CAN FEMINISM BE A HUMANISM?

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This paper is exploratory, rather than definitive. My goal is to reflect upon several different feminisms to consider which of them fail and which succeed in being an authentic humanism. In this context of Maritain studies[1], I am particularly interested in personalist humanism, which focuses on the full development of all human beings. Thus, it will not be surprising to discover that two, or at most three, of the several different kinds of feminism considered turn out to be consistent with the above goal of personalist humanism. Furthermore, all of those feminisms which succeed are rooted in a Christian form of humanism. Those which fail do so because at the same time as they focus on the development of women, they also exclude a particular group of human beings from the goal of full personal development.

The methodology which I will use in this exploration of the relation of feminism and humanism involves an immersion in a wide range of historical sources. Each author offers a specific description of his or her understanding of humanism. Then within a particular humanist tradition, another author is selected for the promotion of a kind of feminism. While there are many other authors who could also be considered in this exploration, the ones selected seem to best articulate a particular approach to the topic. It is my hope that by this close reading of historical texts, we will be able to grasp the development of different forms of humanism and feminism, and better evaluate their premises and conclusions. With this brief introduction to the goal and methodology of the paper, we can now turn to consider the fundamental question: Can feminism be a humanism?

I pose this topic as a question, and it is a question that will create for many people a kind of tension. For others who think it obvious that feminism *can* be a humanism, as well as for those who thank that feminism *cannot* be a humanism,

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the question poses no tension, as the answer for these two groups appears to be either a tautology (feminism is the same as humanism) or a contradiction (feminism cannot be a humanism).[2] If the question produces no tension, then there probably will not be—as Lonergan would say—any insight which comes as a release to this tension.[3] Consequently, it seems important to try to stay open to the question of whether feminism can be a humanism and remain in its tension in the hope that, by pressing the tension forward, we may together be able to reach some new insights both about feminism and about humanism.

To help our enquiry it will be useful to offer at the outset some 'heuristic' definitions of humanism and feminism. By 'heuristic' I mean to capture a kind of sense of the terms that is precise enough to guide our reflections, but not so precise that it resolves the issue before any enquiry is undertaken. So I offer as a heuristic definition of humanism, "the organized thought and action about what a human being really is and can become." Similarly, a heuristic definition of feminism will be "the organized thought and action which aims at removing obstacles for a woman to become (as a woman) what a human being or a human person really is and can become."

This heuristic definition implies that feminism is critical, in the sense that it offers a critique of those conditions in society which are obstacles for the full development of women. In other words, feminism does not emerge in a vacuum, but rather as a response to perceived limitations to the freedom of women to develop their potential for full personal growth and perfection.

As a practical beginning to our search for an answer to the question, 'Can feminism be a humanism?,' there is need to consider the historical development of humanism and of the corresponding feminisms which emerged at different times in history. By bringing feminism into conjunction with humanism, I am trying to set up a framework within which we can enquire together about fundamental concepts concerning the human being and the human person, interactions between men and women, and the appeal to various forms of freedom in pursuit of what might be called 'the common good.'

Before analysing feminisms which seem to want to be a kind of humanism, I would like to exclude the consideration of two different kinds of feminism which do not want to be a humanism. Both of these kinds of feminism have an historical

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[2] In the first case, feminism may be viewed simply as a method to achieve a humanist goal, while in the second, the goal of feminism to promote primarily the well being of women, is seen as contradictory to a goal of humanism, to promote primarily the well being of all human beings. If the solution to the question: "Can feminism be a humanism?" seems to be self-evidently either yes or no, then there remains no tension of inquiry and the question ceases to have relevance.

[3] The Canadian philosopher Bernard Lonergan has identified as the first principle of his theory that "...insight comes as a release to the tension of inquiry." Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), 2-3.

root in a specific anti-humanistic philosophy. They are both inherited kinds of conscious anti-humanism.

The first kind of anti-humanism flows from Martin Heidegger's essay "Letter on Humanism."[4] This essay proclaims the end of western humanism, and argues that 'humanism' is a word which causes damage by implying that there is a simple essence of human beings. Heidegger directly criticizes Marxist, Sartrian, and Christian forms of humanism by arguing that all these forms of humanism offer a univocal or universal definition of man which is a false construct. Consequently, Heidegger asks if we should engage in a kind of open resistance to 'humanism,' and "risk a shock that could for the first time cause perplexity concerning the *humanitas* of *homo humanus* and its basis?"[5] Heidegger ends his essay invoking a new way of thinking that "gathers language into simple saying. In this way language is the language of Being, as clouds are the clouds of the sky. With its saying, thinking lays inconspicuous furrows in language."[6] So, for Heidegger, the concept of man, or human being, floats away like a cloud in the sky.

The radical feminist who follows Heidegger's way of thinking, but on her own terms, is Mary Daly. If we take just one example from a recent text entitled *Pure Lust: Elemental Feminist Philosophy*, we find her saying the following: "In this true and radical sense, feminism is a verb; it is female be-ing...*Feminism* is a Name for our moving/movement into Metabeing."[7] Daly rejects all forms of humanism, and as Heidegger suggests, "lays furrows in language" to break open any essential notion of the human being. So Daly does not want her feminism to be a humanism.

The second kind of anti-humanism excluded from our question is found in the work of Michel Foucault. In the last section of *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, we find an explicit rejection of humanism. Foucault argues that "man is an invention of recent date. And one perhaps nearing its end..."[8] He suggests that if (and when) the structures of our thought were to change, "one can certainly wager that man would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea."[9] For Foucault, there is nothing stable, unified, or integral about the human being, and no humanism to draw upon for its development or fulfilment.

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[4] Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," in *Basic Writings*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 190-242.

[5] Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," 225.

[6] Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," 242.

[7] Mary Daly, *Pure Lust: Elemental Feminist Philosophy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), 194.

[8] Michael Foucault, *The Order of Things: An archeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), 387.

[9] Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 387.

A post-modernist feminist, in the tradition of Foucault, is Monique Wittag, who rejects any linguistic foundation for gender differentiation, and thereby rejects any possibility for defining a feminism, as well as a humanism. In an article entitled "The Mark of Gender," she argues that "Gender is an ontological impossibility because it tries to accomplish the division of Being. But Being as being is not divided...Gender then must be destroyed. The possibility of its destruction is given through the very exercise of language. For each time I say I, I reorganize the world from my point of view and through abstraction I lay claim to universality. This fact holds true for every locutor."[10] Wittag concludes that language ought to be constructed so that there should be no gender differentiation at all, and that women and men, "as classes and as categories of thought or language [...] have to disappear, politically, economically, ideologically."[11] Obviously, if there are no women there can be no feminism, and if there are no women and men, there can be no humanism. So, for this form of post-modernist thought, the question raised at the beginning of the paper is meaningless.

From what has been said thus far, then, there are two kinds of 'feminism' that are excluded by the question that I am asking. However, there are many other forms of feminism and humanism for which is it meaningful to ask whether a feminism can be a humanism. In fact, many feminisms want to be considered as a kind of humanism, and some today might argue that a humanism needs to be a feminism. I will now turn to some of these other views to consider how we might understand the issues involved. For the purposes of this paper I will identify six different historical forms of humanism: Renaissance humanism, Enlightenment humanism, Marxist humanism, Existential humanism, Pragmatic secular humanism and Personalist humanism. With respect to each one of these, I will show how the human being is defined in that particular form of humanism, what kind of feminism sprang up within that humanism, and then ask the question from the perspective of Personalist humanism, about what particular form of feminism might be appropriate.

Each form of humanism has a slightly different set of concepts about the human being, and the corresponding feminisms also have different views about what obstacles interfere with women's freedom to be (qua woman) really human. Each one of these humanisms, however, understand differently how human freedom is an important characteristic of what it means to be really human. Accordingly, then, although other characteristics could have been chosen for comparison, I will focus especially on the feature of freedom.

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[10] Monique Wittag, "The Mark of Gender," *Feminist Issues*, Fall 1985 , 6.

[11] Monique Wittag, "The Straight Mind," *Feminist Issues*, Summer 1980, 108.

Renaissance humanism and feminism (c. 1300-1600)

The first form of humanism to consider is Renaissance humanism. While Erasmus (c.1466-1536) is thought to be the first person to actually call himself "a humanist", Francis Petrarch has been described retrospectively as the "first great representative" of humanism because of his influence on the subsequent development of humanism.[12] The Latin term *humanus* includes three meanings: 1) whatever is characteristic of the human being (i.e., what is 'really human'), 2) especially one who is benevolent ("humane"), and 3) one who is learned or uses speech well ("humanist").[13] In the works of Petrarch we find a further meaning of humanist, namely, 4) a person who has received and who gives a classical education. Central to what it is to be a human being in this latter sense is the study of classical Greek and Latin texts, the rejection of academic and scholastic education, and the adoption of new forms of writing in Latin and in the vernacular, in letters, in poetry, in dialogues, and in essays.

The Latin expression "*humanissime vir"* was the usual way to address humanist scholars. The gender association of *vir* as the male human being seems to imply the exclusion of women from this conception of an educated human being at the time Classical Latin was in use. This term evolved in Christian Latin through the addition of *-ismos*, to signify an activity common to many people. This suffix came into English as the 'ist' applied to the meaning of humanist as a learned human being. In a similar way '*humanista'* and '*homme de lettres'* became the Italian and French versions of a humanist.[14]

If we give a general description of the early Renaissance humanist concept of the human being, realizing that nuanced differences will be ignored for our purposes, it would include the following factors: 1) the human being is situated in relation to a transcendent (Christian) God, 2) true nobility consists in living a wise and virtuous life, 2) the emotions or passions are a natural part of the human being and need to be well integrated by exercise of the intellect and will, 3) men and women can help one another grow in wisdom and virtue through dialogue and example, 4) freedom is an important aspect of the human being which ought to be exercised well, and 5) love helps to build up the common good. These views can be found expressed in Petrarch but also in other humanists as well. For example, Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375) emphasized the naturalness of emotions in men and women as well as the place of dialogue, and Giovanni Pico Mirandola (1463-1494) emphasized the place of freedom in self development. (In Pico's *Oration on the Dignity of Man* we find the first articulation of the view

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[12] Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Eight Philosophers of the Italian Renaissance* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1964), 5.

[13] See Vito R. Giustiniani, "Homo, Humanus, and the Meanings of 'Humanism'," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. xlvi, no. 2 (April-June, 1985), 167-195.

[14] Giustiniani, "Homo, Humanus...", 168-171.

that the human being is responsible, through the exercise of his freedom, to determine his own identity. This human activity of self-definition should take place in a kind of dialogical relation with God, who has given the human being certain characteristics which make this free initiative possible.)

When we turn to answer the more specific question of whether a Renaissance feminism can be a humanism, we have to note first of all that the words "feminism" and "feminist" did not come into use until after the nineteenth century.[15] Certainly, if we reserve the words to apply only to a movement or an ideology of political action of groups of women, then there is no Renaissance feminism to bring into conjunction with humanism. On the other hand, if we allow the words to apply to women (or men) who engaged in some public action specifically aimed at improving the situation of women in the world at that time by removing perceived obstacles to the exercise of women's freedom to become really human (as women), then we can say that there were Renaissance feminists. In Renaissance humanism, writing letters or dialogues that were widely circulated, was considered as a form of public action. Four women, who wrote philosophical texts which contained discursive arguments in support of woman's identity, can be considered as Renaissance feminists: Christine de Pisan (1363-1431), Isotta Nogarola (1418-1466), Lucrezia Marinelli (1571-1653), and Marie de Gournay (1566-1645).[16]

For present purposes, I have chosen one example–Christine de Pisan–to demonstrate that her Renaissance feminism was a Renaissance humanism.[17] Christine received a classical education through her father's library and the library at the Sorbonne. Her over twenty major texts were well written in the vernacular: they included dialogues, poetry, and collections of letters about specific issues.[18] In the content of two of her major texts, the public dialogue of

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[15] Beatrice Gottlieb, "The Problem of Feminism in the Fifteenth Century," *Women of the Medieval World: Essays in Honor of John H. Mundy*, eds. Julius Kirshner and Suzanne F. Wemple (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 337-364.

[16] See also, Joan Kelly, "Early Feminist Theory and the *Querelle des Femmes,* 1400-1789), *Women, History and Theory* (Chicago: and London: University of Chicago Press, 1984)) 64-109). Kelly argues that: "...it is fair to call this long line of pro-women writers that runs from Christine de Pisan to Mary Wollstonecraft by the name we use for their nineteenth- and twentieth-century descendants. Latter-day feminism still incorporates the basic positions the feminists of the *querelle* were first to take.", 134.

[17] See, the broader debate found in Joan Kelly-Gadol, "Did Women Have a Renaissance?" *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, eds. Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koona (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1977): 137-164 and in David Herlihy, "'Did Women Have a Renaissance?': a Reconsideration," *Medievalia et Humanistica*, ed. Paul Maurice Clogan (New Jersey: Rowman and Allanheld Publishers, 1985), no. 13: 1-22.

[18] See, Earl Jeffrey Richards, *"Seulette a part"*—The Little Woman on the Sidelines" Takes Up Her Pen: The Letters of Christine de Pizan, *Dear Sister: Medieval Women and*

letters gathered into the *Querelle des femmes* and the imaginary dialogue entitled *The City of Women*, Christine developed numerous discursive arguments to defend woman's proper identity.[19] Her feminism is primarily a defence against unjust slander against women. By arguing that certain authors falsely accuse women of various forms of vice, she hopes to demonstrate that women are just as capable of wisdom and virtue as are men. In the following example we find her arguing against a satirist's devaluation of women:

> But if women had written these books, I know full well the matter would have been handled differently. They know they stand wrongfully accused, and that the sharing has not been done evenly, for the strong take the biggest share, and the one who does the dividing keeps the biggest portion for himself. Yet malicious slanderers who debase women in this way still maintain that all women have been, are now, and always will be false, asserting that they have never been capable of loyalty.[20]

This particular passage exemplifies Christine's approach: a clear statement of the specific example of injustice (i.e., wrongful accusation), a suggestion for a constructive change (i.e., that women write about their own experiences), and a statement of her goal of a virtue (in this case, loyalty to men). In addition, she identifies a typical difficulty with slander–that it makes universal generalizations. In contrast, in her own work, Christine generally remains with particular judgments. In another passage, she considers that a possible bias distorts her own perspective about women, but she provides reasons for distinguishing the true from the false, as a way of building a common basis upon which men and women can agree.[21]

If we return to the general characteristics listed above for the Renaissance humanist conception of the human being, it can be said that Christine de Pisan agrees with all of them. That is, 1) the relation of the human being to God is directly stipulated in many of her works, and the end of the *City of Ladies* which focuses on justice is ruled by the Blessed Virgin Mary; 2) the emotions are frequently identified in her works and integrated into the human being's life, 3) her letters and dialogues constantly invoke dialogue between women and men, and among women, with a goal of increasing their respective wisdom and virtue, 4) Christine argues for freedom from slander and misjudgments, freedom from the rule of emotions which take one away from a virtuous life, and for freedom

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the Epistolary Genre, ed. Haren Cherewatuk and Ulricke Wiethaus (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993): 139-170. Richards claims that Christine "adheres completely to the humanist tradition" and that her "feminism is in may ways a profound form of humanism.", 148.

[19] See appendix for examples.

[20] Christine de Pisan, *Epistre au Dieu d'Amours*, *La Querelle*, 37.

[21] #11 *Querelle*. In her texts Christine often uses logical arguments such as Reductio ad absurdum, negating the consequent, clarification, relation of whole to parts, relation of cause to effect, counter example, and so forth.

to enter into mature interpersonal relationships as well as a broader political freedom. The goal of her feminism is to encourage women and men to exercise their freedom in all areas of their lives.[22]

If we consider Christine de Pisan's writings in relation to the first of the original meanings of "humanist" identified at the beginning of this paper or "what is characteristic of the human being or what is really human," it is clear that the goal of her "Renaissance feminism" is to confront those things which interfere with women's being able to become really human. In particular, she confronts the devaluation of woman by some men (satirists) who reduce her either to a passive object to be possessed (a rose to be plucked) or to an irrational animal-like being who is filled with vice. In either reduction, woman is considered not really human. All of Christine's arguments seek to demonstrate the falsity of the grounds for these assertions.

The grounds to which she appeals include logic (finding fallacies in her opponents' reasoning), historical authorities who cite examples of women who serve as counter examples (Petrarch, Boccaccio, Plutarch, etc.), and God (e.g., she begins the *City of Ladies* by attempting to demonstrate, by a series of *reductio ad absurdum* arguments, that woman cannot be evil because she was created by God who is a good artisan). The appeal both to historical authorities and to creation by God is common to the early feminist humanists as two prime foundations for women being as really human as are men. Christine de Pisan also includes multiple appeals to her own experience of women to back up her claims.

Christine is an example of a feminist who is interested in the full development of all persons–all men, all women, and all children–though she emphasizes that women are most often blocked in their development as full human beings. This pattern of defence of a woman's human identity is found in other Renaissance humanists as well. Lucrezia Marinelli in her book, *On the Nobility and Excellence of Women* (1601), directly engaged the arguments of philosophers, such as Aristotle, holding that women were more virtuous then men, and that men were more vicious than women. Moreover, in 1622, Marie de Gournay le Jars (1566-1645) published *Egalité des hommes et des femmes*, a text which appealed to the authority of Plato and Socrates for equality rights for women and men. She also appealed to the creation story in *Genesis* to defend her claim that women and men's virtue is "one and the same thing."[23] Through appeals to authority, as well

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[22] One should note also that Christine wrote a number of other books, covering a wide range of subjects, such as the use of military weapons, political tracts, and so on.

[23] Marie de Gournay, *Egalité des hommes et des femmes* in *La fille d'Alliance de Montigne: Marie de Gournay* (Paris: Librarie Honore Champion, 1910), 70. In *Grief des Dames*, also published in 1626, she made the same twin appeal to the authority of Platonic philosophers and God to defend woman's dignity against what she perceived as the deprivation of her liberty and goods by some men.

as to philosophical argument, these early feminists were able to make the claim that women are of equal dignity to men.

When we turn to the Enlightenment, we can identify two stages in the development of feminism and humanism. In general, however, we find a shift in the grounds for what it means to be a human being and for what the basis is for women and men to have the same access to an equal place in the world. Reason itself becomes a new ground for defence of human identity.

Enlightenment Humanism and Feminism

Descartes, I would argue, was the 'founder' of both Enlightenment humanism and Enlightenment feminism. His positing of the "cogito ergo sum" as the source of a human identity–identifying the human being as primarily a reasoning being–was carried over into arguments by feminists of the modern period. Descartes' disciple, Poullain de la Barre (1647-1723), appealed to human reason as the source of equality of women and men in his text *De l'égalite des deux sex*, published in 1673. Here, even though Poullain appealed to God as the original source of the equality of men and women as human beings, he began to shift the argument for equality to another foundation–he argued that the spirit, brain, and faculties were the same in women and men and, therefore, women and men were "equally capable of the same things."[24]

For Poullain, as for most 'Cartesian feminists,' custom (or tradition) was identified as the enemy of the freedom of women. He argued that the remedy for this was human reason, which was able to attack custom and overturn its shallow grounds for claiming that women are not as fully human as men. He argues that "[t]hese kinds of reasonings [which exclude women from certain spheres of activity] proceed from...a false notion which men forge to themselves of custom...".[25] In this early stage of 'Enlightenment humanism,' the primary solution to inequality was education. Cartesian feminism' wanted women to have the same opportunity for education as men.

Mary Astell (1688-1731), again by making an appeal to the equal origin of women and men, proposed that educational institutions be established for women: "For since God has given Women as well as Men intelligent souls, why should they be forbidden to use them?"[26] In her *Serious Proposal to the Ladies for their Advancement of their True and Greatest Interest*, she also claims that custom is the enemy of the exercise of freedom by women: "As prejudice fetters the understanding so does custom manacle the will, which scarce knows how to

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[24] François Poullain de la Barre, *The Woman as Good as the Man: Or, the Equality of Both Sexes* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988), 102-3.

[25] Poullain de la Barre, 66.

[26] Mary Astell, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies for the Advancement of their True and Greatest Interest* (New York: Source Book Press, 1970), 18.

divert from a track which the generality around it take, and to which it has itself been habituated... Custom cannot authorise a practice if reason condemns it, the following a multitude is no excuse for the doing of evil."[27]

In a text published "by a lady" in 1696 (often attributed to Mary Astell), the goal of feminism—for women to become recognised as more fully human—is clearly stated. The writer wanted "to reduce the sexes to a level, and by arguments to raise ours to an equality at most with men."[28] After demonstrating that women's minds, brains, and faculties are the same as men, she argues that the law should recognize women's equality as well. The grounds for this equality are, again, first the fact of the creation of women by God, but also the nature of female creatures and "their primitive liberty and equality with the men." [29]

It is interesting to note that this development of feminism, following Descartes, is primarily Protestant, whereas the early Renaissance (e.g., Christine de Pisan) had been largely Catholic. Poullain de la Barre became a Protestant, and Mary Astell lived in Protestant England. The appeal of Descartes' argument became very much integrated into Enlightenment Protestant feminist work. Still, the 'Cartesian feminists' were not all humanists. In particular, those philosophers (Descartes included) who appealed primarily to reason as a foundation for human development, often neglected to consider the education and development of the whole human being.

There is, however, a second stage of Enlightenment humanism. Here, we find the mention of two qualifications to the exercise of reason which became fundamental to the understanding of what makes someone really human: 1) that human reason ought to be integrated with nature; and 2) that human reason ought to stand on its own away from direction from others.

This stage of Enlightenment humanism is often considered to begin with Jean Jacques Rousseau. Rousseau rejected the (scholastic) academic education which some Renaissance humanists had been interested in, because he held that such an education was incapable of properly forming a human being to become truly human. In *Émile*, he describes in great detail how nature itself is to become the teacher of the new man. Everything is to be brought into harmony with natural tendencies.[30] Thus, education through the study of written texts is viewed as something which "meddles" with man's basically good nature and possibly renders it evil.[31] Indeed, it shifts towards learning directly from nature rather than

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[27] Astell, *A Serious Proposal*, 73.

[28] Mary Astell, *An Essay in Defence of the Female Sex* (New York: Source Book Press, 1970), 7-8.

[29] Astell, *Defence*, 39-40. She was trying to defend women's ability to rule which in England was prohibited by law.

[30] Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Émile* (London: Dent, 1984), 7.

[31] Rousseau, *Émile*, 5.

from classical sources or history. (And so, just as women are coming to be interested in getting an education, suddenly–with Rousseau and others–there is a shift away from the value of a higher education.)

Rousseau claims that "[t]he natural man lives for himself: he is the unit, the whole, dependent only on himself and on his like."[32] So a human being does not need schools or libraries to develop his mind. He only needs his own powers of observation and reasoning and a few informal teachers to keep his reasoning and judgments in the right direction.

Rousseau's enlightenment humanism has many different consequences. By his identification of freedom with goodness, he concludes that the human being was naturally good. This goodness comes to be expressed in 'natural rights' and not, as we have seen in Renaissance humanism, in the exercise of virtue and wisdom. So the human being, by itself, is virtuous simply by being free. A further moral freedom belongs to the participation of human beings in building the common good with others in citizenship. Here, the human being is good by submitting to a law that, though he shares it with others, he gives to himself.[33]

Immanuel Kant, in his famous essay "What is Enlightenment?" echoes this view that the truly human person should reject others' directives: "Enlightenment is man's release from his self-incurred tutelage. Tutelage is man's inability to make use of his understanding without direction from another."[34] Here we find articulated the beginning a fundamental characteristic of the second phase of Enlightenment humanism, namely that the individual human being ought to use his reason and freedom *independently* of all external sources including God or other men. So wisdom becomes detached from history and from theology.

One difficulty with this description of the value of reason for the development of the human being is found in both Kant's and Rousseau's claims that women's proper virtue is not reason but sense or taste. Here, a distinction is introduced between ways of being human which divided the capacities within the human being, and identified reason with the male and sensation with the female. Rousseau expressed it this way–that, even though the 'machine' or body and faculties are the same in women and in men, it works differently so that: "...woman observes, man reasons..." and the "sole end [of her learning should be] the formation of taste..."[35] And Kant directly summarizes it: "[h]er philosophy is not to reason, but to sense."[36] Therefore, it is not surprising that Kant suggests at

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[32] Rousseau, *Émile*, 7.

[33] See Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, 279-281, for a more detailed account of this aspect of Rousseau's humanism.

[34] Immanuel Kant, "What is Enlightenment?" in *The Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1978), 85.

[35] Rousseau, *Émile*, 349-350.

[36] Immanuel Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1965), 79.

the beginning of his essay on "What is Enlightenment?" that "the entire fair sex" finds the rejection of tutelage to be very dangerous if not impossible.

Rousseau and Kant both argued that societies were formed by a social contract or by agreement of the will among several human beings who enter into a collective body or kingdom of ends. Rousseau defines the essence of the social contract as: "Each of us puts in common his person and his whole power under the supreme direction of the general will; and in return we receive every member as an indivisible part of the whole."[37] The difficulty of this description is that it implicitly excluded all women from its range, so that civilized society in Enlightenment humanism implied that only men could be fully human.

One practical consequence of the second stage of Enlightenment humanism was the birth of a new form of Enlightenment feminism. Both men and women began to argue that, for a woman to be fully human, she had to be able to participate in the government of public society. It was not enough to simply have self-government in wisdom and virtue as the Renaissance feminists suggested, but to be fully human demanded freedom to participate in public life as well. Of course, most Renaissance humanists did participate in some form of public life, and there was an implicit understanding that virtue involved such public service. Christine de Pisan did participate in a *de facto* manner by her writing about war, peace, and other such issues. France had a female ruler, and we have the example of Joan of Arc during this same period, so Renaissance feminist humanists did not put forward arguments that women's freedom involved a need to participate in public life, because they didn't see the issue as much of a problem. Enlightenment feminism, however, took on this particular issue as central to its concerns. The French Revolution provided the context for, here, we find that women used an appeal to reason to demand the overturning of custom which denied them access to citizenship. Olympe de Gouges, in her "Declaration of Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen," declared in Article IV that "Liberty and justice consist of restoring all that belongs to others; thus; the only limits on the exercise of the natural rights of woman are perpetual male tyranny; these limits are to be reformed by the laws of nature and reason."[38]

Another key example of Enlightenment feminism is seen in Mary Wollstonecraft's, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. The claim that woman's virtue is to sense–to develop taste–while man's was to reason, struck Wollstonecraft as a way of seriously inhibiting woman's freedom. She states: "If, I say, for I would impress by declamation when Reason offers her sober light, if [women] be really capable of acting like rational creatures, let them not be treated

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[37] Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and the Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, (New York: Washington Square Press, 1967), 18-19.

[38] Olympe de Gouges, "Les Droits de la Femme," in Levy, 88.

like slaves; or, like brutes who are dependent upon the reason of man, when they associate with him; but cultivate their minds, give them the salutary, sublime curb of principle..."[39]

This appeal to reason is also an appeal to God, albeit within an Enlightenment understanding of the 'divine,' as the following passage attests: "I love man as my fellow; but his sceptre, real, or usurped, extends not to me, unless the reason of an individual demands my homage; and even then the submission is to reason, and not to man. In fact, the conduct of an accountable being must be regulated by the operations of its own reason; or on what foundation rests the throne of God?"[40]

The lack of freedom that women had to develop their minds was frequently criticized by Wollstonecraft. She claims: "Liberty is the mother of virtue, and if women be, by their very constitution, slaves, and not allowed to breathe the sharp invigorating air of freedom, they must ever languish like exotics, and be reckoned beautiful flaws in nature."[41] In this context, Rousseau's Emile is directly criticized by Wollstonecraft.

Not all Enlightenment feminists were women. The Marquis de Condorcet strongly defended, by an appeal to reason, the importance of removing obstacles to women's exercise of freedom. In one key passage from *Sur l'admission des femmes au droit de Cité* (On the Admission of Women to the Rights of Citizenship), he states:

> To show that this exclusion is not an act of tyranny, it must be proved either that the natural rights of women are not absolutely the same as those of men, or that women are not capable of exercising these rights. But the rights of men result simply from the fact that they are *rational,* sentient beings, susceptible of acquiring ideas of morality, and or reasoning concerning those ideas. Women having, then, the same qualities, have necessarily the same rights.[42]

It is clear, then, from these few examples, that Enlightenment feminism focused on the ideal of women becoming full citizens, as that was what it was to be fully human. [43]

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[39] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1975), 36.

[40] Wollstonecraft, 37.

[41] Wollstonecraft, 37.

[42] see note #43 in book.

[43] It is also interesting to note, in passing, that "The first self-proclaimed 'feminist' in France was the women's suffrage advocate Hubertine Auclert who, from at least 1882 on, used the term in her periodical, "*La Citoyenne*" [see Karen Offen, "Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach," *Signs:* Vol. 14, no. 1 (1988), 126.]. Shortly afterwards, a feminist congress was held in Paris, and the term gained more popular usage. So 'feminism,' as an official appellation of a movement to remove obstacles to women's freedom to vote, emerged out of Enlightenment humanism and its turn to natural rights.

Later Enlightenment humanism spawned three different forms of humanism in the 19th and 20th centuries which developed parallel to one another: Marxist humanism, Existential humanism, and Pragmatic (Secular) humanism. Each one develops a slightly different aspect of Enlightenment humanism, and all three have corresponding forms of feminism. It is also important to recognise that, while all of these thinkers refined or redescribed what 'humanism' is, each still wanted to be known as a humanist. This appellation or designation was something very important to them.

Marxist Humanism and Feminism

Moving now from a developmental or historical account of humanism to a thematic account of the various forms of humanism which have occurred during the last two centuries, the first kind of 'contemporary humanism' I wish to discuss is Marxist humanism and the feminism which sprang from it. In his early essay on "Private Property and Communism," Karl Marx proposed a new form of humanism. Here, he explicitly develops the naturalistic aspect of Enlightenment humanism as follows:

> *Communism* is the *positive* abolition of *private property*, of *human self-alienation*, and thus the real *appropriation* of *human* nature through and for man. It is, therefore, the return of man himself as a *social*, i.e. really human, being, a complete and conscious return which assimilates all the wealth of previous development. Communism as a fully developed naturalism is humanism and as a fully developed humanism is naturalism. It is the *definitive* resolution of the antagonism between man and nature, and between man and man. It is the true solution of the conflict between existence and essence, between objectification and self-affirmation, between freedom and necessity, between individual and species. It is the solution of the riddle of history and knows itself to be this solution."[44]

Marx, then, aims at developing a new kind of humanism which describes the characteristics of a "really human being." The first way in which the human being is understood differently from both Renaissance and Enlightenment humanism is that, previously, grounds for humanism were found in the creation of the human being by a transcendent God; now the grounds for humanism are explicitly atheistic. Marx states:

> ... atheism as the annulment of God is the emergence of theoretical humanism, and communism as the annulment of private property is the vindication of real human life as man's property. The latter is also the emergence of practical humanism, for atheism is humanism mediated to itself by the annulment of religion, while communism is humanism mediated to itself by the annulment of private property. It is only by the supersession of this mediation (which is, however, a necessary pre-condition) that the self-originating *positive* humanism can appear."[45]

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[44] Karl Marx, "Private Property and Communism," *Early Writings*, (New York, Toronto, London: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), 155.

[45] Karl Marx, "Critique of Hegel's Dialectic," in *Early Writings*, 213.

Marx's call to revolution by the destruction of private property and of a class-based society provides the practical means by which he hopes to bring about his new 'positive' humanism. As history has demonstrated, this kind of humanism did not apply to all human beings, but only to some–the working men of the proletariat class.

Marxist humanism also focuses on the alienation of the human being through work in which one's labor comes to be "owned" by another person. In this case, it is work itself, and in many cases work augmented by technology, which leads to a human being becoming alienated from his real human identity. Marx identifies the various alienations as alienation from the product of the labor, alienation from other human beings, and self alienation. He concludes that: "...the man (the worker) feels himself to be freely active only in his animal functions—eating, drinking and procreating...–while in his human functions he is reduced to an animal. The animal becomes the human and the human becomes animal."[46]

The question of feminism was raised by Marx and his collaborator and friend, Frederick Engels.[47] Engels, for example, argued that "The overthrow of the mother right was the *world historical defeat of the female sex;*" because monogamy was instituted, private property was established, and woman and children became the property of man.[48] Engels argues that the first division of historical division of labor was between men and women for the purpose of the propagation of children, and that the husband represents the bourgeois and the wife the proletariat in the family. So we have feminism emerging from the very first statement of the Marxist view.

While some Marxist feminists emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century, it was not until after the 1960's that large numbers of feminists began to think of themselves in this tradition. There are, of course, many different strands of Marxist feminism. Here, I will turn to just a few of them, to illustrate some common themes. What we find happening here is something different from what we saw in Renaissance or Enlightenment feminism, that is, that certain categories of human being come to be identified as an 'enemy' for women or for men's full development.

In the work of Marlene Dixon, for example, we find a focus on two themes: that Marxist political movements in the United States excluded feminism as an issue, and that the women's liberation movement was predominately interested in middle or upper class issues, and so it excluded Marxist concern with the

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[46] Karl Marx, "Alienated Labour," in *Early Writings*, 125.

[47] See Marx, "Private Property and Communism," in *Early Writings*, 153-4.

[48] Frederick Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (New York: International Publishers, 1972), 120.

conditions of the working poor.[49] Dixon's work is significant because it clearly articulates several fundamental principles of contemporary Marxist feminism. In an article entitled: "We are Not Animals in the Field: A Woman's Right to Choose," we find the following argument:

> The right of all women to control our own bodies includes the right to bear children only when we want. Abortion on demand is the right of every woman. If we cannot end an unwanted pregnancy, if we are forced to bear a child against our will, then our right to self-determination has been completely denied to us.[50]

Dixon clearly perceives a developing human being as an enemy to a woman's freedom. Moreover, sometimes she says that it is the state which is the enemy who seeks to control a woman's pregnant body, and at other times she argues that it is the husband who is the enemy in the family and who seeks to control his wife as his property.[51] What happens, then, is that as the movement to help women grows, others have to be pushed aside. It is clear, however, that in all these arguments that Dixon does not view feminism as a humanism, which includes the development of all human beings equally.[52]

We find another kind of argument in those Marxist feminists who focus on the 'pre-market' or unpaid aspect of women's work in the home. (Their solutions range from arguing for "wages for housework"[53] to the total abolition of the family.) The family itself is here perceived as an enemy for the woman's freedom. Perhaps the most radical Marxist feminist proposal for the abolition of the family is offered by Shulamith Firestone in *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution*.[54] She views technology as ultimately liberating, and suggests that women will only achieve their fully human identity when they no longer have to give birth, and children are produced through "test tube incubation" or artificial reproduction. The enemy here is identified as "childbearing" itself. Firestone calls it "freedom from the tyranny of reproduction

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[49] See Marlene Dixon, "Public Ideology and the class composition of women's liberation–1966-69," and *The Future of Women* (San Francisco: Synthesis Publications, 1980).

[50] Marlene Dixon, "We are not animals...", 124.

[51] Marlene Dixon, "The Right of All Women to Control their Own Bodies," in *The Future of Women*, 207-214.

[52] For other examples of early Marxist Feminist theories see, Charnie Guettel, *Marxism and Feminism* (Toronto: Canadian Women's Educational Press, 1974), Juliet Mitchell, *Women's Estate* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), or Sheila Rowbotham, *Woman's Consciousness, Man's World* (Harmondworth: Penguin Books, 1973) and *Women, Resistance and Revolution* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972).

[53] See the work of Selma James or Giuliana Pompei on "Wages for Housework," (Toronto: Canadian Women's Educational Press, 1972).

[54] Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex* (New York: Bantam Books, 1971)

and childbearing."[55] She surmises that "Machines thus could act as the perfect equalizer, obliterating the class system based on exploitation of labor."[56]

Now we can ask: Can a Marxist feminism be a Marxist humanism? Significantly, none of the Marxist feminists use the expression 'humanism' as descriptive of their views. So we could say that they do not view themselves as humanists, even in the Marxist sense. They do, however, often give a priority to reason, even at the expense of other aspects of human identity. Furthermore, they all reject 'naturalism' as a basis. We can see this in their consistent policy in favour of abortion on demand. A developing human being–even the pregnant body itself–are both perceived as enemies of woman's freedom. The solution is to get rid of both at will. In an analogous way, the state and husbands are also perceived as enemies to women's freedom, so the solution is also to get rid of both. In these moves, Marxist feminism separates itself from the situation of all human beings and focuses instead on the development of some human beings instead of others. Therefore, it can be said that Marxist feminism, at least in the forms outlined above, does not appear to be interested in supporting the full development of all human beings.

Existential Humanism

I turn now to Existential humanism, which sprang out of Enlightenment humanism, and which began with Nietzsche's reaction to Enlightenment humanism. Jean Paul Sartre is, perhaps, the best-known representative of this 'school.' In a 1945 lecture entitled "Existentialism is a Humanism," Sartre attempts to redefine humanism 'in his own image,' as it were:

> But there is another meaning of humanism. Fundamentally it is this: man is constantly outside of himself; in projecting himself, in losing himself outside of himself, he makes for man's existing; and, on the other hand, it is by pursuing transcendent goals that he is able to exist; man, being this state of passing-beyond, and seizing upon things only as they bear upon this passing-beyond, is at the heart, at the center of this passing-beyond. There is no universe other than a human universe, the universe of human subjectivity... This connection between transcendency, as a constituent element of man,... and subjectivity, in the sense that man is not closed in on himself but is always present in a human universe, is what we call existentialism humanism. Humanism because we remind man that there is no law-maker other than himself, and that in his forlornness he will decide by himself; because we point out that man will fulfil himself as man, not in turning toward himself, but in seeking outside of himself a goal which is just this liberation, just this particular fulfilment.[57]

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[55] Firestone, *Dialectic of Sex,* 225.

[56] Firestone, *Dialectic of Sex,* 201.

[57] Jean Paul Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism," in *Existentialism versus Marxism: Conflicting Views on Humanism,* ed. George Novak, 84. Also published in *Existentialism*

The core idea in Sartre's defence of existentialism as a humanism is to argue that his philosophy presents the real nature of a human being as something other than an isolated form of quietism, a sordid view of human identity, or a form of relativism.[58] Sartre wants to defend the view that the existentialist, by his transcendent decisions, presents a model of the human being as a transcendent subjectivity, who projects himself by an absolute freedom, into the future by his acts, and who makes himself into a particular kind of human being precisely by these acts.

Like Marxist humanism, we find that existential humanism situates the human being in a world without God. Nietzsche had proclaimed that God is dead in his prologue to *Thus Spake Zarathustra,* and Sartre is very explicit on the theoretical foundation for an existential humanism: "Existentialism is nothing else than an attempt to draw all the consequences of a coherent atheistic position."[59] So the human being is not primarily a being in relation with other beings, human or Divine. As quoted above, existential humanism argues that the human being is "constantly outside himself." In this move to transcendence, the human being comes up against various enemies of freedom: the body and other people. The body interferes with freedom, according to Sartre, because it is an "in-itself"—a thing without consciousness; while another person interferes with freedom because he or she is a "for-itself"—another free consciousness. In *Being and Nothingness,* Sartre develops in detail how various enemies of human transcendence function. He states: "The true limit of my freedom lies purely and simply in the very fact that an Other apprehends me as the Other-as-object... This limit to my freedom is, as we see, posited by the Other's pure and simple existence—that is, by the *fact* that my transcendence exists for a transcendence."[60] Consequently, as Garcin exclaims in *No Exit*, "Hell is—other people!"[61]

The first articulation of Existentialist feminism came from Simone de Beauvoir, in *The Second Sex.* (One might be able to argue that Lou Andreas-Salomé (1861-1937) did this in relation to Nietzsche, but it is de Beauvoir who provides the first 'systematic' account.) In the prologue to this work, de Beauvoir identifies the two threats to freedom mentioned above: the body and other people; but she ties these "enemies" in a unique way to woman's identity. First, the body:

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and Human Emotions, (New York: Philosophical Library, 1957), 50-51.

[58] For an example of this criticism see, Walter Odajyk, *Marxism and Existentialism* (New York: Doubleday, 1965. He states: "Existentialism, one of the most antisocial and egocentric philosophies every to be developed by the mind of man, is not in any position to speak of humanism, socialism, and true human freedom.", 30.

[59] Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism," 84.

[60] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness,* (New York: Washington Square Pocketbook, 1956), 672-3.

[61] Jean Paul Sartre, *No Exit and three other plays* (New York: Vintage, 1949), 47.

"Woman has ovaries, a uterus; these peculiarities imprison her in her subjectivity, circumscribe her within the limits of her own nature."[62] The very identity of the body as a female body, appears to de Beauvoir to come into conflict with woman's drive for transcendence—an externally projected subjectivity.

Second, woman also experiences other people, and in particular the transcendence of men, as an enemy to her freedom:

> Now, what peculiarly signalizes the situation of woman is that she—a free and autonomous being like all human creatures—nevertheless finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the Other, They propose to stabilize her as object and to doom her to immanence since her transcendence is to be overshadowed and forever transcended by another ego which is essential and sovereign.[63]

Both Sartre and de Beauvoir appear to believe that a kind of humanism is still possible in collective action (the we-acting together for a common cause) and in friendships between men and women. Simone de Beauvoir argues at the end of *The Second Sex* that "...when we abolish the slavery of half of humanity, together with the whole system of hypocrisy that it implies, then the "division" of humanity will reveal its genuine significance and the human couple will find its true form."[64]

In *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, de Beauvoir invokes the Renaissance humanist 'turn to history' as a source of liberation.[65] But when we look at *The Second Sex*, there is no doubt that she saw herself as doing both a new kind of humanism, which placed the highest emphasis on the absoluteness of human freedom, and a new kind of feminism, which sought to provide women with a history in order to escape the lack of transcendence they experienced both from being reduced to their bodily functions, and being reduced by the consciousness of men to objects rather than actively being subjects. Nevertheless, de Beauvoir still appears to support a universal humanism for, after quoting Karl Marx's statement that "...the relation of man to woman is the most natural relation of human being to human being...", she concludes that the task of men and women is to "establish the reign of liberty" and that "by and through their natural differentiation men and women unequivocally affirm their brotherhood."[66]

In a series of interviews, first, with Alice Schwarzer between 1972 and 1982 and, second, with Margaret A. Simons between 1982 and 1985, de Beauvoir clarified how her views about feminism developed as the women's liberation movement progressed and different positions were articulated. In these interviews, de Beauvoir emphasises two particularly important aspects of her

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[62] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, (New York: Vintage, 1953), xviii.
[63] de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, xxxiv.
[64] de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 184.
[65] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (New York: Citadel, 1976), 92-93.
[66] de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 814.

position. The first point is a clarification of her rejection of any essentialist view of human nature as such, and the second point deals with her rejection of taking an essentialist view of woman's nature as a starting point. She states: "...the base of existentialism is precisely that there is no human nature, and thus no "feminine nature. It's not something given. There is a presence to the world, which is the presence which defines man, who is defined by his presence to the world, his consciousness and not a nature that grants him *a priori* certain characteristics."[67]

Simone de Beauvoir has always maintained that she is interested in linking her feminism with class struggle of both men and women. She defines feminism with respect to the situation of women in the world as follows: "In my definition, feminists are women—or even men too—who are fighting to change women's condition, in association with the class struggle, but independently of it as well, without making the changes they strive for totally dependent on changing society as a whole."[68] Existential feminism then involves a set of actions of a being characterized as consciousness in the world. However, de Beauvoir's Existential humanism, like Sartre's, concentrates only on one aspect of human consciousness, or what they call the 'for-itself.'

This Existential feminism is *not* a humanism in the sense that it rejects any view of the whole human being as a unified entity. It is also not a humanism in that it implies that human beings (either developing or fully developed) who interfere with the free project of a conscious being may be killed. Both de Beauvoir and Sartre came to the conclusion that, when someone is perceived as an enemy to one's freedom, it is all right to kill that person, even if the person is innocent. (Sartre said that he would have carried suitcases containing bombs and left them in cafés. He supported terrorism against members of certain classes or nationalities and, for a time, became involved in Maoist political action. De Beauvoir supported abortion, arguing that "the embryo, as long as it is not yet considered human, as long as it is not a being with human relationships with its mother or its father, it's nothing, one can eliminate the embryo."[69])

On the other hand, de Beauvoir has always argued that women ought to work together with men and that, in a certain way, her human identity (as consciousness) takes priority over her identity as a woman. In rejecting a "woman-identity" starting point, de Beauvoir states: "Better that she identify herself as a human being who happens to be a woman. It's a certain situation which is not the same as men's situation of course, but she shouldn't identify

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[67] Margaret A. Simons, "Two Interviews with Simone de Beauvoir (1982), *Hypatia,* vol.3., no.3 (winter 1989), 19.

[68] Alice Schwarzer, *After the Second Sex: Conversations with Simone de Beauvoir* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 33.

[69] Simons, "Two Interviews," (1982), 18-19.

herself as a woman."[70] Simone de Beauvoir offers as an example her rejection of a marriage proposal by Sartre, because she understood both child bearing and housework to be oppressive to women. These two situations of women reduce her, she claims, from her human transcendence into an enslavement. She states: "I have escaped many of the things that enslave a woman, such as motherhood and the duties of a housewife."[71]

Even though de Beauvoir argues that "Women, and men too, must become total human beings," the total—in 'total human being'—includes primarily human consciousness projecting in creative ways into work and into political action.[72] The body, and especially differences between woman's body and man's body, is rejected as simply part of the given, waiting to be transcended. In this one could say that de Beauvoir's feminism is an Existential humanism, as Sartre defined the meaning of humanism–i.e., as being constantly outside of oneself, projecting oneself, and losing oneself in one's projects.

Pragmatic secular humanism and feminism

The third offshoot from Enlightenment Humanism was a new form of humanism that was articulated in England by the Oxford philosopher Ferdinand Canning Scott Schiller, (1864-1937), and by the American pragmatist, William James. This form of humanism characterized the human being *vis-à-vis* law, language and truth. In "Pragmatism and Humanism," James describes it this way: "Law and languages at any rate are thus seen to be man-made things. Mr. Schiller applies the analogy to beliefs, and proposes the name of 'Humanism' for the doctrine that to an unascertainable extent our truths are man-made products too."[73] In other words, Pragmatic humanism rejects one view of enlightenment humanism–that there are some absolute truths (The Truth) that the human reason is able to discover–and, instead, it suggests that truths "make themselves as we go."[74]

At the same time, Pragmatic humanism accepts the place of human reason in determining truths in an historically progressing manner. James contrasts rationalism and pragmatism this way: "The essential contrast is that for rationalism reality is ready-made and complete from all eternity, while for pragmatism it is still in the making, and awaits part of its complexion from the future."[75] This rejection of Truth as 'ready-made' has consequences for feminism,

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[70] Simons, "Two Interviews," (1982), 19.

[71] Schwarzer, *Conversations*, 36.

[72] Schwarzer, 46.

[73] William James, "Pragmatism and Humanism," in *Pragmatism*, (Cleveland: Meridian, 1963), 159.

[74] James, *Pragmatism*, 159.

[75] James, *Pragmatism*, 167.

particularly since the enlightenment feminists appealed to the common presence of reason in women and men as the basis for their natural equality, and ultimately as a foundation for an appeal to equal rights to education, citizenship, and so on.

James also associates Pragmatic humanism with the notion of "good consequences" for any truths. In "Humanism and Truth," he differentiates the pragmatic method itself from pragmatic humanism as follows: "All that the pragmatic method implies, then, it that truths should *have* practical consequences. In England the word has been used more broadly still, to cover the notion that the truth of any statement *consists* in the consequences, and particularly in their being good consequences. ...I think that Mr. Schiller's proposal to call the wider pragmatism by the name of 'humanism' is excellent and ought to be adopted. The narrower pragmatism may still be spoken of as the 'pragmatic method.'"[76]

When this new 'pragmatism' is developed further, we discover that the criterion of evaluation is human experience. "Truth thus means, according to humanism, the relation of less fixed parts of experience (predicates) to other relatively more fixed parts (subjects); and we are not required to seek it in a relation of experience as such to anything beyond itself."[77] This turn away from a realistic epistemology towards a practical emphasis on personal experience is shared by many contemporary feminisms. The emphasis on experience as the sole criteria for truth is emphasized by James: "...the concrete truth *for us* will always be that way of thinking in which our various experiences most profitably combine."[78] This pragmatic notion of truth has the further characteristic that truth changes with time. James identifies this as an essential characteristic of the new humanism he proposes: " The humanism, for instance, which I see and try so hard to defend, is the completest truth attained from my point of view up to date. But, owing to the fact that all experience is a process, no point of view can ever be *the* last one. Everyone one is insufficient and off its balance, and responsible to later points of view that itself."[79]

In the United States, Pragmatic humanism evolved into a still further form of what is called "*naturalistic*" humanism, and its sub-species of secular humanism, scientific humanism, and democratic humanism. Corliss Lamont, in his extensive treatment of the subject, *The Philosophy of Humanism*, identifies the key components of this modern American humanism: "Humanism is the viewpoint that men have but one life to lead and should make the most of it in terms of creative work and happiness; that human happiness is its own justification; that in any case the supernatural...does not exist; and that human beings, using their own intelligence and cooperating liberally with one another, can build an

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[76] James, "Humanism and Truth," in *Pragmatism*, 230.
[77] James, *Pragmatism*, 239.
[78] James, *Pragmatism*, 241.
[79] James, *Pragmatism*, 250.

enduring citadel of peace and beauty upon this earth."[80] It aims towards the removal of discrimination, and what Lamont calls "human-being-ism, that is, devotion to the interests of human beings, wherever they live and whatever their status."[81] This view has, over the years, become integrated into the American way of thinking.

In 1933, several writers, including the American pragmatist John Dewey, produced a "Humanist Manifesto." This document articulated fifteen fundamental principles, including a rejection of belief in God, a rejection of religion as tied to the supernatural, an affirmation of methods of modern science, an acceptance of a goal of the complete realization of the human personality, and the acceptance of the premise that institutions exist solely for the purpose of the enhancement of individual human life. Underlying this new approach was Dewey's affirmation of experience as the prime measure of truth.[82] In *Reconstruction in Philosophy* we find Dewey explaining that "Growth is the only moral "end;" and "Happiness is found only in success; but success means succeeding, getting forward, moving in advance."[83] Furthermore, "growing, or, the continuous reconstruction of experience, is the only end."[84]

This priority given to experience was picked up within the women's movement which began in the United States in the 1960's. The initial aim of the movement, as with earlier humanisms, was to remove obstances to women becoming 'fully human.' Betty Friedan described the anxiety, boredom, and what she called the "progressive dehumanization" that many American women felt in their comfortable suburban homes. She interpreted this wide ranging experience as a disease that had no name—a malaise of conforming to a "feminine mystique."[85] Women now had university degrees, citizenship and voting rights, and material comforts—all the goals which previous feminists had struggled to attain—and yet, many experienced their social situation as leading to dehumanization. Friedan described it this way: "Since the human organism has an intrinsic urge to grow, a woman who evades her own growth by clinging to the childlike protection of the housewife role will—in so far as that role does not permit her own growth—suffer increasingly severe pathology, both for her and for her children."[86] In this context, children, male chauvinism, and discrimination in the workplace became perceived as the new enemies of women's freedom. The

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[80] Corliss Lamont, *The Philosophy of Humanism*, (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1982), 14.

[81] Lamont, *Humanism*, 15-16.

[82] See, John Dewey, *On Experience, Nature, and Freedom* (New York: Liberal Arts, 1960) and *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960).

[83] Dewey, *Reconstruction*, 177, 179.

[84] Dewey, *Reconstruction*, 184.

[85] Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, (New York : Norton, 1963).

[86] Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 279.

solutions proposed for these situations included abortion/birth control, consciousness raising, and preferential hiring or affirmative action to enable women to work outside the home.

The formation of a National Organization of Women, concerned with providing a means for women to network politically, turned feminism into a broad based American political movement, reflecting many of the aims of the pragmatic (secular) humanists. The original statement of purpose at the organizing conference of NOW included the following: "NOW is dedicated to the proposition that women, first and foremost, are human beings, who, like all other people in our society, must have the chance to develop their fullest human potential. We believe that women can achieve such equality only by accepting to the full the challenges and responsibilities they share with other people in our society, as part of the decision-making mainstream of American political, economic and social life." [87] This early statement of pragmatic feminism fits very nicely into the goals of growth expressed by pragmatic humanism.

In 1973, a new Humanist Manifesto was published, incorporating a number of feminist principles along with its own restatement of seventeen humanist principles. Again we find an explicit rejection of belief in God, in eternal life, and an explicit affirmation that "We affirm that moral values derive their source from human experience. Ethics is *autonomous* and *situational* needing no theological or ideological sanction. Ethics stems from human need and interest."[88] At the same time the document is filled with a new zeal for respect for the dignity of the human person, for the use of reason and intelligence, for the protection of civil liberties, the removal of all discrimination because of sex, the rejection of violence as a means of interaction, a rejection of nationalisms, and the hope for a new ecologically sound and democratic world cooperation among peoples.

Many of these themes had also been developed in various forms of feminist activity over the years, including ecofeminism, non-violent protests by women against nuclear war, and the criticism of abuses of human rights throughout the world. Moreover, women's experience becomes the basis for new feminist epistemologies, and women's situations become the basis for new feminist ethics. And, as some aspects of feminist ethics become integrated into the political structures of pragmatic or secular humanism in the context of economic scarcity, we find an ironic pattern beginning to develop within this humanism. Preferential hiring of women over men has led to the situation in which men of the same working class, because they are competing with women for the same jobs, suddenly become perceived as the enemy of women who need to work in order

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[87] "National Organization of Women: Statement of Purpose (1986)" in *This Great Argument: The Rights of Women*, eds. Haminca Bosmajian and Haig Bosmajian (Menlo Park, Ca: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1972), 190-191.

[88] in Lamont, *The Philosophy of Humanism*, appendix, 293-4.

to grow and develop. Inversely, women of the same working class become perceived as the enemy of men. No longer are women or men able to devote themselves to working for the good of all men and women but, rather, they begin to fight one another for their own interest. In addition, we begin to see political alliances being formed with others like them in order to establish power bases of lobbying and pressure groups to defend their own special interests. So, now, the humanist ideal of working for the good of all deteriorates, so that one works only for the good of a few—the particular few who share the same narrow interests one has. Consequently, this kind of pragmatic or secular feminism turns out to be unable to be a humanism even in the pragmatic or secular sense because it excludes the interests of large numbers of human beings.

The same point can be made if we look at the prominence which secular feminism has given to abortion. If the "happiness, growth, and success" of women depends upon the termination of the lives of unborn developing human beings, then this kind of feminism is also not able to be a humanism which claims to defend the rights of all human beings to full growth and development. Consequently, any feminism which either explicitly or implicitly advocates a primacy to women's development by excluding the interests of large numbers of unborn developing human beings cannot be considered a humanism.

Personalist Humanism

We turn now to the last form of humanism to be considered in this paper. Between 1933 and 1937, a new form of humanism began to emerge in Jewish and Christian philosophers almost in a morphic resonance.

It is difficult to determine who first articulated its grounds. We note in France, in 1932, the founding of the personalist review *Esprit* in Paris by Emmanuel Mounier and Jacques Maritain. And, in 1934 Mounier and Maritain, along with Gabriel Marcel and Nicholai Berdjaev, met together in a philosophy group and published a "Personalist Manifesto". This document contained the first public articulation of the new personalist humanism. But we also find, as early as 1919 (in early drafts of *I and Thou*), the Jewish existentialist Martin Buber emphasising the interpersonal nature of dialogue among human beings and with God, and the relation of person and community.[89] Buber argues that true community of persons is established, not through the feelings or experiences one person has for another but, rather :"...all of them have to stand in a living reciprocal relationship to a single living center, and they have to stand in a living, reciprocal relationship to one another."[90] In these reciprocal relations, human beings are not a thing or a 'what' for one another, but instead become a 'who' in relation to one another.

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[89] Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (New York: Scribner's, 1970).

[90] Buber, *I and Thou*, 94.

We also have the example of Edith Stein (1891-1942) who, while having converted to Catholicism in 1922, had been born a Jew. Stein had been giving public lectures in Germany and Switzerland on women's emancipation and the women's movement since 1928[91] and, in her autobiography, she wrote that, from 1916 on, she had been working on "...something which was personally close to my heart and which continually occupied me anew in all later works: the constitution of the human person."[92] (Though Stein is not normally considered a personalist, I would argue that she ought to be so understood. If one looks at how she elaborates her reflections on woman, her views have many of the same components of personalism. There is some question of how much she knew of the personalist movement, as some of her work antedates that of Maritain and Mounier–though she was also contemporary with them.)

A basic theme in this personalist humanism is the distinction between the individual human being and the person. Briefly, the individual is described in terms of the building up of the ego by acts of self determination and self development. The individual is also one of a kind and, in the case of woman or man as an individual, she or he is simply one of a human kind. A human person, on the other hand, is a being who transcends the self, by a gift of the self to another person. In this case, the centre of the self is shifted from oneself to another, by a free act or series of acts. Here the human being is no longer just a 'what' but becomes a 'who,' in relation to another 'who.' Right from the beginning, then, personalist philosophers emphasized that the human being could not be fully explained as simply a material being. Instead the human person was understood to be an integral spiritual and material being.

Mounier, for example, argues that: "[Personalism] includes every human problem in the entire range of concrete human life, from the lowliest material conditions to the highest spiritual possibilities."[93] This basic orientation of all personalist humanisms marks it off from the last three forms previously considered in this paper. In other words, personalist humanism places the human being in an interpersonal set of relations with God and with one another. It takes on a particularly Christian form, when the appeal to the ground for the spiritual identity of a person is placed both in the creation of a human person in the image and likeness of a personal God, and also on the particularly redemptive identity of Jesus Christ who, although Divine, took on human nature when He became man.

In Spain, in 1934, Maritain delivered a series of six lectures at the University of Santandar on this new personalism. These lectures were published in book

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[91] Edith Stein, *Woman* (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1987).

[92] Edith Stein, *Life in a Jewish Family*, (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1986), 197.

[93] Emmanuel Mounier, *Personalism* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1952).

form in Paris in 1936 under the title of *L'humanisme intégral* (*Integral* or *True Humanism* in English translations). Here, we find the first articulation of the claim that the univocal understanding of the human being present in older forms of humanisms should indeed be rejected, as it understands human beings simply as individuals, even if self-defining within the existential model. But there is also an implicit rejection of understanding the human being or person to be equivocal terms—as proposed in forms of anti-humanism. Instead, Maritain suggests that the terms 'human being' and 'person' ought to be understood as *analogical* in their application to women and men. This central place for analogy provides a key to the renewed form of personalist humanism that maritain and others adopt.

If we return to our consideration of human freedom, we could say that the free will and intellect are understood as part of human nature through creation in the image of God, but that the proper humanist use of intellect and will depend upon the redemptive integration of the faculties within the person and the degree to which the person is able to participate actively in building a common good. Grace, or participation in the life of God, is crucial to these two activities of integration and appropriate action. Therefore the human person is not an absolute centre, but rather a constantly renewed centre through being changed by cooperating with grace.[94] Furthermore, within this renewed understanding, freedom is not simply a freedom of individual choice (as found in pragmatic or liberal humanism), but rather "the autonomous freedom of the person"who is both material and spiritual.[95]

Dangers to this freedom then include a militant atheism which makes this world an absolute rather than a relative end, on the one hand, or an otherworldly spiritualism which ignores the proper place of building up the temporal order, on the other hand. Another danger is found in an extreme form of totalitarianism, in which the person is subsumed into the state, on the one hand, and in an extreme form of individualism, in which the individual emphasizes his or her own rights to the neglect of the common good, on the other hand.[96] In these situations the person is reduced from a 'who' to a 'what', or a thing to be used or repressed. Jacques Maritain summarizes more positively the goal of human freedom in *The Person and the Common Good*, as follows:

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[94] Jacques Maritain, *True Humanism*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938), 87. See also his essay, "Christian Humanism" (1942), republished in *The Range of Reason*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), Chapter 14, 185-199.

[95] Maritain, *True Humanism*, 172.

[96] These forms are developed in a discussion of a more contemporary form of personalist humanism, by Andrew Woznicki, *A Christian Humanism: Karol Wojtyla's Existential Personalism* (New Britain, CT.: Mariel Productions, 1980), x. See also, Rev. Paul Poupard, "John Paul II's Christian Humanism," 46-59. He develops the Second Vatican Council's affirmation in *Gaudium et Spes* #55. "We are witnesses of the birth of *a new humanism*..."

> It follows from the fact that the principal value of the common work of society is the freedom of expansion of the person together with all the guarantees which this freedom implies and the diffusion of good that flows from it. In short, the political common good is a common good of human persons. And it turns out that, in subordinating oneself to this common work, by the grace of justice and amity, each one of us is still subordinated to the good of persons, to the accomplishment of the personal life of *others* and, at the same time, to the interior dignity of one's own person.[97]

This characteristic of personalist humanism, of being concerned both with the interior dignity of one's own person and at the same time dedicated to the common good of the freedom of the expansion of other persons is crucial to our study of whether a feminism can be a humanism.

There is a close relation between a personalist humanism and a personalist feminism. For example, in 1936, Mounier published in *Esprit* the first article focusing on the relation between personalism and woman's identity, entitled "La femme aussi est une personne."[98] And Jacques and Raïssa Maritain struggled with many of the same issues.

If we consider the work of Edith Stein, we can clearly identify the characteristics of this new personalist humanism in her essays on women. A particular concern of Stein's was 'What is it that is fundamental to women's and to men's identity?' 'What is it that they can learn from one another, and how can they work together so that they can remove obstacles to one another's becoming fully human?'

Her work was exploratory, but it focused on trying to understand the complex inner structure of the human person, as man or as woman, and the call of each to interior perfection and exterior responsibility. Stein identifies three aspects of personal identity: membership in the human species, membership in the sub-species of man or woman, and identity as an individual. Dangers to freedom would include lack of insight into these aspects of one's identity, or lack of effort in educating oneself in characteristics of the other sub-species (i.e. a woman needs to make an effort to develop masculine characteristics and a woman to develop feminine characteristics), and the lack of cooperation with the grace of Jesus Christ. She elaborates on the Christian dictum, that Christ will make you free. "We therefore achieve total humanity through Him and, simultaneously, the right personal attitude."[99] By her emphasis on education, and specifically on

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[97] Jacques Maritain, *The Person and the Common Good* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame Press, 1985), 103. Orig. pub. 1947. See also, Maritain, *True Humanism*, 127ff. Maritain here develops these characteristics with respect to the *communal* characteristic of true humanism and its *personalist* characteristic.

[98] Emmanuel Mounier, *Esprit* (June 1936): 292-297.

[99] Stein, *Woman*, 252.

woman's education, Stein elaborates the philosophical parameters of her more broad personalistic humanism.

In Stein's form of feminism, if we choose to describe it as such for the purposes of this analysis—and we can because she is concerned with removing obstacles to the full development of women as persons, women and men are two analogous ways of being human persons. She describes the hierarchical interior ordering of the person as involving biological, psychological, philosophical, and theological realities, with the higher order integrating the lower order. One danger to freedom for women is the lack of knowledge of their complex structure and how it is analogous to (i.e. similar and also different from) the complex structure of men. She calls for women to engage in a phenomenological analysis of their human, woman, and individual identities. She resists reducing women and men to things or 'whats' but argues that all human beings ought to gain insight into how their uniqueness relates to their commonness. And in particular she emphasizes the need to gain insight into how woman's identity and situation offers unique contexts for education and action which are similar and yet different from men.

Stein's work was exploratory, and it predated de Beauvoir's by 15 years. So in some ways we can say that it was the first contemporary attempt at an interdisciplinary approach to woman's identity. At the same time, it has in its foundation key components of personalist humanism, and it offers the possibility for further development within this way of approach to the goal of full human development. In this understanding, if a woman views a man as simply a member of a univocal group 'men', she reduces him from a 'who' to a 'what.' This may occur, for example, in a context of preferential hiring, or affirmative action. Similarly, if a woman views a developing human being as simply a piece of material, she reduces the fetus to a 'what' or thing, instead of a developing someone worthy of love. This occurs in many attitudes towards abortion, and especially the most common one, namely that a woman has a right to control her own body. It also occurs in the context in which abortion is described as a right to reproductive freedom. The exercise of freedom in this way reduces the developing human being to a what to be destroyed instead of a who to be defended and supported into full human and personal development. So from these two key components of most contemporary forms of feminism, a Personalist feminism would differ in its approach. It would follow that only a Personalist feminism could be a Personalist humanism.

In all forms of Personalist humanism the main danger to human freedom is seen to be the lack of mature integration within a person, and the lack of genuine participation in interpersonal societies or communities of building up the common good. The specifics of these aspects of lack of integration or participation are elaborated in great detail in the Polish school of Personalist humanism, especially in the works of M.A. Krapiec and Karol Wojtyla (known now as Pope John Paul

II)—who picked up the whole momentum of early personalist humanism. While outside forces reducing the person to simply an individual are significant, it is the mature use of human freedom that is seen as the starting point for full development as a person. (Though the work of this 'Polish school' of personalism largely follows the second World War, it seems likely that there had been a long-standing interest in personalism in Poland, based on the work of Mounier and Maritain. In the 1920s, there were a number of people—such as Max Scheler and Roman Ingarden—who travelled back and forth between France and Poland. Mounier's works were published into Polish and, in 1934, Mounier published an article in the Polish review (*Wiadomosci Literackie)* explaining what was happening in France in the personalist movement.)

Wojtyla, in particular, developed the view that the full development of every human being is the goal of all persons—and he elaborates this in what he calls 'the personalistic norm.' This norm is that one ought always to treat other persons as beings worthy of love, not as 'things' or as entities that can be abused. Wojtyla has elaborated this personalistic norm in a very interesting way in relation to women's identity.

Wojtyla (and Edith Stein) note that the female lived experience of the body prepares women in a certain way to receive another human being from puberty every month, through ovulation. Then, if a woman does have children, the experience of having children increases that sensitivity towards the whole being. A woman generates within herself, while a male generates outside himself. Wojtyla and Stein argue that there is a propensity in women to be concerned with human beings. (Even some radical feminists, who otherwise would disagree with Stein and Wojtyla, would admit this point, though they would describe it as focusing on 'caring.')

In fact, Wojtyla calls this orientation 'woman's genius' and part of a 'new feminism' which, he argues, if it can enter into the workplace as well as in the home, has the possibility of bringing in the personalistic norm—to evaluate whether a person is being treated as a someone worthy of love. This focus on 'the genius of woman' is relatively new—it is something that has started in just the last five years—and can be found in *Mulieris dignitatem, Evangelium vitae*[100], and in recent statements of the American bishops, including their statements on the role of technology in life. One can also find some of this in Edith Stein's essays on women. I would like to note one passage from *Evangelium vitae* that is quite striking:

> In transforming culture so that it supports life, women occupy a place in thought and action which is unique and decisive. It depends on them to promote a 'new feminism' which rejects the temptation of imitating models of 'male domination' in order to

[100] *Evangelium vitae*, Encyclical Letter on the Value and Inviolability of Human Life, March 25, 1995.

> acknowledge and affirm the true genius of women in every aspect of the life of society and overcome all discrimination, violence and exploitation. [...]
>
> A mother welcomes and carries in herself another human being, enabling it to grow inside her, giving it room, respecting it in its otherness. Women first learn and then teach others that human relations are authentic if they are open to accepting the other person: a person who is recognized and loved because of the dignity which comes from being a person and not from other considerations, such as usefulness, strength, intelligence, beauty or health. This is the fundamental contribution which the Church and humanity expect from women. And it is the indispensable prerequisite for an authentic cultural change.[101]

We see Wojtyla–John Paul II–using such words as 'new feminism' and 'male domination'–something that is quite unlike what many people expect to hear from him

This shows that something is happening–that there is a new personalistic norm, with a new feminism and a new humanism, which is based on an understanding of what is truly human, and on what women's and men's places are within that.

Conclusion

Can feminism be a humanism? If one perceives any people or kind of people fundamentally as an enemy–if one can push them out of one's life (and, in the extreme, kill them)–then this is not a humanism. Personalist humanism requires that one ought always to work, as far as possible, for the full development of all human beings with whom one comes into contact. If one is a Personalist feminist, one is interested particularly in those ways that can remove obstacles for women to become fully human persons. What specifically one does, of course, depends on the context that one is in.

The original feminism that was humanistic was, as we saw, Renaissance humanism—a humanism that sprang up within a Christian context, and was situated within a person's relationship with God and with peoples' relations to one another. The first, early Enlightenment form was still Christian, and these femninists were also interested in the development of all persons. But once feminism explicitly separated itself from relations with God, and when it set itself up in antagonism with organised religion, it began to start to think of getting rid of other people. It saw certain groups of people as enemies and saw nothing wrong in eliminating them.

Personalist humanism, which was reestablished through the Catholic tradition in France and in Poland, is a renewal of humanism. The feminist movement within that is also a renewal of feminist humanism. Christianity, then, has an important role to play the articulation of a Personalist feminism and humanism. In Christianity, one can speak of the beginning, the fall, and the redemption as in some way beginning to come, and there is some recent interesting work that has

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[101] *Evangelium vitae*, article 99.

come out of the question 'Do women have a different role to play in this redemptive activity than men? And if so, what would it be?' 'How would women's identity be fundamentally different from men's and how similar?' And thus one point that both Edith Stein and Karol Wojtyla have identified, focuses on the importance of one's attitude towards other human beings.

There are many areas in which a Personalist feminism might be able to cooperate with other forms of feminism in the contemporary world. Some of these include: a critique of particular ways in which technology may lead to the reduction of women; a critique of the ways in which capitalism misuses women; a critique of the ways in which education does not help the full development of women; a critique of the ways in which the structure of societies may inhibit the possibility for women to engage in meaningful work outside of the home; a critique of the ways in which women's health is not adequately cared for; a critique of the ways in which the family—as the original place in which a human being is discovered as a unique and unrepeatable 'who' in relation to other 'who's—can be strengthened, and so on. These were issues at which the recent Beijing conference on women began to focus in cooperative ways—and through which many different forms of feminism sought to find a common ground for a variety of humanisms.

So we can answer our original question of "Whether a feminism can be a humanism?" by the following. If feminism is an ideology that places women's development as a value over the development of men or of developing human beings, then, No, it cannot be a humanism. If, on the other hand, a feminism is an organized way of thought and action, that gives special attention to removing obstacles to the full development of women, but at the same time works for the full development of all human beings as persons, then it can be a humanism. In fact, I would probably make the stronger argument, that only a Personalist feminism can be a humanism in this full sense; it recognizes that the person is a 'who,' that a woman, a man, and a child are analogous ways of being a person, and that persons can be fulfilled only by participating with one another in building up the common good of other persons. Indeed, the only way to become fulfilled as a person is by the repeated habit of the giving of self to other persons.

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