

NIETZSCHE ON WOMAN

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Was Nietzsche a sexist, a "male chauvinist," a misogynist? In the eyes of many, Nietzsche is one philosopher for whom the question should not even be asked, as if there were any question. Is not Nietzsche surely one of the more striking examples of a male philosopher perpetuating a male-dominated culture by arguing for the inferiority of women? I don't think so. With some trepidation, I would like to engage this delicate matter, and take issue with the claim that Nietzsche's views on women reflect "all-too-human prejudices" which are therefore "philosophically irrelevant,"¹ and even attempt the impossible: argue for Nietzsche's "feminism"!

Was Nietzsche a sexist? If "sexism" means a belief in necessary and essential differences between the sexes, the answer is a qualified yes. If it means a belief in masculine superiority (i.e., "male chauvinism"), the answer is definitely no; in fact, a good case can be made for feminine superiority. If western culture reflects masculine domination, we will see that Nietzsche presents a decidedly "non-western" view of the masculine-feminine relation and the priorities disclosed in the nature of that relation.

Like all facets of Nietzsche's philosophy, his thoughts on woman demand a careful reading, with an eye out for links to other aspects of his thinking. We will begin with the longest single treatment of the issue in Nietzsche's writings, found in Part Seven of *Beyond Good and Evil* (*BGE*), sections 231-239.² Two important points in section 231 must be noted at the outset: (1) He speaks of "woman as such" (*Weib an sich*), not "women."³ I take this to be an indication that Nietzsche is pursuing something deeper than sexual differences. Hereafter, the term "woman" is meant to be synonymous with "the feminine" (*Weiblichkeit*), a principle which is neither biological nor sociological but *archetypal*.⁴ (2) Nietzsche identifies the thoughts to come as "my truths." Some might take this to be a philosophical disclaimer, or relief for the serious reader, i.e., that what follows is a rather idiosyncratic indulgence with no importance beyond a subjective profile of the author. But although Nietzsche was a playful writer, he was never without serious intention. In my view, before we can judge Nietzsche's thoughts on woman we must first attempt to see how they fit *his* thought as a whole. Let us begin by quoting a good portion of the sections in question:

Woman wants to become self-reliant—and for that reason she is beginning to enlighten

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men about "woman as such": *this* is one of the worst developments of the general *uglification* of Europe. For what must these clumsy attempts of women at scientific self-exposure bring to light! . . . Woe when "the eternally boring in woman"—she is rich in that!—is permitted to venture forth! When she begins to unlearn thoroughly and on principle her prudence and art—of grace, of play, of chasing away worries, or lightening burdens and taking things lightly . . .

. . . Is it not in the worst taste when woman sets about becoming scientific that way? So far enlightenment of this sort was fortunately man's affair, man's lot . . .

. . . But she does not *want* truth: what is truth to woman? From the beginning, nothing has been more alien, repugnant, and hostile to woman than truth—her great art is the lie, her highest concern is mere appearance and beauty. Let us men confess it: we honor and love precisely *this* art and *this* instinct in woman—we who have a hard time and for our relief like to associate with beings under whose hands, eyes, and tender follies our seriousness, our gravity and profundity almost appear to us like folly.

We men wish that woman should not go on compromising herself through enlightenment . . . I think it is a real friend of women that counsels them today: *mulier taceat de muliere!* (Woman should be silent about woman). (232)

To go wrong on the fundamental problem of "man and woman", to deny the most abysmal antagonism between them and the necessity of an eternally hostile tension, to dream perhaps of equal rights, equal education, equal claims and obligations—that is a *typical* sign of shallowness . . . (238)

Wherever the industrial spirit has triumphed over the military and aristocratic spirit, woman now aspires to the economic and legal self-reliance of a clerk: "woman as clerk" is inscribed on the gate to the modern society that is taking shape now. As she thus takes possession of new rights, aspires to become "master" and writes the "progress" of woman upon her standards and banners, the opposite development is taking place with terrible clarity: *woman is retrogressing*.

Since the French Revolution, woman's influence in Europe has *decreased* proportionately as her rights and claims have increased; and the "emancipation of woman," insofar as that is demanded and promoted by women themselves (and not merely by shallow males) is thus seen to be an odd symptom of the increasing weakening and dulling of the most feminine instincts. There is *stupidity* in this movement, an almost masculine stupidity . . .

. . . what is the meaning of all this if not a crumbling of feminine instincts, a defeminization?

To be sure, there are enough imbecilic friends and corrupters of woman among the scholarly asses of the male sex who advise woman to defeminize herself in this way and to imitate all the stupidities with which "man" in Europe. European "manliness," is sick: they would like to reduce woman to the level of "general education," probably even of reading the newspapers and talking about politics . . .

. . . Altogether one wants to make her more "cultivated" and, as is said, make the weaker sex *strong* through culture—as if history did not teach us as impressively as possible that making men "cultivated" and making them weak—weakening, splintering, and sickly over the *force of the will*—have always kept pace, and that the most powerful and influential women in the world (most recently Napoleon's mother) owed their power and ascendancy over men to the force of their will—and not to schoolmasters! (239)

A careful reading of these passages, in the light of certain basic assumptions in Nietzsche's thought, should lead to the conclusion that this is anything but "male chauvinism," i.e., the belief in the superiority of masculine traits. If the "emancipation of women" means "equality," that is to say, affirming and recommending the participation of women

in “man’s world,” it is clearly Nietzsche’s view that this represents not a step up but in fact a regressive decline and loss of power. If feminine traits could be characterized as: playfulness, adornment, instinctiveness, unpredictability, sensuality, nurturing (e.g., child rearing); and masculine traits as: seriousness, rationality, orderliness, de-sensualization, productivity (e.g., a “career”)—then Nietzsche seems to be saying that the repudiation of feminine traits in favor of masculine traits is an exchange of strength for weakness. In other words, not only is the feminine not inferior to the masculine, it may be superior to the masculine. According to Nietzsche, man is “sick.”

If such an interpretation is to make sense, we must draw connections with certain central Nietzschean themes: (1) *The primacy of instinct*. Although Nietzsche never denies the value of reason, he rejects the rationalistic devaluation of passion and instinct—not out of some shallow romanticism, but because he sees reason and instinct as inextricably linked. Reason is in the service of life instincts, the priority of which must therefore always be recognized. (2) *The primacy of will*. Nietzsche never abandoned the Schopenhauerian view that knowledge is subordinate to will, that explanation, measure and order are epiphenomenal echoes of an inexplicable force of sheer assertion—will. As in the first instance, knowledge is not without value, it simply does not represent the core of human being. (3) *Anti-egalitarianism*. Nietzsche opposed all forms of equality, not on social or political but philosophical grounds. All calls for equality, in Nietzsche’s eyes, represented variations of the central theme of western metaphysics: the attempt to transcend a world constituted by differences, and therefore, conflict. In all facets of his thinking, Nietzsche tried to preserve the tension of differences, because in his view the essence of reality (a process of becoming) is fueled by this tension. (4) *The decadence of western culture*. Nietzsche criticizes the spirit of western civilization because it represents an inversion of the priorities described above. The Platonic-Christian foundation of the western mind determined the course of culture and history to be a continuing suppression of “nature” in favor of “spirit.” Now in view of the masculine and feminine traits sketched earlier, if one were to admit a common assumption of “male chauvinism”—that our culture is a masculine product—then it seems to me that accusing Nietzsche of misogyny or male chauvinism entirely misses the point. There never has been a more severe critic of western culture than Nietzsche. Consequently, Nietzsche can be seen to be one of the most severe critics of the masculine principle.

We can pursue this matter from another angle by recalling the central theme of *The Birth of Tragedy (BT)*: the Dionysian-Apollonian distinction, and with it the issue of truth and appearance, that which is most pertinent to our topic. Assuming the reader is somewhat familiar with *BT*, I will only sketch a bare outline of the fundamental issue in that work.

Nietzsche identifies what he considers to be the two archetypal forces controlling the Greek spirit, forces embodied in the deities Dionysus and Apollo. Dionysus personifies ecstatic self-transcendence and Apollo personifies the principle of individuation; what is portrayed here is a cosmic relation consisting of a unified, formless flux (becoming) and individuated moments within that flux (being), both of which constitute the world-process. For Nietzsche, the early Greeks knew both forces well: the cultivation of form and meaning in the plastic and poetic arts, and form-shattering annihilation in the ecstatic practises of the mystery cults.

Nietzsche's view of the world is one in which becoming has priority over being. Consequently, he feels that Greek tragedy, which was connected with Dionysian religion, represented the culmination of Greek genius, and their deepest penetration into the nature of reality. The tragedies could affirm individuation and form (the poetic reflection of the hero) and yet recognize the priority of the annihilating power of flux (the hero's doom). In other words, the tragic world-view held form (the Apollonian) to be "appearance" (a *temporary* ordering of a primordial chaos) which must consequently yield to a formless power (the Dionysian) symbolized by the priority of destructive fate in the drama. In the tragic age, the Greeks were able to create a world of beauty and meaning and yet affirm the inevitable negativity of life, thereby affirming life as a whole.

With the advent of the scientific spirit (personified by Socrates) the tragic attunement of Apollo and Dionysus was ruptured. The forces of form and formlessness became separated into an antagonistic conflict, where the principle of form was given priority. The Socratic search for "truth" (i.e., an abiding form beyond appearance and change) represents the rejection of the artistic spirit (i.e., the view that form is a *creation* out of an indeterminate chaos, not "truth"). In this way the Apollonian principle is severed from the Dionysian, resulting in the opposition between reason (*form alone*) and chaos (*mystery and destruction*), and the attempt to eliminate or at least devalue the latter.

According to Nietzsche, with this Platonic inversion of tragic priorities, where now form takes precedence over formlessness and unchanging form becomes the criterion for truth, western man begins to be alienated from a world constituted by becoming. The ideals of western (i.e., post-tragic) culture represent the predominance of Apollonian tendencies and the subordination of Dionysian instincts, or even the complete devaluation of the Dionysian (either in the other-worldly form of Christianity, or the worldly form of scientific rationalism). In any case, Nietzsche feels that the consequences are the weakening of life-affirming instincts, and the loss of creativity and attunement to a world of change.

Since, for Nietzsche, form is a *process* of creation out of formlessness, and is therefore not "substance," then the Platonic inversion presents

not only a philosophical mistake, but also an existential barrier impeding the appropriate emergence of form—the aesthetic mode of creativity. Herein lies the background of Nietzsche's critique of "truth" and promotion of "appearance." The continuing references to appearance in Nietzsche's writings point back to this central theme of *BT*: form *as such* is appearance; there is no "truth," other than the annihilation of form; "appearance," that is to say, form which admits its "deceptive" character, which yields to the formless, is a more appropriate model of reality. Form is not "objective truth"; it is a creation. The world is an "aesthetic phenomenon."⁵

If we recall Nietzsche's characterization of woman in the passages quoted earlier, we can begin to see the references to "appearance," "lie" and the repudiation of truth in a new light. And if we could match the Apollonian-Dionysian distinction with the masculine-feminine distinction, then Nietzsche's objections to "emancipation" could be translated as follows: woman's equality means (in Nietzsche's eyes) the adoption of masculine traits; defeminization announces the final victory of the Apollonian over the Dionysian and completes the degeneration and weakening of man. Could it be that "the woman question" represents, for Nietzsche, a specific battle in which he fights for the preservation of the Dionysian?

If we could conclusively equate the feminine with the Dionysian, then in the context of Nietzsche's critique of western culture we could argue for the "primordially" of the feminine. To that purpose, let us hear more from *BGE*:

What inspires respect for woman, and often enough even fear, is her *nature*, which is more "natural" than man's, the genuine, cunning suppleness of a beast of prey, the tiger's claw under the glove, the naiveté of her egoism, her uneducability and inner wildness, the incomprehensibility, scope, and movement of her desires and virtues—

What, in spite of all fear, elicits pity for this dangerous and beautiful cat "woman" is that she appears to suffer more, to be more vulnerable, more in need of love, and more condemned to disappointment than any other animal. Fear and pity: with these feelings man has so far confronted woman, always with one foot in tragedy which tears to pieces as it enchants. (239)

We are clearly reminded of the "nature vs. culture" tragic tension in *BT*. In *BGE*, section 231, Nietzsche says: "Woman is *essentially* unpeaceful, like a cat." In one of his later writings, Nietzsche says that woman "tears to pieces" when she loves, and calls women "maenads."⁶ These are surely Dionysian references. In that same work he tells us that he "knows women" because of his "Dionysian dowry," and calls himself in that context the "first psychologist of the eternally feminine."⁷

These references suggest that Nietzsche considered the feminine and the Dionysian to be closely linked if not synonymous. We can further elucidate this association by briefly addressing the context of Dionysian worship in ancient Greece.

The cult of Dionysus was the most successful "Titanic" counterweight to "Olympian" worship, in the sense that it represented elements

of nature mysticism and ecstatic self-transcendence to balance the “sky” imagery, moderation and de-naturalization personified in Olympian religion. The respective notions of immortality speak to this point: Olympian immortality meant freedom from death; Dionysian immortality meant continual death and rebirth. In this way, Dionysian mythology expressed the cyclic regeneration of nature, the destruction and reconstruction of life forms. Consequently, Dionysian worship embraced the “dark,” destructive side of life in order to receive the blessings which stem from harmonizing the self with a necessary cosmic force. The essence of Dionysian religion consisted in the realization that although nature destroys the individual, the *whole* is indestructible; therefore mystical self-transcendence grants religious transformation.

The Dionysian cult was originally a cult of women; only later were men included. Furthermore, Dionysus was frequently characterized as “androgynous,” that is to say, a male with a feminine manner (e.g., the description of the god in *The Bacchae*). Much of the imagery of Dionysian religion suggests it is derived from an archaic worship of the feminine principle, e.g., the “Great Mother” theme common to many cultures.⁸

The women who worshipped Dionysus were called “maenads,” i.e., those possessed by divine madness. The terrible practises of the cult, such as dismembering live animals and devouring them raw, though “mad” by ordinary standards, nevertheless were religiously significant. They were examples of ritual participation in the destructive force of the god. (Herein lies the religious element of Greek tragedy; the recognition of the priority of destructive force, fate, is derived from the worship of Dionysus.)

Although the wild exploits of the Dionysian women offered a stark contrast to other, more moderate forces in Greek life, nevertheless it must be remembered that Dionysian worship was thought to bring peace and a blissful communion with the god. In fact, since the annihilating force was necessary and inevitable (hence its divinization), then *failure* to revere it would only invite more terrible destruction (e.g., the brutal consequences of Pentheus’ resistance in *The Bacchae*).⁹

Dionysian religion presents the Greek version of a common reverence given to the dark, destructive side of nature in many other cultures. And almost invariably, such a power takes a feminine form. (For example: *māyā*, and the feminine associations with the god Siva in India, and the *yin* principle in China.) In general, one could accurately summarize the cross-cultural features of the masculine-feminine duality as follows: *the masculine* = light, knowledge, construction, consciousness, form; *the feminine* = darkness, mystery, destruction, unconsciousness, formlessness. So in this sense the Dionysian cult represented the worship of the feminine principle.

With little trouble we could characterize western forms of spirituality and intellectual development as the gradual ascendance of the mascu-

line over the feminine principle (beginning with the Olympian victory over the Titans).¹⁰ Now Nietzsche's critique of the West can quite clearly be translated into the terms of our theme: the Apollonian-Dionysian duality presents a masculine-feminine duality; and Nietzsche's objections to the predominance of the Apollonian becomes an objection to the predominance of the masculine principle; and his respect for the tragic spirit is inspired by its recognition and acceptance of a primordial feminine principle.

In this way, Nietzsche promotes a decidedly "non-western" view of the masculine-feminine relation, in that he seeks to elevate the negative force to equal status with the positive force.¹¹ The "destructive" aspect of the feminine, therefore, is not something to be regretted. In fact, it destroys Apollonian "fixation" and thereby induces a "holistic" vision.

Western culture values knowledge over mystery, reason over instinct, technology over nature. Nietzsche's thoughts on woman present a *defense* of, and in some ways a preference for certain sub-cultural forces, the denial of which leads to alienation, weakness and sickness (or perhaps the fate of Pentheus?). We are told at one point that a woman's fight for equal rights is symptomatic of disease. Woman should resist "rights," because the state of nature, the "eternal war between the sexes, gives her by far the first rank."¹² If Nietzsche were a male chauvinist we would have to demonstrate his preference for "man's world," and his subordination of women to their "place" of subservience because of their inferiority. But as we have seen, the superiority of the masculine (intellect, order, the "business of the world"), is a reflection of an Apollonian ideology. The "place" of the feminine, for *Nietzsche*, reflects a Dionysian superiority. So ironically, in the context of our analysis, it would not be difficult to interpret Nietzsche's philosophy *literally* as a "feminism!"¹³

If we are to see this last point in its proper perspective we should develop further the relation between the masculine-feminine distinction and the truth-appearance distinction. We can do this by recalling those passages on woman from *BGE*, this time in terms of the context within which they are found. The passages conclude the section entitled "Our Virtues," which basically explores two important themes: (1) the creator and the rejection of equality; (2) the value of "cruelty." These themes are related in the following way: Nietzsche proposes an aesthetic, "process" view of the world, in which he espouses creativity (form brought forth from formlessness through the creative process) in contrast to a "substance" view of the world, which reifies meaning into fixed, objective "truth," and which in order to overcome the variability of the world must propose some common essence to "equalize" differences, thereby resolving what to the conceptualizing intellect had been a "conflict." It is in this context that we can understand Nietzsche's recommendation for "cruelty." Nietzsche tells us that high culture is the "spiritualization of cruelty" (229) and that there is cruelty in all profound thinking (230).

In other words, since all affirmation is at the same time a denial (an overcoming), the "essence" of thought as a *whole* is process, not fixed substances. The annihilation of form inherent in process *constitutes* the emergence of form. Therefore, any formulation cannot claim to be "truth" (fixed and objective), but is more accurately "appearance" (i.e., creative perspective in a process which cannot be fixed in any form). In this way, Nietzsche inverts the Platonic-western priorities by denying truth and affirming appearance.¹⁴ The traditional notion of truth must be discarded (herein lies the essential meaning of the "death of God" theme); that is to say, the notions of unchanging form, universal concepts and scientific explanations must yield to something more primordial (as Apollo yielded to Dionysus in tragedy). The result is the aesthetic recognition of the role of negativity in the constitution of form.

It is in *this* context that the passages on woman are placed, indeed they conclude the section. Despite Nietzsche's aphoristic style, he was a careful writer. The "woman question" is not a digression or a sidelight. In fact, the Preface to *BGE* begins with the sentence: "Supposing truth is a woman—what then?" Put another way: "What if truth were appearance?"

We should now have a deepened appreciation for Nietzsche's references to certain feminine characteristics such as playfulness, ornamentation, instinctiveness and unpredictability. If we contrast these with certain masculine (Apollonian) values such as seriousness, unmasking through explanation, order and stability, it is evident that the feminine seems to be more appropriate to the primordial aesthetic nature of the world.¹⁵

Nietzsche proclaims in *The Gay Science*: "Woman is so artistic" (361). And the first set of passages from *BGE* expressed Nietzsche's belief that man must continually learn from woman. Feminine naturalness, frivolity and love of surfaces teaches man the "folly" of his pursuits, makes light of serious things, and in so doing discloses the meaning of appearance.¹⁶ Here we have a contemporary remnant of the Dionysian suspension of "culture" and the salvific effect of loosening the bonds of knowledge. We can now better understand Nietzsche's alarm over the prospect of abandoning the feminine. One could say he feared the loss of the "Dionysian connection."¹⁷

We have seen that in the context of Nietzsche's philosophy the "woman question" is much deeper than a social, sexual or biological matter. I hope I have demonstrated the shortsightedness of the judgment that Nietzsche's thoughts on woman are philosophically irrelevant.

At this point I would like to link these deeper aspects of the masculine-feminine distinction with the male-female question, and consequently speak to certain issues in contemporary feminism. I must admit my limitations in these matters; but in considering Nietzsche's

position I am convinced there is much he can contribute to the current debate.

Let us begin by considering what in Nietzsche's eyes is the most important distinction in human nature: not that between male and female or even masculine and feminine, but the creator and the "herd," that is to say, the distinction between those who enact the creative process and those who simply receive their world as "given." How can we characterize the creator? In the light of Nietzsche's archetypes I would say the creator presents an equal mix of Apollonian and Dionysian features; since the creator as such brings forth form from formlessness (not-yet-form) and clears away old forms to make way for the new, he is attuned to both the constructive and destructive aspects of the *whole* (form-as-process) represented by the Apollonian-Dionysian fraternity. In this way, moreover, the creator presents an equal mix of masculine and feminine qualities. If the masculine-feminine distinction can be summarized as the duality of consciousness and the unconscious,¹⁸ we can more clearly see the creative process as a masculine-feminine correlation. Although at times Nietzsche seems to emphasize the unconscious ("All perfect acts are unconscious"¹⁹), nevertheless the creative process as *whole* must involve the gathering in consciousness of unconscious forces (i.e., the tragic synthesis). The creator is therefore to be distinguished from either ordinary types who dwell in the conscious world alone, or purely destructive types for whom chaos is an end in itself.

In characterizing the creator as an equal mix of masculine and feminine qualities, we offer no conclusion about the gender of the creator. At this point I will try to organize what I think *could* be a Nietzschean position in this matter.

The masculine-feminine distinction is not equivalent to the male-female distinction. The former duality is much deeper than gender. I think it is clear that the creator is *archetypally* "androgynous."²⁰ The *ordinary* male could be said to represent a predominance of the masculine (Apollonian) and the *ordinary* female a predominance of the feminine (Dionysian). Nietzsche's remarks on woman in *BGE* might have been limited to ordinary types. But even if this were so, we would have to draw the connection with the matter of the creator, which, after all, was the *context* for the sections on woman.

For Nietzsche, the creator is a special case of human nature. But if we recall the "pyramid" analogy in *The Antichrist* (57) we should remember that the creator is not an *isolated* case. The peaks of culture are supported by a broad base. Ordinary men "support" the creator, and therefore can even be said to be a "foundation" for the creator. How so? If the creator is a mix of masculine and feminine traits, it might have been Nietzsche's view that (true to his "process philosophy") the *tension* between the masculine and the feminine, the "eternal war of the sexes" must be maintained as the condition which *generates* the creator, as a

mix. If the masculine-feminine tension were blurred or suspended, perhaps there would emerge no creator *out of* this tension. In other words, if the creator embodies a *dialectic of opposites*, then the opposites must be maintained *as* opposites in the larger order.

Nietzsche's objections to "equality" have their roots in his aim to preserve the conditions of creativity. On the one hand he objects to reducing the creator to the conventional values of the ordinary type. And on the other hand, he seems to object to a "unisexual" democratization of the basal conditions for the emergence of the creator-type—that is to say, the well-defined masculine-feminine tension between ordinary males and females.²¹

If it is true that the masculine-feminine tension generates the creator, then it is clear why Nietzsche attacks "woman's equality" in the context of his critique of the West. To abandon the feminine principle in an already masculine-dominated culture would only complete the alienated closure of the human spirit and obviate its creative potential. Nietzsche might ask: How much of the modern feminist spirit is merely a *continuation* of masculine dominance in its objections to the feminine (i.e., non-Apollonian) roles of many females? In other words, how much of modern feminism is more accurately a "masculinism"?

I do *not* think that Nietzsche's views imply confining all females to certain roles. He consistently opposes *any* form of "All S is P." I think Nietzsche would simply object to the "democratic" view that *all* females are, or could become the same, either in terms of feminine *or* masculine roles. He would object to the idea that women who follow a feminine stereotype (e.g., "serving" a man) are "oppressed," or that women who might *choose* a feminine role are "duped" or coerced by cultural conditioning. He would oppose such ideas because of the implicit theory that *all* human beings, whether male or female, are capable of or meant for a common form of life—in this case masculine roles ("productivity," "responsibility") or even a masculine-feminine mix (creativity).

I am convinced Nietzsche would not equate "male" with "masculine," and "female" with "feminine." The fact that Nietzsche fears woman could *lose* the feminine implies it is not confined to gender. A female can certainly pursue a predominantly masculine role (e.g., a "career"). Can a female embody the masculine-feminine mix of the creator-type? I am inclined to think so, especially since the only person Nietzsche ever deemed worthy of continuing his work was a female, Lou Salomé. What *would* Nietzsche oppose in contemporary feminism? Not a woman "liberating" herself, pursuing either a masculine role or a masculine-feminine mix, but rather seeing liberation not as an *individual* matter but as a "women's movement." (What Nietzsche seemed to resist most in *BGE* was an "enlightened" woman's pronouncements on "woman as such.") Such a movement would imply yet another form of democratization, which for Nietzsche is always an expression of metaphysical absolutism (e.g., human nature possesses a common essence upon

which distinctions are accidentally imposed).

Nietzsche's doctrine of rank will not allow the idea of a common human nature. But this need not imply that the hierarchy is forever fixed. Women can become creators. Females and males can switch "roles." (Some homosexual relationships illustrate a frequent "relocation" of masculine and feminine qualities; this would suggest that the distinction *itself* is natural but its location varies.) Whatever movement is accomplished, Nietzsche would plead against *universalizing* it. Any idea can succumb to dogmatism. Even the proposition "Everyone is a creator" is a dogmatic statement Nietzsche would *reject*.²²

I think Nietzsche would warn modern feminists that within the legitimate pursuits of certain individuals there is the veiled possibility of a final and completed form of masculine (Apollonian) dominance over the feminine (Dionysian). Nietzsche would simply want to insure that the masculine-feminine distinction (and *tension*) is preserved in some form. I think he would ask: How much of contemporary feminism is an implicit preference for masculine traits? Do women simply want an equal share of masculine alienation? Is there not the danger of a powerful and necessary instinctive element becoming extinct? Has *everyone* come to fear the feminine?

Nietzsche could support, and may have even himself *proposed* a "feminism" with the following characteristics:

- (1) A recognition of the archetypal masculine-feminine distinction, where each has equal importance (perhaps the feminine could even have priority), where the feminine is protected from extinction or domination by the masculine.
- (2) The proposal of a "new model" of human nature, in the form of an androgynous mix of masculine and feminine traits—the creator-type.
- (3) The qualification that androgyny is *not* for everyone. Nietzsche would want to retain the proportionate polarities in ordinary males and females, whose "war" prepares the generation of the exception. (Serious readers of Nietzsche should recognize that his "elitism" has nothing to do with social or political dominance.)

I think we should heed Nietzsche's warnings about "politicizing" individual destinies (even *if* entrenched cultural barriers to individual freedom incite a politically focused attack as a first step), or universalizing the exception. Any "movement," *as such*, can only perpetuate in another form the very condition which aroused its opposition in the first place—the suppression of differences. Even a *liberation* movement can be oppressive. Will we come full circle some day, where a woman will feel guilty if she prefers "homemaking" to a "responsible career"? Is "Total Woman" a sign of inauthenticity? By whose standard?

In closing, although I have tried to show the legitimate importance of Nietzsche's thoughts on woman, it has not been my intention to argue

for the validity of his view of human nature. I am not at all sure about such matters. I *am* sure that most contemporary feminists would object to Nietzsche's elitist exclusion of many persons from the ideal of androgyny. But in my view, at present there is no conclusive evidence that androgyny is the natural state of all persons, or that what Nietzsche calls the creator-type lies dormant in every individual. I must say that the burden of proof does not lie with Nietzsche.

NOTES

¹ Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, (Vintage Books, 1968), p. 84.

² The translation is by Walter Kaufmann in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, (Modern Library, 1968).

³ The same distinction is drawn in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, I, "On Little Old and Young Women."

⁴ See Erich Neumann, *The Origins and History of Consciousness*, (Princeton University Press, 1969), p. xxii.

⁵ *BT*, First Preface, 5. "Appearance" in Nietzsche's thought should never be taken to mean something negative (e.g., "he only *appears* to be wise"), but highly positive (e.g., the actor *appears* on stage)—in other words, an emergence through the creative process. I discuss this point in *Nietzsche and Eternal Recurrence: The Redemption of Time and Becoming*, (University Press of America, 1978), pp. 63-67.

⁶ *Ecce Homo*, "Why I Write Such Good Books," 5, translated by Kaufmann in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, *op. cit.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ For example, the Dionysian practise of boiling goat pieces in milk expresses this idea of returning to the Mother. See C. Kerényi, *Dionysos*, (Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 256.

⁹ The pathological consequences of repressing anti-social impulses is certainly a central concern of psychoanalysis.

¹⁰ See Joseph Campbell, *The Masks of God, Volume III, Occidental Mythology*, (New York: Viking Press, 1964), chapter I.

¹¹ Those who analyse the feminine archetype often overlook the fact that in many cultures the feminine principle not only "nurtures" but destroys as well. But only a culture, like ours, which emphasizes the constructive, masculine principle would disdain the feminine. The female personification of terrible natural forces in other cultures is not an expression of a "woman hating" spirit, but rather a gesture of honor and worship (deification). Such a cultural view affirms construction and destruction as co-equal aspects of the overall world-process. In this archetypal light, American women who protested the exclusive use of feminine names for hurricanes concealed a continuation of the western preference for the masculine. *We* view the association of women with hurricanes as an insult. In India, such feminine associations pay homage to a great power. In this context, the call for "bi-sexual" hurricanes seems silly.

¹² *Ecce Homo*, "Why I Write Such Good Books," 5.

¹³ Although we have here a unique definition of feminism, one which would not seem to suit the goals of today's feminist, nevertheless it is clear that Nietzsche would join the fight against "women's inferiority." At one point in his writings, Nietzsche gives a fascinating explanation for the so-called "failings" of women, fascinating because it sounds so much like contemporary feminism:

... Someone took a youth to a sage and said: "Look, he is being corrupted by women." The sage shook his head and smiled, "It is men," said he, "that corrupt women; and all the failings of women should be atoned by and improved in men. For it is man who creates for himself the image of woman, and woman forms herself according to this image."

... someone else shouted out of the crowd: "women need to be educated better!"—"Men need to be educated better," said the sage"—*The Gay Science*, 68. Translated by Walter Kaufmann, (Vintage Books, 1974).

¹⁴ It is important to clarify the often ambiguous references to "truth" and "appearance" in Nietzsche's writings. At times he speaks *for* truth, at times *against* truth. I think the solution to this ambiguity is the following distinction: for Nietzsche, becoming = truth; being = appearance. Since the tradition had always seen being as truth and becoming as appearance, Nietzsche must criticize the traditional notion of truth (constancy) so that a more primordial truth (flux) can take its place. In this way, traditional truth becomes appearance, which *as* appearance is appropriate to the "truth" of a primordial chaos.

¹⁵ At this point we could clearly understand Nietzsche's objections to a frequent assumption of today's thinking about human nature and sexual roles—that masculine and feminine traits are precisely that—roles, that is to say, (culturally fashioned) "masks" which hide the person's true nature, which is sexually neutral. For Nietzsche, there is *nothing* under the mask. All forms of "nature" are "masks" of a formless flux. Therefore, the adoption of a mask does not hide, but rather *constitutes* "human nature."

¹⁶ The reference to gravity (*Schwere*) in BGE 232 should recall the "spirit of gravity" (*die Geist der Schwere*) that Zarathustra had to overcome in Part III of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

¹⁷ If Dionysian "cruelty" is interpreted as the "dismemberment" of the Apollonian principle, then the connection between playfulness and danger which often comes up in Nietzsche's treatment of woman might make more sense. The playfulness of the feminine is a "danger" for masculine seriousness. Instinctiveness and naturalness are a "danger" for masculine order. Many references to this effect occur in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, I, "On Little Old and Young Women." And I believe that attention to the qualities of danger, play, and man's "fear" of woman described in this section could possibly redeem the statement which concludes the segment, a statement often quoted and thought to typify Nietzsche's misogyny: "You are going to women? Do not forget the whip!" Two remarks are in order: (1) The statement is given not by Zarathustra, but by an old woman; (2) In the context of the section it is not clear for whom the whip is intended! The reference is to "the" whip, not "your" whip. And the whip may serve as an image expressing Dionysian (feminine) "cruelty," in the sense described earlier.

I might add: this piece was written in the winter of 1883. Less than a year earlier, in May, 1882, Nietzsche posed for a photograph with Paul Rée and Lou Salomé. The pose had Nietzsche and Rée pulling a cart with Lou sitting on top, whip in hand. Apparently, Nietzsche greatly enjoyed this episode. See Rudolph Binion, *Frau Lou: Nietzsche's Wayward Disciple*, (Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 55.

¹⁸ See Erich Neumann, *The Origins and History of Consciousness*, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

¹⁹ *The Will to Power*, 289. Translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, (New York: Random House, 1967).

²⁰ For further clues to the complementarity of the masculine and feminine principles, see BGE 248, where Nietzsche describes two types of genius, one which wants to beget, fertilize and dominate (e.g., the Romans), another which wants pregnancy and the task of forming, maturing and perfecting (e.g., the Greeks).

²¹ The image of woman giving birth to the *Übermensch* (creator) in *Zarathustra*, I, "On Little Old and Young Women," might be better interpreted on this level.

²² Nietzsche never argues for the elimination of convention and ordinariness. In fact, the "crowd" is needed to maintain the *tension* of the creative process (the fight *against* convention). See *Zarathustra*, II, "On the Rabble," *The Gay Science*, 76, and *The Antichrist*, 57.