

Excerpt from
TALKING THE WALK, The Grassroots Language of Feminism
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Chapter 13

THE FEMININE PRINCIPLE

There are those who believe that the will toward the feminine principle is *the* idea whose time has come. Apparently, its force is about to precipitate a dramatic change in the world for the better. Because of this claim (and necessity), I did due diligence trying to find an acceptable definition of this force. Instead, what turned up was a variety of opinions, myths, contrivances and nonsense.

Cosmologically, the feminine principle is the fundamental cosmic life force, and the female deity, which created the world. National mythologies, peoples and religions share this belief—Japan, Native Americans, Hinduism and Buddhism are examples. This is the central idea that motivates contemporary women to seek to reestablish spirituality around the female life force and which has resulted in various pagan, goddess, witchcraft and healing teachings. Christianity, misogynist at the bone, is now using the feminine principle as a device to reveal the “other face of Jesus” and the “humanity” of Mary and Mary (Virgin and Magdalen), as it tries to hold itself together while coming apart at the seams.

In the popular narrative, the feminine principle runs the gamut from the sublime to the ridiculous. It apparently holds the yin-yang polarity together; is said to be the chief sponsor of pleasure and the Romantic poets; is the driver of the right-brain; the essence of fertility, energy and the imagination; and responsible for the masculine principle! And if you believe the book, *Business and the Feminine Principle*, it will even make you money.

After my detour in and out of everyone else’s agenda, the feminine principle was still waiting to be made intelligible. And as I did not find a rational interpretation, and having come this far on the Road to Wisdom, I decided to define it myself.

Defined

To start with—ontologically—the feminine principle identifies the primary process of a woman’s life as it incorporates the rules and values of natural law. It represents the integrity inherent in human nature fundamental to the body, mind and spirit of human wholeness. At its core, it is the authority of female being, in and of itself—essential and without domination.

The feminine principle is germane to itself and is a concept upon which a philosophy and practical ethics can be built. It is grounded in the collective human experience and the inheritance that all women share; that which all women know in themselves and in one another. Defining the feminine principle translates into a decision to create a place for the self in the whole order of things.

FIRST:
Survival of the self;
and the procreation and protection of life.

At its simplest, the female principle—as motive force and controlling idea—is survival. Women’s natural state embodies the privilege and responsibility of procreation. This fundamental principle of women’s existence relies on her individual health and wholeness. Any woman can create a life and women are therefore first and foremost creative. Women create community at its most basic level.

The male rendition of this reality is that the ultimate purpose (teleology) of the female sex is to reproduce—likening us to biological incubators, whose role is to reproduce them. Because this has been the “story of our lives,” up to this point in history, we have organized our psyches around the imperative that we exist to bear and serve others. According to this reading, women do not have needs, interests and desires of their own and by extension means that women are non-people. The survival of the self, first, clears up this aberration.

When our survival is threatened, it requires that all normal reservation and social constraints are to be dispensed with immediately. At these times, naivete and passivity are the worst traits a woman can have: duplicity and violence are often required. Your moral obligation is to live and the action that drives the life force is heroic, not shameful.

SECOND:
Fulfillment of human nature;
development of all potential to its highest ability.

The feminine principle operates on the personal and communal level. On the personal level, it requires us to enjoy our lives, use reason freely and avoid suffering. In turn, it requires us to turn our compassion and tolerance toward others. Women have knowledge of the needs of all living things and recognize the essential cooperative nature of human existence. We have a specific, operational wisdom for what one needs in order to thrive.

As Americans, the feminine principle requires us to understand the balance between our beloved individualism and our essential social existence. Generic to women, the feminine principle trumps the so-called “rights of man” idea of society, which was never intended for women.¹⁵

As a normal part of the interrelatedness of things, all the -isms, -ologies, -arians and theories of all other principles are there to be understood for their prejudices and limitations and rejected except for those parts which recognize and compliment the feminine principle. As women define themselves, we also define the quality and quantity of our concern and sympathy for others and other species, based on reason and proportionality according to the principle of the development of our highest—and not our lowest—abilities.

¹⁵*The Rights of Man*, Thomas Paine, 1791. Paine ascribed the origins of rights to nature. Accordingly, “the sole purpose of the government is to protect the irrefutable rights inherent in every human being.” Sounds good on paper. Two centuries plus later, women are still waiting to be recognized as equal enough to even get in on the discussion.

The feminine principle is not tailored to empathize with impotent idealism and the shape of others' grievances where they do not relate to women's common priorities.

**THIRD:
Embodiment and will of the principle.**

The feminine principle plays out its meaning in our individual lives and our interrelationship with all living things. The will of the feminine principle completes itself in relationships. The moral and political rules of nature are within us and extend themselves in the development and mutuality of all people. It is a precept from which other truths are to be derived and clarified. Embodying one's own humanity, expressing it and manifesting it is the challenge of the will of the feminine principle.

The feminine principle has nothing to do with exchanging misunderstanding with understanding. It is beyond cause and effect and removed from polarities. It is not reflective of anything male and does not coexist or exist in tension with male anything, i.e., it is inherently liberated from patriarchal problems. Therefore, it does not trade on the idea that women are morally or ethically different from or superior to men.

The will of the feminine principle is to establish women's values in the culture and reflect them to all people and at all levels of society. Inherent in these values is the expectation and obligation of men to uphold their own responsibilities in the mutuality of human development, the holistic progress of society and culture, the preservation of our natural world and sustaining and caring for our offspring.

Femininity

Femininity is a touchy subject these days. The reactionaries have hurled back that an independent, intelligent life can only be had at the expense of what is "feminine"; that is, making oneself unattractive to men. There are different ways of looking at this subject: as the thing itself and the pseudo-femininity fabrications that purport to qualify that which is inherently female.

Essentially, femininity is a natural property of being female. It is specific to the female gender and marks our character and behavior when we express our creativity and authentic selves. It means being comfortable in our female bodies and spending time maintaining and enhancing ourselves if we so desire: performing women's aesthetics. In equal measure, it entails accenting our attributes, punching up our persona, and impressing our flesh and blood selves—sensuous and sexual—on the humanity around us. Emphasizing one's attributes and putting our best foot forward is not hyperbole, nor distortion, but a creative act.

The way we learn to be feminine and how we display it, is individual and should have nothing to do with men, but of course it does. Femininity is just another item in the long list of women's attributes that have been colonized by the male.

. . . When one is an object, not a subject, all of one's own physical and sexual impulses and interests are presumed not to exist independently. They are to be brought into existence only by and for others—controlled, defined and used.

Jean Baker Miller, M.D.,
Toward a New Psychology of Women

Two parasites have intertwined themselves with pseudo-femininity: the economic and the social. Femininity, the commodity, exists to satisfy male standards of appearance as defined by the gargantuan enterprise founded on the appearance of women's bodies. In this category are the things they say we need to attract them. Every imaginable accouterment—gunk, goo, thing, activity—promises that if we buy into it, they will come. Consumed by this belief, we keep the commercial masquerade going and men on top. While appearance takes care and resources, the pursuit of extraneous femininity—which inevitably causes time and money problems—distracts us from other issues, including self-development. Getting women sucked into commodity femininity at the early phase (it now starts with four and five-year old girls) predicts your presence later, as well. Later comes the “procedure” phase of the femininity industry, when women present themselves to go under the knife to be plumped up, cut down and implanted with foreign objects so they can appear “more feminine” (which often means just having bigger tits) or as though they have not aged, thereby complying with what is required to meet the requirements of commodity femininity.

The other parasite attached to pseudo-femininity is the sexist, social melodrama played out directly with men. This is femininity prescribed as a single standard of belief and behavior that confines women to superficial performance, passive traits and sexual availability. This is known as the feminine ideal, and is the foundation of women's side in the gender drama. Its other aspect is the feminine mystique, the fabrication that makes us think our profound and sovereign femaleness is only achievable when we can attract that special guy, who will set it free and make it come true.

This femininity means heightening certain physical and behavioral aspects at the expense of maintaining one's own identity and power. It often escalates into toxic femininity—debilitating exaggerations of overdone female appearance and behavior. Most women are not aware of how this is used against them, but there are many aspects of social, cultural, economic and political powers which deem this failing to be maladjusted and sick and which exploit it as such.

Our part as losers in this feminine scenario is masked by the pride of the “women's intuition” package. But don't be fooled. Cultivating a lily-livered, watered down versions of possible selves is not intuitive. Intuition is innate judgment: recognizing the truth or falseness of something according to natural laws—judgment that relates to what it means to be human. Sexist femininity is the survival skill of women operating from a position of weakness. Feminine wiles are developed as a response to the male's exercise of pleasure or displeasure. It results when women are unable to stake out an authentic existence for themselves and are incapable of influencing the reality around them to accept their individual authority.

END of Excerpt, **THE FEMININE PRINCIPLE & Femininity**