

Feminism: The Grounds of an Idea and Logics of Disintegration

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Abstract

This paper looks at the history of the idea of “feminism”. How it emerges with the liberal construction of individuality that was the basis of Enlightenment, and social contract theories of that period. Women were the deprived minority of this Enlightenment along with other minorities, as they were deemed insufficient to be included in the idea of a complete individual, and hence, a citizen. Early feminist movement demands equality for women in this respect. In the second wave of the feminist movement, this demand for equality changes proportions towards attacks on the construction of female inferiority and subordination. But soon, it turns into disillusionment with Enlightenment and a realization that the Enlightenment itself is as gendered as the earliest constructions were. As a result, the thematics of Enlightenment become problematic with this critique. Post-feminism emerges, as somewhat, coeval to post-modernism, out of feminism and modernity’s dissolution. As three logics of this disintegration, I read Foucault, Derrida and Deleuze, and conclude on that.

The term “feminism” evokes mix reactions when one first encounters it. From an idea to a socio-political movement, and later, to a complete academic discipline, it has many dimensions and multifarious meanings. One common thread running in all these is that it is something pertaining to women. This paper seeks to investigate the historical trajectory of this theme: How it emerges, what types of transformations it goes through, and how these transformations impact the discourse around it? The basic premise of the paper is that the issue of feminism is a direct outcome of the concept of “individual” as free and autonomous being. In its epistemic underpinnings it is modern in the Western Enlightenment’s sense. Its political, economic, juridical, and academic discourses are weaved around that concept. However, its logical growth is such that it has in it the seeds of its dissolution and its later emergence in more variegated and hybrid forms, where it is almost unrecognizable.

For this paper, such writers are brought under analytical spotlight who provide basic and fundamental logical thrusts of the entire feminist movement in their respective temporal settings. These include: Mary Wollstonecraft, to begin with as a pioneer; J.S. Mill, as a first real theoretician of a liberal bent; Simone de Beauvoir, the philosopher of

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feminism; Kate Millet and Shulamith Firestone, as the two radical representatives of second wave feminism and main theoreticians of its politics; mention will also be made of Betty Friedan as their prominent liberal counterpart in this phase; followed by the post-modern critique of the whole movement, by such luminaries as Foucault, Derrida, and Deleuze, as a dissolution of this earlier feminism into post-feminism. The mainstream Marxist theory of feminism is however side stepped because for one, it lies outside the mainstream feminist discourse, although its logical bearings carry lot of similarities; and secondly, it will enlarge already expanded enquiry. Though, it must be mentioned here that de Beauvoir and Kate Millet are left leading feminists, inspired by Marx and Engels in many ways. I would also not take into consideration the populist Germaine Greer, Ti-Grace Atkinson, Eva Figes and the likes, for the same reason; and secondly, Simone de Beauvoir and Kate Millet's theorization cover all of their politico-logical grounds adequately, on the basis of which their demands stem out; only Shulamith Firestone has something additional to say. Friedan's case is different, for once, as already mentioned, she belongs to different stream of thought, and secondly, she is important to understand the context in which the movement has shaped up in the sixties.

The scope of this paper is quite broad, however, it is deemed pertinent here to confine the discourse to an overview on the basis of which a further research can be carried out that may be sufficient to produce a preliminary research. If we look at the history of feminism as a socio-political movement its earlier manifestations are to be found in seventeenth century Europe.¹ In its earlier enunciations, it only sought re-interpretation of biblical texts so that a ground for better treatment of women could be paved. It only emerges as a genuinely articulated idea in nineteenth century as an offshoot of the Enlightenment. Its first real spokeswoman, Mary Wollstonecraft, writing in 1792 demands some sort of equality for women to perform their functions dutifully as mothers, wives, sisters and daughters. In her opinion, it is only by giving them their rights that they would be held responsible towards their own being and their men folk.² Later on many imbibed this theme, and on its basis, the first wave feminism took shape as a movement for equal rights for women in the West.³ Why this demand for equality at that particular moment of time? Why not earlier or later? One is entitled to ask these questions.

The tentative and preliminary answer to these questions lies in this demand for equality in Enlightenment itself, but not in the enlightenment of modernity, of science and progress, of democracy and liberalism, but Enlightenment based on the conception of the individual self that is thinking and rational, forming an individuality that is the bedrock, the cornerstone of this modernity. How and why? We shall examine it further.

Immanuel Kant defines Enlightenment as "man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity."⁴ The immaturity alluded here is "the inability to use one's own understanding without the guidance of another."⁵ It is the idea of man's maturity, the ability to use one's own understanding, that is the bedrock of this enlightenment, modernity, science, progress, liberalism and democracy, and not vice-versa, as if all these are epi-phenomenon and an after-event of this idea. The motto of this idea is "Sapere aude"⁶, literally meaning "dare to be wise" suggesting "the courage to use [one's] own understanding".⁷ It is this understanding, this wisdom that gives a person his/her identity; his/her own-ness, and being. To be is to think — one thinks therefore one is! The famous *Cogito* of Descartes: *Cogito ergo sum*⁸, literally means, "I think therefore I am".

Now, this cogito by its very definition disqualifies many from the domain of selfhood. One may question: Does everyone think? The answer to this question can only have come in the negative. Principally, all should think, but practically few could have met that criterion and thus many were discounted. This was the dilemma of enfranchisement that few of the many were thinking and rational individuals. Women, slaves, children, Negroes, non-western colonized were excluded from the category of thinking and rational individuals and so were debarred from having any right of enfranchisement. Even, in Locke, Rousseau and Kant's universal programs and manifestoes, many were excluded not for any other reasons but just because of inability and lack. The included constituted a majority and excluded became a minority; a minority which otherwise was a majority.

Speaking in terms of citizenship, according to Michel Duche "the individual of the social contract is a self-sufficient entity".⁹ Kant, while elaborating the concept, divides citizenship into two categories: namely, active and passive citizens. Passive citizens are 'mere auxiliaries of the commonwealth, for they have to receive orders or protection from other individuals, so that they do not possess civil independence'.¹⁰ Kant enlists the passive citizens as:

Apprentices to merchants or tradesman, servants who are not employed by the state, minors ..., women in general, and all those who are obliged to depend for their living (i.e. for food and protection) on the offices of others (excluding the state) — all of these people have no civil personality¹¹

On the other hand, an active citizen is the one who must be "(apart, of course, from being an adult male) ... his own master (*sui-juris*) and must have some property (which can include any skill, trade, fine art or science) to support himself".¹² So, maturity, reason, and autarky go hand-in-hand, inconceivable without the other. Only a mature and reasonable person is a self-sufficient one. The emergence of political rights movements as human rights movements on the horizon with the advent of the Enlightenment is not surprising then. It was nothing else but the quest for inclusion in the domain of an active individual citizen. In the presence of divine rights there were hardly any human rights. These were only interpreted as divine/biblical commands, either this way or that way, but never gained the acclaim and currency which they later held. Because of overwhelming exclusions from the ideals of active individual citizen, Proudhon describes this social contract as an "offensive and defensive alliance of those who possess against those who do not possess".¹³ Even Kant has to suggest that "rulers should ... encourage the greatest enlightenment of their people"¹⁴ so that the widest possible public participation in policy making and public affairs is ensured. In such a way, the quest for enlightenment was the quest for possession for those who were dispossessed and inclusion for those who were excluded, otherwise, enlightenment was already there with its enlightened.

Writing in 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft is pleading the case for women as a deprived segment of society, a minority (in the sense described above). She pleads the case before their masters, men folk, a *la* Kantian, to be encouraged for enlightenment, to

have had more responsibility as a necessary pre-requisite for a greater answerability. Wollstonecraft writes:

It is vain to expect virtue from women till they are in some degree independent of men; nay, it is vain to expect that strength of natural affection which would make them good wives and mothers. Whilst they are absolutely dependent on their husbands they will be cunning, mean, and selfish.¹⁵

In the same vein she asks that woman to be really rendered virtuous and useful, “she must not, if she discharge her civil duties, want individually the protection of civil laws; she must not be dependent on her husband’s bounty for her subsistence during his life, or support after his death”.¹⁶ She questions the assumptions of woman’s generosity and virtuosity that without being free and having property rights she could not be held responsible for any deed. While indicting in her own times a woman’s role as a wife, “who is faithful to her husband” but “neither suckles nor educate her children, scarcely deserves the name of a wife, and has no right to that of a citizen”, she invokes the social contractarian logic, which says, “take away natural rights, and duties become null.”¹⁷

However, the first real case for equality for women was built by J.S. Mill, in all its comprehensiveness, and that too under the influence of Harriet Taylor, a women’s rights activist who later became his wife. In a well articulated treatise on *The Subjection of Women*, he at the very out-set questions the rules governing the relationships between the sexes, “the principle which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes — the legal subordination of one sex to the other — is wrong in itself ... one of the chief hindrances to human improvement”, and suggests in return its replacement by a “principle of perfect equality”, which he defines as “admitting no power or privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other”.¹⁸

Although convinced of the strength of his argument he was nevertheless wary of the would be (potential) criticism received to his opinion on the basis of its novelty and unprecedented nature, as established custom and general feeling went against it. Only by showing ‘that custom and feeling from age to age ... [had] owed their existence to other causes than their soundness’,¹⁹ could a case for women’s equality be built. For this purpose he tries to dismantle the belief in the soundness of general practices and established customs. One reason for their weakness was that they might have outlived their utility, “the consideration which recommended [them] may, like so many other primeval social facts of the greatest importance, have subsequently, in the course of ages, ceased to exist”,²⁰ though at the time of their general adoption, with some evidence, they were fairly thought to be the best.²¹

Secondly, as regards woman’s position, “it arose simply from the fact that from the very earliest twilight of human society, every woman (owing to the value attached to her by men, combined with her inferiority in muscular strength) was found in a state of bondage to some man”.²² The origin of law lies in the recognition of existing relations, “they convert what was a mere physical fact into a legal right, [and] give it the sanction of society”.²³

For Mill, the case of women’s bondage was similar to slavery, “from being a mere affair of force between the master and the slave, [it] became regularized and a matter of compact among the masters, who binding themselves to one another for common

protection, guaranteed by their collective strength the private possessions of each, including his slaves".²⁴

So, it was not because of any genuine or valid reasons that women were subordinated and made subject to men, but just because of old habits and customs, whose origin might be of unjustified nature. On the other hand, Mill believed that, in changing modern times, history was taking a different course towards a progressive human society and women's subjection would be the "relic of the past [that was] discordant with the future, and must necessarily disappear".²⁵

Mill's optimism was thoroughly embedded in the ideals of Enlightenment and gave a strong impetus to women rights movement, and the demand for suffrage was the cornerstone of these rights. His writing has also the underpinning of a relatively radical feminine critique, which later on, professed more vehemently by the second wave feminist writers and activists. The demand for equality entails, equally, the question mark against the superiority of the other sex. Mill touches this question but only as an after-question with some suggestive hints and nothing more. Simone de Beauvoir takes up this stream of thought, later on, in a subtle and critical fashion, and it is on her critique that the second wave feminist movement gets its inspiration and grounding.

Why did equality remain an inconclusive goal in spite of Mill's optimism and the struggle of first wave feminist movement? Only substantial thing achieved was the right of franchise. Most of the western countries, including USA, got it after the World War I. There were other improvements particularly in the areas of education, work conditions, and property rights as well, but overall women's condition remained subordinated to men with all the inherent dependencies. The struggle for equality had only accentuated the pain of women's unequal status, they were still far behind.

Perhaps, there was a belated realization that the centuries old societal traditions had in them a collective unconscious and any amount of legislation would come to fail against these hard headed hidden prejudices. They were the unconscious truths to be battled against. The battles were fought then, to change the minds of people, in the form of coffee house meetings and consciousness raising campaigns in the second wave of the feminist movement, and had in them some surprising results which we'll come to see later. Let us first examine the theoretical foundations of second wave feminism, whose major articulations are to be found in the works of Simone de Beauvoir, Kate Millet, Betty Friedan and Shulamith Firestone.

Simone de Beauvoir contests the second status of woman as "the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential".²⁶ Whereas, "he is the Subject, he is the Absolute — she is the Other".²⁷ She considers this duality to be arbitrary, an event of historico-sociological import, just like slavery, as Mill already spoken off, or the class division of bourgeois as the One and the proletariat as the Other. The Self is always conceived against the Other. The division implies the complimentary nature of the terms divided in the pre-existing whole: "Male and female stand opposed within a primordial *Mitsein* The couple is a fundamental unity with its two halves riveted together".²⁸

The whole was broken, nevertheless, and how it did all happen remains perplexing but understandable at the same time: "No subject will readily volunteer to become the object, the inessential The Other is posed as such by the One in defining himself as the One".²⁹

Man chose the Self and posed woman as the Other. It was woman's unique position where she could not leave man to struggle against him that was different from proletariat's and Negro's; as a matter of fact she was a partner in most of other struggles, and her own struggle came afterwards and in a different way. The historical precedent for this was deep rooted, perpetrated by religion, philosophies of great many thinkers, the institution of family and its economy linked with the powerful male as the master. Simone de Beauvoir disputes the biological and psychological basis of this inequality, the problem lays in the fact that "in exchange for her liberty she has received the false treasures of her 'femininity'"³⁰ that determined her psychology as well.

The tone set by de Beauvoir was followed by many that laid the basis for second wave feminist movement, equality remained the goal, but for its achievement, the Other would have to challenge the One and its superiority. Kate Millet took the challenge on political grounds. In what she describes as "notes towards a theory of patriarchy"³¹, she takes the whole gambit of sexual relationship as a political field of analysis, in Weberian terms *herrschaft*,³² a relationship of dominance and subordination. An institutionalized form of social order whereby males rule females as a birthright priority is achieved through "a most ingenious form of 'interior colonization'".³³ Its connotations are thoroughly steeped in ideology, biology, sociology, class system, economy and pedagogy, force, anthropology, and psychology.

Kate Millet analyses these categories separately. Ideology functions at the level of socialization of temperament, role, and status determination of the sexes. These are interdependent categories through which the One is given a superior pedigree over the Other, and these are then consented by both sexes unreflexively. Biologically speaking, "the heavier musculature of the male" can't be the source of "male supremacy, [as] like other political creeds, [it] does not finally reside in physical strength but in the acceptance of a value system which is not biological".³⁴ So the crux is, she declares, "Patriarchy's chief institution is the family".³⁵ Inspired by Goode's³⁶ analysis, she finds family to be "both a mirror of and a connection with the larger society; a patriarchal unit within a patriarchal whole".³⁷ In this whole, "the family effects control and conformity where political and other authorities are insufficient".³⁸ It is not a coincidence that "the fate of three patriarchal institutions, the family, society, and the state are interrelated".³⁹ As per Catholic percept, "the father is the head of the family", similarly the ruler is the head of the state, like a shepherd over wives and children.

Her class analysis is interesting that even though of howsoever low status a male may be like "a truck driver or butcher has always his 'manhood' to fall back upon".⁴⁰ Again following a lead out of Goode's work, it entails a paradox:

While in lower social strata, the male is more likely to claim authority on the strength of his sex rank alone, he is actually obliged more often to share power with women of his class who are economically productive; whereas in the middle and upper classes, there is less tendency to assert a blunt patriarchal dominance, as men who enjoy such status have more power in any case.⁴¹

On the whole, the class division only confounds the issue for women, while standing on the same ground, nevertheless, they are pitted against each other as belonging to different classes. Patriarchy also works while holding back educational and economic opportunities for women. Force and violence are perpetrated against them in the form of

rape and other heinous crimes, “justified on the grounds that the enemy is either an inferior species or really not human at all”.⁴² Anthropologically speaking, religion and myth are equal partners in the strength behind patriarchy. Whereas all the above aspects combined have a psychological bearing on both sexes, “their principal result is the interiorization of patriarchal ideology”,⁴³ which tends “toward the reification of the female ... [as] a sexual object than a person”.⁴⁴

Betty Friedan defines this psychology in terms of a feminine mystique.⁴⁵ She writes in the backdrop of American reversal to feminine ideals after the gains of first wave feminism. In the 1950s and early 1960s, the baby boom returned to America where more and more women were encouraged to have a domestic job of a house wife rather than a professional life outside. It was considered to be ideally suited to their feminine nature. Friedan analyses the frustration of most of these women as “the problem that has no name”.⁴⁶ As earlier with Wollstonecraft’s era, the problem with these women was their leisure time and sheer boredom without having their own identity related to their work. They were glad to be identified with their fathers, husbands, spouses, and children, but, in spite of that, they remained depressed and frustrated.

Though wary and critical of this feminine mystique, Friedan was not, nevertheless, a radical feminist. Among the radicals, Shulamith Firestone stands out by asking some ultimate and less probable questions. Taking on Engel’s analysis that women’s subordination began with the development of private property, when according to him, “the world historical defeat of the female sex”⁴⁷ took place, she goes even further in the biological roots of this subordination as prior to the development of private property. Woman’s woes are to be blamed on her womb and the child bearing and child rearing activities she performs, which make her dependant on man as the pillar of this subordination. She thinks, by eliminating these hurdles woman can be liberated? Her hope lies in developments taking place in modern biological sciences that may make this reality possible.⁴⁸

Although following different strands of thought, all these four leading feminists of second wave generation have one thing in common, while struggling for equality it was not enough to demand for equal rights but equally necessary to challenge the notions of One’s supremacy. But, was enlightenment and modernity ready for that challenge? My answer is an emphatic NO! In questioning and challenging the One’s space, in the quest for inclusion on equal basis, the women’s struggle, as all other struggles from the periphery, was least successful in getting that space, as a matter of fact that much space was not available from the very beginning; but in the process, it destroyed that space as a sole and exclusive space of legitimacy, thus opening up other spaces. In challenging the male, it challenged the individual in terms that are limitedly defined by the Enlightenment, thus, opening up spaces for multiple individualities, and rendering, in the process, the individual of the Enlightenment as a hegemonic being. The space of its sole legitimacy was no longer kosher.

Post-feminism emerges from feminism as a collapse of feminism, as post-modernism emerges from modernity as a collapse of modernity; whereas, all have their roots in the ideas of the Enlightenment. It is not, however, be described in historical terms but purely on the basis of their logical priority. Historical traces may be scattered but logical priorities unfold in this way, and the shift from feminism to post-feminism, and similarly from modernism to post-modernism constitute a discontinuity and a breach of

perspective. Homi Bhabha locates the meaning of the term 'post', in post-modernity, post-coloniality, and post-feminism, not "in the popular use of the 'post' to indicate sequentiality – *after*-feminism; or polarity – *anti*-modernism" but, for him, "these terms that insistently gesture to the beyond, only embody its restless and revisionary energy if they transform the present into an expanded and ex-centric site of experience and empowerment".⁴⁹

Historically speaking, disenchantment with enlightenment has deep roots from the very beginning of the Enlightenment. Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, and latter on Heidegger to name a few were its leading disenchanted souls. Disenchanted means that they were not only its critics, but genuinely suffered in their own self, the pangs of modernity. However, the real fall came in the seventies and eighties, of the last century. But why has it collapsed, and why did it have to collapse? The answers are multilayered, and one of its leading fold is in the history of the idea of feminism or, in other words, in the ontology of feminism itself.

The lacuna in the idea of Enlightenment was that it was a particular and limited idea but claimed Universality. It had not had the space of Universality into it. It grew in the West and only for the well to do, educated, middle class westerners, sans the minorities previously mentioned, including women. Its truth was a hegemonic truth. People fell for it as a liberating idea; excluded wanted inclusion; but it failed to carry them along. Eventually, they were given the rights but only in abstraction, in the forms of law and juridical sanction, but not in concrete terms as fully participating individualities. In their desperation, the excluded, the peripheral questioned and challenged their masters as if standing on medieval ancient grounds; but the grounds were modern nevertheless.

Michel Foucault, leading French social thinker of the last century, admires the feminist movement for what he considers to be its politics of truth, the kind of politics found in Kate Millet's writings; feminist movement in the late sixties and early seventies was mainly built around that kind of politics. One, other feature of this politics was its micro nature in the forms of small gatherings in the coffee houses, clubs and consciousness raising campaigns. This was also closely akin to Foucault's idea of microphysics of power and resistance.⁵⁰ This politics of truth questioned the leading and well-established truths of its times, the patriarchal and phallogocentric order of the period, the modernity itself, though implicitly:

The real strength of the women's liberation movements is not that of having laid claim to the specificity of their sexuality and the rights pertaining to it, but actually departed from the discourse conducted within the apparatuses of sexuality.⁵¹

The contours of these apparatuses were ancient but modernity's failure was that it only strengthened them while professing to be doing otherwise. It is in this sense that Foucault rejects the illusory nature of theories of 'liberation' implied in the Marxist-Freudian notion of repression. Psychoanalysis can be construed as the first real critique of modernity's idea of a complete individual-thinking-self by pointing out the unconscious discrepancies and holes in that self, by splitting it open. But its real aim was to retrieve that self and not to destroy it. The retrieval was through the liberation of sexuality; while liberating sexuality the self is regained from the unconscious. Foucault rejects this as standing on modernity's plane of an imposing order by means of consent. This liberation

remains, in the end, controlled liberation. Politics of truth demands the dismantling of this idea of controlled liberation, standing on narrow and flimsy grounds, and feminism contributed to it by asking some critical questions.⁵² The critical questions pointed towards the single liberated self, asking and demanding the possibility of multiple selves within and without that single whole that could only be a male.

While dismantling the male, the order of modernity was dismantled as that order was a phallogocentric order itself. Describing Derrida's sexualized practice of philosophy, Rosi Braidotti comments, "by associating the illusion of the unitary presence of the subject with a masculine phantasy: logocentrism is a phallic posture".⁵³ Now what Derrida means by 'logocentrism'? He takes it to be "the recurring propensity of Western thinking to centralize or ground its understanding on notions of 'presence' (logos)".⁵⁴ What was "present" to the West, at a particular moment of time, it considered it applicable to all as a Universal Idea. It is not only logocentric but phallogocentric; the order grows out of male phantasy, as all orders grow out of it, "the enunciation of truth a typically masculine 'habit': it is man who believes in women as in truth".⁵⁵ Then, one may ask, who is a 'woman'? In Braidotti's words, echoing Derrida, "that which evades and is in excess of the phallogocentric structure of subjectivity".⁵⁶ And, what is feminine in woman: "which will not be pinned down by truth is, in truth — *feminine*".⁵⁷ So, how could feminists have gained equality and inclusion in those frames of reference which were male from their very inception? Here, Derrida can be accused of an anti-feminist stance. But, it would be a misplaced accusation; Derrida is writing post-feminist with the feminine to dismantle the established truths of manhood, "I would love to write like (a) woman. I am trying".⁵⁸

What are required in this post-feminist age are the feminine relational values that "privileges relationship rather than opposition, gift rather than challenge, the offer of love rather than the declaration of war".⁵⁹ For Derrida, feminism itself is "the type of phallic, normative, normalizing and hateful discourse"⁶⁰ that grew out of western modernity. Feminism stands on "the place of phallocracy"⁶¹ that is the place of this modernity. Dissolve these frames of normalizing order and its law, feminism stands dissolved as well, as no longer valid in a relational space other than the space of exclusivity.

Post-modernity and post-feminism are trajectories towards becoming-minority of women. If modernity represents order and universality, feminism tries to stand as a counter to that order; but post-modernity and post-feminism are not concerned with any order or universality but multiplicity and universality in singularity that, for Deleuze, can never be accomplished but might be lived through becoming-minority of women. What is this becoming-minority? Deleuze distinguishes between "the majority, as a homogeneous and constant system, and the minority, as on the one hand sub-systems, and on the other, the becoming-minority as process, both existent and potential, a creative possibility",⁶² a possibility of "moving beyond the dialectical antagonism between majority and minority",⁶³ of male and female itself. While there can be "no becoming majority, [as] majority is not a becoming",⁶⁴ what constitutes a minority?

Women, regardless of their number, are a minority, definable as a state or a subset; but they only create by rendering possible a becoming, which is not their property, which they still have to enter, including those who are not women.⁶⁵

Becoming-minority, then, is in contra-distinction to modernity's discourses, and of feminism as well. Like Foucault, Deleuze recognizes feminism as 'one of the new revolutionary possibilities', but other than that "for him the Women's Liberation Movement is mistaken in its assertion of a specifically feminine sexuality".⁶⁶ What he envisages instead is the desiring machines of a non-Oedipal woman:

In all the desiring machines sexuality does not consist of an imaginary couple of woman and machine as substitute for Oedipus, but in the couple of machine and desire as production-desire, as real production of a daughter born without a mother, of a non-Oedipal woman.⁶⁷

Conclusion

While all the above mentioned discourses addressing the question of the disintegration of feminism carry substantial weight, however, their authors can be accused of anti-feminist posture, if their posture is any posture at all; and in Foucault's case misogyny as well. It may be termed as improvised criticism because of two reasons: First, they are writing post-feminism, post-gender, from a de-sexualized terrain. Second, they admire feminism for what it had done and achieved, but now they want to move beside and beyond it. One may still question: What if this deconstruction is on the plane of *phallogoperiphoria*?⁶⁸ A centered de-centeredness? Again, of male origin? There is a great deal of criticism available on this deconstructive interpretation of feminism by the writers of such stature like Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous, Julia Kristeva, Michèle Le Doeuff, who can be considered as the pioneers of post-feminist feminism, which emerges in response to these deconstructive critiques.

But, what it entails for us? Where we stand in the moment of history regarding *feminism*? In the beginning of Wollstonecraft era; in the middle of second wave feminism; or in the third wave post-feminism? From which stage can we follow it? May be from all three stages! May be from nowhere at all! This discourse is not our discourse in any way! Then, what is ours? We need to search for answers to these questions. The best we can achieve is through looking for answers that may arrive from the questions that are posed in the context of our own culture and milieu, but what is taking place on the outside and for that matter a dominant outside, and thus an inside as well, cannot be ignored. However, it may only help to bring into sharp contrast and focus our own possible questions and answers.

ENDNOTES

1. See Stephanie Hodgson-Wright, "Early Feminism" in Sarah Gamble, ed., *Feminism and Postfeminism* (London: Routledge, 2001).
2. Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of The Rights of Women*, 2nd ed. (London: 1792).
3. It is interesting to note that the term 'feminist' seems to have first been used in 1871 in a French medical text to describe a cessation in development of the sexual organs and characteristics in male patients, and thus suffering from the 'feminization' of their bodies. Later, Alexandre Dumas used it in a pamphlet, on the subject of adultery, to describe women behaving in a supposedly masculine way, in 1872. The term 'feminism' itself is of a later origin, but the activity linked to it emerges long before the term came into vogue. See Jane Freedman, *Feminism* (New Delhi: Viva Books, 2002), p.2.
4. Immanuel Kant, "An Answer to the Question: 'What is Enlightenment?'" in H. Reiss, ed., *Kant's Political Writings* (Cambridge: 1970), p.54.
5. Ibid.
6. Originally it is Horace's motto that Kant used here, which also means "Think for yourself". Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. An outcome of Descartes method of doubt, his famous formula is deduced from both of his works, *Discourse on Method* (1637) and *Meditations* (1642), however, exact lines are taken from *Discourse on Method*.
9. Michael Dusche, "Multiculturalism, Communitarianism, and Liberal Pluralism" in Jamal Malik and Helmut Reifeld, eds., *Religious Pluralism in South Asia and Europe* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 131.
10. Immanuel Kant, "Metaphysics of Morals" in *Kant's Political Writings*, p. 139.
11. Ibid., pp. 139-40.
12. Immanuel Kant, "Theory and Practice" in *Kant's Political Writings*, p. 78.
13. Pierre J. Proudhon, *General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Pluto, 1989), p.118.
14. See Howard Williams, "Kant on the Social Contract" in David Boucher and Paul Kelly, ed., *The Social Contract from Hobbes to Rawls* (London: Routledge, 1994), p.140.
15. Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of The Rights of Women*, p.141.
16. Ibid., p.146.
17. Ibid.
18. See J. S. Mill, *The Subjection of Women* (1869). I have taken the extract from Ann E. Cudd and Robin O. Andreasen, ed., *Feminist Theory* (Blackwell, 2005), p. 17.
19. Ibid., p.18.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid., p.19.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid., p.22.
26. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Everyman, 1993), p. x□v.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid., pp.x□viii-xlix
29. Ibid., p.x□vi.
30. Ibid., p.755.
31. Kate Millet, *Sexual Politics* (New York: Ballantine, 1978), p.32.

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- 32.Ibid., p.33. *Herrschaft* is a form of knowledge which emerges in one's enmeshing in its social surroundings, and conveys through work, language and power. It is basically steeped in power; patriarchy as its one form. In German *Herr* is a male referral, and *schaft* connotes knowledge.
- 33.Ibid.
- 34.Ibid., pp.36-7.
- 35.Ibid., p.45.
- 36.See William J. Goode, *The Family* (Englewood: Prentice-Hall, 1964).
- 37.Millet, *Sexual Politics*, p.45.
- 38.Ibid.
- 39.Ibid.
- 40.Ibid., p.49.
- 41.Ibid., p.50.
- 42.Ibid., p.64.
- 43.Ibid., p.75.
- 44.Ibid., p.76.
- 45.See Betty Friedan, *Feminine Mystique* (New York: Laurel, 1983).
- 46.Ibid., p.26.
- 47.Frederick Engels, "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State" in *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels Selected Works*, vol. 2 (Moscow: 1962), p.217.
- 48.See Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex* (London: The Women's Press, 1979).
- 49.Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), p.4.
- 50.Foucault has elaborated his idea of microphysics of power on many occasions, but for its relation to feminism see I. Diamond and L. Quinby, eds., *Foucault and Feminism* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988).
- 51.Michel Foucault, "The Confession of the Flesh", in C. Gordon, ed., *Michel Foucault: Power/Knowledge* (Brighton: Harvester, 1980).
- 52.See I. Diamond and L. Quinby, eds., *Foucault and Feminism*. Also see Braidotti, *Patterns of Dissonance*. For details see Foucault's critique of psychoanalysis, the major commentary on his work by Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1982).
- 53.Braidotti, *Patterns of Dissonance*, p.100.
- 54.Richard Kearney, *Modern Movements in European Philosophy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), p.115.
- 55.Braidotti, *Patterns of Dissonance*, p.103.
- 56.Ibid., p.100.
- 57.J. Derrida, *Spurs: Nietzsche's Style* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), pp.54-5.
- 58.J. Derrida, "Discussion" in *Nietzsche aujourd'hui* (Paris, 1973), p.299.
- 59.Braidotti, *Patterns of Dissonance*, p.104.
- 60.Ibid.
- 61.Ibid., p.105.
- 62.G. Deleuze, "Philosophie et minorité", *Critique*, 369 (Feb. 1978): 154-5.
- 63.Braidotti, *Patterns of Dissonance*, p.108.
- 64.Deleuze, *Critique*, pp.154-5.
- 65.Ibid.
- 66.Braidotti, *Patterns of Dissonance*, p.116.
- 67.G. Deleuze, "Bilan-programme pour machines désirantes", *Minuit*, 2 (1973): 16.
- 68.The term coined here is meant to describe the phallogocentric periphery that is de-centered, but again, in phallus and logos' terms. For details on critique of Postmodernism and Postfeminism, see Sue Thornham, "Postmodernism and Feminism" in Stuart Sim, ed., *The*

Routledge Companion to Postmodernism (London: Routledge, 2001), and also see Braidotti, *Patterns of Dissonance*.