or the specifics of which it consists. Similar dilemmas have arisen in attempts to codify such notions as 'the good life' and 'justice'. It is fairly widely accepted that these latter concepts reflect something that really exists in people's experience of the world, yet there are a myriad of suggestions as to the specific content or characteristics of the good life and justice. Krąpiec reminds us that Man is not 'a

fact' that can be known empirically (Krąpiec 1982, 30).Human nature, rather, is a concept and, as such, shares in the epistemological difficulties of all concepts.

In the following section, a definition of 'human nature' is suggested, based on those things that *all* theories of human nature have in common. However, it must be emphasized that there will be no attempt to specify a *particular*, let alone a correct, theory of human nature. Theories of human nature seem to be provisional theories, not facts, because they are "essentially contested" (Jagger 1983, 7) and it is not the intent of this dissertation to add to the already considerable number of theories of human nature.

At this point, the reader may be reminded that liberal feminism seeks to include woman in the universal human nature:

> The liberal feminist position seems to be that male and female natures are
> identical; or, to put it more accurately, that there is no such thing as male
> and female nature; there is only human nature and that has no sex. (Jagger
> 1983, 37)

In accord with the liberal feminist tradition, there is but one universal, pancultural and panhistoric human nature that is held in common by all. As will be suggested in Chapter 3, the liberal conception of human nature is deliberately left vague in order that it may apply to the largest possible number of human beings. The defining quality of liberal human nature is its universality — all human beings are encompassed within its inclusive and comprehensive framework:

> To believe in human nature is to believe that humankind possesses some
> common attributes. These attributes are to be understood not as 'optional
> extras' but as belonging to Man as Man. (Berry 1986, 58)

On the other hand, cultural feminism either attacks and rejects the notion of human nature altogether as a male construct predicated on masculine virtues or equates human nature with male nature, outright; and, in addition, attempts to validate a separate female nature (to which both sexes ought to aspire, according to Martin [1985], Ruddick [1989], and French [1985], for example).

Before embarking in the concluding section of this appendix on an examination of the nature of man and its congruence or lack of congruence with what is known about ideologies, it may be useful for illustrative purposes to begin with a two representative quotations, followed by working definitions of 'the nature of man' and 'ideology'.

> All men by nature desire to have knowledge. (Aristotle 1963, 40)

> And because men are all members of one great whole, and the sympathy
> which is in **human nature** will not allow one member to be indifferent to
> have the rest... Perfection—as culture from a thorough disinterested study of
> **human nature** and human experience learns to conceive it,—is a
> harmonious expansion of *all* the powers which make the beauty and worth

of **human nature...** (Matthew Arnold *Culture and Anarchy* 1867-68 reprinted 1958, 461-462)

It is interesting that these typical quotations were difficult to find. Although it is my contention that a particular version of human nature underlies each philosophy, the phrase itself is conspicuously absent from philosophical writings (indeed, Arnold is not primarily a philosopher). The reason for this is that the philosopher's idea of human nature is seldom the focus of his or her work but must be deduced or extrapolated from the writings.

Defining the Nature of Man

As a definition of the nature of an entity was presented in Appendix II, the definition of the nature of man will not vary significantly: *Human nature is the essential and innate qualities, forces, or properties within all humans that are fixed, inherent, and inseparable, giving humanity its fundamental character and tendencies as revealed in its actions, including cognitions.* However, building upon the components of 'nature' developed in Appendix II, the following common elements of all theories of human nature may prove illuminating.

First, human nature is located within each human being as a basic part of the individual's makeup. As an innate quality,[4] it is distinct from any external force (for example, coercion, manipulation, incentive, deliberate repression). Thus, it is "that which stems from its nature alone, without outside influence" (Richards 1980, 68). For example, in *Coriolanus*, Act I, Scene i, a citizen accuses Coriolanus of acting, not for his country, but out of his own pride and to please his mother. A second citizen answers, "What he cannot help in his nature, you account a vice in him. You must in no way say he is covetous." Thus, Shakespeare's second citizen is suggesting that Coriolanus' pride, or covetousness, arises automatically from his nature, for which he cannot be blamed. His fixed nature, distinct from his will and moral actions, causes this vice in him. The first citizen is convinced that Coriolanus' actions have sources that are external (his mother's wishes) and internal but deliberate and under rational control. In other words, the first citizen attributes Coriolanus' actions to causes other than his fixed nature and, thus, implies that Coriolanus must take full, rational responsibility for his actions. This Shakespearian example demonstrates that there is an element within a nature that is seen to be, at very least, difficult to control rationally.

Those who believe in human nature do not believe that the individual arrives upon this earth as a completely blank slate, to be formed entirely through its interaction with other human beings. Rather, an individual is born with certain characteristics common to all other human beings (a human nature), and individual dispositions or propensities (an individual nature). In a human context, human nature is traditionally contrasted with socially-contrived learned behaviour (Holmstrom 1982, 26; Richards 1980, 65). It is often depicted as the human equivalent to the instincts of lower species and, as such, is seen as a subconscious and/or noncognitive drive, depending on one's theoretical orientation (Richards 1980, 66,

78). The *Encyclopedia of Psychology* confirms this: "The human mind has certain innate or inherited tendencies which are the essential springs or motive powers of all thought and action" (Corsini 1984, 419).

As innate, particularly as an instinctive or noncognitive drive, human nature is fixed and invariant. If it can be transcended at all, it is through a vigorous program of education, involving the cultivation of judgement.[5] Thus, according to Hume for example, the tendency in human nature to act in favour of oneself and one's family may be remedied artificially, through the exercise of judgement and understanding that leads to justice:

> Our natural uncultivated ideas of morality, instead of providing a remedy for the partiality of our affections, do rather conform themselves to that partiality... The remedy, then, is not deriv'd from nature, but from *artifice*; or more properly speaking, nature provides a remedy in the judgment and understanding... (Hume 1969, 540)

In Bantock's terms, artifice can remedy nature because, along with the seeds of vice are planted the seeds of virtue. It came to be thought that "Natural man 'by art, by hard work, by self-cultivation and self-formation' can transcend or at least selectively develop his basic nature (Berry 1986, 25). Yet, nature is "bred in the bone and must out in the flesh," so such transcendance is rarely absolute. For example, from a Freudian viewpoint the sexual drive can be repressed or sublimated, but may manifest itself in ways that may be unexpected.

That "sympathy" in human nature to which Arnold refers in the extract above is what Berry calls a "given", as is the "superiority" of the male in the extract from Aristotle's works quoted at the beginning of Appendix II. Males are highly unlikely to lose this superiority; males in other cultures and eras are unlikely to be inferior; efforts to render males inferior likely will not succeed. Thus, "Human nature just because it is human nature cannot be changed" but must be accepted and taken into consideration (Berry 1986, 95).

According to Berry, scholars like Herder (and Holmstrom) present a non-traditional communitarian "contextualist" approach to human nature. Unlike those scholars who use the phrase 'human nature' in the usual way to imply a fixed nature, they hold that human nature is "a pliant clay which assumes a different shape under different needs and circumstances" (Berry 1986, 69). This is a redefination of human nature that serves, at this point, to highlight the innate and fixed universality of the traditional common-usage sense of the term. In the body of this dissertaion the communitarian or contextualist position will be reintroduced with reference to the abstract individual and the collectivist concept of human nature that underlies cultural feminism.

Second, human nature is universal. Abstracted from individual human beings, human nature is a concept that,

> Represents in equal fashion all the individuals from which it is abstracted or can be abstracted. In itself it is something one, yet it represents any and all of the instances that come under it. This relation to the many instances is expressed by calling it a universal (Owens 1992, 153)

Thus, human nature is inherent, not transitory or changeable (though an individual can act 'against his or her nature' without altering that nature itself) by the individual or by external forces and it is universal over time and place, as expressed by Hume, for example:

> There is a great uniformity among the actions of men, in all nations and ages, and that human nature remains still the same, in...all times and places, that history informs us of nothing new or strange in this particular. (Hume 1977, 55)

As with the natures of nonhuman entities presented in Appendix II, human nature expresses a distinct and bounded set of potentialities. Thus human beings cannot express pure potentiality and infinite adaptability. A creature with such a protean nature would not be considered to have a discernable or definable nature—or, rather, its nature would be 'to have no discernable nature'.

Should a human being act against its nature, such an action would involve a struggle. For example, the person who is naturally indolent will have to struggle to achieve marathon runner status. According to Favreau, natures are so fixed and stable that "they can lead one to infer that nothing can be done to improve the performance in question" (Favreau 1977, 64). Acting against one's nature carries normative implications that will be discussed later in this appendix because that which is inevitable can also be seen as ideal (Lehmann 1994, 53).

Third, although human beings can claim many insignificant qualities 'by nature', human nature expresses *homo sapiens'* dominant or most important qualities because they are those "individually necessary and jointly sufficient characteristics which constitute [humanity's] essence" (Holmstrom 1982, 26). Without those qualities, human beings would nonsensically not conform to their own definition and cease to be themselves. While the dominant qualities expressed in human nature may pertain to the physical composition of a human being, they may also depend on those internal drives that make the human being act. Further, these dominant qualities are categorical. They are participated in by all members of the category 'human being'.[6]

Fourth, then, is that human nature has to do with the way human beings *act*; in other words, with human behaviour in a variety of environments and circumstances. The tendency of human beings to act in certain ways makes them predictable, even transculturally, across the millenia of history, and at a geographical remove. Thus the motivations and actions of Odysseus, Job, and Beowulf are comprehensible to the modern reader. If a human action is attributed to human nature, it is seen as occurring spontaneously and nonrationally from within the person him- or herself. It is not a deliberately reasoned-out action, depending upon logic, judgement and the rational weighing-out of alternatives. Thus, perhaps Coriolanus could not help his actions, which arose spontaneously from the well-spring of his nature. Although actions attributed to human nature are seen as largely involuntary, they are not seen as conditioned or inculcated through brainwashing by some external human or social controlling source. Rather they arise from the wellspring of human nature within the organism, soul, or self. Neither are 'natural' actions seen as expressing learned or experientially acquired behaviour patterns.

Fifth, human nature comprises "those characteristics in the absense of which we would not call [a human being] a [human being]" (Hospers 1963). These are the most necessary, basic, and essential elements of human beings that are hidden beneath the complexity of the human condition. The search for this simplicity has led to the scrutiny of human lives for 'the way things *really* are' underneath the superficial intricacy of our pluralistic society. Chapters 4 and 5 will continue the discussion of simplicity in a consideration of the original state of nature (or Golden Age) and Natural Law.

Finally, human nature is seen to have freely flourished in a simplified, original state of nature in which it achieved full expression before being cloaked by the artificial palimpsest of civilization. This aspect of human nature expresses the tensions between the natural and the artificial (or cultured) briefly noted in Chapter 1.

Although each individual is seen as having his or her own unique personality and behaviours that are in common speech called his or her 'nature', the individual nature is not equivalent to human nature. For example: "The simplicity and cheerfulness of her nature... were a recommendation to every body and a mine of felicity to herself" (Austen 1972, 12). Jane Austen sees the simplicity and cheerfulness of this character's nature as her own unique properties and not as a common attribute of universal human nature. Human nature, on the other hand, is the bedrock upon which individual natures such as that delineated by Austen take shape: Human nature is the common property at the core of all human beings, at all times, and in all places. Nott identifies it as a "concrete-universal":

> We begin with the particular, also with the sense of a person, and at the same time we feel we can discern what is common in this individual—characteristics which we assume to warrant us in talking about a general conception, and to be instantly recognisable by others. (Nott 1970, 54)

This is not to say, however, that human nature has always been considered monolithic. The discussion in Chapter 2 supports the idea that there are two distinct conceptions of human nature. One, herein called the classical theory of human nature, gives pre-eminence to several major hierarchical subdivisions of human nature. This theory was developed by Plato, given a slightly new direction and further refined by Aristotle, and popularized in the Christian tradition by Aquinas. Significant elements of the classical theory of human nature were revived and somewhat modified by Rousseau and the Deist movement. Perhaps its last major proponent was Burke in the 18th century—but it survived and prospered in the way woman was conceptualized, and has been recently claimed and reactivated by the cultural feminist movement. It is the second theory of human nature, herein termed the modern, that posits one general vaguely-defined human nature shared by all. This theory became popular during the Enlightenment, provided a *rationale* for the great liberating revolutions of more recent history, and underpins the contemporary liberal-individualistic *zeitgeist* that is at the heart of liberal feminism. Chapters 4 and 5 describe the classical and modern theories of human nature.

Many attempts have been made in the context of the various theories of human nature to list the elements of human nature. To cite two examples, Krąpiec lists common elements as: rationality, technics (skills and tool use), community life, tradition, language, science (organized knowledge), art, religion, reflection on the fact of death, and culture (symbol use, reflection, cognition, creativity, and will) (Krąpiec 1985, 20-23). To Murdock, some common elements are:

> Age-grading, athletic sports, bodily adornment, calendar, cleanliness training, community organization, cooking, cooperative labour, cosmology, courtship, dancing, decorative art, divination, division of labour, dream interpretation, education... weaning and weather control. (Murdock 1945, 124 in Berry 1986, 84).

However interesting, such lists do not represent human nature itself. We have already seen that the nature of a human being has to do with attitudes and dispositions. These are internal states that a mere list of human activities cannot hope to approach (as an aside, Behaviourists must reject the notion of human nature because they discount all but observable action). Similarly, the definition of human nature above gives a fairly clear idea of what all theories of human nature suggest that human nature is and how it operates. The specifics or the content—what human nature *consists of* or what human nature *is like* — is the difficult aspect because it leaves open the question of *which* characteristics (particularly in terms of behaviours, attitudes, and dispositions) are those in the absence of which we would not call a person a person. This is an issue that, to this date, has not been resolved (and may indeed be beyond resolution). It is an important theme in such disparate works as *Frankenstein, Lord of the Flies, Alien*, and *2001: Space Odyssey*; and it is a central concern of lawmakers, biologists, and artificial intelligence engineers (Weizenbaum 1976). Having said that human nature is neither an individual's nature in the sense of unique personality nor an inventory of common human activities, and that the actual characteristics that make a human being elude inventory, it remains to turn to a consideration of what all theories of human nature are in terms of the components of human nature implied by the above definition of human nature.

Descriptive

First, all theories of human nature, in their most apparent form, are, and purport to be, empirically descriptive. In the tradition of Aristotle, empirical knowledge of entities carries authority—what *is* must be acknowledged and taken into consideration. The descriptive element of a study of human nature is what gives it scientific credibility because science purports to study what *is* and not what ought to be.

All theories of human nature must refer to aspects of the human condition that are easily recognized because, to be accepted as more than a personal eccentricity, a theory of human nature requires some congruence with experience. As seen in Appendix II, a theory of human nature that does not correspond in any way to apparent empirical realities is

invalid by definition, because the starting point for any definition is usually the external object (human beings, in this case). For example, it would be absurd to say that the nature of man is to live forever (not in a religious or spiritual sense, however!) because this contradicts what can plainly be perceived about all human beings.

The descriptive element of all theories of human nature could be termed the 'facts' of human life (as, for example, those empirical facts listed by Murdock above). These facts must be taken into consideration and are elements that an account of human nature often attempts to explain but they are not, in themselves, human nature. As Ryan points out, by grounding ideological notions in human nature, some type of factual basis for ideology is coopted or assumed along the lines of stating, "This is the way things *are*" or "This is the way things *really* are" (Ryan 1973). Whether or not there are grounds for accepting any theory of human nature as fact is under investigation in this appendix.

As part of our working definition, *Human nature is the essential and innate qualities, drives, or properties within all humans that are fixed, inherent, and inseparable, giving humanity its fundamental character and tendencies as revealed in its actions, including cognitions,* human nature has a component revealed through activity but specific human activities themselves (age-grading, athletic sports, and so on) are only an aspect of any theory of human nature. Appendix II presented the notion that the 'facts' about any entity are difficult to categorize (any entity could be classified into a number of categories, classification is an artificial situation imposed on natural continua, theory orients the observer toward certain judgements of significance, and so on). Thus Murdock's list above was criticized on the grounds that it said more about the observer than about the observed, particularly as regarded his inclusion of "property ownership".

Along with characteristic human activities, any theory of human nature can refer to certain common qualities, drives, or properties. These can be interpreted as tendencies reflected in human behaviour, cognition, and emotion. For example, humans tend to display grief following the death of someone close to them and they tend to be upset when they are victims of theft. We remark on these tendencies from earliest childhood. Because they are habitual, they allow for a certain predictability in human affairs. This predictability allows individuals to live together more easily: Human beings seem more comfortable when those around them act in accordance with human nature, in other words, appropriately or 'logically'. We are accustomed to certain behaviour patterns and we base much of our own behaviour on the reasonable certainty that people will act in accord with our expectations. The fixed nature of these tendencies that allows us to predict behaviour seems law-like in its control over individuals (this point will be expanded upon in the section on Natural Law in Chapter 5).

Although there is a strong descriptive element in theories of human nature, Berry suggests that human beings may find it difficult to describe themselves objectively, because they lack 'distance' from their own subjectivity:

> The concept of Man can never be a mere descriptive term. In studying human nature we are studying ourselves...Because of this identity of studier

and studied a description of human nature is always in some measure a self-description. But a self-description is no neutral datum...To cite C.B. Macpherson, "the very structure of our thought and language puts an evaluative content into our descriptive statements about 'man'". (Berry 1986, 40-41)

Explanatory

Second, all theories of human nature suggest causality and thus have explanatory power. In other words, certain characteristic activities are seen to be undertaken for reasons implicit in human nature. For example, Murdock's observation that all cultures express some form of community organization could be causally attributed to Plato's definition of the nature of man as *zoon politikon*. Although tautological because virtually any behaviour can be attributed to human nature, common usage accepts explanations grounded in human nature as valid. In common parlance, it is interesting that human nature is frequently cited, correctly or incorrectly, as the cause or explanation of opposing behaviours. It is entirely lucid that some theories of human nature may be false generalizations. There are those who hold that Lorenz's theory of human nature as aggressive is directly contradicted by the evidence (Hunt 1990). To give a concrete example from the world of work of the common usage of human nature as an explanatory device, a 'Type A' executive may excuse his autocratic and tyrannical management style by saying, "It's human nature to avoid work." A 'Type B' executive may justify his laissez-faire and supportive management style by saying, "It's human nature to do the best job you can."

Further, as Eliade points out, primitive man needed a cosmological base in which to anchor and make possible some understanding of his own actions. Explanation is grounded in the idea that "What he does has been done before. His life is the ceaseless repetition of gestures initiated by others" (Eliade 1959, 5). These repeated gestures comprise those universals noted in human behaviour and given meaning through an invocation of human nature because, "For archaic man, reality is a function of the imitation of a celestial archetype" and products of nature and man-made artifacts acquire "their reality, their identity, only to the extent of their participation in a transcendent reality" (Eliade 1959, 5). This prefigures Plato's theory of the Ideal Forms discussed in Chapter 4.

Pragmatic

Third, all theories of human nature contain the seeds of political philosophy. In other words, the ramifications of any particular theory of human nature are pragmatic (in the Greek sense of *to do*, or *deed*) because they are used to support a particular political agenda (for example, how individuals can best live together, conceptions of the good life, how individuals should behave, definitions of virtue, and so on) or, in more common application, to defend or critique specific human behaviours, habits of thought, or social arrangements. If something is not natural, or in accord with human nature, one may suspect that difficulties may arise—certainly Rousseau suggested this (Rousseau 1989, 14-15). Berry theorizes that

the principle purpose in any theory of human nature is to tell humanity what to do (1986). Therefore, he characterizes human nature as a *practical* concept in a way that parallels the Marxist use of the term *praxis* as theory in action. Stevenson's statement that ideologies depend on human nature demonstrates that at least some theories of human nature suggest a course of action: "An ideology, then, is more than a theory, but is based on a theory of human nature which somehow suggests a course of action" (Stevenson 1987, 7). Ryan associates theories of human nature with ideology more overtly:

> Our images of human nature are centrally important ideological phenomena
> [which] incorporate the validating assumptions of those imperatives. The
> assumption that these imperatives... have their roots in 'human nature' is one
> main condition of their very intelligibility (Ryan 1973, 3).

Stevenson underlines the focal point of a theory of the nature of man as giving meaning to life, being action-oriented (prescriptive), and applying limitations (in terms of realistic goals). Theories of the nature of man are implicit in ideologies and are seldom made manifest. It may not be too presumptuous to state, with MacIntyre, that every social arrangement "carries with it its own picture of human nature" (MacIntyre 1967, 268).

Stevenson describes all theories of human nature as having four structural elements in common: "(1) a background theory of the nature of the universe; (2) a basic theory of the nature of man; (3) a diagnosis of what is wrong with man; and (4) a prescription for putting it right" (Stevenson 1987, 9). This list draws attention to the reasons why the concept of human nature has been necessary. Above all, we want to know why people are the way they are. This is the explanatory element of theories of human nature mentioned above and in elements (1) and (2) of Stevenson's list. Second, we want to know how current social arrangements developed, particularly if they are seen as 'wrong' or oppressive. Third, we want to know how to fix things. Thus theories of human nature are a call to action. Bloom puts this very clearly:

> Those who first taught the state of nature proposed it as a hypothesis. Liber-
> ated from all the conventional attachments to religion, country and family
> that men actually did have, how would they live and how would they freely
> reconstruct those attachments? It was an experiment designed to make
> people recognize what they really care about and engage their loyalties on
> the basis of this caring. (Bloom 1987, 109)

Normative

Fourth, theories of human nature have normative and prescriptive power. If something is common to all human beings, it would behoove everyone to take it into consideration. Human nature speaks with authority: We look to nature for "facts which can be no other way" and which are "eternal and invariable" (Berry 1986, 29) in the same way as the laws, equations, and patterns of mathematics and geometry. The regular nature of human activity lends itself to law-making or theorizing. The post-Cartesian scientific

revolution suggested that the body may be "completely subject to mechanistic laws" (Krąpiec 1985, 71) and materialism, the opposite viewpoint to dualism (which separates body and soul), extends this notion to posit that human beings act in ways determined by the causal chain of antecedent events. These causal chains can be called natural laws, and survive in the behaviourist perspective (for example, "That all behaviour is governed by such laws is a 'metaphysical' assumption which ill befits a supposedly strict empiricist such as Skinner" [Stevenson 1987, 111]).

Because human nature expresses ubiquitous characteristics, it simultaneously defines deviance. As mentioned above, human nature is expressed in terms of habitual, even customary, tendencies: To act against the norm for appropriate behaviour is to run the risk of having one's actions thought 'illogical', even subversive.

The normative aspect of human nature is, perhaps, most easily apprehended if the adjective 'natural' (as in, "it's natural for human beings to be aggressive") is compared to its opposite, 'unnatural'. The epithet unnatural is a pejorative, indicating disapprobation: To take a current example, "unnatural sex". Literature abounds with references to unnatural actions—"her offence must be of such unnatural degree that monsters it... Abhorred villain, unnatural, detested, brutish villain!" (*King Lear* I, i). An unnatural act is an act perverted, turned away from its true purpose. The word 'unnatural' cannot be separated from the value judgement of perversion/wholesomeness: Thus, tools are not termed unnatural, although they are unquestionably manmade artifacts that do not exist in nature, because they fulfil their intended or proper purpose—to extend and complement the natural (innate) dexterity and power of human beings. This sense of proper purpose is expanded upon and related to my central thesis in Chapter 2.

Further, the normative aspect of human nature has as its core "a conception of human abilities, needs, wants and purposes" (Jagger 1983, 20). No absolutes in any of these areas have yet been agreed upon and it seems extremely unlikely that any consensual understanding of human needs, wants, and purposes is feasible. Even as basic an assumption as survival, Jagger reminds us, cannot be taken for granted: witness current debates over euthanasia and assisted suicide. There is an element in human nature, if you will, that resists definition.

Many theories of human nature have, at their unstated crux, the conviction that human beings *ought* to be a certain way. As discussed above, there is a purely descriptive aspect to human nature: often, however, the prescriptive (*ought*) aspect infiltrates what purports to be an objective description of human nature. Hume describes this tendency to project from an actual state of affairs the idea that things should be thus:

> In every system of morality...the author proceeds for some time in the
> ordinary way of reasoning, and...makes observations concerning human
> affairs; when of a sudden I am surpriz'd to find, that instead of the usual
> copulations of propositions, *is*, and *is not*, I meet with no proposition that is
> not connected with an *ought*, or an *ought not*...It seems altogether

inconceivable, how this new relation can be a deduction from others, which are entirely different from it. (Hume 1969, 521)

Oughts are, of course, value judgements. Stevenson gives a rather controversial example: Homosexuality is sometimes condemned as unnatural yet it is 'natural' in the sense that it appears common to virtually all societies and, as he suggests, is the sexual orientation of the majority in some (ancient Greece, is his example). Thus, in saying that homosexuality is unnatural, someone is not saying that people actually do not have this sexual orientation as observed in nature but is presenting an ethical ought:

> [In terming homosexuality unnatural, one is] expressing an opinion about what they ought to do (or ought *not* to do!) ...In order for the statement to be rightly allowed to be thus impervious to evidence, it must be recognized as a value judgement, as not even *attempting* to say what *is* the case. (Stevenson 1987, 18)

Limiting

Fifth, again according to Berry, human nature can be cited to put a full stop to argument and silence contradictory viewpoints in the sense that it takes certain items 'off the agenda' because they are non-negotiable and must be accepted as they stand. In Appendix II, it was suggested that one of the functions of defining an entity was to set its limits. If we know what human nature is, we know what our limits are. If, for example, we believe that it is human nature to be acquisitive, any plans to abolish private property will not be well-received.

It is important for subsequent discussion of the individual and the collectivity to note that to cite one common human nature implies that there are certain basic things about all human beings that must be taken into consideration. Human nature thus impinges upon and sets limits to the possibilities of social arrangements. In Berry's terms, social and political arrangements must "accommodate" themselves to human nature—not *vice versa*. Further, in moral terms, human nature sets limits by defining what suitable and appropriate human action is (Berry 1986, xi and 54). In Chapter 2, the contrary viewpoint is presented: That natures can be seen to serve social needs, to the point where the philosopher may see them as 'designed' to fulfil particular purposes.

Significance

There is a further sense in which any theory of human nature is limiting. In Appendix II, the issue of significance was introduced. A theory of human nature does not list every aspect of the human condition. Rather it picks up on what is essentially human. Since this judgement requires selectivity, of necessity certain elements involved in being human will not appear while others will. A theory of human nature is limiting, then, in the sense that it deals with certain specific aspects of being human while it silences others. For example, to

the Marxist, work is central to human nature ("The work-process... is the everlasting Nature-imposed condition of human existence" [Marx in Jagger 1983, 208]), while, to the Existentialist, it is not an essential part of human nature. To subscribe to either version of human nature, Marxist or Existentialist, is to accept and agree to the limiting focus of that version of human nature. Note, however, that espousing the Existentialist version of human nature, in this example, does not require one to believe that humans do not work—merely to acquiesce to the belief that the work role does not define what human beings *are* (Lavine 1984, 363). In other words, the *significance* given to a human activity (or activities) is what is important for a consideration of human nature. Significance, in the explication of human nature, is further explained by Berry:

> What for one theorist is a relevant and salient fact about human nature, for example, that Man alone has 46 chromosomes, could be for another theorist an irrelevance. The chromosome count would be irrelevant for this latter theorist because biological data do not enter into her conceptual classification. The classification is decisive because it determines what is to count as a description of human nature...(Berry 1986, 37)

Berry is suggesting that theories of human nature emphasize selected elements of the human condition and goes on to suggest that these elements are selected on the basis of a judgement that is not primarily scientific, but pragmatic, as discussed in the above section:

> There is—and this is a key point—an important distinction to be made between statements that happen to refer to human beings and those that articulate a theory of human nature. These do not necessarily coincide. The former could well be an object of theoretical science whilst the latter, as we have argued, is a practical concept. To claim that the chromosome count is relevant to human nature is to place that fact in a practical context; it is to 'go beyond' a statement *about chromosomes* to one which relates to human conduct. (Berry 1986, 37)

Berry goes on to point out that the selection of *any* elements of the human condition as significant enough to be definitive of human nature can be challenged or denied by anyone who can demonstrate that it is possible for that to conduct his or her life "without reference to that feature or activity" (Berry 1986, 53). Thus, the Marxist theory that work is the most central and hence significant aspect of human nature can be countered by the Existentialist who believes that it is possible to live his or her life authentically without working. Counter examples may always be provided. Berry's argument can be summarized as follows:

> Judgments as to the saliency or otherwise of 'facts' of human nature were inseparable from judgments about human conduct. [Further] any conception of human nature, no matter how ostensibly formal or descriptive, carries with it an understanding of what is appropriate for humans to do. (Berry 1986, 88)

Having considered the aspects of all theories of human nature under the broad categories of explanation, pragmatic application, normative implication, limitation, and significance, it may be interesting to return briefly to the quotation above to note how they bring into relief some of the ways in which a definition of human nature can be more complex than that of an entity.

All men by nature desire to have knowledge (Aristotle 1963, 40)

This quotation begins with the words, "All men." This underlines the categorical quality shared by all theories of human nature, including Aristotle's: All members in the classification 'man' possess this characteristic. They do not, of necessity, cultivate it (for example, through rigorous training and intellectual education) but, because it is a 'given', it is inborn in all men (although some individuals may cultivate it more than others). We are entitled to take for granted that every man we meet will have this disposition at the very core of his being because, if he did not, he would not be a human being. Thus, even if we observed contrary behaviour (one who never desires to have knowledge of anything) we would have to believe that this particular individual was either prevaricating, deluded (behaving 'illogically'), not fully in control of his desires, or denying his basic nature.

In this short extract, Aristotle says that all men desire knowledge, not because they are taught that happiness ought to be pursued, because they come through experience to see that knowledge is desirable, or because social forces lead them to value happiness, but because innate or deeply-socialized non-cognitive forces within them spontaneously produce this tendency. Note however, that this is a *tendency* only: Evidently humans do not always desire to seek knowledge (as of their own deaths, for example, when terminally ill). The tendency to desire knowledge can be overcome without changing basic human nature. Even inanimate entities can be brought to act against their natures if their environment is manipulated: For example, in a weightless environment, water will not seek its own level; pruned vigorously, bonsai trees will retain miniaturized proportion.

Further, human beings can possess contradictory tendencies by nature. Just as Lorenz posits that human nature is aggressive, Kohn (1990) and Hunt (1990) suggest that it is altruistic. There is empirical evidence of both tendencies in the newspaper every day. This is not, in itself, an argument against human nature: Human nature can express itself in a myriad of different qualities, some of which are dominant in certain individuals and recessive in others. For example, medieval theories of human nature frequently cited the humours as a source of individual psychological qualities (Allen 1985, 303-309). Human nature was held to be composed of several humours, which appeared in different proportions in individuals and caused an individual's unique nature in a way that is retained today in language—splenetic, for example.

Note also, as in our discussion in Appendix II, that the sum total of an entity's characteristics are not its true nature. Rather, certain key elements are selected as significant, important, or salient (in the sense of particularly pertinent for the subject at hand). Thus the second illustrative extract with which this appendix began, from a

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nineteenth-century essay by Arnold, states a different view of human nature. It is quoted again to save the reader from turning back several pages:

> And because men are all members of one great whole, and the sympathy which is in **human nature** will not allow one member to be indifferent to have the rest... Perfection—as culture from a thorough disinterested study of **human nature** and human experience learns to conceive it,—is a harmonious expansion of *all* the powers which make the beauty and worth of **human nature**... (Matthew Arnold *Culture and Anarchy* 1867-68 reprinted 1958, 461-462)

The salient facts of human nature now are sympathy and fellow-feeling: "The sympathy which is in human nature will not allow one member to be indifferent to the rest". In the extract from Aristotle's *Metaphysics* above, the most important, or salient, fact about human nature is that all men desire knowledge. To Lorenz, it is that all men are aggressive. And so on. These most significant things about human beings are what compose all the various theories of human nature. Because an element of the human experience is omitted from a particular theory of human nature cannot mean that the element is not truly human. Rather, it is a simple reflection of what, to the author of that particular statement about or theory of human nature, is *most* important, *most* pronounced, *most* consequential, *most* pertinent to take into account. This is why there is can be absolutely no consensus on one definitive Theory of Human Nature to which all can ascribe. Through the definition of human nature itself we can agree on a fairly clear idea of what this nature would be like, how it would make itself felt, and where it might be manifested if it could clearly be detected. What we cannot be certain about is the content of human nature—which human attributes are 'natural' or 'due to human nature', in the sense that a nature and human nature have been understood traditionally, and which are acquired through 'art' or culture. To accept one theory of human nature over another is to 'buy into' its explanation of human behaviour and the workings of the mind. In order to accept or reject a particular theory of human nature as correct, a variety of truth-seeking strategies have been developed and are described in the following section.

Methods of Defining Human Nature

There have been four basic investigative methods used to discern the common core of human nature and derive corresponding theories of human nature. In general, these methods parallel those used in taxonomy that were briefly examined in Appendix II—they also entail a search for similarities and for differences.

Similarities

First, human beings were examined over a period of time and (when it became possible historically) across cultures to discover what was universal about human beings and

their social structures. The classical (pre-empirical, in other words) *zeitgeist* saw science and truth as products of the rational formulation of grand laws followed by general natures, rather than the specifics of individuals and the *minutiae* of their everyday lives. In other words, importance was given to those behaviours, events, and entities that conformed to laws; as Aristotle confirms, and later astronomers Galileo, Copernicus, and Brahe found to their peril, what seemed to be exceptions could be written off as "unnatural" or attributed to errors of the senses ("for it is possible for the same things to appear different to the sight of the two eyes, if they are different from each other" [Aristotle 1963, 70]). The classical necessity for a perfectly ordered universe resulted in the "Save the Phenomena" position mentioned in Appendix II: In other words, human observations and measurements that proved irregularities in astronomical movements were not 'true' but useful fictions ("mathematical devices to account for the phenomena" [Crowe 1990, 72]) that had little to do with the 'true' movements of the spheres.

These conforming commonalities were taken to be particularly significant vis-à-vis human nature; and even more significance accrued when the observations were of cultures less civilized and, by inference, more simple. As presented in Appendix II, the premium placed on simplicity has a complex background and ought not to be taken at face value. In isolating the essential features of human nature, an attempt was made to dig beneath the surface appearance of humanity to discover what humanity *really* is (as opposed to what humanity is as empirically observed). In Mill's words, "[Nature] denotes things as they would be, apart from human intervention"(Mill 1958, 341). As noted above, in our working definition of the 'human nature' that underlies all theories of human nature, there is a sense in which the original is seen as more authentic because spontaneous human nature is freely allowed to flourish, uncorrupted by masking layers of artificial behaviour. Aristotle may be the source of this conviction ("He who thus considers things in their first growth and origin, whether a state or anything else, will obtain the clearest view of them" [Aristotle 1977, 49]) that persisted as a self-evident truth:

> In [primitive cultures], the true, most useful, and natural virtues and properties are alive and vigorous; in [civilized cultures], we have bastardized them, and adapted them only to the gratification of our corrupt tastes... It is not reasonable that art should win the honours from our great and mighty mother nature. We have so loaded the riches and beauty of her works with our inventions that we have altogether stifled her. (Montaigne 1958, 109)

Obviously, this method of discerning human nature is strongly tied to the observed status quo. If, for example, slavery and the subordination of women are observed in the surrounding environment, these social arrangements tend to be attributed to human nature. Thus they are given justification because human nature expresses what is inevitable, natural, appropriate, and in accord with "human abilities, needs, wants and purposes" (Jagger 1983, 20). If attributed to human nature, they are fixed and invariant. Further, they are not the artificial results of current social conventions. Rather the issues of ubiquitous slavery and female oppression are taken 'off the agenda': they cannot be debated but must be accepted because human nature has set these basic limits to the possibilities of human social

arrangements. On the other hand, if slavery and female subordination are *not* attributed to human nature, they are not immutably fixed and rooted in the very being of the types of individuals involved (the natures of slaves and women). They may be the result of other factors, such as artificial social arrangements designed by convention, for convenience, maintained by power mechanisms, and so on.

From the concept of universalism, the transition is smooth to the concepts of a natural order and natural law (Krieger 1989; Berry 1986, 58-67) that affect humanity directly, because both of these concepts confirm the notion that the universe must be as it is for a purpose. Eliade points out that this is not simply a Western phenomenon but a ubiquitous mythical prototype (Eliade 1959, 32). That purpose, for the classical philosophers, is teleological and will be presented in detail in Chapter 4. For our present purposes, it is sufficient to state that the classical view of nature is that it is self-regulatory, self-moving, and has a mind (Collingwood 1972, 3-4). During the Renaissance, the view of nature shifted so that it was no longer seen as an intelligence in itself, but as conforming to rational laws of nature "imposed from without" (Collingwood 1972, 5; Miller 1967, 5). In other words, the workings of nature came to be seen as those of a perfectly-calibrated machine, set up by God. Tinkering with the machine, or altering the self-regulatory mind of a transcendent nature, both seemed to be rooted in the utmost *hubris* to the rational human mind. Thus conformity to universally-observed social practice seemed the wise course of action.

The Golden Age Through history, as the immense variety of conventional, culture-bound values became apparent, individuals searched for universal values in human nature that were consistent across cultures and across time. The perception of universality led to concepts of natural order and natural law but left open the question of which theory of human nature was correct. If the one true theory of human nature was not to be found in individual cultures, perhaps it could be found in an original human nature that predated the artificial conventions of civilization. Thus, Rousseau and Locke, for example, strove to understand 'natural man' by looking backward to the origins of the species.

If the purpose in formulating a theory of human nature is to criticize prevailing social arrangements, an historical epoch in which human beings lived in accord with guiding principles other than those currently accepted could be postulated or imaginatively reconstructed — today's problems were non-existent yesterday and will be resolved tomorrow. As archaeology provides but sketchy data, virtually any utopian reconstruction of the past is possible. This is the technique that Rousseau, for example, used in his description of the Golden Age; currently, French (and others mentioned in Chapter 6) describes an original matriarchy as a rationale for her cultural feminist stance (1985 and 1992). That these imaginative reconstructions are largely mythical testifies to their ideological power. References to mankind's original innocence and its undeviating faithfulness to original purposes are archetypal and possess great ideological influence. Stevenson points out that all great theories of human nature present their own versions of history as an integral part of their cosmology and theories of man (Stevenson 1987, 4).

Natural Man Ryan calls natural man an important critic of civilized society (Ryan 1973, 17). Interest in aboriginal human nature led, through the influence of the 18th century Deist movement, to a focus on the Natural Man as exemplified by the Noble Savage and Robinson Crusoe. The discovery of Victor, *l'enfant sauvage d'Aveyron*, provided scientists, philosophers (including Rousseau), and educators (Itard and others) with a perfect focus on the nature/nurture controversy, on the perfectibility of mankind, on the abilities and weaknesses of the Noble Savage in isolation and in society, and on Rousseau's hypothesized moral superiority of the natural man. Because Victor was a twelve-year-old feral child free of the false veneer of civilization, without the evils of artificiality, uncorrupted by social institutions, true to his innate qualities, completely uneducated—he exemplified "what man is *really* like".[7]

The contemporary equivalent of Victor may be the non-human primate. Lorenz's work on aggression provides an example: Civilized man often appears peaceful and society seems more-or-less harmonious on the surface. Yet if we look back at our origins, it seems as though we must acknowledge that man is fundamentally an aggressive animal. In Bloom's terms, fighting seems to be something that man "cares about". As noted above, whether this aspect of the human condition is to be held significant, or more significant than also-observed altruistic tendencies in humanity, is moot.

Differences

Second, in the investigation of common core characteristics of human nature, theories of human nature can compare the human species to non-human (animal) species, for example: "For as regards reason or sense, inasmuch as it is the only thing that makes us men and distinguishes us from brutes..." (Descartes 1971, 7). The differences that separated men from animals were also presumed to be distinctly and significantly human. Thus, lists of uniquely human qualities such as rationality, reflection, language, tool use, and emotion were suggested and debated. The controversy continues today over where to draw the line (anencephalitic babies and people in irreversible comas are two examples in medical ethics—and there is a strong lobby group to include certain species of [intelligent, tool-using, symbol-literate] ape within the human species).

Similarly, those activities seen as particularly human are those in which animals do not involve themselves (and, as a corollary, these activities are linked to reason while those we share with animals—like eating, childcare, and play—are not). This method of deriving human nature accounts for the frequent omission of such distinctly human activities as community life from descriptions of human nature, because they are shared with lower life forms. Arendt is quoted as saying that the classical Greek philosophers, for this reason, separated political activities (as part of human nature) from social activities and family life (which were not a part of human nature but a biological legacy) (McMillan 1982, 7).

As noted in Chapter 4, it is hardly surprising to note that those (males), following Aristotle, who were doing the ranking put themselves at the top of the list, followed by

women, male children, female children, and slaves—the justification of this hierarchy of categories being rationality:

> For he who can be, and therefore is another's, and he who participates in reason enough to apprehend, but not to have, reason, is a slave by nature. (Aristotle 1977, 52).

A point of interest here is that, in any theory of human nature, these comparisons were based solely on male human beings. For example, Aristotle's great-souled man is clearly not a concept developed from a balanced consideration of all human beings, including women and children. Rather it is an abstract ideal to strive for and, further, an ideal in the masculine mode. A cultural feminist critique might remind us that, in attempting to emulate the great-souled man, a woman would be forced to deny her femininity. This point is addressed in Chapter 6. Nowhere in the description of the great-souled man or in Aristotle's discussion of the virtues is the notion that human nature strives to become more nurturing, for example (although Plato's Guardian must be gentle as well as high-spirited [Plato 1974, 45]).

Potential

Third, theories of human nature can be presented in terms of potential. To overcome the aforementioned limiting aspects of human nature, man was described as a creature at the apex of creation with virtually unlimited power and dominion (for example, "Earth is the centre of the visible universe, and that man is the cynosure of things terrestrial" [T.H. Huxley quoted by Arnold 1958, 491]). Taylor quotes Pico della Mirandola's *Oration* as follows:

> The nature of all other beings is limited and constrained within the bounds of laws prescribed by Us [God]. Thou [Adam], constrained by no limits, in accordance with thine own free will, in whose hand We have placed thee, shalt ordain for thyself the limits of thy nature. (Taylor 1989, 199)

This potential was interpreted, literally from the Latin, as the power to become itself, to achieve perfection:

> For what each thing is when fully developed, we calls its nature, whether we are speaking of a man, a horse, or a family. Besides, the final cause and end of a thing is the best, and to be self-sufficing is the end and the best. (Aristotle 1977, 50).

Chapter 2 of this dissertation returns to a consideration of the classical notion of the nature of an entity as its potentially perfect form in the section on **Essence**.

Function

Fourth, the nature of any entity, including human beings, can be understood in terms of its function. As pointed out in Appendix II, notions of 'good' or particular excellence in terms of function (the Greek word is *arete*) have lost their mooring in the contemporary interpretation of human nature. Because of its centrality to this dissertation, the method of discerning an entity's, particularly a human entity's, nature through an examination of that which it does best by nature is examined in Chapter 4, the section entitled **Function**.

Having examined some of the common elements at the heart of all theories of human nature and having briefly examined the strategies used in developing theories of human nature, the following section again takes up the project of establishing that theories of human nature rest primarily on an ideological basis rather than on objective fact. As stated in the introductory paragraphs of this appendix, the focus here is *human* nature rather than woman's nature because if it can be seen that theories of human nature are primarily ideological in origin and foundation, it would then seem unlikely that a separate woman's nature were based on objective fact.

* * * * *

It is evident that there is a fairly well-developed set of ideas with which the term human nature' reverberates. Where the difficulty arises is in the various contexts in which human nature is evoked. In fiction, religion, philosophy, the liberal arts, and science, human nature is used to describe, explain, evoke a response, set norms, and set reasonable limits to human activities. These are crucial tasks—yet the human nature invoked as their foundation is subject to a myriad of different descriptions. Human beings are, by nature, variously: animals, political animals, social animals; abstract individuals; workers, rulers; oppressed, cynosures of the universe; maximizers of self-interest, altruistic; aggressive, passive victims of social manipulation; rational, impelled by nonrational drives; slaves and masters; and so on. The common core of human dispositions, behaviours, and drives seems infinitely capacious—particularly because, according to the above definition of a human nature, individuals can mask that common core by acting against nature. Thus questions as to the content of human nature are rendered difficult to answer. Anyone is free to posit a particular content of human nature because no reliable, value-free method exists by which to prove that any theory of human nature is wrong. Just as the list of descriptors in the common core of human nature is infinitely long, "those characteristics in the absence of which we would not call a person a person," are becoming fewer and fewer. The list at one time included rationality, self-mastery, male physiology, and adulthood. Today there are lobby groups claiming that the human sperm and egg at the moment of union form a person. A zygote or foetus cannot claim rationality, self-mastery, or adulthood. It is not even observably male or female.

Prescientific common-sense knowledge allowed the articulation of the notion of human nature because it was and remains a useful goad to action, moral reference point, and

check to civilization's tendencies to artificiality and corruption. Used in this way, a single clear-cut universally acceptable theory of the nature of man is unnecessary. Human nature is not an empirical fact but a tool of discourse, or way of speaking about humanity,* about life, and about the moral issues that arise out of a consideration of what human beings *are*. It could be suggested that, cleverly, the elusive definitive statement on human nature has avoided scientific detection and allowed us free reign to create ourselves (a quest that the existentialists would depict as serious, fraught with *angst* and loneliness). As Taylor epigrams and will be discussed in Chapter 3, all definitions but self-definition have been rejected by the contemporary Western concept of human nature. Philosophy itself has been defined as a search for a definition of man (Berry 1986, 132). "As a point who synthesizes the whole cosmos in his nature, man has always appeared to be the most difficult object for a definitive explanation of philosophical investigations" (Krąpiec 1982, 89). Chapter 2 considers that "whole cosmos" of which human nature is the fulcrum and apotheosis.

Having examined a number of ways in which the concept of nature, natural man, 'by nature', and human nature fail to provide a definitive source of guidance for human action, it seems reasonable to conclude with Richards... "that in no readily understandable sense of the word 'natural' does there seem to lie any reason at all for acting according to nature rather than against it" (Richards 1980, 71).

A more radical interpretation may suggest that the concept of human nature muddies more waters than it clears and ought to be avoided at all costs. Kagan's critique of social science, particularly psychology, attests that meanings vary depending on the "salient features" selected by the individual using the term (Kagan 1989, 44). Characteristically, human nature *is* those salient features selected by individuals using the term. Hence, one might anticipate that the attendant difficulties in the use of any term will be compounded in the case of human nature. Further, he quotes Putnam as saying that even science "failed to reveal to us any ready-made objects, any objects with a built-in an unique description, but the objects it does postulate are intimately connected with the observer and his ways of observing them" (Kagan 1989, 50). Thus the natural world, including man's own essence, may seem to elude scientific understanding. Amélie Rorty supports the perception of the elusiveness of the concept of human nature as follows:

> For all practical and theoretical purposes it doesn't matter whether the concept of a person has multiple and sometimes conflicting functions, or whether there is no single foundational concept that can be characterized as *the* concept of a person. As long as we recognize that such appeals are, in the classical and unpejorative sense of that term, rhetorical, we can continue to appeal to conceptions of persons in arguing for extending political rights, or limiting the exercise of political power. (Rorty 1990, 38)

It is understood that Rorty, Kagan, Putnam and the other philosophers and scientists cited in this appendix speak from their own particular approach to the person and to human nature. It is not suggested that their interpretations are the only way the person and human nature can be conceptualized, let alone the only *correct* way. However, it is possible to see

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how the concept 'human nature' can be a tool of rhetoric employed effectively in practical political contexts without saying that this is the *only* use to which human nature can be put. Chapters 2 and 3 of this dissertation illustrate the use of human nature as a political concept.

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ENDNOTES

1. These terms are used interchangeably. The Nature of Man, even when it serves as a complementary nature to that of woman, represents those self-same qualities that are identified as human (Stevenson supports this viewpoint [1974, 3] as does Tarnas [1991, 441-445]).

2. The quotation marks indicate an awareness of the epistemological problems in knowing (particularly in knowing 'reality') briefly mentioned in Chapter 2.

3. The classical notion of human nature is described in Chapter 4.

4. The possibility that a female nature may inevitably develop as the result of deep socialization is introduced in Appendix I and further discussed in Chapter 7. The possibility that human nature is a social creation ("contextualism") is suggested by such chronologically diverse scholars as Marx, Holmstrom (1982), and Rose *et al.* (1984, 13). However, this perspective has developed largely as a critical reaction against the traditional conception of human nature as innate and immutable (Rose *et al.* 1984, x and 13). Holmstrom is particularly persuasive on this point. She notes that a nature which is mutable and formed completely by the environment perhaps ought not to be called a nature at all because it runs contrary to the traditional use of the word (Holmstrom 1982, 37).

5. Or through Grace, in a Christian context.

6. The idea that there are a variety of distinct human natures, whether male and female, slave and master, Guardian and Auxiliary, and so on will be developed subsequent to the discussion of 'human nature' *per se*.

7. To this day, studies of feral and criminally neglected children are the closest that scientists may come to the so-called forbidden experiment.

8. Wittgenstein, for example, clearly refutes notions of human nature as he does all other essentialist theories. He would support the use of the term 'human nature' as an element in a particular language game.

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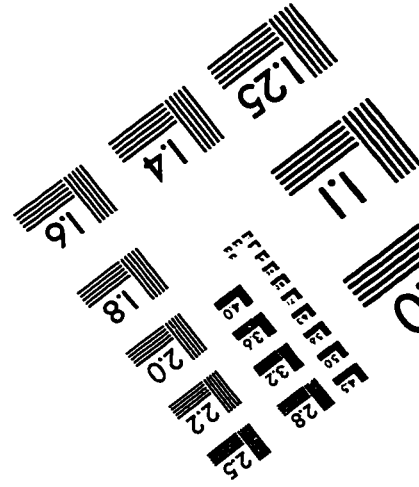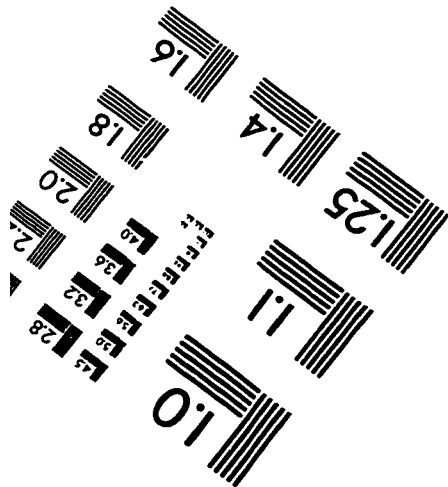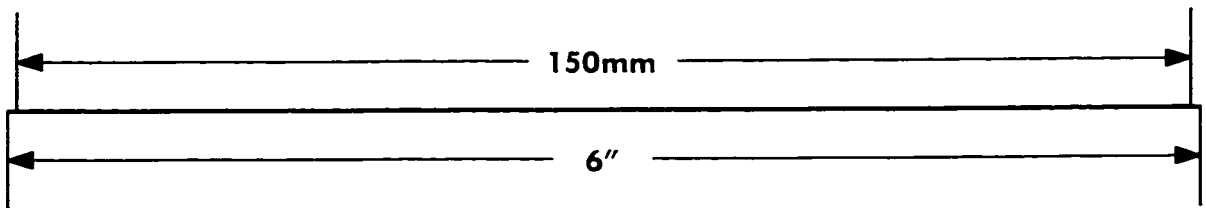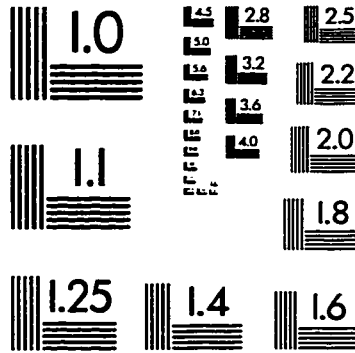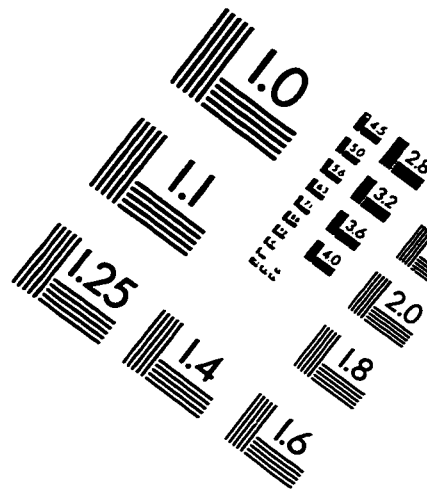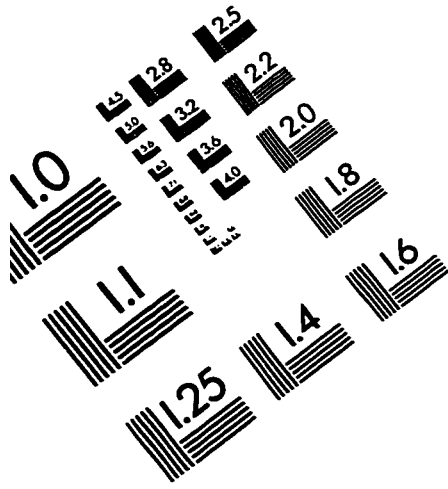
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