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What More Do We Want? Feminism Redefines Moral Education

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WHAT MORE DO WE WANT?
FEMINISM REDEFINES MORAL EDUCATION

A THESIS
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by
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PROJECT TITLE: WHAT MORE DO WE WANT? FEMINISM REDEFINES MORAL EDUCATION

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I. INTRODUCTION

As a feminist, I chose to write this for political reasons. It seems important to me to disseminate both the feminist critique of education and the ways in which it seeks to transform the university. However, as a woman, I chose to write this thesis for very personal reasons.

Certainly, my own experience in the university has been one of struggle, of marginalization. Many times I have felt estranged from the material, but more importantly, at some very fundamental level, I was absolutely separate from what I was learning. The material, especially in my field, often felt at best irrelevant, at worst, damaging. My experience as a woman was often denounced as inferior (Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, etc.), or ignored entirely.

Often, I feel, we reject outright that which harms us. For a great deal of time, it felt quite difficult—indeed, it felt like a betrayal—to remain a part of the university at all. But I have no desire to reject my schooling out of hand. This paper, then, comes out of a very real need to claim my education as my own. It is crucial for me to feel a part of what I learn. I, like the authors in my study, am not a rejectionist. I don't wish to discard tradition. However, I do wish to add to it and make it my own in some way.

Feminist studies has provided me with a framework to both understand my oppression and to learn to move beyond it.
After studying feminism for several years, it seems quite natural to me to embrace what it has to offer. However, I realize that this may not be the case for everyone.

In this thesis I do assume certain things. I assume that the feminist critique of education, which has been going on for nearly 20 years, is both established and valid. Indeed, the field is old enough to have undergone its own self-critique, eliminating those sources which were simply not examples of clear and distinct scholarship. More important, however, I do assume the validity of the particular feminist charge that the university is exclusive in its vision. In a search for universals, traditional educational structures have often proven themselves racist, classist, sexist, and heterosexist.

Equally important to me has been the feminist critique of the passivity of the university. The emphasis on the intellect as somehow separate from the physical seems to me especially damaging. My own experience has certainly been colored by an inaction both physical and mental. Feminists are reconceiving the university as active (a fact I will expand upon later), and this seems valuable as we struggle for ways to help create truly ethical students.

At this point it seems important to note that, when I utilize the term "university", I do not wish to utilize the term as a generic to denote all universities or, conversely, to refer to one particular school. Instead, I hope the term can stand as reference to the body of academic tradition
known as a liberal arts curriculum.

Additionally, I do not wish, through my use of terms, to assert that all universities are guilty of the failings I delineate below. It is crucial to realize that education is transforming itself daily, and certainly my own educational experience has included a process which is indeed moving closer to the things I propose here. Moreover, most of the authors in this study are teaching right now, thus helping to transform tradition. Feminist educational theory is active, is in process, and I hope to have contributed significantly to that process here.
II. THE FEMINIST CRITIQUE: AN OVERVIEW

To embrace the tenets of this paper, one has to know that there is a deep schism between what post-secondary education could and should be and what it is. In a culture so enamored with its progressive spirit, we persist in creating academic structures that do not meet the needs of many. As Adrienne Rich noted over ten years ago:

"Today the question is no longer whether women (or non-whites) are intellectually and "by nature" equipped for higher education but whether this male-created, male-dominated structure is really capable of serving the humanism and freedom it professes."

(Rich 1979 133)

The problems facing education are many, and it is only fair to note that feminism offers only one set of solutions. But, as I will show, these ideas can transform the American intellectual landscape into a far more inclusive structure. To fully understand these ideas, however, we must examine many things. This thesis will first explore the current feminist critiques of post-secondary education. Additionally, I will examine the specifics of feminist pedagogy. Lastly, I will apply these notions to the task of transforming the college curriculum with special attention paid to the arena of moral education.

Recent years have seen a veritable surplus of critiques of American education. Paying heed to feminist criticism, we find many parts of a single recurring theme: with its emphasis on objectivity, its preclusion towards
assimilation, and its unrelentingly racist, sexist, classist
and heterosexist assumptions, the modern university simply
cannot meet the needs of the scholars of the 1990s. As
Schuster and Van Dyne point out, the university is
increasingly filled with students of color and women:

For the first time in history, women represent the
majority of the college population. More, a grow-
ing percentage of women undergraduates (nearly 20
percent in some institutions) are older returning
students. By the year 2000, more than 30 percent
of all students in America who may apply to col-
lege will be members of so-called "minority"
ethnic groups.

(3)

Current curricula, designed to meet the needs of white,
middle-class males aged 18-22 can no longer be said to serve
the bulk of the university population. It is with this in
mind that we turn to an extensive look at feminist critiques
of education.

While many feminist scholars have offered specified
criticisms of various disciplines, it is helpful to first
examine the more general indictments, both of curricula and
university structure. Belenky notes that, even at women's
colleges, women have felt "stunted rather than nourished by
the incessant academic pressure" that was placed on them
(207). Consequently, women have begun to cite their out-of-
school experiences as most powerful, itself a scathing
critique on the current structure of the university (Belenky
200). Adrienne Rich notes that no women's college today
provides women with what she calls "the education they need
for survival as whole persons in a world which denies women
wholeness" (Rich 1986 2). As far back as 1971, Catherine Stimpson clarified many of the problems with the current curriculum when she pointed out that the experiences of women (and, we can extrapolate, the experiences of students of color and gay and lesbian students) have faced three difficulties: omission, distortion and trivialization (Makosky and Paludi in Paludi and Steuernagel 1). The experiences of women, Judith Shapiro notes, are "seen as a problem requiring some kind of special attention while men are more or less taken for granted" (Langland and Gove 112). Certainly, then, current structures and methods prove difficult for, if not downright hostile to, "minority" groups in the university.

Feminist scholars have been especially assiduous in attacking the emphasis on "objectivity" so prevalent in the modern college. The foundations of this critique can be seen when we note that "objectivity" has been historically linked to knowledge while intuitive senses and/or "subjectivity" have generally been linked to experience. In a culture based on the tenets of an ostensibly objective, detached set of sciences and liberal arts, experience has been relegated to second-class citizenship (Code 54). Throughout Western history, women have been generally considered to only possess experience, while men are possessors of "knowledge" (Code 70). In this schema, then, the detached "knowledge" taught by the university implicitly discredits women’s experience.

The above is especially important as more and more
older, non-traditional students enter the university, students whose life experience does not consist of the formal amassing of knowledge. Makosky and Paludi expand on this:

A fifth pervasive norm [of education] (which is sometimes explicitly stated, especially in "liberal arts" contexts) is the one which assigns intellectual superiority and status to "theoretical" or "pure" courses and programs, and defines "applied" or "practical" areas as inferior or derivative. This attitude is apparent in the status of anything "vocational". Given that many of the things that women have learned about the world are based on practical experience and that they have often been concentrated in the "applied" areas in the academy, the existence of the norm has constituted a disproportionate burden on women. (Paludi and Steurnagel 9)

Paludi and Steurnagel point out a crucial aspect of the feminist critique: in failing to give equal credence to life experience as a life tool for learning, education has failed not only women, but all students. Elizabeth Minnich points this out:

Though liberal arts advocates claim that a liberal arts education instills in students the perspectives and faculties to understand a complex world, instead, students learn about a detached and alienating world outside their own experiences.

(Andersen 228)

Minnich points out to us the estrangement of student from material. If students are constantly examining a world that seems to have no relevance to their own experiences, they will become increasingly distanced from what they are learning. Additionally, philosopher Jane Flax points out that theory—one of the most basic tools of the academy—often seems divorced from students' everyday lives. This leads to a perception of theory and theoretical structure as hostile,
unintelligible, and useless (Pearsall 3). In failing to take into account the life experience of students, the liberal arts curriculum is failing to meet the needs of all students, not just those labelled "minority".

Feminists have also been quick to point out that the basis of a liberal arts curriculum is firmly grounded in a white, male, middle-class, heterosexual set of assumptions about the world. More specifically, it has failed to account for the individual, diverse experiences of students. As Michele Wallace has noted, many conservative scholars, such as former secretary of Education William Bennet feel that issues of racism and sexism are "irrelevant in the context of studying Western civilization" (Simonson and Walker 165). The underlying assumption here is of course based on the notions of objectivity set forth above. If knowledge is pure and timeless, then experiences of color, gender, and sexual orientation become irrelevant. We are discovering more and more, however, that this belief in some sort of "universal" (which often replicates the experience of the dominant group) is simply not valid. Significant new work shows that the concept of the generic— that so pervasive use of "man", "mankind", "he", "him", etc.— to represent all of us, is a "false" generic. Barrie Thorne points out that, in two separate studies by Wendy Martyra and Donald McKay, both male and female subjects pictured men and boys upon reading or hearing the masculine "generic" (Pearson 312). A true generic and, we can extrapolate, a true universal, would
not suffer from this failing. Often, it seems, the knowledge that is presented as universal is often only applicable to the lives of the dominant group that it serves.

Rich goes a step farther, pointing out the other biases often present in traditional curricula:

The basis for dialogue and discussion remains heterosexual, while perhaps a section of a reading list or a single class period is supposed to "include" lesbian experience and thought. In an almost identical way, the experience and thought of women of color is relegated to a special section, added as an afterthought, while the central discourse remains unrelentingly white, usually middle-class, in its assumptions and priorities.  
(Rich 1986 200)

By creating an academic environment where the experience and thought of a dominant group is seen as "universal" and, consequently, "normal", the university is actively sustaining an environment where those who have been culturally marginalized are then academically marginalized also.

Members of minorities in this culture have historically coped with this marginalization by attempting to assimilate themselves into the dominant culture. Laboring under the pervasive assumption that there is one truth, the truth disseminated as "universal" throughout one's education, oppressed societal groups have been forced to deny their own cultural heritages to "succeed" in academia and elsewhere. Adrienne Rich supports this when she points out that, in a "quest for a middle-class standard of life, every wave of immigrants who were not already Anglo-Saxon has been haunted by the pressure to assimilate" (Rich 1986 142). Terry Haywoode also notes that this drive towards "universality"
often requires the cutting of community ties:

When working-class and poor people attend college, they are expected to shed the identities which link them to the families and communities of their youth and to develop the universalist reference frame of middle class culture.

(Bunch and Pollack 52)

In striving to attain the mythical "universal", students seem to be losing a sense of who they are and where they come from. Perhaps the most eloquent description of the dangers of assimilation comes from Native American lesbian author Paula Gunn Allen:

Failure to know your mother, that is, your position and its attendant traditions, history, and place in the scheme of things, is failure to remember your significance, your reality, your right relationship to earth and society...The American idea that the best and the brightest should willingly reject and repudiate their origins leads to an allied idea that history, like everything in the past, is of little value and should be forgotten as quickly as possible. This all too often causes us to reinvent the wheel continually.

(Simonson and Walker 13-14)

Rich echoes this when she notes that "to assimilate means to give up not only your history but your body, to try to develop an alien appearance because your own is not good enough" (Rich 1986 142).

Janice Raymond points out that pressures of assimilation might prove especially dangerous for women in academia. In order to succeed, women are expected to possess traditionally "male" qualities of rationality and assertiveness, yet women are still expected to maintain traditionally "feminine" behaviors (Andolsen 169). They are asked, in effect, to live in two worlds, making a positive conception of "self" quite
difficult.

More importantly, perhaps, we find that the tendency towards universalizing one "truth" explicitly devalues women:

Whatever self-confidence is gained by the woman student in mastering the terms defined by such a male curriculum is gained at the loss of the sense of rootedness and connection that comes from affirming others like herself. To learn to discount women either explicitly, through the study of misogynist literature, rhetoric or method, or implicitly, through the invisibility of women in the curriculum, means that a student will devalue her own experience as a woman.

(Elliot in Schuster and Van Dyne 49)

To be constantly instructed in only one tradition—a tradition that does not fit—forces many students to rid themselves of those cultural, racial and sexual heritages that separate them from the supposed "universal". The assimilationist tendencies in academia force all students to give up various parts of their personal heritages.

The above criticisms have been focused on general indictments of both curricula and intellectual atmosphere. However, feminist critiques of education have also offered specific indictments of various disciplines. As these are quite widespread, let us limit ourselves to a glance at some of the critiques of history, political science, and philosophy.

Perhaps the most long-lived, the feminist critique of history is certainly the most recognized. Many colleges that would never consider offering a women's studies program have proved amenable to offering women's history courses. The feminist critique of history is quite connected to the
critiques, current and past, that have come from scholars of color. By creating and teaching a history focused only on public figures and public victors, history has all but ignored the experiences of women and people of color. Women's history and histories written and taught by people of color are only beginning to reclaim parts of the world. Scholars have noted frequently, however, that past damage may have been too great. Dominant histories may have fragmented the past far beyond total reclamation:

To write as a complete Caribbean woman, or man for that matter, demands of us retracing the African part of ourselves, reclaiming as our own, and as our subject, a history sunk under the sea, or scattered as potash in the cornfields, or gone to bush, or trapped in a class system notable for its rigidity and absolute dependence on color stratification. On a past bleached from our minds. It means finding the art forms of these ancestors and speaking in the patois forbidden us. It means realizing our knowledge will always be wanting (emphasis mine).

(Cliff in Simonson and Walker 59)

Cliff's realization—that her own process of assimilation is so great that she may never reclaim certain aspects of her self or her culture—is a powerful denunciation of the tendency in the university to search only for what we hold in common with the dominant tradition. The sense of loss—that we are somehow without a vital part of ourselves—pervades the literature of feminists, gays and lesbians, and scholars of color.

Historian Carl Degler has pointed out the fact that, if we are truly to speak of ourselves as an integrated, egalitarian society, we must have a history that proves useful to both men and women (Langland and Gove 83). The
feminist critique of history strives to point out, as do the various critiques from people of color, that current history does not meet the criterion set forth by Degler.

Nannerl Keohane has offered a valuable critique of political science in her work on women and authority. She points out that a crucial question—how might women's ways of exercising authority differ from those of men—has been almost completely ignored in the field of political science (Langland and Gove 88). The assumption, again, is that male ways of exercising authority, (as were male ways of thinking and learning), are timeless and standard. Additionally, Keohane points out that study of politics, with its constant focus on public assertions of authority, has ignored arenas where women typically hold and share power, arenas such as convents, harems, families and nursery schools (Langland and Gove 89). This critique is of course closely related to the above critique of history, with its unrelenting focus on the "state" and public achievement. It is important to note, however, that feminism does indeed recognize that there are just and unjust ways of sharing power, and that these can come from either sex. Feminist theory as regards empowerment does not seek to say that women per se will exercise authority more fairly, but rather that women have been ignored entirely in determining how to distribute power.

Last, we find many valuable feminist examinations of the field of philosophy. Feminist critiques of this field are often closely related to the criticisms of objectivity
offered above. In a drive to "standardize" human truths and ways of thought, philosophy has often denied the importance of individual experiences. Additionally, a tendency towards "objective" evaluations of thought, behavior and morality, has led philosophers to discount the importance of emotion and feeling. Susan Sherwin, herself a feminist philosopher, explains:

While philosophers seek objective truth, defined as truth valid from any possible viewpoint, feminists consider it important to look to the actual point of view of the individual speaking. Philosophers believe that emotion and personal feeling are impediments to truth.

(Code 19)

A more vehement critique comes from lesbian author Ellen Shapiro:

Traditional Western philosophy tries to dilute complexity by positing the existence of universal laws of human nature and by defining only certain ways of thinking as valid. This hierarchical set-up allows a select few to be closer to "the truth" and thereby attain the system's validation.

(McEwen and O'Sullivan 119)

Though philosophy has historically striven to create and name laws that would prove universal, in doing so, it has relied on the "truths" offered only from white men, most often of a propertied class. This has created a philosophy whose assumptions simply do not prove useful, to return to Degler's criterion, for all members of a increasingly diverse society.

All of the above feminist critiques--be they specific to disciplines or generally related to curricula--center around one important factor: the traditions, assumptions, ways of thought, and values of one privileged group have been named
as universally valid. Feminism, along with a myriad of "liberation" movements, seeks to point out that other viewpoints are not only valid, but necessary if we are to continue to name our society and our education as inclusive.
III. SPECIFICS OF FEMINIST PEDAGOGY

As we have certainly seen, feminist thought has done a great deal of work investigating and indicting current practices in academia. However, feminism does not limit itself to mere criticism. Many valuable, practical ideas have been offered as solutions by feminists. Feminist pedagogy, like all truly radical new ways of thinking and naming, has been constantly in flux since its assumption. It is indeed difficult to define specific aspects of a movement which names as one of its primary virtues an unwillingness to be defined. Nevertheless, there are various specifics of feminist thought about education that can be enumerated here. It can be said that feminism seeks to transform knowledge in general, the structure of the university, the curriculum, the teacher, the way we think about and utilize power, and the classroom itself.

When feminists speak about education, it seems that invariably one idea can be agreed upon: feminism seeks to transform the perspective of the university. To merely "add women and stir", as the phrase goes, is simply not enough when thinking about curricular change. Rich notes that the driving force behind feminist thought in all arenas is the question, "how can things be other than they are?" (Rich 1986 190). Feminism seeks to radically alter education, not to merely reform some arenas. This is fully commensurate with the tendency found in more overtly political radical
feminism, which seeks to alter society rather than reforming it along existing lines. Feminism names women's experience as vital:

Women and women's experiences are fundamental to the development and vitality of every discipline. As each discipline begins the urgent task of including women's studies within its perspectives, it aids the transformation of the whole seascape of knowledge... the study of women in any one discipline affects all of academia.

(Langland and Gove 6)

It is incumbent, then, upon a women's college to both teach women what they need to know and to strive to change "the landscape of knowledge itself" (Rich 1986 l). Perhaps most important, Canadian philosopher Lorraine Code notes that

...there are genuinely new ways of thinking, and it is important to find these ways instead of trying simply to adapt the old ways so that they include and accommodate women.

(Code 5)

First and foremost, then, we find that feminism seeks to alter the whole terrain of knowledge, the coinage of the university.

Explicitly avoiding the previous conception of inquiry as objective, as devoid of emotional content, feminist education seeks to create passionate teachers and learners. Lesbian author and teacher Cherrie Moraga points out that one of the primary reasons she teaches Lesbian and feminist studies is that there is "nothing like a passionately lived connection when you're teaching a subject" (Cruikshank xii). Moraga explicitly states that she teaches because the material is important to her personally, specifically because it attaches to her everyday life. This is a radical
departure from the previous conception of education as mere transfer of impartial knowledge.

Several essays in Margo Culley and Catherine Portuges' Gendered Subjects collection stress the importance of allowing what Culley calls the "intrusion/infusion of emotionality" into the classroom (19). She goes on to stress that it is precisely this emotional content that can begin to heal the fragmentation that education has suffered from in the past. As noted above, education and theorizing often seem irrelevant to the individual lives of students, leaving them "devoid of any deep commitment to its content" (Raymond in Culley and Portuges 58). Feminist educators strive to reunite the student with her/his fields of study, to create an atmosphere where both intellectual and emotional understanding are equally vital.

Equally important in feminist thought about education, we find a goal of transforming the structure of the university as regards disciplines. Feminism has often eschewed the divisions created by culture, refusing to acknowledge clear lines between the personal and the political, the subjective and the objective, etc. Sally Miller Gearhart has pointed out that radical feminism "is opposed to hierarchies" and seeks, instead, to freely share experience and knowledge (Bunch and Pollack 4). Keeping this paradigm in mind, feminist thought has often attacked the structure of the university as regards departments. With such a heavy emphasis on both individual disciplines and
traditional authority structures, "departments" may become divisive and counterproductive.

Economist Nancy Barrett has called for women's studies to remain interdisciplinary, as "the study of women...[in] any one discipline is likely to lead squarely into another" (Langland and Gove 107). Two of the foremost feminist educators, Adrienne Rich and Nel Noddings, have both called for this transformation of structure. Noddings recommends that, in order to truly educate, we must "dismantle the professional structures that separate us into narrow areas of specialization" (Noddings 188). To be bounded by disciplines is to name only certain parts of the whole scope of knowledge as valuable, rather than utilizing a myriad of arenas to better understand the world. Rich explains how this might work, here using a feminist literary critic as an example:

I want to ask the feminist critic of literature to inform herself not just with training in literary exegesis but in a concrete and grounded knowledge of the feminist movement, which means reading not only books by women, but feminist newspapers, periodicals, pamphlets, articles; studies on women battering, welfare mothers, sexual and economic struggles in the workplace, compulsory sterilization, incest, women in prison, etc.

(Rich 1986 89)

Rich and Noddings are calling upon the feminist scholar, the feminist educator, to wholly ground her/himself in explorations of women in culture. To fully understand any one discipline we must certainly draw upon others. Feminism seeks to blur the lines of demarcation that have historically divided the university.

Feminism is also striving to redefine the curriculum.
More specifically, feminism seeks to create a truly inclusive curriculum. As we noted earlier, current curricula accept the experiences of white men as normative. Andersen has noted that the whole premise of women's studies generally rests on the idea that "knowledge in the traditional academic disciplines is partial, incomplete, and distorted because it has excluded women" (Andersen 224). Certainly it is true that our knowledge will always be "partial" in varying degrees; the feminist critique, however, points out that our knowledge is wanting in very specific ways.

How can we truly be said to be "learning" when we are woefully ignorant of a wide variety of traditions? Andersen offers an eloquent explanation of why an inclusive curriculum requires more than simply adding women's studies:

> Creating an inclusive curriculum means more than bringing women's studies into the general curriculum because it also means creating women's studies to be inclusive so that women's studies does not have the racist, class, heterosexist, and cultural bias that is found in the traditional curriculum. (Andersen 239)

To create a curriculum that feminists would be comfortable naming as inclusive will require careful attention to a wide variety of traditions.

Again we see the foundation of radical feminist political ideas influencing thought about education: it is not enough to merely mimic existing structures and ways of thought. Women's studies must consciously and carefully strive to be truly inclusive in its examination of the world, and feminist scholars have realized that current structures
simply do not provide for this. To be inclusive in this manner proves no easy task, however, as feminism calls on people to actually unlearn the dominant ways of culture:

For white feminists, who make up by far the largest group of academic feminists, [true feminist criticism] involves deliberately trying to unlearn the norm of universal whiteness...[and] of universal heterosexuality.

(Rich 1986 88)

Feminism calls upon scholars and educators to strive for true inclusiveness, for a curriculum that will include the experiences of all.

The need for inclusiveness has also created a need for attention to personal history. Students must learn that their own experience is crucial, that they are indeed included in their own educational experience. The problem of the current detachment so prevalent in education can be solved in large part by paying heed to the history of each student. Rather than teaching students, as current courses often do, that only public figures have "important" experience, education should strive to name each personal history as vital. This is especially important as past public figures have hitherto been generally white, male, ostensibly heterosexual, and economically privileged, thus excluding many students. With attention to personal history, however, students learn that their own experience and the experience of those around them is important.

Witherell and Noddings offer a valuable explanation of how exploring personal histories can help create an inclusive curriculum:
Through telling, writing, reading, and listening to life stories—one's own and others', those engaged in this work can discover the power of the self and the integrity of the other, penetrate cultural barriers, and attain understanding of one's history and one's possibilities.

(Witherell and Noddings 5)

Michele Gibbs Russell has pointed out how, in her experience as a person of color, storytelling has been one of the oldest and most important ways to build "historical consciousness in community" (Bunch and Pollack 274). The understanding of history through story—through connection—provides students with an understanding of their own importance, their own contributions. Frances Maher goes one step further, noting that as feminism "legitimize[s] the study of ordinary lives from multiple perspectives...students and teachers can use their own experience in the creation...[and] illustration of course topics" (Culley and Portuges 41). Finally, Mankato State scholar Carolyn Shrewsby delineates a specific teaching tool which allows the introduction of narrative. She suggests

...the use of oral interviews by students as part of a class. [This leads to] a discovery of the extraordinary strengths of relatives, community residents, neighbors, again, models from those we have been taught to ignore or overlook.

(Pearson 330)

In this format, students are called upon to recognize the contributions of "ordinary" people—including themselves.

To place importance on the individual experience of each student serves a twin purpose: students gain an understanding of other traditions through the personal narrative of others while learning through their own narrative that their life
experience is important. This, then, helps to create a truly inclusive curriculum.

Changes wrought by feminism make it incumbent upon each teacher to transform her/his teaching. Certainly the most pervasive change has come about in teaching style, as feminists have called for teaching to be much less hierarchical than traditional methods. Feminist teachers are called upon to consider themselves "co-learners" with each student in the classroom. In viewing all experience as important, the teacher is able to bring his or her own background into the classroom, in turn allowing students to speak to their own personal needs in a classroom setting.

Makosky and Paludi have noted that it is important for the classroom to be a "safe space" where women can feel good about themselves and other women (Paludi and Steuernagel 24). Certainly, creations of "safe spaces" are quite a departure from the traditional roles of teachers. A still often-held, view of the classroom views that space as a mere location for the transmission of knowledge. Expanding this notion of a "safe space", we can instead turn the classroom into an arena where all students can affirm others and receive affirmation. Paludi and Steuernagel also point out the effectiveness of team-teaching in the feminist classroom (19). Team-teaching points out, by definition, both differences and commonalities among professors. This may prove especially helpful for younger college students who are still inclined to view teachers in traditional, distanced, authoritarian ways.
Admittedly, in these days of severe budget constraints, tools such as team-teaching may not be an option. However, several scholars suggest many valuable ways for the teacher to transform her/his classroom. The first step has already been discussed extensively, that being to "drop the masks of our own non-involvement" (Culley et al. in Culley and Portuges 17). Teachers must first bring their own passion about their topics to the classroom, thus helping to create a fervor amongst students. Additionally, it is crucial for the professor to shed the illusion of impartiality. By definition, one teacher's perspective is simply that—a perspective. It is of necessity partial, biased. Academia has hitherto scorned this belief, but feminism embraces it. Knowing that we as teachers possess only part of a truth allows for substantial input from students. It allows students to feel more comfortable offering contributions, at the same time assuring them that their interpretations are valid. This is not to succumb to the trap of relativism, however, thus claiming that all interpretations of any sort are equally permissible. Rather, the feminist structure allows for careful respect of a well-constructed viewpoint.

Evelyn Torton Beck also points out the necessity of what she calls "teacher self-disclosure" (Bunch and Pollack 287). It is important that the professor acknowledge her/his connection to the material being taught. This can take many forms. Beck's example is drawn from her own experience as a lesbian teaching women's studies. Again, we return to a
common theme: It is impossible to separate what we teach from who we are. Feminist teachers are learning to embrace this fact.

Last, but perhaps most crucial, feminist pedagogy has sought to transform the nature of power in the classroom. This was clearly seen above in the discussion of non-hierarchical teaching styles, the foundation of sharing power in the classroom. As most, if not all, feminist teachers embrace the ideas of "shared power and responsibility" in the classroom, this redefinition of power is quite widespread (Makosky and Paludi in Paludi and Steuernagel 9). As is the case with many ideas in feminist education, the need for a transformation of power is intimately tied to feminist political goals of shared power. Rich points out that, when feminists speak of power, they are generally talking of a power concerned with having "the potential to possess and use one's energy of creation--transforming power" (Rich 1986:5). The notion of power as a force to be shared by all is clearly a radical departure from traditional classroom dynamics, and feminist theory is only beginning to explore how power might be shared in the classroom.

Many feminist scholars and theoreticians have offered valuable ideas about how to alter classroom structure. Generally, these suggestions are drawn from each scholar's own experience as a teacher. Some of these suggestions center around the issue of classroom space; others emphasize teaching style. An important element in all, however, is the
conscious commitment to an egalitarian classroom. First, Barrie Thorne offers suggestions on how physical space in the feminist classroom can be utilized:

Structures of power and participation can be altered by stepping away from a podium and moving closer to the class, by moving chairs from rows and into a circle, by the teacher’s sitting on the side rather than at the end of a rectangular table.

(Pearson 317)

Thorne, in conjunction with Cherie Kramarac and Nancy Henley, has also noted that women's speech tends to be more collaborative and interactive, and that women participate more when the discussion is informal (Rohrlich and Baruch 183-4). An interactive pedagogy, with its emphasis on discussion, can help draw out those students previously marginalized. Maher expands on the effectiveness of discussion:

The teacher may have been responsible for the selection of the reading and the framing of the problem, but the discussion legitimates the experience of all in analyzing it. Hence, both teacher and student can play the role of both expert and learner.

(Culley and Portuges 43)

Lastly, Schniedewind has pointed out the importance of community-building in the classroom. Students need to have a sense of who the others in the course are, what concerns, passions and fears they bring to the classroom. She suggests tools such as "refreshments during breaks, a potluck dinner, and the integration of poetry and songs into the course" as helpful tools for bringing people together (Bunch and Pollack 263). As we can see, within the feminist reconception of the classroom, all aspects of classroom life are transformed.
IV. FEMINIST MORAL EDUCATION

As feminist teaching strives to give weight to individual experience, it struggles with how this might be translated into a moral vision. Things can certainly be said to be altered when we approach each person individually, rather than as a member of either a privileged or stigmatized group. To pay heed to individual needs makes it incumbent upon a teacher to view each student as both utterly "subjective" and utterly important. In disciplines such as moral philosophy, which have hitherto sought to create "objective" standards for evaluating human behavior, feminist pedagogy can certainly effect radical changes. Just as the structure of the university can be transformed, the structure of ethics—the way it is taught and the way it is developed by individuals—can be radically altered. Raymond has pointed out that there is a "dearth of feminist theory that has moved beyond theories of women's oppression to theories of women's empowerment" (22). It seems important to pay heed to this critique and begin developing new ways of thinking about ethics and empowerment.

As I noted at the beginning, one of the reasons I have looked to feminist theory to solve the problems I see in the university is that it seems to offer an attempt at unifying our experience in some way. This seems especially true when we are speaking about the concept of "disciplines" or departments, within the university. Until very recently,
there seemed to be a strict mental "division of labor" at the post secondary level. Of late, however, we have seen increasing tendencies among disciplines to examine, critique, and affirm one another. This seems especially true in the case of ethics which, in the feminist paradigm, pervades all of what we do. So, while it may seem odd, at first glance, to concentrate only on moral education, my feeling is that it will prove inclusive of all parts of the university.

Feminist moral theory often explicitly contrasts itself to traditional Western ethical theories. Two dominant ethical systems in Western thought—utilitarianism and deontology—can both be called impartialist ethics. By using this term, I refer to a style of ethics that by definition excludes the particular care of one for another. Both Mill’s "greatest good for the greatest number" and Kant’s categorical imperative are bound to the notion that the concerns of everyone be equally weighted in the decision making process. In contrast, feminism pays heed to the relationships between individuals, pointing out the special care of one human for another.

Much of Western ethical tradition also centers around the striving for "objectivity"—for separation from our situations, from our desires. The systems provided to us by men such as Mill and Kant try to offer us a framework in which our mental biases and, often, our physical desires, can be eliminated. Feminist moral thought, on the other hand, strives to give weight to our emotions—our "subjective"
experience. Additionally, feminism attempts to explore ethics which affirms the experiences of our bodies, of ourselves as flesh and blood beings.

Lastly, an underlying but distressingly consistent misogyny in Western philosophical tradition often alienates women. Plato’s political philosophy in *The Republic* may indeed be valuable, but how is a female student to overlook Plato’s continuous assertions that women are inferior? Aristotle’s work on friendship proves quite good, but his statement that women by definition are unsuitable for friendship makes it nearly impossible for the female student to read this with impunity.

I mentioned earlier that I am not a rejectionist. I do not seek to reject all that has come before me. Nor, I feel, does feminist philosophy. Feminist moral philosophy seems to provide an avenue to reclaim ethical thought. We find ourselves in an arena where we are able to include our own experience, our desires, in our academic studies. In this light, feminist moral thought becomes a very careful tradition. It strives to retain the value of existing thought, while adding to it at the same time. It seems inadequate to assume that the exclusive vision we have previously utilized can serve us all.

Feminism is redefining morality and moral education in many ways, and significant among those ways is the reunification of the personal and the political. This refusal to separate spheres of one’s life again finds its
foundation in overtly politicized radical feminism, which declared long ago that there were no clear lines between one's personal and political needs and concerns. Andolsen expands upon this:

We cannot accept rifts between knowing and doing or among separated areas of life. What happens in the kitchen or the bedroom is significant for what happens in boardrooms and on city streets. In ethics, this means that we cannot accept artificial dichotomies between "personal ethics" and "social ethics" or "public ethics".

(Andolsen xx)

This drive to unify arenas of life is certainly related to the critique of objectivity set about above. Here, as before, feminism seeks to unify all arenas of human existence. Within the framework offered here, we find we can no longer engage in the kind of separation of person from situation, thought from action, rationality from emotion, that has gone on for so long. The assumption behind traditional "justice" ethics--that we can somehow create objective, universal rules, seems quite debatable, especially when ideas about morality in the West have been drawn chiefly from the experience of white males. Indeed, Makosky and Paludi point out that the classic moral studies (i.e. Kohlberg) were done using only male subjects, again assuming male experience as normative (Paludi and Steuernagel 5).

The feminist indictment of this lopsided theorizing has led many authors to a creation of new ways of thinking about morality. Notable among these has been the work of Noddings, who has consciously shifted away from what she calls "rule-bound" moralities to begin to create an ethic of caring.
This ethic of caring, as with other feminist ethical theories, requires close attention to the needs of individuals, again making it a wholly "subjective" (would that we could resist the pejorative connotations of that word!) enterprise, much as feminist teaching.

As we have noted, a major shift away from tradition occurs in feminist thought about ethics. Choosing to avoid becoming an offshoot of a classic moral theory such as utilitarianism or deontology, feminist ethicists, just as feminist educators, place great value on individual experience. A theory that is not fully cognizant of human anguish and pain cannot be said to be a theory in this paradigm. Philosopher Sheila Mullett explains the foundation of feminist thinking as regards ethics:

Feminist moral consciousness begins with an anguished awareness of violence, victimization, and pain. The highly developed capacity of human beings to avoid painful experience, to ignore, suppress, deny, and forget the agonies of life, is shifted aside and they fill our consciousness. We lose our moral callousness and see the violence around us.

(Code 114)

Feminist theory, then chooses to remain utterly aware of the experience of women (and men) as physically and emotionally victimized.

Just as feminism chooses to be explicitly aware of our pain, it also strives to be aware of many other notions previously excluded from ethical thought. Where previous moral theories have sought to entirely eliminate the "subjective" or experiential world, feminism embraces it and makes it a cornerstone of feminist theory. Indeed, authors
such as Carleton teacher Maria Lugones have explicitly called upon feminist theory in all arenas to be based upon "the variety of real life stories women provide about themselves" (with Spelman in Pearsall 21). The call has come from many quarters for women to especially pay heed to the experiences of their bodies. Finally, Rich calls upon feminist ethicists to always back theory and scholarship with awareness of "flesh, blood, violence, sexuality and anger" (Rich 1986 154).

Feminist moral theory also calls upon its practitioners to embrace an ethic of individual friendship among women. Of course the most significant work on this topic has been done by philosopher Janice Raymond, in her work, A Passion for Friends. (However, Mary Hunt has done some significant work on the topic, this time from a theological perspective, in her new book.) Friendship creates for women a vital support system that allows them to continue their work in the world. Additionally, placing profound value on friendship changes greatly our previous notions about relationships in our lives. Emphasizing bonds between women affirms the importance of women, at the same time creating a community—a vital process if we are truly to speak of "ethics in action". Raymond notes:

Friendship achieves this reunification of ethics and politics because it gives feminist political activity a moral passion and depth...an adequate feminist politics needs the depth and value of a moral passion and purpose.

(Andolsen 173)

Raymond is asserting that friendship—creating connections
between ourselves—is a moral enterprise. More importantly, in Raymond’s reconception, friendship becomes a treasured moral good to strive for. Again, this is a radical change from previous ethical conceptions which asked us to strive for detachment and impartiality.

As we become increasingly aware of each other not as separate moral agents but as members of a community, the student-teacher relationship can be altered dramatically. As each teacher strives to meet and be met as an individual, the boundaries (and power imbalance) of the traditional teacher-student relationship might well blur. As power becomes shared by all in the course, rather than held in the hands of the teacher alone, the role of moral educator shifts. It becomes incumbent upon the teacher to help in the search for knowledge and ethics and, at the same time, to admit that she/he is constantly undergoing the same process. In reconceiving moral education, the teacher becomes a sort of guide, drawing out each student. The feminist moral educator is a whole person, with biases, desires and fears, as is each student. Together, they transform the feminist classroom into a vehicle for both understanding previous moral theory and searching for an ethic which enables them to get along in the world.

It is also important to remember that feminism calls upon us to be inclusive in many ways. Significant among these is a trend toward making our own thoughts more unified, less polarized. Code tells us that we can:
...start thinking in terms of differences rather than dichotomies. Differences need not be construed as bipolar opposites, nor as pairs of terms pulling against each other on a quasi-conflictual model, as is almost inevitable in dichotomous thinking. Rather, one might recognize a plethora of differences, shading into one another and reciprocally influencing one another.

(81-2)

By eschewing the system of opposites, often academically termed the "adversary" method, that has been utilized so long, feminist educators and students can learn to approach each other as whole people. Audre Lorde notes:

To examine Black women's literature effectively requires that we be seen as whole people in our actual complexities—as individuals, as women, as human—rather than as one of those problematic but familiar stereotypes provided in this society. (McEwen and O'Sullivan 271)

In creating a school where people are seen as individuals, where, as explained above, their experiences are taken seriously, a major change can occur. Moral problems become real issues centered around individual conflicts rather than textbook case studies. Indeed, a new program at the University of Massachusetts which "encourages students to reflect on their own experiences and deal with their own prejudices" has proved quite successful in this regard, says Anne J. Herrington, director of the program (quoted in Watkins A13). Other teachers at the school have noted a "greater gravity" in students' writings and a "greater sensitivity" to serious social issues (Watkins A13).

The Massachusetts program proves a significant departure from the standard conception of the university as a place to obtain timeless, value-free "information". Within our
framework here, we can see the goals of schooling shifting radically. At present, while the university is still regarded as a place to merely obtain knowledge rather than being an active creator of it, the "knowledge" often imparted does not seem to truly prepare students for the world or to impact them as important to know. This knowledge does not meet their needs, respond to their concerns, or serve their fears. Within the feminist paradigm, those needs, those concerns, form the basis for learning. The social and political concerns of students and teachers alike thus prove particularly important within this framework.

Since feminist moral theory has tied itself so closely to the larger ideas of the feminist movement, feminist theorists are called upon to be activists. This implies a radical shift for the scholar-educator, who is now asked to take a role outside the classroom, which, at the same time, impacts the classroom itself. For feminism, theory alone is inadequate, and social activism becomes crucial. Feminist moral theory shows no interest in creating purely theoretic arguments which deny political implications and affiliations (Sherwin in Code 21). Standing firm beside the widespread refusal of feminists (and feminism) to draw lines partitioning the public from the private, the intellectual from the activist, theory in a feminist paradigm is unalterably tied to activity. This proves a major shift:

Feminist scholars are, by definition, social activists, and this brings them into conflict with their peers who have been socialized to believe that advocacy and scholarship are incompatible.
Where previous scholars have and educators have sought to minimize experience, believing that it might skew the "objectivity" of their mental perceptions, feminism occupies itself with embracing activity, combining scholarship with action in a concerted effort to alter the status quo radically.

These goals of change are often explicitly tied to feminist political goals. If women are not safe physically, how can they hope to prosper academically? Rich explains:

The undermining of self, of a woman's sense of her right to occupy space and walk freely in the world, is deeply relevant in education. The capacity to think independently, to take intellectual risks, to assert ourselves mentally, is inseparable from our physical way of being in the world, our feeling of personal integrity. If it is dangerous for me to walk home late of an evening home from the library because I am a woman and can be raped, how self-possessed, how exuberant can I feel as I sit working in that library?

(Culley and Portuges 25)

Issues of creating a safe world for women are thus intimately tied to educational priorities of feminist teachers. Moreover, Cruikshank points out that it is incumbent upon education to create a greater tolerance for diversity (xi). Just as feminist political theory strives to be inclusive, feminist moral education must be constantly concerned with fostering respect for self and others. Additionally, Andersen notes that one of the main premises of feminist theory is a belief that what we study can change our lives (225). Thus, feminist teachers encourage their students to alter not only their studies, but themselves and the world
around them. This is quite different from traditional moral education curricula, with an often too-heavy emphasis on "intellectualizing".

In our reconception of the university and moral education, teachers take on an even greater importance than they currently hold. A teacher becomes responsible for the conscious creation of a student who will be ethical in a very deep sense, utilizing ethics that respect diversity and challenge prejudice. The teacher is thus responsible (along with each student) for creating a curriculum that is useful and relevant to all, thus being truly inclusive.

Additionally, teaching can then serve to unify many of the ideas that form the basis of feminism:

Teaching is both a public and private activity. It involves both narrative and analytic ways of knowing. It requires a quest for both the general and the particular. It strives to deepen our understanding of respect for the self and the other...it asks us to address the moral and aesthetic as well as the practical aspects of everyday experience.
(Witherell and Noddings 12-13)

We have noted time and again that the transformation of the academy is intimately connected to other goals of feminism. Consequently, it is impossible to speak of the transformation of moral education without discussing the transformation of the surrounding community. Feminism proposes--demands, rather, a connectedness between university and community, public and private, education and everyday living. When we "study" ethics, we enter fully into striving to understand what an ethical life consists of--not through the abstractions of the great philosophers, but, rather, by
examining the community around us. This conception of ethics requires, as Nona Plessner Lyons points out, an understanding of morality as "aware, connected, and attending to others" (Gilligan et al. 21). More specifically, we cannot separate our teaching of morality from our daily experiences. Rather, as we have seen, the converse is true. We must embrace everyday experience, embrace the resources of our communities, in order to truly teach ethics.

In this paradigm, the structure of the university cannot remain wholly separate from the community. No longer can we rely on a neat division between academic and otherwise. Moral education becomes the province of all disciplines in the university in conjunction with parents, corporations, local political institutions and volunteer organizations. Community service would become crucial, not only for students but for the university itself; Rich points out that the feminist conception of a university would require a college to organize its resources and research around problems in the surrounding community (Rich 1979 152).

Many feminist educators from a wide variety of disciplines have explored this notion of utilizing community resources to teach students. Gloria T. Hull and Barbara Smith suggest that, while striving to teach a Black feminist analysis of violence against Black women, teachers could have speakers from a local rape crisis center and a battered women's refuge (Bunch and Pollack 25). Students are forced to understand violence against women not merely as a classic
moral question, but, rather, as a problem the community must deal with.

Perhaps the most extensive work on the college-community connection has come from Terry L. Haywoode, in her discussion of her own participation in teaching a college for neighborhood women. The program was conceived as community based: located in the neighborhood itself with offices and other resource buildings nearby; additionally, class scheduling was designed to "reflect the needs of the community women" (Bunch and Pollack 53). This college strove to create a symbiotic relationship with the community much like the one described by Rich above. Haywoode notes:

As the neighborhood was to be a resource for the college, so the college would be a resource for the neighborhood. The college would generate data and information that would be helpful to neighborhood residents. New ideas for neighborhood preservation and renewal would be a product of the college program. The program itself would be an important community institution. (emphasis mine) (Bunch and Pollack 53)

Projects in all disciplines at the college were explicitly linked to community needs: a legal studies course created a survey of the needs of working-class neighborhoods, a medical studies group examined alcoholism in the community, and a local history class produced family and neighborhood histories (Bunch and Pollack 55).

Through projects like the above, students become intimately aware of their surroundings. They begin to understand that their everyday actions have moral consequences in their communities. They acknowledge that the
seemingly commonplace—teaching, raising a family, etc.—are actually ethic-intensive activities. Finally, they begin to reconceptualize moral behavior itself, departing from the concept of a rational, separate individual making moral choices. Instead, morality becomes what Lyons calls "a type of consciousness", a way of living (Gilligan et al. 21). The student learns that she/he is constantly faced with ethical decisions that require careful and caring attention.
V. CONCLUSION

It is very difficult to be specific about what tools feminism can utilize to improve moral education. First, as Raymond pointed out above, we have been guilty in the past of spending too much time on critiques and too little on the creation of new ways of thinking, feeling, and acting. Moreover, feminism is happily encumbered by its refusal to define or limit itself, leaving us very open to new ways to nurture ethical behavior. To be fair, in recent years, feminist pedagogy has consciously searched for ways to answer its critique of the university. As we strive to create a truly inclusive moral education, we must be continually exploring the resources of all disciplines and the communities in which we take part. Only then can we begin to escape the limited conception of both education and morality that has hampered us for so long. Our world is expanding in so many ways— in ways hitherto unknown to us and in ways that we have forgotten but are beginning to reclaim—that we now have many new opportunities, educational and otherwise, at our fingertips. It is up to us as educators to take advantage of these.
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