Feminist Philosophy 
and Visions of the Future 

A Philosophy of Balance

What is the significance of women and the feminist point of view within philosophy and humanity’s future? This question is important because a profound social, psychological, and philosophical revolution is occurring in modern times that involves dramatic changes in feminine identity, values, and influence within our world. Consequently, ideas about masculine identity, human relationships, love, sex, and the family are changing as well. In fact, as we will see, the changing identity and significance of women and the feminist perspective will probably affect every dimension and sphere of human life in the future.

I will begin this article with a short history of women and men and their relative significance in human society. In particular, I will examine the historical hypothesis that women were at one time equal to men in social and spiritual status, living together with men in a “partnership culture”, but later became enslaved and dominated by men. This enslavement though, which involved both a system of social organization and a framework of thinking, negatively affected and constrained both men and women and the very fabric of human society. Riane Eisler refers to this repressive system of social order and belief as a “dominator culture”.¹ Next I will highlight some aspects of the contemporary feminist movement and its implications for both men and women and the nature of human thought and society. I will argue that the feminist movement and feminist thinking are, in fact, reflective of a general shift in philosophy and culture occurring worldwide. Third, I will consider how the feminist movement and feminist thinking could impact the direction of the future, in particular, highlighting changes in philosophical thinking in the future.

One startling and perhaps counter-intuitive implication to emerge from this review of the past, present, and future is that sexuality, love, philosophy, and spirituality are intimately connected topics and issues. The dualist philosophical and spiritual belief systems that have “dominated” both Eastern and Western cultures have severed and repressed the fundamental relationship of “Eros” and “Spirit”. (“Eros”, from the name for the Greek God, means love, sexuality, and desire) As we move beyond a dualist mindset that separated spirit and body we will reconnect the human dimensions of sexuality and spirituality – of passion, love, and spirit. Feminist thinking and philosophy is significantly contributing to this transformation in thought and behavior.

The main theme of this article is that, according to many feminist thinkers, we will witness, in the near future, a collapse of male-centered, “dominator” Western theology, philosophy, and social practices. Feminist thinkers contend that we are moving toward (or should be moving toward) a philosophy of unity through diversity and cooperation, of order through partnership and collaboration. This new feminist
view will replace the dualist and masculine inspired idea that order requires the imposition of power from above. The male centered dominance hierarchies of the past will give way to networks of distributed power. The feminist promise for the future is a return to a partnership philosophy. On a related note, we are even now seeing a collapse in the dualist idea that mind and spirit are somehow above and superior to the world of nature and the body, and that mind and spirit must somehow control the body and nature. The feminist ideal is that in the future there will be a collapse of male and female stereotypes, in favor of more freedom of options for everyone. There will be a continued rise of woman leadership in business, education, politics, science, art-humanities, academia, economy-finance, and other professional spheres, and reciprocally, a growth in the nurturance side of men. Lead by feminist thinking, humanistic values will balance off economic and technological values. In general, the hopeful ideal is that we will move toward a balance of feminine and masculine values in both public and private arenas.

The Sexist and Sexually Repressive Heritage of the Past

“… our most famous story of human origins, the Genesis story of Adam and Eve, has absolutely nothing good to say about sex, love, or pleasure…it presents the human quest for higher consciousness as a curse rather than a blessing, and it does not even touch on the awe and wonder we humans experience when we behold or touch someone we love.”

Riane Eisler

“Woman is defective and misbegotten.”

St. Thomas Aquinas

“All witchcraft comes from carnal lust, which is in women insatiable…wherefore for the sake of fulfilling their lust, they consort even with devils”

Malleus Malleficarum

The future is often discovered through the past. On many occasions, social and cultural revolutions have found their inspiration by looking at the traditions of old or ancient times and picking up ideas or practices left dangling or thwarted in the past. The Renaissance drew its inspiration from classical Greece, and, according to Diane Eisler, in her provocative and influential book The Chalice and the Blade, the modern feminist movement picks up a long-suppressed cultural heritage that dates back over five thousand years.²
According to Eisler, prior to approximately 3000 B.C., many of the human societies worldwide had Mother Goddess religions that emphasized communion with nature, a reverence of nature, and a sense of equality of participation between the sexes. The Mother Goddess, usually identified or associated with the earth and the fertility of the earth, was worshipped as the creative and reproductive source of new life. Women were seen as the living embodiment of reproduction and creation and they held positions of leadership in government, religion, and culture. Consequently the sacred and divine was connected with the power of biological creation, of reproduction and sexuality. Eisler refers to such societies as gylanic, emphasizing a linking and union of the male and the female.

These early predominantly agricultural societies were eventually overrun and subdued by nomadic peoples who brought a philosophy of hierarchical domination and male supremacy. Eisler refers to these newer social systems as androcratic, although in structure they were actually more primitive than gylanic societies and represented a throwback or regression to a type of dominance hierarchy found in insects. These types of hierarchical societies are also found in chimpanzee and baboon colonies. With the emergence of human androcratic societies, males ruled by force, and communion and cooperation were replaced by conquest and competition. The blade replaced the chalice as the symbol of social order.

According to Eisler, the androcratic society became the norm in human life. Totalitarian governments arose, expecting obedience to a single absolute truth and a single controlling power. Authoritarian laws were articulated and enforced through military might and power and the threat of retribution and punishment. Society divided into "haves" and "have nots" with most of the "haves" being men and most of the "have nots" being women and children. Women were pushed out of positions of importance in public life and restricted to home life and child rearing. Further, the care giving and nurturing responsibilities of home life were denigrated; the accomplishments of human society were seen as occurring outside of the home, and women were not given any economic recognition or compensation for their work. In fact, women were now seen as breeders, sexual objects, and possessions of men.

Androcratic societies suppressed and distorted the earlier Mother Goddess mythologies, turning the woman into the source of human problems and misery. The story of the Garden of Eden is a classic example. Eve, who wishes to eat of The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil (and hence to think and choose for herself), brings the wrath of God (a male father figure) down on humanity and “poor” Adam as well, who was beguiled and tempted by the feminine powers of Eve.

In place of the Mother Goddess religions, androcratic societies developed male-centered theologies. The male Sky God (standing above nature) replaced the female Earth Goddess. As the contemporary feminist writer Elizabeth Gray notes, the sacred act of naming became a male-dominated right. The priest became the earthly authority and representative of the divine, and the priestess was theologically buried and eventually persecuted as a “witch,” presumably being an agent of evil or demonic
forces. In the ultimate act of religious subjugation, the Biblical story of humanity’s creation describes God, the Father, forming “Man” in His own image. Continuing the male-centered theological conquest, the Christian Trinity developed with a Father and a Son, but without any corresponding feminine person. This lop-sided depiction of God, interestingly and quite significantly, kept sexuality out of the nature of God. The Mother Goddess, to recall, derived her power from her creative and sexual nature. In masculine theology, sex and consequently femininity was banished from the divine.

Eisler, in her more recent book Sacred Pleasure: Sex, Myth, and the Politics of the Body, develops the above historical themes even further, in particular highlighting the central significance of sexuality and spirituality in the transformation from gylanic to androcratic cultures. She now uses the terms “partnership” and “dominator” cultures to emphasize the fundamental difference in how order is conceptualized and enacted. Do we achieve order by imposing it upon “inferiors” through domination, or do we achieve order through partnerships among equals? According to Eisler, sexuality and spirituality were closely connected in earlier partnership (or gylanic) societies, because sex was seen as the source of creation and the most intimate expression of love and bonding between women and men. In subsequent domino cultures, spirituality was elevated above physical matter, nature, the body, and sexuality. Sex became something “dirty” and “sinful”, needing to be controlled and subdued by the mind and spirit. This sense of dominance and control of what was evil and inferior provided the central model of human society, morality, and spirituality.

The idea that the body is inferior to spirit can be found in the ancient Greeks, perhaps best epitomized in Plato’s dualism of the world of matter and the world of eternal forms. But the idea that the body, nature, and physical matter is corrupt and inferior to mind and spirit goes back as least as far as Zoroastrianism, several centuries earlier. Zoroastrianism presents a world view, later to be developed with the Judeo-Christian religious tradition, that within the cosmos there is a fundamental polarity of good and evil, and that the temptations and desires of the body are evil. Sex and bodily pleasure, in particular, are evil and anathema to the life of spirit. The female was seen evil for she embodies both earthly nature and the temptations and desires of sexuality. Consequently, the female needs to be repressed and controlled by men, who were seen (by men of course) as more spiritual and elevated. According to Eisler, where before in partnership cultures, nature, sex, and pleasure were revered and connected with the miracle of creation, these fundamental features of life now become vilified in domino cultures. The women’s body was re-conceptualized from an object of sexual and spiritual power to an object to be controlled by men. It is important to see in this spiritual and philosophical transformation that domino cultures arise in conjunction with an emerging dualism of good and evil. Evil is something to be fought against, repressed, and opposed by what is good. Morality becomes a war. Further, the dualism of good and evil arises in conjunction with the dualism of spirit and matter. What is evil and inferior is identified with nature and matter; what is good and superior is identified with spirit and mind. And at a social-psychological level, these dualisms are embodied and represented in a dualism of men and women. Men are superior and more spiritual; women are inferior and more carnal and evil.
If morality and spirituality become more like a war involving domination and conquest then a celebration of creation and love, then the spiritual path tends to get identified more closely with suffering and sacrifice than pleasure and abundance. Within traditional Christianity, the idea that sex and women are corrupt and evil takes hold in the writings of St. Augustine. The saintly life becomes a life of the rejection of bodily pleasure, with the ultimate spiritual and social control being exerted by the threat of eternal pain and damnation in Hell. For Eisler, dominator religions sacralize pain rather than pleasure. In fact, the promise or threat of pain and punishment becomes the central mechanism to maintain social order. Further, with the development of dominator religion, there is an increased obsession on violence and death, rather than love and creation. The mythologies of earlier Mother Goddess religion are demonized – monsters come into our myths. Further, according to Eisler, domination and conquest are eroticized – sex becomes an act of conquest of the male over the female, rather than an act of partnership and mutual desire. And quite paradoxically, since war and conquest become pivotal cultural themes, dominator cultures end up idealizing and institutionalizing evil. If evil is something to fight against and destroy – if the path to what is good is pain and suffering – then our behavior and goals in this war of good against evil embody the very monsters and values we are trying to cast out. In fighting against the presumed enemy we become like the enemy. Evil becomes the idea fixée of the warrior against evil. For Eisler, our myths and stories shift from a worship of Eros (the life instinct) to Thanatos (the death instinct).

At a theological level, Eisler contrasts two different views of the divine. God can be seen above nature or within nature. (God as transcendent versus God as immanent.) Nature can be seen as without spirit or in-spirited. Within dominator cultures, which place the spiritual above the natural, God is separated from nature. Within partnership cultures, the divine was seen as embodied within nature. Within a naturalistic spirituality, the woman is not an after-thought as in the Bible; she is the incarnation of creation.

As dominator culture developed in Europe during modern times, the human capacity to control and manipulate the environment and nature became seen as the highest expression of evolution. To recall from the readings for Lesson Five, the idea that progress involved the control of the material world by the mind developed out of the dualism of Western science and theology. The Industrial-Newtonian model of civilization emphasized the imposition of order upon society and nature through the mind and the technological instruments of the mind. For Eisler, the highest expression of evolution within a partnership culture would be the human capacities of love and creation – a nurturance view, which is a totally different perspective on human evolution and achievement.

Eisler believes that the most popular explanation of the evolution of complexity in human societies through history is the theory that increasing social order arises through the evolution of social hierarchies. She objects to this view that social order is a product of increasing chains of command of domination. In support of her position,
Robert Wright in *Nonzero: The Logic of Human Destiny* argues that the historical evidence indicates that cultures evolve through the establishment of **mutually beneficial transactions**, that is, through **cooperation** and **collaboration** rather than domination. Domination and control is not needed to evolve social order. Wright’s ideas fall much more in line with Eisler’s concept of partnerships among humans as a basis for human society. Yet Wright has chronicled in great detail the evolution of such partnerships throughout classical and modern times — during a period in which Eisler contends that human societies were fundamentally directed by dominance hierarchies. Eisler though clearly acknowledges that even after the downfall of earlier partnership societies, human history shows many examples of continued partnership behavior and thinking. Her point is that the central ideology from the ancient Greeks and Judaic tradition to modern times has been a dominance and dualistic philosophy.

Francis Fukuyama in *The End of History and the Last Man* argues that the fundamental direction of modern history has been the ongoing struggle and development of democratic systems of government. Within Fukuyama’s perspective this means the achievement of **reciprocal recognition (equality)** and the **freedom** to determine and direct one’s own life. On a parallel line of thinking, Eisler contends that modern history is a struggle to break free from dominator cultures. For Fukuyama, what we see in history is the continued fight to overthrow **authoritarian** systems of government that rob people of self-respect and autonomy; the **democratic impetus** is the struggle of the slave against the master. Wright points out that throughout history where individuals or groups have attempted to disproportionately maintain the benefits (economic and politically) of a productive society, the masses will inevitably rise up against such dictatorships to realign more equitably the wealth and power in the society. Dominance in the long run always backfires. Since Eisler believes that dominator cultures maintain their level of control and order through the threats of violence, punishment, and pain (a view that to a great degree I think Fukuyama would agree with), the ongoing struggle for equality of the sexes and reciprocal recognition of the value of both sexes is a **struggle of love** against the forces of **aggression** and **domination**.

Fukuyama, following the lead of self-organizational theory in contemporary science, would also probably support Eisler on the foundations of social order. In Fukuyama’s more recent book *The Great Disruption: Human Nature and the Reconstitution of Social Order* he argues that humans will, in the spirit of mutual benefit and collaboration, invariably create social order among themselves. Order does not need to be imposed upon a society or group of individuals from above. We are back to the idea, discussed in depth in the reading for Lesson Five, that order naturally arises and evolves in nature — it does not need to be designed or directed by forces from above. Eisler, who is very familiar with contemporary evolutionary theory, clearly subscribes to the **self-organizational perspective** on human and natural evolution. It is in fact our dualist heritage that leads us to think that order in nature must be imposed from some higher realm of reality.

In summary, Eisler proposes that in human history two different mental frameworks for organizing and constructing human relationships and sexuality have evolved —
partnership and dominator systems. Dominator systems see women (or any other “inferior” humans) and sexuality (and nature in general) as needing to be rigidly and violently controlled. Such control systems create tension and mistrust through force and fear and use pain to maintain order. In a partnership system, sex is a sacrament, rather than a debasement; it is a union of equals and a reminder of the oneness of all life and the bond of women and men. Sex is spiritual. The capacities for love and higher consciousness are intimately connected, rather than severed as in a dualism of spirit and body. The highest powers of humanity are giving, nurturing, and illuminating rather than control, domination, and destruction. Eisler contends that the main dividing line within human cultures is not East versus West, but dominator versus partnership. Whether we look at the East or the West we will find elements of both modes of thinking, but the predominant worldwide system in both ancient and modern times (basically since the beginnings of recorded history) has been dominator rather than partnership. The struggle within all human history is the breaking free of the repressive reality.

The Contemporary Feminist Resurgence

“The crisis of modern man is an essentially masculine crisis, and I believe that its resolution is already now occurring in the tremendous emergence of the feminine in our culture... Today we are experiencing something that looks very much like the death of modern man, indeed that looks very much like the death of Western man. Perhaps the end of “man” himself is at hand. But man is not a goal. Man is something that must be overcome – and fulfilled, in the embrace of the feminine.”

Richard Tarnas

Out of the dominator heritage and culture has emerged the modern world and the present division and dualism of men and women. Women have been socialized to care for others and, in fact, often see other people as necessary for their sense of identity and self-worth. Men, on the other hand, have been socialized to find their identity in their own individual projects and initiatives and to see others as impediments. Philosophically and psychologically, women have been guided toward intuitive skills and an ethics of care for others; men have been guided toward abstract logic and an ethics of justice. Women and men have been socially stereotyped as possessing the distinctive traits listed above, and, within our androcratic world, the traits associated with the female have been seen as inferior to the traits associated with the male. Additionally, the woman has been cast as an “object” of beauty, existing for the adoration and pleasure of the male.
The division and stereotyping of women and men has in fact been nothing but that – a stereotyping that exaggerates differences over similarities.\textsuperscript{18} We should keep in mind that a goal of a dominator society is to create a sense of division between superiors and inferiors. Regarding the classic stereotype that women are more emotional than men, men presumably being more controlled by reason, actual research studies reveal that along a variety of psychological dimensions men are not less emotional than women. As men and women break out of traditional gender roles they both become more emotionally and sexually expressive, and the presumed differences in sexual behavior diminish. Women, contrary to Carol Gilligan’s original study, use abstract principles of logic and justice in their ethical decision-making, and men show a strong dimension of care and concern in their ethical thinking. Again, the strong divisive stereotyping does not in fact hold true. As men and women mature and age, the rigid division that boys and girls set up between themselves when they are young, increasingly disappears. Women become more concerned with professional accomplishment and autonomy, and men become increasingly concerned with love and caring in later years.

It does though appear that men have a more independent and separatist sense of self whereas women have a more relational sense of self.\textsuperscript{19} Yet even here the picture is more complex than some simple stereotype. To recall, Eisler contends that the detached, dominator mentality derives from a masculine mindset, whereas the partnership (hence relational and connected) mindset reflects a perspective of equality. But men as noted above, become more concerned with love and nurturance as they age and women show the reverse and complementary trend. Also Western males tend to emphasize an autonomous and individualist self more than Eastern males who have a more relational and conformist sense of identity. But both Eastern and Middle Eastern males clearly demonstrate a strong sense of control and domination over women – by all appearances more so than Western males show over Western women. Finally the whole notion of a distinct and autonomous ego or self – a reflection of dualist thinking that separates the mind from the world – has come under significant criticism (from both men and women) within contemporary psychology and philosophy.\textsuperscript{20} Are we as distinct and separate as we imagine ourselves to be? Should we aspire to be independent and distinct selves? Western society tends to emphasize excessive individualism – connecting this trait with competition, independence, and self-serving behaviors – whereas Eastern societies tend to emphasize more of a sense of conformity and identity being defined in terms of social relations.\textsuperscript{21} Yet Western individualism has led to a host of social problems including alienation, disconnectedness, moral ambiguity, and self-centered narcissism. In our dualist thinking we have perhaps emphasized a view of the self (at least pertaining to males) that is fundamentally flawed and unrealistic. If we are open systems that require interaction with the environment for our self-identities to grow and flourish, then the idea that our self or ego is a separate, intrinsic reality is a mistake, both psychologically and morally.

Eisler would contend that many of our contemporary social problems derive from our androcratic or dominator social system.\textsuperscript{22} The population problem results from treating
women as breeders, with no other life than to reproduce and raise children. Most of the hunger and poverty in the world are concentrated in women and children, for the men control the food and money. According to Eisler, as well as the social futurist Hazel Henderson, any time social policies are proposed to help women and children, they are resisted strongly by the male status quo for fear of the present dominator system losing its totalitarian hold. Vast amounts of money and effort are, instead, channeled into military defense and development - in fact, many times more than what is needed to feed, clothe, house, and educate all of the underprivileged people in the world. With the continued maintenance of a dual economy, care and nurturing labor are still grossly underpaid (if paid at all) relative to money earned for the development and production of physical objects, machines, and technologies (typically controlled by males). In general, Eisler argues that in our present time of challenges to the dominator system, there are numerous counter-reactions, including fundamentalist religion, that wish to return human society to a previous time of traditions that would preserve the dominator system of beliefs and norms. Again see Henderson for additional details and examples of how the controlling system of power is actively resisting any change to a redistribution of social status and benefits. These counter-reactions just perpetuate our present social problems rather than solving them.

As a general point regarding our modern world, I have discussed at length the dominance, conquest, and competitive attitudes of the Industrial Era. The arrogance and sense of superiority regarding nature and the earth (the province of the Earth Goddess - Gaia) have led to many ecological problems. Further, I have examined the authoritarian-democratic struggle within history. Within the emerging global society, numerous difficulties are encountered when a culture or nation wishes to maintain a tight authoritarian hold on its people. The list goes on; the attitudes and practices Eisler describes as androcratic or dominator seem to have created many of the problems in our world today.

It should be pointed out, however, that Eisler believes men are victims of this present social system as well. Men are stereotyped and constrained in their personal development. They are saddled with a philosophy and psychology of dominance, defense, conquest, and competition - all mentally and physically unhealthy if carried to the extreme. They must acquire an “emotional body armor” that interferes with the full expression and enjoyment of their feelings and even sexuality. To suppress a vast array of psychological traits, as being too feminine and non-masculine, skews and limits the mind and personality of males. Further, as the contemporary philosopher Richard Tarnas states, the male stereotypical mind of unemotional, detached analysis and logic has reached a crisis in contemporary times. The very principles of thought and practice in which males found their purpose, meaning, and self-worth are coming unglued at the seams. The male mind is in an identity crisis.

Regardless of how the male may also suffer from a social heritage of dominance and control, it was the woman who began the revolt against this top-down dualism of male and female. Phyllis Chesler, in her article “Women’s Movement”, points out that the contemporary resurgence of women actually consists of at least two stages or waves.
First Wave feminism, early in the 20th Century, brought women the right to vote. Second Wave feminism grew during the time of the human rights movement in the 1960’s. This second wave initially focused on the right to abortion, sexual freedom, and equal pay. It also emphasized and publicized the violent sexual subjugation of women. (Recall Eisler’s idea that violence and domination were eroticized.) In the 1980’s, the feminist focus has expanded to include the rights of women within marriage and issues of women’s health. Women’s studies also emerged during the same time.

Sarah Kurian notes in “Women’s Rights” that although the first women’s movement was aware of many rights women did not possess, the movement focused on the right to vote. These early feminists thought that if they had the right to vote they would be able to solve the other problems of social injustice to women. As Kurian observes, this hope went unfulfilled. According to Kurian, The Feminine Mystique by Betty Friedan helped to instigate the second movement of feminism. The social and philosophical message of this second movement was that women could and should go beyond the home for fulfillment. The second movement attacked the sexual stereotypes of the androcratic society. It attacked the power structure of this repressive way of life. The new feminists challenged the various social codes in marriage, health, physical safety, finance, and reproduction, where women had not been given power or equality. The message of the second movement illustrates that it is more than just laws or public policies, but the whole culture that is sexist - the underlying social norms and customs. This general philosophical point must be part of the present and future development of the feminist movement.

The psychologist Maureen O’Hara argues that there are several different feminist movements and philosophies. One view is that there is a unique feminine psychology and mode of thinking and behaving that is basically determined by biological nature. According to these feminists, this feminine side of humanity has been suppressed and denigrated to a position of inferiority within society. The goal of feminism would therefore be to reassert the value and equality of such a philosophy and psychology in human life. Yet a second view is that what we call feminine traits are really a creation of a male dominated culture – that there is no intrinsic or biologically based feminine personality. Women have been socially controlled and shaped to think and behave in very limiting ways by male dominated culture. Hence, the goal of feminism is emancipation from this slavery and repression. As we have seen both these views have degrees of validity. Those traits stereotypically associated with women have been given second-class value in dominator human societies; they in fact according to Eisler have been often relegated to an immoral and evil quality. But also, the division of men and women along such traits is exaggerated and undoubtedly culturally reinforced. Women and men tend to become more balanced, whole, and similar if the dual social constraints (on both men and women) are challenged and transcended.

What is the status of women today? In spite of numerous setbacks and status quo counter-reactions, the contemporary social and economic position of women has vastly improved over the last century. The feminist movement has strongly unsettled...
the **male** and **female stereotypes** associated with our androcratic society, as well as attacked those dominance philosophies and practices that devalue traits associated more strongly with women. The **philosophy of Gaia** (the idea that the earth is a single living organism of which we and all of life are a part of) is reasserting the importance of cooperation over competition, as well as instigating a return to a **Mother Goddess** mythology and religion that is on equal footing with a male God theology. Women are not only challenging the intellectual tradition of the dominant male mind in **philosophy**, but women are also overturning male-dominated business principles and practices. The concepts of **participatory management** and **employee empowerment** strongly derive from the growing force of women leaders in business.

Yet women still face significant obstacles and difficulties, and progress on many fronts is slow in coming. In her article “Women in Politics”, Julia Jones observes that nowhere in the world do women participate equally in **politics**. She does remark, though, that more women are being elected to office, presumably because women are perceived as less corruptible, and, with the present distrust of politicians, this has worked to women's advantage. Some areas of the world are making significant progress (Scandinavia), but often in Third World countries women are still highly restricted and under-represented in politics. Even in the USA, women only hold 18% of the elected offices. On the issue of **women’s rights**, Jones notes that in the past the women’s suffrage movement created a **backlash** and this backlash still exists today over the **abortion** issue. Further, she points out that two-thirds of the world’s illiterate are women. We still need to provide better and more equal access to **education** for women. For Jones, a central goal for the feminist movement in the future should be education. As a general point on the continued **economic inequality** between men and women, women do two-thirds of the work worldwide but receive only one-tenth of the income and own only one-hundredth of the property.

Eleonora Masini, in her article “Women and Work,” reinforces Jones’ point that education is crucial to the fulfillment of women’s rights. Women are still not nearly as well educated as men, especially in parts of Asia, Africa, and South America. On a positive note, she observes that the disparity between men and women on time spent in the household and outside labor is decreasing, albeit slowly. Yet, especially in developing countries, women work longer hours than men and women are concentrated in low productivity jobs. Masini concludes that overall there is still a **gender gap** in education and work. Progress, however, is occurring in the **feminization of property** due to more households being headed by women.

In noting these trends, we are only scratching the surface of possibilities. One interesting fact to keep in mind is that most **futuristic predictions** about human society, whether pertaining to women or not, have been developed by men. Also, men have also predominantly written the supporting **histories** of humanity that provide a basis for looking into the future. Generally, it has been men who have written and popularized the “accepted **story**” of humanity. Consider Alvin Toffler’s well-known history and future predictions for human society. According to Eisler, Toffler divides history into **technological eras** (agricultural, industrial, information) and, in so doing, fails to
emphasize the major social-psychological junctures in our past. It is a techno-history masquerading as a universal history. Eisler would contend that the major events in human history pertain to the overthrow of the gylanic cultures, circa 3000 B.C., and the extended perpetuation of an androcratic society and dominator culture worldwide for five thousand years. Where Toffler sees growth over the last five thousand years, defined in technological terms, Eisler sees a long-term regression defined in social and moral terms that is only now (hopefully) being overturned.

In Eisler's mind, a future of further technological advance, without the necessary re-emergence of a partnership culture, would simply be business as usual without any real breakthrough in humanity's development. Consider that if we look at most science fiction on the future, men have written it and it tends to emphasize technological advances. If we look at most future studies research, it is also written primarily by men, and, aside from its emphasis on technology, it also emphasizes economics and politics, typical male pursuits and interests. Yet in the last few decades, many women have begun to write science fiction and there has been a noticeable shift toward social, psychological, and moral themes. When Eisler looks at the future, what she sees are possible developments in these latter areas. Hence, within the context of this discussion on feminist philosophy and visions of the future, it is important to note that both our history and our future are being reinterpreted and rewritten by women. The story of humanity and the meaning of our journey will change. So with a significant transformation of perspective, the total scheme of things and direction of events will change for everyone and every sphere of human life.

For a moment consider three influential contemporary women philosophers and futurists - Hazel Henderson, Margaret Wheatley, and Barbara Marx Hubbard. All three are humanistic in their emphasis on the future, highlighting social, psychological, and ethical themes. Although they are not by any means antagonistic to science and technology, they are all definitely anti-Newtonian and highly critical of the Industrial Era. There are strong elements of holism and evolutionism in their theories. They are also generally spiritualistic and they clearly emphasize the value of cooperation. Both Wheatley and Henderson are very supportive of the value of human diversity in human organizations and human society. One particularly noticeable and strong feature of Henderson's view of the future is that it is very comprehensive in scope, a true indication of a holistic attitude. Henderson considers the big picture and not just technology and economics. In general, the theoretical orientations of these three women futurists seem to fit the model of thinking Eisler describes as gylanic and partnership.

Still, there are numerous male futurists who have similar beliefs. If anything the general perspective of all contemporary futurists seems to fit the partnership model. As Tarnas states, the “masculine mindset” is in an identity crisis, and it is not just women who are reacting against its basic principles; it is men as well. There is a fundamental intellectual reaction against the philosophical dualism, gender stereotyping, and dominance hierarchies of the past. So much for stereotyping the male and female minds! In fact, one other woman futurist and social philosopher, not mentioned above, Danah Zohar,
finds her inspiration in quantum physics, a highly abstract and mathematical discipline that, according to our classic stereotypes, should appeal to the male mind and not the female perspective. Margaret Wheatley is also quite supportive of quantum theory in her approach to the future of business organizations.

We should clearly see from this last point of discussion that the feminist movement is not simply about economics and social status; it is a theoretical challenge to ideas and principles in Western thought. In looking at the future of women and feminism in the next section, we will consider how the human mind and human belief systems could change as a consequence of the rise of women.

**Women, Men, and Future Human Society**

“*In this [future] world there will still be myths sacralizing suffering, as pain and death are parts of the cycle of nature and of life. But there will be many more myths about awe, wonder, and ecstasy that has been given us to feel, including the joy, awe, wonder and ecstasy of physical love. There will be stories about how we humans are conceived in delight and rapture, not in sin. There will be images spiritualizing the erotic, rather than eroticizing violence and domination. And rather than myths about our salvation through violence and pain, there will be myths about our salvation through caring and pleasure.*”

*Riane Eisler*

As we head toward the future, women are making significant advances on both the practical and theoretical fronts. There are, however, disagreements among feminists and women futurists regarding their goals, philosophies, and visions of the future – recall O’Hara’s comments on the different versions of feminism. Let us look at some of the trends and themes, as well as some of the controversies. No revolution occurs without turmoil and conflict. I will begin with the growing area of women’s studies, where the ideas of the feminist movement are being intellectually debated and worked out. Phyllis Chesler notes that there have been great gains in women scholarship and ideas in literature, theology, and psychology. It appears that the future of ideas will clearly reflect the feminist voice. Many women, in fact, think that the second wave has succeeded in its ideological goals, but there are other radical feminists who believe that women need to go further still in the development of a true feminist philosophy. Perhaps, for one thing, women need to move beyond the principle of equality.

Irene Tinker, in “Women and World Development”, remarks that women’s studies have been criticized as being too Western, emphasizing individualism and feminine
autonomy too much.45 (But recall that Eisler, for one, emphasizes partnership rather than autonomy.) Women in other countries and cultures see their identity more bound with family, community, and culture. Should we devalue such attitudes and behaviors? Isn’t part of the point of the feminist movement to assert the central importance of nurturance and family responsibilities? Tinker describes this challenge to American feminism as a Post-Modern critique of women’s studies and the women’s movement. Women scholars need to consider the various roles and values across cultures for both men and women. As noted earlier, Eastern countries tend to emphasize more of a sense of connectedness and conformity across both sexes.46 The sexes are diverse, both across cultures and across individuals, and feminist writers should not fall prey to social stereotyping women, a prejudice they attacked in the last few decades. If part of the philosophical message of feminism is the value of human diversity, then diversity should apply to the sexes as well.

What is also interesting about this criticism of American feminists is that they are accused of emphasizing a view similar to the mindset many of them criticize the Western male of adopting, that is, the male belief in an autonomous and independent self. (But then keep in mind that Americans regardless of sex tend to emphasize excessive individualism.) In their effort to assert their independence and self-worth, beyond a subservient role to males, many feminists have swung to the opposite direction of emphasizing extreme autonomy and separateness. O’Hara notes in fact that some feminists would even wish to disconnect entirely from present human society. Still, if part of the philosophical message of the feminist movement is to move beyond stereotyping the sexes, then the psychological traits of autonomy and independence are as appropriate for females as they are for males. Perhaps any element of autonomy within women would be seen as threatening to the traditional power structure of society. Still the bottom line is that no woman or man is an island, and it is critical that all humans appreciate this fact. Historically though, it seems that men have been more guilty of not seeing this basic fact. Eisler’s vision of women in the future entails a sense of partnership with men, rather than separatism. In fact, she clearly is aware that humans are fundamentally relational realities – with nature and each other.

Peggy McIntosh, in a comprehensive review of “Women’s Studies”, notes that the discipline varies around the world due to cultural differences of values and priorities.47 She defines women’s studies as the study of women developed by women in the late 20th Century. In the United States, women’s studies have centered in academic institutions, and focused on how previous treatments of academic subjects ignored the issue of human bias due to race, sex, and other basic differences among people. In this sense, women’s studies have been part of the Postmodern critique of all attempts in history to write objective accounts of reality. It is a frequent feminist criticism of male writers, scientists, and philosophers that they tried to pass off their masculine-biased ideas as absolute objective truths.

McIntosh relates that there has been the emergence, in the last few decades, of hundreds of degreed women’s studies programs in the United States, and hundreds of research centers and institutions that add to the knowledge base of feminist
Women’s studies have become a general cultural phenomena, including art, books, workshops, conferences, and secondary and primary education programs. It has now spread into English-speaking and European countries, Asia, and Latin America, and most recently into Eastern Europe. McIntosh states that women’s studies strive to be multicultural in perspective, so that women scholars do not commit the same mistake of one-sided bias they accused male scholars of practicing. Especially in this article by McIntosh, it is pointed out that there are differences in women’s perspectives around the world. The feminist movement may be global, but it is not a singular voice.

Women’s studies and the entire feminist movement have been attacked on a variety of grounds. Interestingly, women’s studies have been criticized as subjective, non-scientific, and political - presumably in contrast with traditional academic practices and institutions, which are supposedly objective, non-political, and scientific. This is a fascinating reverse reaction - accuse the accuser of making the very mistake he or she is accusing you of committing. It is hard, though, to see how anybody can say he or she is not political or biased. Part of the male bias in science has been that there was no bias. To recall, contemporary philosophy of science has come to the realization that all science contains elements of interpretation, theoretical bias, and subjectivity.48 Fundamentalism, in the 1990’s, has also attacked women’s studies and feminism in general, but this negative reaction is quite understandable since feminism has been highly critical of Western fundamentalist theology, religion, and social-family practices.49 These challenges to feminist thinking and scholarship, however, reveal what McIntosh thinks is the chief contribution that women’s studies will make toward the Western intellectual tradition. Both academic science and fundamentalist religion have espoused a philosophy of absolute truths, presumably represented in clear objective statements. Yet women’s studies have demonstrated, according to McIntosh, the equal importance of the personal narrative as a valid way of knowing. In fact, insofar as the feminist movement is part of the Postmodern attack on objectivity and one-sided bias of thought, all knowledge claims need to be seen as involving a subjective dimension.50 As Tarnas (1991) has noted the male mindset of absolute detached objectivity misses the essential “feminine” dimension of human relatedness and connectedness to the world.

Moving from the ideological and philosophical directions of the feminist movement to the practical, political, and economic, Kurian observes that although the feminist movement appeared to be set back in the 1980’s, in the 1990’s there seems to be a resurgence.51 (The Third Wave?) Women are a strong component of the new work force and women-owned businesses are increasing steadily. Women, in many modernized countries, are outpacing men in higher education and getting more degrees. Jones points out that family, environmental, and educational issues (that were once recognized as primarily women’s issues) are becoming more important and seen as general global priorities.52 Hence, women’s values are being seen as more significant within all humanity. Snyder presents the fascinating fact that young women in the United States tend to select what once used to be male professional positions as their career goals, e.g., doctor, lawyer, company president, and scientist. Only a minority of young women state that they just want to be housewives and mothers.
Young males in the United States show much less certainty of career goals and the two most common aspirations they list are entertainment and sports. Young American women seem to show a better and more progressive understanding of the future than young males.53

An interesting and varied sample of women’s visions of the future can be found in Cynthia Wagner’s “Women’s Preferred Futures”.54 Wagner summarizes the main themes that emerged from over 20 futuristic scenarios and short essays written by women. She lists the following central ideas of these women’s visions of the future:

- No more glass ceilings in business
- **Equal representation** of women at all levels of government
- Understanding and celebration of **gender differences**
- Understanding and celebration of **diversity** of all kinds, including race and sexual orientation
- It’s OK for women to be single
- Control over childbirth - abortion outmoded, fewer children, and the perfection of contraceptions
- Community and business based child care
- **Human scaled institutions** - local and decentralized - large corporate structures will diminish, being replaced by home based businesses
- Equal education for women throughout the world
- A clean environment based on principles of **sustainability**
- **Less war, crime, and violence** in general - no nuclear weapons
- A future that would **benefit all humanity**, including men

We should note that the main themes are almost exclusively **humanistic** in emphasis. **Social, psychological, moral, and family issues** and **values** dominate over technological, materialistic, and scientific concerns. We should also note that the group of women, who wrote the futurist essays, believe that there are differences between women and men, but these differences should be celebrated rather than suppressed or denigrated. In fact, the value of **human diversity** in general is a central theme within their writings. The **collapse of large hierarchical organizations** is another important element in the above list - smaller social, business, and community organizations, built on the principles of **networking, distributed power**, and grass roots movements, should replace big government and big business, which tend to be highly impersonal and centralized. **Parity** (equal though different) and **partnerships** in human relationships should replace superiority, dominance, and submission.

Another central issue that is quite noticeable in many of the individual scenarios and essays is the importance of **children** and the **family** in the future. How children are raised - the rights of reproduction - learning how to be good parents - individuals, groups, and communities assisting and supporting the process of child care - the professionalization of parenting - and full-time nurturing educators are some of the topics covered in the essays.
Reviewing through the various perspectives presented in this article some other interesting ideas include: **New forms of marriage** involving more than two individuals; a **woman world coordinator**, built up through a grass roots movement on the Internet; both **male** and **female “essences”** being recognized in every individual; a **new cultural renaissance** based on personal fulfillment, spirituality, nurturance, tolerance, and empathy; a representative Islamic view which emphasizes the family as the basic social unit and the women’s role of **caring and nurturing** as being more highly esteemed by society - the Western women has strayed too far toward individualism and the pursuit of selfhood; it is OK to have “**feminine traits**” if a women or “**masculine traits**” if a male – there should be **freedom** to chose one’s personality and we shouldn’t force balance in everyone; **businesses** must get more concerned with social and value issues, e.g., with the community and employee’s children and their care; and a **transformation of religion**, connecting psychotherapy, psychology, nurturing, community, and spirituality. In general, many of these ideas highlight the theme of **personal freedom**, and quite significantly for both women and men.

Let us now focus on Eisler’s ideas about the future and see how they fit into the above general themes we have been discussing. We will see many similarities with the views described above. When Eisler looks at the future, what she sees is a potential revolution in **philosophy**, **psychology**, and **social reality**. She bases her projections on a return to a partnership human society that would pick up a thread of development in our history that has been stymied for the last five thousand years. It is important to re-emphasize that, from Eisler’s perspective, the last five thousand years have involved in many respects a human regression, rather than an advance. A future partnership society would redirect the growth of human civilization back in a positive and progressive direction.

According to Eisler, **science** and **technology** would change from a model of logic, detachment, analysis, and a disregard for issues of value to a caring, intuitive activity that sees reality **holistically** and **relationally**. To recall from the discussion of open systems theory in the philosophy of science reading, science in fact has been moving toward a more holistic vision of nature. Science, technology, and secular thinking, in the effort to adopt a rationalistic and logic-dominated approach to knowledge, have tried to reject and suppress the value of **mythology**. Eisler calls for a re-emergence and re-creation of mythology as an integral part of human reality. This **new mythology** would reassert the primacy of women. In fact, our stories and fairy tales would need reworking, where the woman was no longer weak and incapable and in need of a Prince Charming to rescue her. The ongoing general revolution in consciousness and human culture has involved the “deconstruction” and “reconstruction” of our stories and myths, and the newer myths of our time, according to Eisler, are very reminiscent of earlier partnership societies. Yet, still most of our present myths have little to say about love and human intimacy, and our movies, according to Eisler, tend to glorify violence over sexuality.

Eisler states that androcratic mentality fears **conflict**, since its intent is to maintain a rigid, hierarchical dominance and conformity within humanity. Paradoxically, this leads to a society beset by wars, where one faction is always trying to gain dominance over
another faction and vice versa. In the future, conflict and diversity should be seen as
natural and acceptable; what would be important would be to find constructive ways to
deal with conflict. The prevalent destructive approach to conflict essentially involves a
rejection of conflict because the intent is to eliminate it. Also recall the related point that
a dominator culture creates a ongoing war of good against evil, with the intent to
suppress, if not destroy the “evil side” of humanity. Instead of looking at conflict as a
\textit{win-lose scenario}, we should switch to \textit{win-win} approaches. Individual growth and
the need for affiliation should not be seen as incompatible factors, but rather as
connected. Eisler states that, contrary to the androcratic thinking, personal development
is actually supported through social interaction and affiliation. The "other" is not a threat
to individuality. The modern Western \textit{dualist notion of individualism}, which
emphasizes \textit{separateness} and \textbf{competition}, misses this essential point that
relatedness is integral to the development of the self.

In general, Eisler’s views on future psychology and social interaction can be interpreted
as advocating for a \textit{harmony} through \textit{diversity} and \textit{partnership} rather than a
\textit{harmony} through \textit{uniformity} and \textit{dominance}. In the past, order was something seen
as imposed from "above" - the dominant, single controlling force or figure in a hierarchy.
For Eisler, order emerges in a spirit of cooperation and acceptance of conflict and
diversity.

It should be clear, then, that Eisler’s ideas on dominance versus partnership are closely
connected to the theme of \textit{dualism versus reciprocity}. The dualistic mindset creates a
division within reality and elevates one element of the created dichotomy over the other.
Eisler thinks that we should move beyond this dichotomy. \textbf{Male versus female} is one of
many forms of dualism within human history. Perhaps it is the archetypal foundation of
all forms of philosophical dualism - the psychosocial reality that generated the
philosophical doctrine. The historically accepted stereotype is that the male mind
presumably embodies the principles of \textit{order} and \textit{control} (via \textit{reason}), and the female
mind embodies the elements of \textit{chaos} and \textit{desire} (via her presumed \textit{emotionality}).
This division though is a stereotype and exaggeration as we have seen. Additionally,
femininity presumably embodies the \textit{values} of the \textit{earth}, \textit{life}, and \textit{nature}, which,
somehow in humanity’s aspirations toward a higher realm of existence as represented
in the sky and heavens above, were seen as inferior and “beneath” the ethereal
dimensions of the mind and soul. In this sense, the duality of male and female is the
\textbf{foundation} of \textit{mind-body dualism}. Yet, again this is another artificial division for
women can have cosmic inspirations and men can be grounded, earthy, and
naturalistic. Further, the male has psychologically projected, into the female, the bodily
reality of \textit{sexuality}, attempting to divorce himself from this non-mental, lower realm of
existence. And on this repressive division, the consequence has been to \textbf{armor the male}
against true sexual expressiveness and treat the women as nothing but a sexual
object. For many scholars and historians, sex, as symbolized in the apple, is the real sin
committed in the Garden of Eden. Eve, of course, was blamed for this transgression.

In all cases, the philosophy of a dualism, where one dimension of reality stands
separate and controls the other dimension, is being replaced by a mutually supportive
philosophy of reciprocity. Does this philosophical change basically come down to a shift from a masculine mindset to a feminine mindset? As Eisler is careful to observe a true shift away from dualistic thinking would not involve a rejection of the masculine mindset; we would just enter into a new form of dualism if we took this route. Moving beyond the dualism of the past means valuing both the masculine and feminine dimensions of thought in all of us. For Eisler, the world of tomorrow should be a real partnership of women and men – not another war of the sexes.61

Given the humanistic and philosophical changes Eisler envisions in a future partnership society, various other types of changes should occur. The incidence of war and violence should diminish significantly; our ecology should improve; overpopulation should be brought under control; energy and resource problems should lessen; military expenditures should drop dramatically, with the money now going into care and nurturing activities; crime and mental illness should reduce; the sovereignty and power of nation states should decrease; humanity should show even more diversity as oppressive stereotypes break down; and the amassing of huge amounts of wealth in single individuals, organizations, or nations would come to an end. In essence, we would turn from a society of conquest and competition to a society of love.

Perhaps Eisler's projections are too utopian and her analysis of history and society too simplistic though she documents her historical analysis with a vast amount of documentation. Perhaps she can be seen as blaming the male mind too much for our present dilemmas, but according to her the male is in many ways as much a victim of dominator culture as women. Yet her ideas strike a strong cord of resonance with many other ideas in contemporary science, philosophy, and the study of the future. Further, the control and domination of women within our world has been so extensive and long-lived that if women were to gain an equal place in the workings of society and the thinking of humankind, there is little doubt that our world would change dramatically and fundamentally. There is no denying that the most pervasive form of oppression in human history has been the subjugation of women - a fact that humanity (male humanity, in particular) is just recently beginning to see. Perhaps the real culprit is the dualist mindset, which invariably creates such categories as “inferior” and “superior”, “chaos” and “order”, “nature” and “spirit”, and the war of “good and evil”.

As an appropriate way to conclude this section, let us look a little more closely at the religious and spiritual significance of feminism. We began this chapter with a discussion of the shift from Earth Goddess to Sky God religions. At the center of the philosophical and social debate on the feminine perspective is the issue of how we should view the meaning and value of human existence. At the ultimate level the women’s movement is a theological quest - an attempt to reassert the divine within the female.

Elizabeth Gray, in her article “Women and Religion”, notes “women are the emergent movement in religion today,” challenging the long held position of male leadership in Western religions at least.62 Feminist theology is very critical of male-centered God concepts, for example, in using such expressions as “Father” and “King” to refer to the Supreme Being. Feminist scholarship is also trying to locate and reassert the female
role in religious history suppressed by men. Eisler presents an extensive historical analysis of this spiritual and religious repression of the feminine. In moving beyond a masculine-centered religion and theology, Gray notes that a strong Mother Goddess movement has developed across the world and a women’s mythology has emerged. Spirituality is acquiring new meanings to celebrate women’s experiences, like birth, menopause, and menstruation.

Catholics, Protestants, and Jews alike are being criticized by feminists on their “Pelvic Theology.” There are controversies over celibacy, abortion, gays and lesbians, and the sexual abuses by male clergy. Feminist theologians are pointing out the changing sexual practices of today that traditional religions have condemned and are still unwilling to accept.

These feminist critiques have generated a backlash in fundamentalist religions. For Gray, patriarchal religion has functioned as a significant element of control over women. According to her, fundamentalism wants to put women back in their traditional subservient role. Controlling women, sexually and reproductively, has been a central point of power of men over women. She believes that the increasing violence toward women is a sexual backlash to the perceived threat of women.

It is worth pointing out that Gray strongly connects the conflict between feminist and male-centered theology with sexual issues and reproductive rights. Eisler, to recall, has argued that sexuality and spirituality are intimately connected in Goddess cultures. As I noted earlier, the theme of sex is perhaps embodied in the archetypal narrative of Adam and Eve. Did the bodily and earthly forces of sex overpower the male? But why should sex be seen as a threat to the spiritual and the divine? We have looked at Eisler’s answer to this question. Within a dualist framework, controlling sex is a fundamental form of controlling the body and a theological rejection of the spirituality of the earth amounts to a denigration of sex. It seems to me quite significant that the Western God of Man possesses no sexuality. Within such a view, sex is beneath God. The introduction of the feminine into God would bring sexuality into God’s nature - both the feminine and the masculine would be present, as well as the processes of reproduction, creation, and love. Keeping the feminine out of God is a form of sexual repression in the masculine and dominator mindset.

Sexuality is also clearly related to controlling the future, for sex is the medium of reproduction. But who should control sex? Isn’t sex a cooperative act? According to Eisler, sex is ideally an expression of love, intimacy, and bonding – a “sacred pleasure”. If women have been stereotyped and socially constrained as breeders, controlled by the will of males, then the battleground of the feminist movement is clearly sexual. Our traditional attitudes toward sex reflect the masculine mindset of domination of the mind over the body - a dualistic theology, psychology, and theory of sex. In Eisler’s mind sex should be associated with love and partnership rather than domination and conquest.

What is particularly interesting and revealing regarding the connection of sexuality and spirituality is that humans (and in particular males), who pride themselves on their
elevated and advanced qualities, including their intellect, culture, and art, have until only recently confronted the highly evolved sexual nature that we also possess. Eisler argues that the evolution of “higher consciousness” in humans inextricably involved a co-evolution of enhanced sexuality. Most animals only participate in sex for reproduction and then rather infrequently. Humans on the other hand, have evolved an incredibly powerful sexual culture and participate in sex for pleasure, bonding, expressions of love, and all variety of forms of interpersonal stimulation. Sex in humans is not a lower “biological drive”, but a high expression of human consciousness and social interaction.64

Conclusion:
Love and Human Relations

“…love (is) the mutuality of devotion forever subduing the antagonisms inherent in divided function.”

Erik Erikson

The above discussion of sexuality and male and female relationships leads us to the conclusion that sexual relationships within the future, according to feminist thinking, should move beyond a philosophy of dominance and control. As noted above, sex should be seen as a cooperative act as opposed to a controlling act. In fact, how can we conceptualize love without the ideals of mutual respect, concern for the happiness and freedom of the other, and the willingness to work together toward mutually beneficial ends? More generally, I have noted that human relationships throughout history have often involved domination and conquest of certain people over others and that the ascent of modern civilization has been struggle for equality, mutual respect and benefit, and democratic partnerships.65 The feminist emphasis on cooperative human relationships, as one important facet of the rise of equality and democracy in modern times, challenges the traditional and pervasive social system of dominance and inequality within the history of human interactions.

Although the feminist movement clearly introduces some valuable insights into human psychology, social ideals, and human relationships, we can also see certain undesirable consequences in this social and philosophical development. Fukuyama notes that when any group of humans attempts to assert special rights because of some unique feature the group shares, e.g., race, culture, or sex, social polarization results. According to
him, we should approach human rights as something accorded simply on the basis of being human and not because of special qualities, since such a philosophy works against the general democratic ideal. In the last couple decades a masculine or male movement has emerged which has attempted to assert the special rights and values associated with being a male. When the feminist and masculine movements are set at odds with each other, each perspective gets into blaming the other sex for its problems. Just as feminist thinkers have said that intuition, nurturance, and caring were devalued by the masculine perspective, male movement thinkers have responded with the claim that logic, justice, and competition get devalued within the feminist perspective.

Within the true spirit of **reciprocity** and **equality**, neither the feminist nor the masculine perspectives should devalue the dispositions or traits of the other sex. Secondly, since the supposed “feminine” and “masculine” traits are at best only relative, and are to varying degrees shared by both sexes, attacks on either set of traits constricts and devalues the total richness of what it means to be human. Further, cooperation cannot evolve within a context of competition and mutual blaming. Feminist thinkers would be quick to point out that cooperation (the win-win scenario) lies at the center of their social philosophy and that it has been the masculine perspective throughout history that has emphasized competition (the win-lose scenario). Yet how can we achieve true mutual respect unless we try to see the value in the other position? If males feel feminist thinkers are attacking them, then the goal of cooperation between the sexes is very difficult to achieve. A logic of reciprocity would entail that there is a value in competition and more generally, a value in all those traits associated with the masculine mindset. From an historical perspective, we may wish to move beyond the Newtonian-Industrial Age mindset, yet we need to ask what were the positive features of this approach to life that need to be **balanced**, rather than simply **eliminated**, by complimentary or reciprocal features. Again we do not want a “war of good against evil”.

We should recall that a fundamental theme throughout feminist thinking is the importance of love, caring, and nurturance in the future. If the contemporary world reflects a tradition of valuing economics, technology, and material growth, then future human society could shift toward putting primary emphasis on humanistic issues, such as love, friendship, and human relationships. We could spend just as much time on nurturing, understanding, and valuing love in the future as we now spend on making money and developing new technologies. Love comes in many forms, and our understanding of it has grown with developments in psychology and sociology. Love does not just happen; it is something that requires effort, commitment, and wisdom. A society dedicated to teaching, researching, and practicing love would be much different than our present world. This is Eisler’s vision, as well as the vision of many other feminists and humanist men.

Within this article a key hypothesis was introduced and explained regarding our dualistic philosophy of the past. Its origins and support may lie within a masculine perspective on reality. The alternative idea of reciprocity may derive more from a feminist point of view. “Feminine” and “masculine” refer to mindsets more than particular sexes, although the feminine mindset has been stereotyped as residing exclusively in the female sex.
and devalued as less important than the masculine dualistic perspective. The contemporary feminist revolution is therefore fundamentally a revolution in thinking and human values, altering the future beliefs and practices of both men and women.

This philosophical change has a variety of concrete and practical consequences. We discussed potential changes in spirituality, society, human values, personal identity, human relationships, love, and sex. Challenging the visions and values of individualistic, materialist, and dualistic ideas within our recent past, all these areas of human life and humanistic concern have been emphasized by feminist writers and futurists. For Eisler, the shift from a dominator to partnership philosophy and culture would fundamentally shift our central social values from domination and destruction to nurturance and the giving of life. Love would be seen as the highest expression of the evolution of life and the universal unifying principle. As noted in the beginning of this article, the social and philosophical changes associated with the rise of women and feminist thinking may alter the total fabric of human society.

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