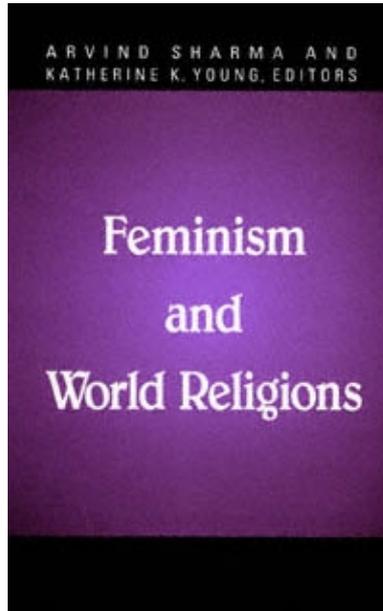


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## Introduction

Katherine K. Young

My co-editor, Arvind Sharma, once said that "power might have no gender but gender has power." My thoughts on the topic of feminism and world religions began with these cryptic words. I quickly moved on to the topic of how the perspectives of female insiders within world religions are changing the way we all think about power, gender, and religion.

This introduction <sup>1</sup> consists of the following four sections: (1) preliminaries; (2) intellectual trends; (3) feminist borrowings and critiques; and (4) insiders and outsiders. In the postscript of this book, I will offer my own analysis of insiders and outsiders.

### Preliminaries

Before launching into the topic of feminism and world religions, some comments on the following are in order: (1) definitions; (2) the purpose of this book; and (3) the authors of this book.

### *Definitions*

It is difficult to offer basic definitions for some well-known terms. The word feminism, for example, can refer to the women's movement in general or any one theoretical position in particular. And the term *world religions* can include all religions of the world or only those that have had a major impact on the world. Like any discussion, therefore, this one must begin with some working definitions.

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directly or indirectly as "false consciousness" to oppress people. Like Marx, moreover, they argued that the solution to social problems lay within history, not beyond it in some abstract or sacred realm. But Marxists emphasized agitation in the streets, and the critical theorists emphasized "education." The purpose of education, they said, was to reveal the hidden conditions of oppression embedded in institutions and whatever passed for common sense in order to liberate oppressed groups and transform society as a whole. These critical theorists coined the term the "social construction of knowledge," which has by now become so prevalent that few people actually think about its origin, much less question its accuracy or usefulness.

Although critical theory drew heavily from Marxism, it shifted Marx's emphasis on economics to "right knowledge" and from activism in the workplace to activism in the universities. For Marx, the proletarians were outsiders to power. For the critical theorists, all marginal groups were outsiders to power. Marxists of both the old and new schools, though, saw their goal as destruction of an all-powerful, or "hegemonic," class so that outsiders could gain the power of insiders. In connection with religion, like anything else, one worldview would be undermined to pave the way for another. The latter has usually been associated with postmodernism (a worldview acknowledging no absolutes, no objective truth, no intellectual unity), deconstruction (a method used to expose "textual" inconsistencies, especially those known as "phallogocentric" or "Eurocentric"), feminism (activism to improve the economic and social circumstances of women as a class), and new political alliances (women and minorities in the name of "diversity," "pluralism," or "multivocality").

### *Hermeneutics*

Paul Ricoeur argues that modern people are incapable of believing in their canonical texts (scripture and all other sources of tradition). The decentered self, for Ricoeur, is the product of both human finitude (nature)

and secularization (characteristic of this particular historical moment). The only hope is for a "decentered" self to rediscover the "sacred" in literature and the other arts. Understanding the variety of "texts," he says, is like "play."<sup>15</sup> He claims that entering the many "worlds" of literary or other "texts" is the best way of destroying the idea that anyone can live at the centre of the universe. Ricoeur argues that "texts" can either reflect "structures of domination" which are revealed by what he calls the "hermeneutics of suspicion" or respond to the "voice" of the other. In this way, he shifts attention to the insiders of other religions and the arts.

### *Deconstruction*

No "text," claims Jacques Derrida, is ever completely explicit; each retains "traces" (gaps, conflicts, ruptures) that betray its "complicity" with meta-

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insofar as women are associated with them, then women should not be denigrated, but venerated. By itself, this would still be a highly androcentric view, but the concomitant Vajrayana emphasis on nonduality discourages projection of emotion onto the other and encourages claiming one's emotions as one's own, a point consistently stressed in Vajrayana meditation training.

Some feminists have voiced suspicions that a genuine dyadic unity is impossible. Put more abstractly, they would have to claim that genuine nondualism is impossible, that the only options are duality or monism. Whenever two elements are central in a symbolic universe, they would contend, there *will be* hierarchical ranking between the two. In their favor, many systems do retain a subtle dualism, even when they proclaim that both elements of a dyad are critical and necessary. The ambiguity attached to the *yin* element in some Chinese cosmological thinking is a good case in point.<sup>32</sup> Is there a similar possibility that activity and compassion, the male elements in this dyad, are given a subtly higher value? They are not, which becomes clear in the oral instructions given to the student for internalizing and utilizing the symbols for feminine and masculine principles in Tantric meditation rituals. The interplay of right and left hands, and of the *vajra* and bell, which stand for masculine and feminine, stress equality, co-necessity, and mutual interpenetration.

A more serious question would concern whether the emphasis on masculine and feminine principles reinforces, rather than undermines, gender stereotypes. Are women to be accommodating and spacelike, rather than active? Are men to be busy saving the world, but not too spacious and quiet? That humans should emulate and strive to develop only the principle that matches their physiological sex is never taught in Vajrayana Buddhism. Rather, the practitioner always strives to develop both wisdom and compassion, both spacious accommodation and effective activity. Women and men equally are given *sadhanas*\* in which they visualize themselves as male or as female *yidams*, or as both together. Men and women students may begin their journey conforming to gender stereotypes, but their conformity should decrease, not increase, with practice, which, in my experience and observations, usually happens.

### Toward a Feminist Reconstruction of Buddhism

When the feminist account of Buddhist history is joined with the feminist analysis of key Buddhist doctrines, a massive contradiction is apparent. This contradiction is the inspiration for the third strategy for a feminist revalorization of Buddhism reconstruction according to postpatriarchal androgynous vision.

The most succinct way of summarizing the contradiction is to say that, in Buddhist terms, it represents an intolerable conflict between view and practice.

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The "view," according to the feminist analysis of key Buddhist concepts, involves nonfixation on gender identity, the emptiness of gender, and the nonduality and mutuality of feminine and masculine principles. But the "practice" frequently excuses and condones gender hierarchy. Buddhist institutions of all types in all forms of Buddhism are more open to men than to women. Women are stereotyped as incapable of or uninterested in serious Buddhist practice. Their specific reproductive responsibilities are constructed by society to limit them from cultural expression and creativity, though men's reproductive responsibilities are not similarly construed.

To resolve that intolerable contradiction, one must alter the practice, not the view. But how? Since it is the institutions of Buddhist society, not the Buddhist worldview, that fall short, I have frequently argued that it becomes imperative to "mandate and institutionalize gender equality, to build it into the fabric of Buddhist life and institutions completely, in a thoroughgoing fashion." <sup>33</sup>

The reconstructive vision will be articulated in two stages. The most immediate need that comes to mind is the Buddhist parallel to the reformist wing of Christian feminism or so-called equal rights feminism in secular terminology. This kind of feminist reconstruction focuses on the contradiction between the nonsexist core of Buddhist teachings and the patriarchal overlay that has tainted it throughout its history. Reconstruction, therefore, requires only undoing undesirable accretions to uncover a pristine and adequate basis for gender equality in traditional Buddhism.

Allow women full access to Buddhist institutions and practices, the kind that men have always had, and the imbalance between male and female exemplars of the tradition will disappear. It could not be otherwise, advocates of this position would contend, for the teachings of the Buddha are equally relevant and applicable to all.

The reformers focus on the three major forms of Buddhist institutional lifelay Buddhism, Buddhist monasticism and education, and the lifestyle of yogic practitioners who are neither monastic nor lay. With proper sensitivity to the basic issue of making sure that the institutions of Buddhist life don't favor men over women, with proper encouragement and opportunity for women, we could expect a veritable flowering of accomplished women accompanying the men who have always stood out.

The issue of a lay Buddhism that fosters both women and men as Buddhist practitioners is central to Western Buddhism, since at this point, it does not appear that most Western Buddhists will become monks or nuns. Classically, Buddhism has very weak models for serious lay practice, since lay Buddhists were thought to be too busy and too easily distracted by family and profession to engage in meditation or to understand Buddhist teachings fully. Encouraged to practice the accumulation of merit through economic support of monastics, their lifestyle has received relatively little attention from Buddhist thinkers.

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Therefore, reconstructing lay Buddhism in accord with feminist values is part of the project of constructing viable models of lay Buddhism for the West.

The practice of Buddhist meditation and the study of Buddhist teachings are more time-consuming and demanding than the usual program for lay involvement in a religion. Therefore, lay Buddhists need to think carefully about precisely those aspects of the householder lifestyle that earlier Buddhism saw as the liabilities that disqualified lay Buddhists from serious pursuit of the accumulation of wisdom, family and livelihood or profession. These also are major concerns that feminism has already explored in some depth, providing useful and relevant models for Buddhism.

Drawing upon the resources of both Buddhism and feminism, rather simple guidelines suggest themselves. Feminism insists that the responsibilities and opportunities for both livelihood and family should be shared equally and equitably between women and men. And since serious pursuit of Buddhism requires dedication and time, the lay Buddhist practitioner must limit both reproduction and career appropriately. Large families and workaholicism are probably incompatible with serious lay Buddhist practice, because they are too time-consuming. And since both family and livelihood are, on the one hand, time-consuming and demanding and, on the other hand, rich opportunities to develop one's practice and understanding of Buddhism, those responsibilities and opportunities need to be shared by both men and women. The kind of mutual incompetence fostered by traditional sex roles is a poor and unworthy model for lay Buddhism.

Basic feminist reconstructions of monastic life would be relatively straightforward and, with few exceptions, should be relatively noncontroversial. Two reforms have the highest priority. The full ordination for nuns needs to be restored to those forms of Buddhism in which it has been lost—namely Theravada and Tibetan traditions. And the low levels of economic support for nuns and consequent lack of education for nuns also need to be corrected. Unfortunately, even these modest reforms are not acceptable in all parts of the Buddhist world, as already detailed in the beginning of this paper. Even in Buddhist groups that do not voice opposition to reinstating the nuns' ordination, the men who hold power and authority seem to be in no rush to get on with the task.

If reinstating nuns' ordination or supporting nuns more adequately are not immediately put into practice as valid and reasonable feminist reforms in Buddhist institutional life, then we must expect that other, more radical feminist reforms would surely be resisted. Historically, the nuns' order was under the control of the monks. The eight special rules that are attributed to the Buddha himself effectively subordinate all nuns to each and every monk, regardless of age, seniority of ordination, or level of education and attainment. According to some analyses, these rules both reflect Buddhist uneasiness with

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the idea of allowing women to take up the monastic option at all and are largely responsible for the decline of the nuns' order in all parts of the Buddhist world.<sup>34</sup> Given their poor track record and negative influence on the long-term health and well-being of the nuns' order as well as their obvious incompatibility with feminism's egalitarian vision, the eight special rules have no place in postpatriarchal Buddhism.

Among the lifestyles and options found in historical Buddhism, the lifestyle of yogic practitioners who lived unconventional lives dedicated to Buddhist practice provides the best model for contemporary feminist

Buddhists. Many of the most famous, influential, and accomplished women in Buddhist history followed this lifestyle. However, frequently in Buddhist literature, these women are presented as enablers and companions of important Buddhist men, rather than as important figures in their own right. In contemporary feminist perspective, such women, who might well have male companions, would not be understood primarily as enablers, but as great teachers and role models. From their ranks will come many of the feminist Buddhist prophets who will develop the outlook of postpatriarchal Buddhism.

Some Buddhist feminists expect the story to end with feminist reforms of the lay, monastic, and yogic lifestyles. They feel that since "the dharma is neither male nor female," the presence of female teachers would not add to or change the message that has always been given. For them, it really is simply a matter of equal rights and fairness. I am in complete sympathy with the reformist feminist position vis-À-vis Buddhism. However, I no longer feel that the story is likely to end when these goals are attained, because the reformist agenda would produce the one thing Buddhism has always lacked: large numbers of thoroughly trained, well practiced, and *articulate* female Buddhist teachers who are not male identified. That is to say, for the first time, the Buddhist world would experience significant numbers of female gurus. In the nontheistic tradition of Buddhism, I feel that this new situation will have the same transformative potential as the introduction of female god-language into the patriarchal monotheisms. Minimally, in line with the reformist agenda, at least Buddhist women would have the same kind of role models that Buddhist men have always had.

But there is a much more basic question. Has everything that needs to be said about Buddhist concepts of liberation already been said by male Buddhists? Or when women finally participate in Buddhist speech, will they *add to* the sum total of Buddhist wisdom? The example of Christian feminist thought indicates that women's voices do not merely amplify what has always been said, but what they add to the message significantly. With that possibility we go beyond "equal rights" feminism, which merely wants women to be able to play the game men have previously dominated, into "transformative" feminism, which suggests that the rules of the game will change (for the better) once

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women really learn how to play. Such suggestions also take us beyond the current limits of Buddhist thought.

It is easy to demonstrate why the voices of truly empowered Buddhist women might take us beyond those limits. Traditional Buddhist texts often state that the enlightened state of mind is beyond gender, not obtained in a male body or a female body. If that is true, then what could women possibly say or understand that has not already been incorporated into Buddhist teachings? The dharma is not only beyond gender; it is also beyond words, which are a skillful means, the finger pointing at the moon. Currently, however, the words brought back from the wordless realm and put into dharma texts are men's words. In a society that constitutes itself by means of strong gender roles and in which only men articulate the religious experience and its vision of liberation, religious speech will grow out of male experience.

Going beyond the limits of current Buddhist thought to suggest how woman-identified Buddhist teachers might expand our verbal formulations of the dharma is unnerving and difficult. The pitfalls of such a venture are deep and the issue subtle and complex. However, I expect at least three interrelated issues to be important. These issues are interrelated in that all of them refocus the relationship between "spirituality" and "ordinary" or "mundane" existence so that they are interfused, much in the manner of Zen or Dzogchen, but incorporating women's experiences much more existentially.

The most basic of these three issues involves a deeper appreciation of the absolute centrality of sangha \* than has been characteristic of Buddhist thought and practice. Much of the inspiration for this perspective comes from much feminist work exploring the theme that relationship is as essential in a healthy identity as are individuation and separation. Even more important, the centrality of community and relationship to human

well-being and sanity has not been recognized in patriarchal and androcentric thought. Buddhist thought, with its glorification of solitary withdrawal, could certainly benefit from this awareness. Especially since Buddhism is nontheistic and does not offer the comforting belief that an Ultimate Other cares even in a lonely universe, the refuge of sangha, of the companionship and feedback of fellow travelers on the difficult path from confusion to enlightenment, is essential.

Buddhist thought and Buddhist institutions need to become much more aware of this resource and refuge, to value it much more than has ever been characteristic in the Buddhist past, and to provide training in being a good companion on the way, just as training in Buddhist meditation and philosophy is now provided. Just as Buddhists are expected to become proficient meditators and to have some understanding of Buddhist thought, so they should be expected to know how to nurture others, to be friendly and supportive. Likewise, a Buddhist should be able to find such nurturing and emotional support readily available in her sangha. This emphasis on sangha as nurturing, supportive community is not, of course, a cop out from basic Buddhist teachings regarding suffering, a some

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androcentric critics have supposed, but a recognition that the matrix of enlightenment is human community. It has always been that way; that reality simply has not been articulated clearly or sufficiently in Buddhist thought to date.

Second, ordinary, everyday domestic life, which has never received much attention in formal Buddhist thought, except to be denigrated, needs to be addressed much more directly as a *Buddhist* rather than merely a lay or a secular problem. Rethinking sane economic and reproductive practices will certainly be important in this task. With reasonable guidelines for sharing and limiting both productive and reproductive activities properly in place, it will then be important to infuse these ordinary activities with a sense of sacred outlook and meditative awareness. In the same way that daily tasks, such as cooking or gardening, have been valorized as part of a meditative lifestyle when they are combined with monastic living, tasks such as cleaning or working at one's job will be considered part of one's Buddhist practice. No longer will they be considered merely distractions from more valuable pursuits, such as formal meditation practice or the study of Buddhist texts.

In this revalorization, no task needs more discussion than child care. Childrearing can no longer be delegated to women for the reason that it is regarded as being too distracting to be compatible with serious study and practice. Rather, when reproduction is properly limited and shared, child care could become an aspect of Buddhist practice. In the same way that Vajrayana Buddhism revalorized sexuality as symbol and as experience, and that Zen Buddhism revalorized ordinary labor, so, finally, postpatriarchal Buddhism may discover a middle path regarding children. This task of infusing everyday tasks with sacred outlook must be done carefully however, for without the proper foundation in meditative training and attainment, cooking, cleaning, or working at one's job will simply breed mindlessness, fixation, and lack of awareness. Even people who are well trained constantly face this problem. Desirable as it may be to experience sacred outlook in the midst of distracting or boring tasks, that attitude must be cultivated slowly and carefully. One cannot will it to happen, but must train for it and maintain a critical perspective on one's level of mindfulness and awareness in daily life.

The third question that must be dealt with in postpatriarchal Buddhism: reassess some longstanding Buddhist ideas about what is proper and adequate spiritual discipline. It must ask when such discipline actually produces gentle and balanced human beings and when it is merely a macho endurance contest. In order to do that, I believe several principles can be relied upon. The first is that there is no substitute for formal training in meditation, which will often feel "unnatural" or "against the grain." Such disciplines cannot be rejected as the products of a male or dualistic style of spirituality simply because they can be boring and difficult.

A meditation practice that grounds people more presently and fully in experience, a meditation discipline without gimmicks, hyperbole, and promises of

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bliss, is indispensable for dealing with the myriad stresses that a feminist woman, or anyone else, for that matter, will face. These basic formless practices of mindfulness and awareness can easily be integrated into one's ongoing life and, after some intensive experience with them, they readily inform one's life beyond formal practice. The more esoteric practices associated with Vajrayana Buddhism, which are quite time-consuming and involve visualizing an alternate reality, do produce expanded states of consciousness. But to do them seriously also requires setting aside other concerns. I am uncertain to what extent they will be integrated into postpatriarchal Buddhism that seeks balance and wholeness.

Finally, an important part of the practice of spiritual discipline should be to use it skillfully, as a tool rather than a prison, so that one is not so compulsively meditating that one misses one's life. Spiritual disciplines should not be used to deaden or distance oneself from the vibrancy of the moment.

The final important postpatriarchal question concerning spiritual discipline asks, "For what purpose?" What do we hope will result from the practice of spiritual discipline? What changes will it effect? Freedom from rebirth and communication with unseen beings, often currently the hoped for results, do not seem to be relevant. In fact, the whole orientation of practicing a spiritual discipline to be prepared for death will probably not survive into postpatriarchal Buddhism. If a spiritual discipline promotes wholeness and balance, tranquility, and deep peace, that will be sufficient. And communication with one's fellow human beings will also be sufficient. If spiritual discipline results in a sense of presence of other realms, that would be an additional bonus, but would not overshadow the desire to develop enough sensitivity to communicate with and comfort the people with whom one lives.

One can also question the relevance of exalted, euphoric states of consciousness or esoteric knowledge and understanding. They can be exhilarating, and, properly used, may deepen one's appreciation of one's life and the world, but when they are pursued instead of one's immediate connections with earth and one's fellow human beings, they are counterproductive.

Rather, the point of such discipline is basic psychological grounding, deep sanity and peace with ourselves. Out of that grows the caring for community and for each other that is so important for spiritual insight and well-being. Additionally, our sensitivity to, appreciation of, and desire to care for our earth will shine forth. Spiritual discipline will no longer encourage us to seek to leave her behind for a better world or to superimpose another purer, visualized world upon her.

The tradition speaks of becoming deities (*vidams*) and living in the palace of the deities through our spiritual discipline. For that to happen properly, we will indeed see ourselves and each other as valuable, divine beings whom we cherish and for whom we care. We will not need to leave our world behind to visualize the palace of the deities in her place. When we look out from our win-

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dows, we will see the palace of the deities. When we comfort each other, we will converse with the deities. To become sane, to live in community with each other and our earth, is to experience freedom within the worldthe mutual goal of feminism and of (postpatriarchal) Buddhism.

## Notes

1. See the following articles: Rita M. Gross, "Feminism and Buddhism: Toward their Mutual Transformation," *Eastern Buddhist: New Series*, vol. 19, nos. 1 and 2 (Spring and Autumn 1986), 4459 and 6274; "Feminism from the Perspective of Buddhist Practice," *Buddhist-Christian Studies Journal*, vol. 1 (1980), 6372; "I Will Never Forget to Visualize That Vajrayogini is My Body and Mind," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, vol. 3, no. 1 (spring 1987), 7790; "The Feminine Principle in Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhism: Reflections of a Buddhist Feminist," *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology in Religion*, vol. 16, no. 2 (1984), 17992; "Yeshe Tsogyel: Enlightened Consort, Great Teacher, Female Role Model," in Janice Dean Willis, ed., *Feminine Ground: Essays on Women and Tibet* (Ithaca, New York: Snow Lion), 1989, 1132; "'The Dharma is Neither Male nor Female': Buddhism on Gender and Liberation," in Leonard Grob, Riffat Hassan, and Haim Gordon, eds., *Women's and Men's Liberation: Testimonies of Spirit* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), 10528; and "Buddhism After Patriarchy," in Paula M. Coe, William Eakin, and Jay B. MacDaniel, eds., *After Patriarchy: Feminist Transformations of the World's Religions* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 6586.

2. Chatsumarn Kabilsingh, *Buddhist Peace Fellowship Newsletter*, Summer, 1990, 2425.

3. See Rita M. Gross, "Studying Women and Religion: Conclusions after Twenty Years," in Arvind Sharma, ed., *Today's Woman in World Religions* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), pp. 327361.

4. This summary of the problem is not limited to Buddhism. All androcentric thought forms treat women as objects exterior to "mankind" as objects to be defined, delimited, classified, and debated about by men. Women's voices are neither sought nor listened to in this process. Thus women are robbed of their role as co-creators of the human realm and are treated only as passive objects, not human subjects. Mary Daly spoke of this condition most powerfully in her famous phrase about "the power of naming" being stolen from women. For similar reason, Nancy Falk and I entitled our book, the first on women's religious lives in cross-cultural perspective, *Unspoken Worlds*.

5. Eleanor McLaughlin, "The Christian Past," *Womanspirit Rising*, ed. by Carol Christ and Judith Plaskow

(San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979), 9495. This excellent essay is highly recommended.

6. Diana Paul, *Women in Buddhism: Images of the Feminine in Mahayana Tradition* (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1979), 236.

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7. Janice Dean Willis, *The Diamond Light: An Introduction to Tibetan Buddhist Meditations* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), 103.

8. Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), 6973.

9. See especially the work of Elizabeth SchÃ¼ssler Fiorenza on the New Testament. The whole question of whether "Jesus was a Feminist," to quote the title of a popular and influential article by Leonard Swidler, is quite relevant.

10. David Snellgrove, *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism: Indian Buddhists and Their Tibetan Successors* (Boston: Shambhala, 1987), 80. See also Reginald A. Ray, "Response to John Cobb," *Buddhist-Christian Studies Journal*, 8 (1988) 83101.

11. Rahula Walpola, *What the Buddha Taught* (New York: Grove Press, 1974), 26.

12. These are the "three poisons" found at the hub of the "wheel of becoming" that occurs so frequently in Tibetan Buddhist art.

13. Rahula, 51.

14. Valerie Saiving, "The Human Situation: A Feminine Perspective," *Womanspirit Rising*, 2542.

15. Nancy Schuster, "Changing the Female Body: Wise Women and the Bodhisattva Career in some *Maharatnakutasutras* \*," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, 4:1 (1981) 2469; and Diana Paul, *Women in Buddhism*, 166243. Gross, *Buddhism after Patriarchy*, contains a feminist interpretation of the doctrine of emptiness, 17380.

16. Chogyam Trungpa, *Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior* (Boston: Shambhala, 1995) 2934.

17. Ann Klein, "Gain or Drain?: Buddhist and Feminist Views on Compassion," *Women and Buddhism: A Special Issue of the Spring Wind Buddhist Cultural Forum*, 6:13 (1986) 105116.

18. Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice* (Cambridge; Harvard University Press, 1982).

19. Ann Klein, "Gain or Drain?," 10815.

20. An enormous popular self-help literature has grown up around this theme, most notably the highly popular book *Women Who Love Too Much*.

21. See *Buddhism after Patriarchy*, especially 13235, for a fuller discussion of the prophetic voice in Buddhist feminism.

22. Two new books on this concept add significantly to the literature. Sallie B. King, *Buddha Nature* (Albany: SUNY, 1991), and S. K. Hookham, *The Buddha Within: Tathagatagarbha Doctrine According to the Shentong Interpretation of the Ratnagotravibhaga* (Albany: SUNY, 1991).

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23. See Paul Williams,  
*Mahayana Buddhism: The  
Doctrinal Foundations*  
(London: Routledge, 1989)  
99109, for a helpful summary of  
the arguments on both sides.

24. Despite the contradiction involved, such symbolic valorization of birth, combined with sociological denigration of literal birth-givers, is not uncommon in world religions. In many religious contexts, the valuable birth is one's second birth, one's ritual rebirth, which may be seen as reversing the negativities of birth from a female body. Sometimes the symbolism becomes so divorced from its basis in physical birth that many people do not even realize that rebirth is occurring.

25. Anne C. Klein, "Non-Dualism and the Great Bliss Queen: Study in Tibetan Buddhist Ontology and Symbolism," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 1:1 (Spring 1985) 7376.

26. Important ritual implements used in Tantric meditation rituals, they are held in left and right hands and symbolize feminine and masculine, wisdom and method, emptiness and compassion.

27. Allione, *Women of Wisdom*, 29; Chogyam Trungpa, "Sacred Outlook: The Vajrayogini Shrine and Practice," *The Silk Route and the Diamond Path: Esoteric Buddhist Art on the Trans-Himalayan Trade Routes*, ed. by Deborah E. Klimberg Salter (Los Angeles: UCLA Art Council, 1982), 236.

28. This phrase from the "Heart Sutra" sums up the entirety of Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism. See Trungpa, *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism* (Berkeley: Shambhala, 1973), 18799 for an illuminating commentary. See also Donald S. Lopez, Jr., *The Heart Sutra Explained: Indian and Tibetan Commentaries* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988).

29. Janice Dean Willis, *The Diamond Light: An Introduction to Tibetan Buddhist Meditations* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), 103.

30. Jamgon Kongtrul (trans. Judith Hanson), *Torch of Certainty* (Boston: Shambhala, 1996) 3033.

31. Trungpa, *Cutting through Spiritual Materialism*, 22030.

32. *Yin*, which is feminine, should be the equal opposite of *yang*, the masculine element in Chinese cosmological thinking. In many cases, the two are seen as co-equally necessary in the scheme of things, though opposites of each other. But, in some contexts, *yin* is associated with evil, which is avoided, while *yang* is associated with good, which one attempts to increase and attract.

33. Gross, "The Dharma is Neither Male nor Female," 122.

34. Nancy Falk, "The Case of the Vanishing Nuns: The Fruits of Ambivalence in Ancient Indian Buddhism," Falk and Gross, eds., *Unspoken Worlds: Women 's Religious Lives*, Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Press, 1989, 5664.

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physics. Like Ricoeur, his teacher, Derrida uses the word *play* to describe how words interact with each other so that meaning is never fixed. Like Ricoeur, he argues that each has a "surplus" of meaning. And like Ricoeur, who coined the term "hermeneutics of suspicion," Derrida argues that "texts" should always be read with the aim of destroying "logocentrism:" the assumption that its words and ideas point to an external reality. All of history is thus reduced to a series of ephemeral, but politically useful, "discourses." Applying this to "texts" of the Western canon from those of the pre-Socratics to those of Heidegger and inverting their Eurocentric meanings, Derrida tries to undermine the foundation of Western philosophy. After its "deconstruction," he believes, other religions and cultures will be considered more relevant by Westerners. By adding to or changing the canon, greater value and authority can be ascribed to those who had formerly been outsiders.

#### *Postmodern Psychoanalysis*

Michel Foucault, the founder of postmodern psychoanalysis, tried to deconstruct heterosexuality in the interest of sexual minorities. In *The History of Sexuality*,<sup>16</sup> he attacked Freud's theory of repression for diminishing the importance of power. For Foucault, the origin of sexuality lay in ruling ideologies. Until the mid-eighteenth century in the West, according to him, this was found in legal and moral discussions that defined sexuality in terms of licit or illicit behavior. Later on in medical, psychological, and educational discussions sexual desire was discussed in terms of normal or abnormal desires. Homosexuality was no longer an illicit form of behavior, for example, but a psychological disposition. This shift, observes Foucault, paralleled a more general one from central (heterosexual) to peripheral (lesbian, gay, or bisexual) orientations. This has given rise to an interest in the latter: the ways in which they are presented, the perceptions of the body that they imply, and the kinds of conduct they condone.

#### *Postcolonialism*

Applied to nationalism by Edward Said, deconstruction takes the form of postcolonialism. In *Orientalism*,<sup>17</sup> he discusses the West's creation of the "Orient." As its antithesis, the latter is part of both the West's self-definition and its misunderstanding of foreign cultures. This way of thinking, argues Said, is used to legitimate the West's political domination of the East. It gives rise, in turn, to notions of superiority and inferiority. Unlike the West, for example, the East is said to be static and incapable of development. Orientalism gives rise, in addition, to the projection of a collective identity onto what would otherwise be seen as many individual cultures. Said reserves his harshest criticism for colonialism. A Palestinian himself, he is especially hostile to "Zionist" rule over the Palestinians. It is at least partly due to his influence that immigrants to Western

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## Chapter 3

### Confucianism and Feminism

Terry Woo

*Asian American men have suffered deeply from racial oppression. When Asian American women seek to expose anti-female prejudices in their own ethnic community, the men are likely to feel betrayed. Yet it is also undeniable that sexism still lingers as part of the Asian legacy in Chinese America and that many American-born daughters still feel its sting. Chinese American women may be at once sympathetic and angry toward the men in their community: sensitive to the marginality of these men but resentful of their male privilege*

Hirsch 1990, 239 <sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

Feminism and Confucianism have been involved with each other for over a hundred years. The relationship has largely been a one-sided affair: feminists criticizing the status and treatment of women determined by Confucianism. Early feminist critiques of Confucianism continue to have currency. It is therefore important to analyze their validity. How accurate are they? To what extent did the early accounts foster and reinforce, as they still do, the stereotype of an aged, changeless, decrepit, anesthetized, and barbaric China? And in turn, how have these Western images affected the notions the Chinese have about themselves?

An essay on feminism and Confucianism must therefore include a mention and an acknowledgement of the history of Western power and influence in late nineteenth- and twentieth-century China. Simone de Beauvoir serves as a potent reminder for the Western perception of the history of Chinese women. She wrote, in a footnote, that there was no need to study women in China because they had met with nothing but "long and unchanging slavery" (1952,

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81). Yet it must also be said that the volume of scholarship on Chinese women has increased as have also the variety of perspectives.

Sinologists particularly have taken care to present a more balanced view. Their restraint from generalizing across place and time promises a chance for more even accounts. But first what follows is a brief look at three types of feminist critique on Confucianism: Protestant, socialist, and liberal. <sup>2</sup>

#### Feminist Critiques of Confucianism

Many feminist theorists now agree that there is no single "feminism"; but rather, that there are many feminisms. On the other hand, as Karen Offen writes, there is a common thread that runs through them: that is "the impetus to critique and improve the disadvantaged status of women relative to men within a particular cultural situation (1988, 132)." And some Western feminists have critiqued enthusiastically the presumed "universally unfavorable" conditions in which Chinese women existed.

The Protestant missionaries were prominent pioneer feminist critics in China. They attributed to Confucius the "greatly inferior position of women" and focused on "particularly the practices of foot binding and infanticide" (Varg 1958:117).

Tales were told of girls sold into slavery, and young Chinese brides married to strangers and then subjected to the rule of arbitrary mothers-in-law. The descriptions were so common in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, that by and large they became symbolic of the reality for all Chinese women, in all places, for all times.<sup>3</sup> These gross generalizations were possible at the time because the West saw itself as progressive and China not; and that the Chinese treated their women badly was "observably" true. They did not question the veracity of the images that were encouraged by, and in turn reinforced the stereotype of the Oriental despot (ibid. 11922).

And so it was that the plight of Chinese women, with the help of Christian feminist critique, became an outstanding standard for Chinese inferiority. In time Protestant analyses became more sophisticated and less prejudicial, especially after the missionaries read and found in the writings of Confucius the same principles of the Christian gospels. Knowledge of Chinese culture and civilization precluded the labeling of Chinese as "heathens" (Varg, 215); and eventually, aid to the Chinese for modernization replaced criticism and proselytizing. But the torch of feminist critique had been lit. The socialists were the inheritors.

"It has been said (Curtin writes) that Confucius, whose epigrams codified the ethics of precapitalist China, had not one favorable word for women" (1975, 10). This comprehensive judgment was passed on cosmology, social custom,

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and philosophy. As with the Protestants, bound feet, female infanticide, loveless marriages, and the preference for breeding male children were all included; but there was also a new element. Curtin quotes Hu Shih (b. 1891), a famous Chinese writer who studied at Columbia with John Dewey, who said: "Woman had always been the greatest despot of the family and no other country could compete with China for its number of hen-pecked husbands" (ibid. 11). Chinese women had, over one generation, become both despots and victims.

Hu Shih wrote during a low point in Chinese history, in the early twentieth century when China had fallen to Japan, which had never before been a military and political force powerful enough to be reckoned with; and it had also been defeated by the "barbarian" West. He wrote before communism, the great white hope for China and Curtin's reference to the Chinese adherence to blaming traditional culture after thirty years of communist rule is to be expected. Confucianism remains the archenemy, the oppressive ideology, even as the "woman question" was understood to be a part of the larger problem of social and economic reform,

And so Andors, another socialist feminist, repeats religiously the litany of Confucianism as "hierarchical, authoritarian, and patrilineal, embodying a strict sexual and generational division of labour" (1983, 12). Thus conventional wisdom is perpetuated and antidoctrine is safeguarded by repetition: the subordination of women, through the three obediences and the four virtues, is the central feature of the traditional Chinese family system.<sup>4</sup>

If these Protestant and socialist feminist critics can be criticized for being unhistorical and one-sided, then liberal feminists may be seen as primarily disinterested. French writes that in this, "race divides women." White feminists:

Write books analyzing patriarchal culture, attempting to establish feminist theory, or examining a dimension of women's condition without mentioning women of color at all women of color are as invisible in these works as women as a sex are in the work of many men (ibid. 462463).

Yet it is precisely the realization and admission that signal a change and begin a new chapter in the history between feminism and Confucianism.

## Feminism, Sinology, and Confucianism

French describes a general tendency in feminist scholarship. Holmgren, as a sinologist, on the other hand, offers a broad and radical critique of early sinology while relating its impact specifically to the study of Chinese women. She writes in "Myth, Fantasy or Scholarship: Images of the Status of Women in Traditional China":

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Nineteenth century western imagery of the brutality and cruelty of the Chinese way of life is still found relevant to the depiction of the place of women in the traditional society and our selection of view comes from a very limited slice of these early images of China. This black caricature is reinforced by the anti-Confucian bias of Chinese reformists' writings of the May Fourth era. (1981, 163)

Holmgren may be right in writing about the first interaction between feminism and Confucianism as "the most wretched of beginnings" (154). She criticizes it for narrowness: in blurring the entire dynastic tradition of women into one big amorphous whole, and for the judgments being based on a limited source of information on the upper class. Moreover, she goes on to cite how Miss Adele Fields, a Catholic missionary in Swatow in the 1880s, based her writing on anecdotal examples (15863). Holmgren's criticisms are well taken. There is no "one tradition" for women; and likewise there is no one confluent Confucianism over the twenty-five hundred years since Confucius lived. For this reason, particular bundles of Confucianisms will be treated in historical context in this essay: Confucius and the tradition he comes from; his earlier and most influential disciples; the Han Confucians; and the Neo-Confucians. <sup>5</sup>

Confucius did, however, conceive of a return to "tradition": the early Chou dynastya hope that is akin to some feminists' reminiscence of a simpler and more peaceful time of matriarchy.<sup>6</sup> Confucius lived during a time of chaos. The world that was known then as China was under attack from outsiders: moreover, traditional society was disintegrating from within. Sexual mores were loose, family loyalties and obligations unstable. There were reported cases of incest and licentiousness; sons murdered fathers; vassals challenged kings at the central courts of the Chou dynasty; and ministers revolted against rulers.

Confucius's primary concern was therefore political stability and an end to suffering. To this end, it would have been incongruous for Confucius to be concerned with women, since they were neither directly involved with war nor were they active in politics, being traditionally assigned and restricted to the private sphere: the home. Men held a monopoly of military and political power. To stop war and suffering meant, essentially, to stop men. However, inferences can be made as to Confucius's attitudes toward women.

### The Influences of Traditional China on Confucius

Confucius (?551479 B.C.E.) is said to have been influenced by the following: the *I ching* or *Book of Changes*; the *Shu ching*, the *Book of History* or *Book of Documents*; the *Li chi*, the *Ritual* or *Book of Rites*; and the *Shih ching*,

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the *Book of Poetry* or the *Book of Odes*. I refer the reader here to Guisso's article, "Thunder over the Lake: the Five Classics and the Perception of Women in Early China," in *Women in China* (1981), for a summary of the negative attitudes toward women in these writings; and then to Kelleher (1987) for a different perspective on some of the same materials. The picture that emerges is not a consistent one. There is, on the one hand, this passage: "(The bride and groom) ate together of the same animal, and joined in sipping from the cups made of the same melon; thus showing that they now formed one body, were of equal rank, and pledged to mutual affection" (Legge, 1967, 2:42930). On the other, there is the following, a poem from Waley's translation of the *Book of Odes* (71):

My heart is in turmoil, I cannot sleep.  
 But secret is my grief  
 My heart is not a mirror, To reflect what others will . . .  
 My heart is not a stone; It cannot be rolled.  
 My heart is not a mat; It cannot be folded away.  
 I have borne myself correctly  
 In rites more than can be numbered.

My sad heart is consumed, I am harassed  
 By a host of (small-minded people).<sup>7</sup>  
 I have borne vexations very many, Received insults not few.  
 In the still of the night I brood upon it;  
 In the waking hours I rend my breast.  
 O sun, ah moon, Why have you changed and dimmed?  
 Sorrow clings to me  
 Like an unwashed dress.  
 In the night I brood upon it,  
 Long to take wing and fly away.

These two excerpts reflect simultaneously the joy and importance of marriage and family, and the unhappy and besieged life of a woman obliged to be yielding and obedient. The assignment of women to the private sphere; the three obediences and four virtues; the disparity in the garb and period of mourning for father and mother, husband and wife, all predate Confucius.<sup>8</sup> And these prescriptions for behavior designed to bring about harmony assume a "natural" hierarchy<sup>9</sup> and share as their rationale the eventually influential idea cited in the *Book of Changes*: when the women are correct and firm or virtuous, their families will gain peace and prosperity (Liu Te-han 1974, 28).

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### *A Feminist Assessment of Confucius*

The nominal subjugation of women by Confucius acquires a different light when seen through this assumption and belief that society can be harmonized through stable relationships. Feminism and Confucianism differ at the roots of their endeavors. Feminism is concerned with freedom, equality, and finally a "complete social revolution" (Cott, 15), especially from the perspective of women. Confucius, on the other hand, regards the sexes together and is concerned with order, harmony, and thus a return to peace and stability.

The paradox is this: feminism also wants peace and stability; and Confucius too, was asking for a complete social revolution from the greed, disloyalty, licentiousness, and violence of his times. But from Confucius's point of view, freedom cannot bring a peaceful society. Instead, freedom, with its complementary idea of rights, forms the antithesis of the Confucian sense of duty. In this way, Confucianism and feminism speak past each other, conveying parallel ways. For in Confucianism, all belong to one family, "within the four

seas, all are brothers" (Analects 12:6): their communication is, therefore, to be guided by *jen*, benevolence or humaneness. Harmony in society depends on the web of interdependent obligations, with a special emphasis on the dictum: "Do not do to others that which you do not want done to you" (Analects 15:23; 12:2). Freedom and rights, Confucius might have argued, are precisely what cause chaos since they may too easily degenerate into license and self-centeredness.

Confucius might therefore answer positively to the accusations of the individualist feminists.<sup>10</sup> His philosophy and the tradition he wishes to encourage, recover, and uphold can be described as hierarchical, authoritarian, patrilineal, and embodying a strict sexual and generational division of labor. He might, however, also point out that his position is not unlike the relational feminists who support the case for women's distinctiveness and complementarity. And, he would hastily add, his conception of authority does not condone cruelty and inhumaneness in the senior partner. The senior partner in fact would have clear responsibilities and blind authority would be contrary to the spirit of *jen*. Confucius could not have supported infanticide, and bound feet would not have been accepted. Moreover, the junior partner is obliged to critique and bring to light any unjust situation. For example, a woman may, in serving her parents, repeatedly and gently remonstrate with them; but if she sees that she has not persuaded them, she should not disobey them. Instead, she should resume an attitude of respect and continue to offer herself and not complain (Analects 4:18 adapted).

This strategy of avoiding conflict is expected not only of women but of men as well and can be criticized as an integral part of the system that keeps women oppressed. But Confucius may in turn ask, using his parameters, how

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much closer the fight for freedom and rights has brought us to a more harmonious society. Might not the failure of feminism be measured by the continued dominance of "male" values, and the erosion and cooptation of "feminine" values and women by political and commercial establishments? Moreover, how well can a society care for its old, its young, and its disadvantaged, when there is a massive disintegration of families, evident in high divorce rates and reports of child abuse?

But these criticisms are immediately recognizable as ideologically biased. They assume family, and a particular type of family at that, to be the most important unit in a community, and harmony is valued above all else. Moreover, it attributes social problems to feminism singularly while it neglects to consider a complex weave of preexisting economic and political circumstances. Such an assessment of the "failure" of feminism is similar to particular feminist assessments of the oppression of women by Confucianism. Parts of the judgment may be right, but the whole remains a caricature of a much more involved and complicated reality.

<sup>11</sup> After all, much of early feminism was racist in the way that many feminists now consider Confucius sexist. The prejudices are inherited.

### *The Philosophy of Confucius and Its Implications for Women*

In fact Confucius does teach equality; but his egalitarian notions are not applied socially. He applies them to the opportunity to learn: "In education there should be no discrimination in categories of persons" (Analects 15:38); and in moral progress, the development of *jen*: "When assuming *jen*, one should not yield even to one's teacher" (Analects 15:35). As to the performance of rituals, which is of central importance in traditional society, Confucius says this: "If a person is not *jen*, what would she have to do with *li*, ritual?" (Analects 3:3).

The focus is clearly on *jen*. *Jen* in turn can be conceived of in two parts: *chung* and *shu*. The first is an attitude of sincerity and loyalty; the second is the principle of reciprocity, using one's feelings as the basis of one's interaction with others. So far there is no clear case of misogyny or intent to malign and oppress women; Confucius is apparently not the source of sexism in China.

If, however, we accept the fact that Confucius inherited a patrilineal and authoritarian system, as has feminism, then Offen's insight can help explain the part Confucianism played in the increasing restrictions on women's lives. She comments that relational feminist arguments "seem to cut both ways; even as they support a case for women's distinctiveness and complementarity of the sexes, they can be appropriated by political adversaries and twisted to endorse male privilege" (154). Perhaps Confucianism was thus twisted, by adversaries and advocates alike.

Yet it is undeniable that Confucius had no female disciples. Moreover when he was a chief magistrate, he separated the women from the men, even on the streets (Smith 1973, 5689). But most notorious is the remark that

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"women and servants are difficult to keep. If you approach them, they become disrespectful; if you keep a distance from them, then they complain" (Analects 17:25). There is, however, some discussion as to which the two groups of difficult people are. In Chinese *nǚ tzu* can mean women in general or it could refer specifically to maid servants or concubines; likewise *hsiao jen* translates literally into "little people" and can mean servants or lower-class persons. So this again may not be a categorically negative statement against all women.

However, there is a more puzzling second statement. In citing examples that talented ministers are difficult to find, Confucius uses Emperor Wu, founder of the Chou dynasty, as an example. He notes that Wu had ten ministers, but goes on to say that there were really only nine *jen* or persons, since there was a woman among them (Analects 8:20). It is unclear what the rationale is, in differentiating between female and male ministers. It is interesting, however, to observe that Wu is considered an exemplary ruler, and that Confucius did not condemn or criticize the existence of the female minister.

More intriguing still is Confucius's attitude toward women as a source of distraction. In the Analects 18:4, a story is told of a three-day court cancellation at Lu, the home state of Confucius, because the ruler of Ch'i had sent a gift of female musicians. Confucius responded to this by leaving; no comments are recorded. Elsewhere he counsels the practice of virtue to modify one's attachment to sensual pleasures (1:7), while also making clear that it is not only the beauty of women that can deceive, but rather that men who are smooth talkers and attractive are likely also to be devoid of virtue (17:17).

Yet despite his own theories and policies, Confucius went to see Nan Tzu, the wife of the Duke of Wei, who was notorious for her lasciviousness (27:26). Later scholars have had a hard time explaining this, suggesting that Confucius had not known of her reputation. But rather simple and more plausible reasons were simply the principle of *jen* and that Confucius was a pragmatist. In his estimation, it is difficult to survive chaotic times without specious eloquence or good looks (6:14). The episode of Nan Tzu might therefore be a case of *jen* in action; an illustration of Confucius's compassion for people caught in troubled times.

But Confucius's sympathy was limited. And even if the virtues demanded of women were also demanded of men, there was one central difference: although a woman must like a man be respectful, humble, kind, righteous, benign, upright, temperate, generous, sincere, and earnest (5:15; 17:6) she must also be a helpmate to her husband in a way that would not be expected of men in their relationships to their wives (16:14). So Confucius should not perhaps be condemned as a misogynist and primary oppressor of women. But in his uncritical adherence to the traditional norms of sexual segregation and male authority, Confucius may be judged an accomplice to the continued cultural minimalization of women.

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*Mencius and Hsüan Tzu:  
Two Branches of Early Confucianism*

Mencius (371-289 B.C.E.), like Confucius before him, focused on the problem of politics. He emphasized the importance of a sensitive heart for compassionate government. Mencius believed that all people have this heart that is acutely affected by the suffering of others. He comments that anyone devoid of this heart is not human. This sensible heart contains four components: the heart of compassion; the heart of shame; the heart of courtesy and modesty; and the heart of right and wrong (Mencius 2:A:6). If we take this to be a central principle in Mencius's philosophy, then we must conclude that infanticide and bound feet would have been, for him as for Confucius, appalling examples of the lack of humanity.

Yet like Confucius before him, he accepted blindly the maxim in the *Book of Rites*: "A woman is one who follows or obeys." The character *ts'ung* in Chinese can mean either to follow or to obey. Mencius takes away any ambivalence in the rites dictum by stating that the correct way for a wife or concubine is compliance (3:8:2). On the other hand, he stresses the influence and importance of women. Hence, for him, the primary relationship within the five relations is the one of husband and wife (5:A:2).

The practice of these principles, however, is not so straightforward. Mencius's relationship to his mother and wife offer interesting anecdotes into the web of human relationships. First, there is the story of his mother teaching him while he was still in her womb. Then Mencius's mother, who was widowed early, is said to have moved three times in order to find a good environment for him to grow up in; she settled next to a school. In another story, he is reprimanded by his mother for unjustly complaining about his wife for being in an indecent posture when he entered her room: his mother countered that he should have announced himself rather than be lurking around. And finally, when he was offered a posting away from his mother and was perplexed as to whether he should take the position, his mother reminded him that the affairs of state must take precedence over her. It was her duty to follow him, her son, in her old age (Lieh-nü chuan 1:1011, O'Hara 1945, 3941).

Mencius's mother does not conform to the stereotype of an oppressed woman. She demonstrates an intelligent and active maternal devotion, which exemplifies the ethos of Confucian virtue. The source of this morality is represented in the pithy saying of the *Great Learning*: every person, from the commoner to the emperor, must take as the root of conduct, self-cultivation. It is only after one has understood oneself and nurtured one's virtue that she or he is able to bring together the family and it is only then, that one is capable of ruling the empire (1:1:4).

The accounts of Confucius and Mencius do not support extreme feminist assessments of Confucianism. Early Confucianism, at least, did not intend to

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"shackle" (Fu) women. On the contrary, Mencius speaks of women as wise counsellors (3:B:2) and productive members of society as silk weavers and caretakers (7:A:22). Moreover, he warns that if a man does not practice virtue, then he cannot, in turn, expect his wife and children to behave virtuously and to obey him. But an even more radical suggestion is that a great person will not observe prescribed rites and duties if the nature of the actions oppose the spirit that motivates the performance (4:B:6). This has profound implications for the binding of women's feet and the killing of babies. But the most powerful image this spirit

of defiance conveys is resistance to what is unjust which is, in this context, the oppression of women.

Mencius advocates and dares to question "tradition." He questions the principle and authenticity of associating the benevolent with warfare, wary that this can easily serve as the justification for battle. So he comments that if one were to believe everything in the *Book of History*, it would have been better that the book had not been written (7:B:3). As to the conventional "truth" that men and women should not touch each other, Mencius has this to say: if a man's sister-in-law were drowning, then discretion must be used; if he did not rescue her because he holds to the rite of men and women not touching, then in Mencius's estimation, he would amount to no more than a brute, lacking in the heart of compassion (4:A: 17). In the end, Mencius says, a person must seek within himself the cause for the lack of benevolence. It is only a slave who would shirk his responsibility and blame others for the want of wisdom and duty (2:A:7).

Hsüan Tzu (298239 B.C.E.), like Confucius and Mencius before him, lived during tumultuous times and was interested primarily in politics. The last era of the Eastern Chou dynasty, known as the Spring and Autumn, and the Warring States periods, lasted from 722 to 481 B.C.E. and 403 to 221 B.C.E., respectively. Confucius lived toward the end of the first period of unrest; and Mencius and Hsüan Tzu lived at the end of the five hundred years of unrest, during the second period. Hsüan Tzu differed in the emphasis of his solution to restore order from his predecessors; he advocated the power of *li* over the influence of *jen*. He was fully aware of the manmade quality of ritual, noting in the chapter entitled "Man's Nature is Evil," that all *li* were created consciously by the sages. And in "A Discussion on Rites," he suggests that only a sage can truly understand them and that to the *chüan tzu*, the good person, they are part of worldly practices, whereas by the masses, they were believed to have supernatural efficacy.

Confucianism, in Hsüan Tzu, shows the first signs of a rigid systematic definition in the "quality" of persons. Although Hsüan Tzu, like both Confucius and Mencius, believed that all persons have the capacity to be sages, he stressed more than ever the value of education, because he believed human nature to be evil, so that people have to be taught to be good. At the same time, he pressed to the logical conclusion the implications of hierarchy in traditional society.

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countries have come to think of themselves not merely as outsiders but as insiders as well in the sense of being allies of feminists. Of greatest importance here, though, is that Said rejects the deconstructive belief that only "texts" or "discourses" are worth thinking about. Proclaiming that "'solidarity before criticism' means the end of criticism,"<sup>18</sup> Said argues that criticism produces not only knowledge but also a foundation for intellectual and social change. In this sense, he wants to combine deconstruction and critical theory.

### Feminist Borrowings and Critiques

Feminism has been influenced by all of these intellectual trends. In more ways than one, it is the product of its historical context. But it has made one major contribution. Feminism has detected in the work of many male thinkers a lack of attention to gender. Even Derrida, who has been useful to so many feminists, has not fared well. With this in mind, I now revisit the following topics: (1) Romanticism; (2) phenomenology; (3) ecumenism; (4) Marxism; (5) the "Frankfurt school"; (6) hermeneutics; (7) deconstruction; (8) postmodern psychoanalysis; and (9) postcolonialism.

#### *Romanticism*

Like the early Romantics, some feminists explicitly glorify emotion (which they associate with femaleness) at the expense of reason (which they associate with maleness).<sup>19</sup> They seldom expose its logical conclusion, of course: that women are unequal to men when it comes to intelligence. They focus instead on the idea that men and women are unequal when it comes to *emotion*; women, they claim, have some unique affinity for