**'The Academic Woman':
Minds, Bodies, and Education in Britain and Germany,
c. 1860 - c. 1914**

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To my parents,
Liz Rowold and Harald Rowold

Abstract

The thesis is a comparative study of British and German ideas about female nature, as reflected and developed in debates surrounding women's entry into university education. It consists of two parts, respectively on Britain and Germany. Contending conceptions of middle-class women's minds and bodies and their related social roles are explored from the time of the emergence of demands by the organized women's movements in each country to reform middle-class women's education, until after the institutionalisation of women's higher education.

The thesis examines how in Britain scientists and physicians became the main participants, as well as feminists, in the public debates about women's education. As for Germany, it focuses on the intervention of academics, physicians, racial hygienists, and sexologists in the debates. It examines how feminists reconstituted, developed, and contributed to conceptions about female nature and women's social roles. It traces the ideas developed respecting the female mind and body and women's ensuing place in society; how they were contested; and how they changed in the period under examination. The contextual nature of the construction of gender difference is highlighted by the examination of two

distinct national cultures, which display differences and similarities in the cultural meanings at stake, affecting ideas about female nature and women's social roles and feeding into the education question.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1869 the first women's college in England was established just outside Cambridge. More than thirty years after the opening of Girton College, in 1900, Baden became the first *Land* in Germany to admit women to its universities. In Britain and Germany access to higher education constituted an important aim of the organized women's movements. The attempt to introduce women into spheres of education hitherto open only to the male sex sparked off intense debates about female nature and how it related to women's social roles. These debates became a site for the negotiation of gender difference, in which those in favour and those against the demands of the women's movement, took up, discussed, developed and contested each others' views. This thesis is a comparative study of the constructions of gender in Britain and Germany in these debates, covering the period from the emergence of the organized women's movement in both countries during the 1860s until after the institutionalization of female higher education around the time of the outbreak of the First World War.

In the debates there were similarities, but also significant differences between the two countries. In Britain, feminists' claims for reforms in women's education were located in a context of contesting notions of women's rights as individuals and perceptions of

natural differences between male and female individuals which underlay their distinct positions in society. The emergence of ideas of universal equal rights since the Enlightenment had been paralleled by the scientifically-based elaboration of differences between the sexes, which justified the continuing inequality of rights between men and women.¹ The separation of the public from the private sphere was formulated in terms of biological difference, in which women were constructed as finding their fullest expression in the family, and men in the public domain.² Demands for women's admission to higher education challenged conceptions of differences between the sexes, which underlay middle-class social organization.³ The notion of women's right as individuals to the same education as men was negotiated in terms of the natural abilities of the female sex. As those who decoded the laws of nature, scientists and physicians acquired a high profile in the assessment of the implications of reforms in female education. Feminists' demands to make higher

¹Londa Schiebinger, The Mind Has No Sex? Women in the Origins of Modern Science (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), part. chapter 8; Thomas Laqueur, Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), part. 193ff.

²Ornella Moscucci, The Science of Woman: Gynaecology and Gender in England, 1800-1929 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 3; Mary Poovey, Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England (London: Virago Press, 1989), p. 77.

³For an excellent study of "border cases", which potentially challenged the social arrangement of separate spheres, see Mary Poovey, Uneven Developments.

education accessible to women led into controversies about the biological implications such changes would have for women as individuals and as mothers of future generations.

In Germany similar conceptions of natural differences between men and women underlay an ideological separation of the public and the private. Nature had established women's domestic role as wives and mothers. The biological implications of higher education for women were also aspects of the debates in Germany. But in the German context the concept of the rights of the individual was more closely linked to the notion of duties to society as a whole. What was best for the individual was not necessarily best for the whole. In approaches to changes in women's education the effects on the nature of the female individual were not centralized in the same way as in Britain. Rather, these changes were to be assessed in terms of their effects on the social organism.

The demands of the women's movement for greater female education drew upon an universalistic ideal of *Bildung* (self-formation through education). However, notwithstanding this ideal, *Bildung* was also a means to reinforce class boundaries and a separation of spheres between the sexes in the middle classes. *Bildung*, scholarship, and culture were central to the self-understanding of the educated middle class. The admission of women to university was debated in terms of the

respective roles of middle-class men and women in the production and reproduction of cultural goods and values, as well as in terms of the role of *Bildung* in the inner development of the two sexes. In both countries, participation in the education debates supposed the negotiation of the meanings of sexual difference and how it related to social roles.

The cultural construction of gender has received much attention from scholars of a range of disciplines over the last decades. "Sex" (anatomical difference) has been distinguished from "gender" (culturally variable understandings of differences between men and women). Yet questions of how much is natural and how much is constructed continue to inform feminist debate. Standpoints are embraced which range from biological essentialism to theories that not only gender, but also sex is culturally constructed.⁴ The body itself has been increasingly historicized:

we cannot speak of the feminine body as if it were an invariant presence throughout history. There is no fixed, experimental base which provides continuity across the centuries; our perceptions and interpretations of the body are mediated through language and surrounding culture.⁵

The possibility of drawing a boundary between the

⁴Jill L. Matus, Unstable Bodies: Victorian Representations of Sexuality and Maternity (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), pp. 7-8; Mary Jacobus, Evelyn Fox Keller, Sally Shuttleworth, "Introduction", in *idem* (eds), Body/Politics: Women and the Discourse of Science (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 3-4.

⁵Jacobus *et al.*, "Introduction", p. 4.

construction of gender identity and an essential biological differentiation has been called into question. It has been shown that the category of nature and the articulation of sexual difference itself are dependent upon social contexts.⁶

In feminist analyses of cultural constructions of female nature the role of the natural sciences has constituted a special focus of interest because of the long-standing involvement of science in putting forward natural explanations of social differences. Historians, sociologists and philosophers of science have come to argue for the social production of science.⁷ It cannot be separated from questions about

how power struggles among various groups, institutional rivalries, competing research programs, cultural worlds, and social processes unique to a particular, historically specific collective order structured the pursuit, indeed the very definition, of scientific activity.⁸

In the social constructivist view of science, gender is of importance as a subject area; it also constitutes an analytical category for the history of science as

⁶*ibid.*; Matus, Unstable Bodies, p. 8.

⁷Evelleen Richards, "Darwin and the Descent of Woman", in David Oldroyd and Ian Langham (ed.), The Wider Domain of Evolutionary Thought (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1983), p. 57; Janet Oppenheim, "Shattered Nerves": Doctors, Patients, and Depression in England (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 4.

⁸Regina Morantz-Sanchez, "Feminist Theory and Historical Practice: Rereading Elizabeth Blackwell", History and Theory (1992), p. 52.

such.⁹ Science, it has been pointed out, is deeply gendered in its "presuppositions, methods and operations".¹⁰ The development of the identification of "objectivity, reason, and mind as male, and subjectivity, feeling, and nature as female" has been demonstrated.¹¹ Hence, as Ludmilla Jordanova has maintained: "scientific knowledge is quite centrally about gender". Just as "forms of knowledge are dense with gendered assumptions", the "content of natural knowledge mediates gender relations by virtue of its goal to explain nature".¹²

Interest in the role of science in naturalizing gender roles has led to an extensive Anglo-American historiography on the Victorian intersection of science, medicine and gender, upon which this thesis draws.¹³

⁹Ludmilla Jordanova, "Gender and the Historiography of Science", British Journal of the History of Science, 26 (1993), pp. 473-474.

¹⁰J.R.R. Christie, "Feminism and the History of Science", in R.C. Olby, G.N. Cantor, J.R.R. Christie, and M.J.S. Hodge (eds), Companion to the History of Modern Science (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 105.

¹¹Morantz-Sanchez, "Feminist Theory", p. 52.

¹²Jordanova, "Gender", p. 478.

¹³See, for instance, Cynthia Eagle Russett, Sexual Science: The Victorian Construction of Womanhood (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989); Elizabeth Fee, "Science and the 'Woman Question', 1860-1920: A Study of English Scientific Periodicals" (Ph.D., Princeton University, 1978); Moscucci, Science of Woman; Elaine Showalter, The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture, 1830-1980 (London: Virago Press, 1987); Patricia Vertinsky, The Eternally Wounded Woman: Women, Doctors and Exercise in the Late Nineteenth Century (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990); Vern Bullough and Martha Voght, "Women, Menstruation, and Nineteenth-Century Medicine", Bulletin of the History of Medicine, 47 (1973), pp. 66-82; Jill Conaway,

Earlier scholars have sometimes maintained that Victorian scientists' pronouncements about the nature of the sexes were "unscientific".¹⁴ Susan Sleeth Mosedale thus argued in 1978 that the theories of Victorian scientists on gender were "corrupted" by their "emotional commitment to the traditional concept of the female's place in society."¹⁵ Hence scientific views on gender were questioned by arguing that scientists were emotionally involved in their research, and that this research was

"Stereotypes of Femininity in a Theory of Sexual Evolution", in Martha Vicinus (ed.), Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Age (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972), pp. 140-154; Janice Law Trecker, "Sex, Science and Education", American Quarterly, 26 (1974), p. 353-366; Susan Sleeth Mosedale, "Science Corrupted: Victorian Biologists Consider 'The Woman Question'", Journal of the History of Biology, 11 (1978), pp. 1-55; Flavia Alaya, "Victorian Science and the 'Genius' of Woman", Journal of the History of Ideas, 38 (1977), pp. 261-280. The focus on notions of femininity so far has dominated this field of enquiry. There are some studies, however, that take a relational approach such as Oppenheim, "Shattered Nerves"; and Mark S. Micale, "Hysteria Male/Hysteria Female: Reflections on Comparative Gender Construction in Nineteenth-Century France and Britain", in Marina Benjamin (ed.), Science and Sensibility: Gender and Scientific Enquiry, 1780-1945 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), pp. 200-239. As for Germany, the scientific construction of gender has received less attention than is true of Britain. For examples of existing studies see Barbara Duden, Geschichte unter der Haut: Ein Eisenacher Arzt und seine Patientinnen um 1730 (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1987); Johanna Geyer-Kordesch, "Geschlecht und Gesellschaft: Die ersten Ärztinnen und sozialpolitische Vorurteile", Berichte zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte, 10 (1987), pp. 195-205; Claudia Honegger, Die Ordnung der Geschlechter: Die Wissenschaften vom Menschen und das Weib 1750-1850 (Frankfurt a.M.: Campus Verlag, 1991); Anna Bergmann, Die verhütete Sexualität: die Anfänge der modernen Geburtenkontrolle (Hamburg: Rasch und Röhling, 1992).

¹⁴See, for example, Bullough and Voght, "Women", p. 66.

¹⁵Mosedale, "Science Corrupted", pp. 1, 3.

often undertaken with the purpose of lending scientific authority to preconceived social ideas. Objective findings were tarnished by scientists' biases.¹⁶

Some, such as Mosedale, maintained that the implications of this were that a society "requires a body of research uncontaminated by bias, upon which, along with other considerations, all its members may reflect in arriving at moral policy."¹⁷ Others, however, stressed the point that scientific pronouncements were inevitably shaped by the social context.¹⁸ The concept of a value-free and neutral science was questioned.¹⁹

In conjunction with the spread of a social constructivist view of science, in more recent years the distinction between "good" value-free and socially neutral science and a science "corrupted" by prejudice has been made less frequently. Victorian science in general, and scientific ideas on gender in particular, have come to be seen as cultural products. The separation between the "truth" of science and the Victorian cultural

¹⁶Bullough and Voght, "Menstruation", p. 81; Mosedale, "Science Corrupted", p. 54. See also Trecker, "Sex", p. 353.

¹⁷Mosedale, "Science Corrupted", p. 55.

¹⁸See, for example, Trecker, "Sex", p. 354; Elizabeth Fee, "Science and the Woman Problem: Historical Perspectives", in Michael S. Teitelbaum (ed.). Sex Difference: Social and Biological Perspectives (New York: Anchor Books, 1976); *idem*, "Science and the 'Woman Question'".

¹⁹See Ruth Hubbard, "Have Only Men Evolved?", in Ruth Hubbard, Mary Sue Henifin and Barbara Fried (eds), Women Look at Biology Looking at Women: A Collection of Feminist Critiques (Boston: K. G. Hall, 1979), pp. 10-11.

context is no longer made. Gender is seen as an integral and sustaining part of Victorian culture, and science itself as part of that culture. It is not only that in the Victorian context science was invoked to lend scientific authority to social roles, but Victorian science itself depended upon cultural ideas about gender.²⁰ Hence, theories of gender are not seen to be the result of the personal sexist and anti-feminist bias of scientists, which led to unscientific pronouncements, but rather they are analyzed within a larger cultural framework.²¹

Studies of late-nineteenth-century scientific views on gender are generally placed against the backdrop of the women's movement. It has frequently been stressed that Victorian science confirmed narrow social ideals of women's roles.²² Anne Digby, for example, has argued that Victorian medical men constructed a "biological straitjacket" which transformed "natural laws" into "social conventions that reinforced restrictive gender roles."²³ Such an approach is often underlined by the belief that there existed a unanimity among male

²⁰Matus, Unstable Bodies, p. 7.

²¹See, for example, Richards, "Darwin"; Moscucci, The Science of Woman.

²²See, for example, Showalter, Female Malady, pp. 121-122.

²³Anne Digby, "Women's Biological Straitjacket", in Susan Mendus and Jane Rendall (eds), Sexuality and Subordination: Interdisciplinary Studies of Gender in the Nineteenth Century (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 193.

scientists about a fundamentally different female nature, and women's ensuing social role. Thus Cynthia Eagle Russett in Sexual Science has argued that Victorian scientists in their views about gender difference "display such a remarkable degree of uniformity that it is fair to say that a genuine scientific consensus emerged by the turn of the century."²⁴

Although drawing on these works, this thesis is more influenced in its methodological approach by studies in which attention has been re-directed to examine the internal debates and contestations in the construction of gender²⁵ under the influence of the late-Foucauldian notion of discourse as multiple and contested.²⁶ It has been indicated that bio-medical representations of sexual difference were not unanimous and univocal. Moreover, these representations were riddled with inconsistencies and ambiguities.²⁷ As Jill Matus has pointed out, this suggests that bio-medical discourse might have been "more

²⁴Russett, Sexual Science, p. 10.

²⁵See, for example, Nancy Theriot, "Women's Voices in Nineteenth-Century Medical Discourse: A Step toward Deconstructing Science", Signs 19 (1993), pp. 1-31.

²⁶See Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality: Volume I, An Introduction, trans. Robert Hurley (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1990); originally La volonté de savoir (Éditions Gallimard, 1976); *idem*, Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977, ed. by Colin Gordon (Hemel Hemstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1980). See also Joan Scott, "Deconstructing Equality-Versus-Difference: Or, the Uses of Poststructuralist Theory for Feminism", Feminist Studies, 14 (1988), pp. 33-50.

²⁷Matus, Unstable Bodies, p. 5. See also Poovey, Uneven Developments for this approach.

open, exploratory, and less ideologically obedient" than previously thought.²⁸

With regard to the question of female education, in the Anglo-Saxon historiography it has frequently been argued that in face of the demand of the women's movement for female higher education physicians and scientists promoted theories about the injurious effect of too much mental effort upon female health.²⁹ Many physicians and scientists indeed formulated theories about gender difference which reinforced women's exclusion from higher education. However, as I will show, scientific and medical theories could encompass notions which favoured a better education of the female sex. Moreover, scientists did not univocally adhere to uniform notions of female nature, nor did they have a monolithic view on the meanings of sexual difference. The education debates did not simply run along "male scientists versus feminists" lines. Scientists also disagreed with one another. Victorian "sexual science" did not constitute a stable and impenetrable armoury for the rejection of reforms in women's education. Theories about female nature were open

²⁸Matus, Unstable Bodies, p. 6.

²⁹ See, for example, Showalter, Female Malady, pp. 124-126; Digby, "Biological Straitjacket", pp. 192-220; Carol Dyhouse, "Social Darwinistic Ideas and the Development of Women's Education in England, 1880-1920", History of Education (London), 5 (1976), pp. 41-58; Joan N. Burstyn, Victorian Education and the Ideal of Womanhood (London: Croom Helm, 1980), pp. 84-98; Janice Law Trecker, "Sex, Science and Education", American Quarterly, 26 (1974), pp. 352-366.

to be interpreted, reconstituted and developed in a multitude of different ways.

This thesis argues that women's writings about female higher education contributed to these theories. Thus it disagrees with a number of feminist critics and historians in this respect. Some scholars who have analyzed the writings of male scientists have maintained that women's voices were silenced by their pronouncements on female nature.³⁰ Several other influential studies of Victorian scientific ideas on female nature, such as Cynthia Eagle Russett's study of the Victorian scientific construction of gender, Elaine Showalter's work on women and madness, and Ornella Moscucci's history of the science of gynaecology,³¹ on the other hand, rarely mention women theorists, giving the impression that women were absent from, or of little consequence in, the formulation of these ideas and that they were simply powerless receivers of them.

Historians who have focused on nineteenth-century feminist ideas have interpreted them in a variety of

³⁰Ruth Hubbard, for example, in 1979 argued that there were very few (American) women who drew attention to the "androcentrism" of Darwin's evolutionary theory. Moreover, she implied that those who did, developed less sophisticated, or "scientific" theories than male scientists. These women did not have the professional status and scientific experience as such men like Darwin and Spencer. Their books, she says, were hardly acknowledged at the time (see Hubbard, "Have Only Men Evolved?", p. 16); see also Digby, "Biological Straitjacket", p. 214 for a similar argument.

³¹See Russett, Sexual Science; Showalter, Female Malady; Moscucci, Science of Woman.

ways. Some have suggested that feminists developed a language radically different from that of men.³² This approach can be criticised for implying unanimity among feminists.³³ Moreover, the notion of a female language, outside of and separate from male language, has been rejected. Women's voices have been located within the context of prevailing discourses.³⁴ Just because women, Judith Walkowitz has pointed out,

are excluded from centres of cultural production, they are not free to invent their texts... They are not innocent because they are on the sidelines. They are bound imaginatively by a limited cultural repertoire, forced to reshape cultural meanings

³²Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, for instance, in "The New Woman as Androgyne: Social Disorder and Gender Crisis, 1870-1936", has argued that feminists in the United States initially developed a language that differed radically from the medical model men had developed. It was only later, with the rise of sexology, that they adopted a language invested with male sexual metaphors which ultimately led to the disappearance of the women's movement as a political force (see Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, Disorderly Conduct (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 245-296).

³³In her study of women physicians in the United States Regina Markell Morantz-Sanchez has rejected the representation of women physicians as having a coherent voice which was critical of male-dominated medical practice by focusing on the divergent ideas of Elizabeth Blackwell and Mary Putnam Jacobi (See Regina Markell Morantz-Sanchez, Women Physicians in American Medicine: Sympathy and Science (New York: New York University Press, 1985). See *idem*, "Feminist Theory" for a reassessment of her interpretation of the theories of these two physicians). For a study which highlights the diverging ideas, as well as internal contradiction of feminists' arguments about sexual morality, see Lucy Bland, Banishing the Beast: English Feminism and Sexual Morality, 1885-1914 (London: Penguin, 1995).

³⁴See, for instance, Theriot, "Women's Voices"; Bland, Banishing the Beast; Ann Taylor Allen, Feminism and Motherhood in Germany, 1800-1914 (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991).

within certain parameters.³⁵

This, however, is not taken to imply a female (or human) lack of agency.³⁶ Individuals are subject to historically specific cultural constraints. Discourses, however, are not unified and monolithic. This means that there are openings to develop and reconstitute them.³⁷

Nineteenth-century women were not devoid of agency. They became historical actors through setting up women's colleges (in Britain), campaigning to open higher education to women, going to university, and becoming professionals. Thus they became agents who inaugurated change. Women, however, were also important in the formulation of ideas about gender difference. It is this which will be my main focus. There have been examinations of the negotiations of concepts of female nature in English feminists campaigns around sexual morality.³⁸ No detailed study of feminist ideas on female mental powers, however, has been produced. In this thesis I will examine how women in Britain and Germany participated in discussions on the nature of the female mind and its relationship to the body.

I will emphasise that members of the women's

³⁵Judith R. Walkowitz, City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London (London: Virago, 1992), p. 9.

³⁶*ibid.*

³⁷Allen, Feminism, p. 10-11.

³⁸See Bland, Banishing the Beast.

movement did not speak a language separate from that of men. There existed, I argue, no clear dividing line between genders in terms of the language spoken and cultural context inhabited. The women and men who contributed to the education debates drew on the same cultural premises in the formulation of their ideas. Ideas about gender were sites of competing definitions and interpretations. I explore how feminists formulated their arguments in the light of contemporary understandings of female nature and how it related to women's position in society, and how they contributed to and reconstituted these conceptions.

This approach towards nineteenth-century feminist theories has been taken by historians such as Lucy Bland³⁹ and Ann Taylor Allen, in her study of feminists' involvement in issues of children's welfare and family policy in Germany.⁴⁰ These excellent studies, however, largely neglect to examine ideas other than those of feminists. Formulations of feminist theories, however, were contingent on a larger context of views on gender, views that were continuously negotiated. In addressing the question of female education here I will pay equal attention to the ideas formulated by women and by men, by those in favour of, and in opposition to the women's movement, thus establishing an integrated picture of the interaction of the two and stressing how the one

³⁹See Banishing the Beast.

⁴⁰See Feminism.

illuminates the other.

The comparative approach adopted will highlight the contextual nature of the construction of gender difference.⁴¹ By addressing different national cultures, I show the similarities and differences in the cultural meanings at stake that affected ideas about the female mind and body in Britain and Germany. The arguments formulated by feminists in the education debates in both countries were influenced by the specific national contexts. Historians of German feminism have frequently highlighted the importance of concepts of gender difference within the bourgeois women's movement. Barbara Greven-Aschoff has maintained that

Emancipation leading to equal rights - according to what the German bourgeois women's movement idiosyncratically stood for - found its legitimation in the postulate of a "feminine" cultural function, which was seen to lead to a moral regeneration of society. This would be possible only when the "nature" of women was given the freedom to develop without hindrance. The bourgeois women's movement did not argue in terms of natural rights, but rather started from a dualist anthropology and traditional gender stereotypes.⁴²

This, it has frequently been maintained, was a distinctive characteristic of the German women's

⁴¹This thesis examines the cultural construction of concepts such as nature, male, female, race, primitives, savages, superior and inferior races, fit and unfit individuals, normal and abnormal persons, etc. I have mostly omitted putting such terms in inverted commas, purely for reasons of readability, not out of an adherence to essentialist notions.

⁴²Barbara Greven-Aschoff, Die bürgerliche Frauenbewegung in Deutschland, 1894-1932 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981), pp. 43-44.

movement. Contrary to Anglo-American feminism which was mostly based on the principle of equal rights for men and women around 1900, German feminists, most particularly those of the moderate wing, it has been argued, "were concerned about a contribution of *woman* to culture and the difference between the sexes".⁴³

The interpretation of the German emphasis on gender difference has constituted the subject of much historical debate. Richard Evans, one of the first historians to focus on the relationship between the women's movement and the wider national history,⁴⁴ has maintained that there was a shift in the dominant principle underlying feminism. Arguing that the movement was of little importance before the 1880s, Evans contended that it was from the turn of the century until 1908 that the women's movement espoused a "more clearly defined feminist stance", by favouring equal-rights policies.⁴⁵ After this date, however, the movement "abandoned liberalism" when it drew in large numbers of previously politically inactive members. It retreated from the "emancipatory

⁴³Elke Frederiksen, "Einleitung: Zum Problem der Frauenfrage um die Jahrhundertwende", in *idem* (ed.), Die Frauenfrage in Deutschland, 1865-1915: Texte und Dokumente (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1981), pp. 9-10. Frederiksen's emphasis.

⁴⁴Richard J. Evans, The Feminist Movement in Germany, 1894-1933 (London: Sage, 1976).

⁴⁵Richard Evans, "Liberalism and Society: the Feminist Movement and Social Change", in *idem*, Rethinking German History: Nineteenth-Century Germany and the Origins of the Third Reich (London: Unwin Hyman, 1987), pp. 225-226.

tenets of feminism" and moved to the right in national political terms.⁴⁶ It was then that it adopted

the view that women were fundamentally different in character and abilities from men. Rather than compete with men, it was now argued, women should simply seek out the "female sphere" in life and develop their "specifically female qualities" there.⁴⁷

Evans' view of the equal rights doctrine as the only truly feminist one, as well as his interpretation that the adoption of arguments based on gender difference in itself constituted a turn to the political right, has been criticised by other historians. Ann Taylor Allen has pointed out that definitions of feminism should be "historically situated". In her examination of "ideas of public and private motherhood as part of an evolving intellectual tradition",⁴⁸ Allen has stressed that this ideology constituted the basis of a socially transformative ideology. Another historian, Nancy Reagan, on the other hand, has pointed at the concept of "spiritual motherhood" as one which was adapted into a variety of political agendas.⁴⁹

Allen has indicated that the opposition between concepts of equal rights and notions of feminine specificity should also not be oversimplified. In the

⁴⁶*ibid.*, pp. 222, 226-227, 230, 234.

⁴⁷*ibid.*, p. 226.

⁴⁸Allen, Feminism, p. 1.

⁴⁹Nancy R. Reagan, A German Women's Movement: Class & Gender in Hanover, 1880-1933 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

German context where social organic theories stressed the relationship of the individual to the whole, feminists

usually perceived no basic contradiction between arguments based on social motherhood and on equal-rights doctrine. Their conception of citizenship linked rights to duties, and defined individual self-fulfilment in the context of community.⁵⁰

In this thesis, I will show that the dichotomy of "equality versus difference" is a problematic one, not only when applied to the German women's movement, but also when applied to a division between the German and the British women's movements.⁵¹ Karen Offen has made a distinction between what she called "relational feminism" and "individualist feminism". Relational feminism, she has pointed out, was the prevalent form in nineteenth-century Europe: it was Anglo-American feminism which constituted the exception. Yet, she also established a somewhat problematic opposition between the two. According to Offen, advocates of relational feminism insisted on the "physiological and cultural distinctions between the sexes and adhered to the concepts of womanly or manly 'nature' and to a sharply defined sexual division of labour both in the family and throughout society." Individualist feminists, however, focused "more

⁵⁰Allen, Feminism, p. 4.

⁵¹For contemporary calls to dismantle this dichotomy in feminist theory see Scott, "Deconstructing"; Gisela Bock, "Challenging Dichotomies: Perspectives on Women's History", in Karen Offen; Ruth Raech Pierson; Jane Rendall (eds), Writing Women's History: International Perspectives (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), pp. 1-23.

exclusively on demands of women's 'natural' rights, for freedom from social restraint and opportunities for personal development for women (and for men), and for self-determination, or autonomy as the essential condition for the growth and development of human potential."⁵²

I will argue, however, that when applied to British feminism this distinction has to be qualified. In British "individualist" feminism there was a widespread adherence to notions of differences between the sexes. Recent feminist scholarship has drawn attention to the gender subtext of liberal ideology.⁵³ This is important for the understanding of the combination of liberal arguments with notions of gender difference in British feminism. In the first part of the thesis I shall show that in Britain the concept of equality did not exclude concepts of difference. Feminist theories were informed by perceptions of women's right, as individuals, to the same education as men. However, they also drew on ideas of women's difference. That the sexes were "equal, but different" was a pervasive view during the nineteenth century. Feminists often contended that equal rights had to be granted to allow for a "real" femininity to

⁵²Karen Offen, "Liberty, Equality and Justice for Women: The Theory and Practice of Feminism in Nineteenth-Century Europe", in Renate Bridenthal; Claudia Koonz and Susan Stuard (eds), Becoming Visible: Women in European History, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), p. 338.

⁵³See chapter one.

develop. Women were to enter the public sphere on the basis of their difference. Moreover, at the turn of the century, as I will show, feminist reformism centred ever more around the idea of women's role as race-reproducers, rather than around their rights as individuals. Feminist negotiations of theories of gender difference and gender-specific social roles thus were not only a German phenomenon - British feminists engaged in them as well.

The thesis consists of two parts, respectively on Britain and Germany, each of which has four chapters, organized in a more or less chronological order. The first chapter lays out the background to the British case. It sketches the institutional developments in middle-class female education which ensued from campaigns of the women's movement. Then it examines the terms of the debates about women's education in the early years of the women's movement. At the time of the appearance of the movement in the 1860s perceptions of natural differences between the sexes underlay conceptions of their different social, legal and economic rights and roles, aligning women with the private and men with the public sphere. The emerging feminist arguments were located in a context of tensions between concepts of equal rights and concepts of natural differences between the sexes. Feminists operated with notions of equality and difference, negotiating the two in a variety of ways.

Chapter Two looks at the arguments with which scientists and physicians contributed to, and intervened

in, the question of whether women should and could go to university during the 1870s and 1880s. It argues that scientists engaged in the construction of differences between the sexes, but that they were also preoccupied with how sexual differences were mutable within a lifetime and over the span of generations. Reforms in women's education were discussed in terms of the effects such changing external influences would have on female nature. In these discussions theories about the impact of evolutionary developments on sexual difference were important, as were beliefs that life-style (including education and occupation) was influential in shaping the physiology of individuals.

Darwinian evolutionary theory naturalized mental differences between the sexes in ways which legitimized the sexual division of labour. But it also opened spaces which questioned the essential nature of this. Evolution supposed change: female mental powers had been developing in the past and could do so in the future. At the same time as it became possible to think about future female mental development, the belief that women's mental inferiority was the consequence of their reproductive function became prominent. There existed a substantial body of medical theory which asserted that too little mental effort was injurious to women's health, and that women should receive an intellectually more thorough education. However, physicians and other scientists also contended that for women to undergo too much mental

application would have harmful consequences on the workings of the female body and thus for future generations. For exponents of this view, the question of women's right to education had to be assessed in the light of the female body's potential to degenerate and its biological implications for society.

In the third chapter I explore the impact of medico-scientific ideas upon feminist thinking. Feminists engaged with scientific constructions of female nature. They developed and reconstituted them. Many integrated evolutionary ideas into their arguments that women's mental powers had been shaped by the history of the female sex and emphasised that under altered social conditions these would change. There was also an extensive engagement with scientific views of the female body and the effects of education on health. Feminists contested the theory that woman's physiology constituted a natural obstacle to women's higher education and professional employment.

In the final British chapter I explore how, at the turn of the century, ideas about the degenerative effect of female higher education and engagement in paid employment developed into eugenicist concerns about the biological quality of the "race". The question of female education was approached by considering women's function as race-reproducers. Feminist thinking at this time increasingly incorporated views of the importance of the female reproductive function for the race. Arguments for

changes in women's position centred around the advantageous impact it would have upon racial development. For many feminists of this generation women's emancipation had become an evolutionary demand.

Chapter Five establishes the background to the debates in Germany. It recounts the emergence of the women's movement with its strong bias towards reforms in middle-class female education. It locates these demands in relation to the cultural importance of the concept of *Bildung*. During the 1860s and 1870s arguments for reforms in female education were often supported by claims of women's right to the character-forming processes of *Bildung*, as well as the right to receive an education adequate to prepare single women for employment. From its very emergence concepts of gender difference were central to the women's movement. The notion of equal rights was not opposed to concepts that these were to be granted to women so that they could fulfil their gender-specific duties to society. Yet that female education was a question of rights was not readily accepted. For many commentators the thought that women and men were entitled to the same rights was contradicted by the law of nature which had established the sexual division of labour.

When the women's movement engaged in campaigns for admission to the universities from the late 1880s onwards, the effects this would have on the female mind and body did not acquire the same dimensions as in Britain. As I argue in Chapter Six, female higher

education was rather debated in terms of the effects it would have on the social organism in general and on the family in particular, as well as on the universities as central institutions for the dissemination and creation of culture. The women's movement, with the inauguration of the higher education campaigns, separated into two wings, the "moderates" and the "radicals", with different policies on educational reforms. Both argued that women had a right to education and single women the right to employment. For some radicals this constituted the main core of their claims. Many moderates, as well as some radicals, developed this idea in conjunction with the argument that society was in need of greater female participation in the public sphere. Women had the crucial role of regenerating the social organism.

In Chapter Seven I show how the question of middle-class female lifestyle became of interest to racial hygienists at the turn of the century, who, like British eugenicists, conceptualized women's function as purely biologically reproductive. These were ideas with which mainly the radical wing of the women's movement, specifically members of the *Bund für Mutterschutz* (League for the Protection of Mothers), engaged. Like some feminists in Britain, they argued that women's emancipation would generate racial advancement. Moderates, however, during this period mainly continued to focus on concepts of a particular "spiritual" cultural mission of women. Female difference was to re-direct the

developments of modernity and to counteract a cultural crisis in which the inner development of people had become severed from external developments.

Motherhood (biological or spiritual) was thus central to radicals' and moderates' ideas. A number of other women, however, participated in the construction of the "abnormal" woman, who had no maternal inclinations. In the final chapter, I explore the emergence of a sexological discourse about the existence of women who were biologically not really female, but sexually intermediary types. This theory emerged from concepts of homosexuality as a symptom of degeneration. It was taken up and reconstituted by members of the homosexual movement who represented homosexuality as the result of a non-pathological developmental abnormality. It was argued that women's emancipation was necessary for those women, who were biologically different from normal women, to be able to express their masculine nature. The manly lesbian was inserted into the male sphere of higher education, professional work, and mental production, but only through drawing a boundary between the normal feminine and the abnormal masculine woman.

PART ONE: BRITAIN

CHAPTER ONE

EQUALITY AND DIFFERENCE:

THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT, FEMALE EDUCATION, AND GENDER UNTIL c. 1869

The reform of female education was one of the many campaigns of the nineteenth-century women's movement that gathered momentum during the 1860s. The education of middle-class girls throughout the Victorian period was non-standardized and took place mainly at home, being administered by family members or governesses. Often their education also included some years at a private school.¹ The traditional understanding of the emergence of the education movement is one of a "female rebellion" against an intellectually deficient education that was directed solely at making middle-class girls marriageable. Hence Ray Strachey, in her classical account of the nineteenth century women's movement, entitled her chapter dealing with girls' education "The Revelation of Ignorance" and characterized the common attitude towards female education at the time of the formation of the women's movement as: "girls must be

¹Deborah Gorham, The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal (London: Croom Helm, 1982), p. 20; June Purvis, A History of Women's Education in England (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1991), p. 65; M.Jeanne Peterson, Family, Love, and Work in the Lives of Victorian Gentlewomen (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), chapter 2.

prepared to achieve matrimony in a difficult and overcrowded market; and how would arithmetic do this?"²

Girls' education was non-vocational in terms of paid employment, and focused on the training in "accomplishments". But rather than assuming that the inevitable outcome of this education was ignorance, more recently, historians have stressed that the main features of this education were its non-standardization and its variability of form and content.³ The argument that girls' education need not necessarily have been shallow and was not exclusively aimed at making them marriageable has been most forcibly put forward by M. Jeanne Peterson in her study of three generations of women of an upper-middle-class family, the Pagets.⁴ Their education, according to Peterson, was

serious and thorough. In this respect they differed little from the leisured gentlemen who pursued a liberal education in philosophy or biology with no need to make a profession or career of such interest. Similarly, their lives demonstrate that the education of Victorian gentlewomen was not necessarily oriented toward the marriage market. If typical, the experience of the Paget women suggests that a fine education, whether formally or informally

²Ray Strachey, "The Cause": A Short History of the Women's Movement in Britain (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1928), p. 125. For more recent arguments about the intellectually deficient nature of middle-class girls' education before the 1860s see, for example, Joan N. Burstyn, Victorian Education and the Ideal of Womanhood (London: Croom Helm, 1980), part. chapter 2.

³See, for example, Gorham, The Victorian Girl, pp. 21-24; Purvis, A History, chapter four.

⁴M. Jeanne Peterson, "No Angels in the House: The Victorian Myth and the Paget Women", American Historical Review, 89 (1984), pp. 677-708.

obtained, was part of the cultural equipage of the new urban gentry of both sexes.⁵

Female training in "accomplishments" could encompass a development of thorough artistic and musical skills; knowledge of modern languages, sometimes of ancient languages, and of scientific subjects.⁶ That the character of female education in the mid-Victorian period did not necessarily result in women's "ignorance" is, of course, also manifest in the sophistication of the writings of feminists who had grown up in this period. What did characterize female education was its non-vocational outlook and the non-standardized, mainly private, form.

Changes towards the institutionalization of middle-class women's education took place from the mid-century onwards. In 1848 Queen's College was founded in London by the Christian Socialist Frederick Denison Maurice and the Governesses' Benevolent Institution, which had been established in 1841 to assist gentlewomen in "temporary distress". The college was conceived with the primary intent of raising the educational training of governesses. The following year, 1849, another college for women was founded in Bedford Square by the Unitarian Mrs Elizabeth Reid, aiming to give women a liberal education. Unlike Queen's, Bedford College had a mixed governing board. Both colleges admitted girls from the age of twelve, but had many students of a relatively

⁵*ibid.*, pp. 693-694.

⁶Peterson, Family, pp. 45-57.

advanced age.⁷ In 1850 and 1854 Mary Frances Buss and Dorothea Beale opened secondary schools for girls, the North London Collegiate School and the Cheltenham Ladies's College. Both offered more academically oriented curricula than conventional girls' schools.⁸ The Schools Inquiry Commission (Taunton Commission), which was set up in 1864 and published its reports in 1868, included girls' schools in the inquiry on the instigation of Emily Davies.⁹ The sisters Emily Shirreff and Maria Grey in 1871 founded the National Union for the Education of Girls of All Classes, which became known as the Women's Education Union. In 1872 the Union set up the Girls' Public Day School Company to finance the establishment of girls' schools.¹⁰

⁷Many women who subsequently became involved in the women's movement attended these colleges. Frances Buss, Dorothea Beale, and Sophia Jex-Blake, for example, attended Queen's. Barbara Leigh Smith and Bessie Rayner Parkes, for example, attended Bedford. For Queen's and Bedford College see Strachey, "The Cause", pp. 60-63; Philippa Levine, Victorian Feminism, 1850-1900 (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1987), pp. 32-33; Purvis, A History, pp. 107-109; Linda Bentley, Educating Women: A Pictorial History of Bedford College, University of London, 1849-1985 (London: Alma Publishers, 1991).

⁸Strachey, "The Cause", pp. 126-129; Levine, Victorian Feminism, pp.33-34; Purvis, A History, pp. 77-80; Edward W. Ellsworth, Liberators of the Female Mind: The Shirreff Sisters, Educational Reform, and the Women's Movement (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1979), pp. 133-139.

⁹Sheila Fletcher, Feminists and Bureaucrats: A Study in the Development of Girls' Education in the Nineteenth Century (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 19-25; Gorham, The Victorian Girl, pp. 24-25. For the Report see Parliamentary Papers (Session 19 Nov. 1867 - 31 July 1868).

¹⁰For the involvement of the sisters in educational reform see Ellsworth, Liberators.

Before the Taunton Commission was set up Emily Davies had started a campaign to open the Cambridge Local Examinations to women. Oxford and Cambridge examinations had been introduced in the 1850s with the aim of providing middle-class secondary boys' schools with a standard. In 1863 Cambridge held girls' local examination experimentally, installing them officially in 1865. Oxford was to follow suit in 1870. The Universities of Durham and Edinburgh opened their local examinations to girls in 1866. The University of London, after having rejected attempts by Jessie Merton White in 1856 and Elizabeth Garrett Anderson in 1862 to be admitted to the matriculation examination, in 1868 established special examinations for women which were comparable to the local examinations.¹¹ In 1867 the North of England Council for Promoting the Higher Education of Women was set up with Josephine Butler as its President and Anne Jemina Clough as Secretary, arranging university extension lectures.¹²

University education became available to women when the first women's college was established by Emily Davies in 1869 at Hitchin, Herts. It was moved a few years later to Girton village, in close proximity to Cambridge University. In the meantime the reforming Cambridge professor, Henry Sidgwick, asked Anne Jemina Clough to

¹¹Emily Davies, Women in the Universities of England and Scotland (Cambridge: Macmillan and Bowes, 1896), pp. 6-14; Levine, Victorian Feminism, pp. 34-36.

¹²Strachey, "The Cause", pp. 151-153; Purvis, A History, pp. 109-111.

become the residential head of a residence he had rented, and established what was to become Newnham College. The different approaches to women's higher education of Davies and Sidgwick have been well-documented. Davies rejected all ideas of treating women students differently to prove that they were capable of undergoing the same intellectual education as men. Accordingly, she insisted that Girton students should follow exactly the same curricula as men at Cambridge. They were also required to take the preliminary classics examinations and the degree examinations within the three years and a term as was the case at the male colleges. Sidgwick, on the other hand, believed that most women students did not have the necessary previous preparation for the traditional Cambridge education, which he thought to be outdated anyway. He favoured a more flexible approach, adaptable to the needs of individual women students. At Newnham, students were encouraged to favour courses in the sciences and modern languages over classics, and they were allowed to spend as much or as little time at the college as they liked. Their different points of view remained a point of friction between Davies and Sidgwick in years to come.¹³

¹³Martha Vicinus, Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women, 1850-1920 (London: Virago Press, 1985), pp. 125-126; Rita McWilliams-Tullberg, Women at Cambridge: A Men's University - Though of a Mixed Type (London: Victor Gollancz, 1975); *idem*, "Women and Degrees at Cambridge University, 1862-1897", in Martha Vicinus (ed.), A Widening Sphere: Changing Roles of Victorian Women (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), pp. 117-145; Sara Delamont, "The

In Oxford, women's colleges were established in 1879 with the opening of Lady Margaret Hall and Somerville College. During the 1880s there was much pressure from the Cambridge women's colleges for the University to award degrees to women. However, in 1881 Cambridge gave permission to women only to sit the examinations and a year later to issue certificates stating the class of the Tripos obtained without granting official degrees. It made these attainable for women in 1922, two years after Oxford University. However, by the 1890s it was widely perceived that higher education was obtainable for women. Although not receiving official degrees, women could attend colleges at Cambridge and Oxford, and degrees were available at a growing number of universities across Britain.¹⁴

At the same time that higher education became available, women gradually entered the medical profession. The precedent was set when in 1858 Elizabeth

Contradictions in Ladies' Education", in Sara Delamont and Lorna Duffin (eds), The Nineteenth-Century Woman: Her Cultural and Physical World (London: Croom Helm, 1978), p. 156ff; Barbara Stephen, Girton College, 1869-1932 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933); Daphne Bennett, Emily Davies and the Liberation of Women (1830-1921) (London: André Deutsch, 1990).

¹⁴In 1880 the co-educational Victoria University was founded in Manchester; in 1882 Westfield Colleges was founded; in 1890 at Queen Margaret College, Glasgow, a school of medicine for women was opened; and in 1892 the Universities of Edinburgh, Glasgow, St Andrews and Aberdeen admitted women to degrees. See McWilliams-Tullberg, Women at Cambridge; Carol Dyhouse, No Distinction of Sex? Women in British Universities, 1870-1939 (London: UCL Press, 1995) for social histories of women at British universities.

Blackwell was placed on the first British Medical Register. The British-born Blackwell had emigrated to the United States with her family at the age of eleven. In 1847 she enrolled at medical school at Geneva College in New York, from which she graduated two years later. During the next twenty years she often visited Great Britain, occasionally giving lectures on the role of women in medicine, until she settled there in 1869. One of her lectures was attended by Elizabeth Garrett (later Garrett Anderson), a friend of Emily Davies, who thereupon decided also to become a physician. As a first step she trained at the Middlesex Hospital as a nurse in 1860, but was subsequently refused entry to the medical schools of the universities of London, Edinburgh and St. Andrews. She then prepared in private study for the licentiate of the Apothecaries Society, which she received in 1865. In the following year she became the second woman to be put on the British Medical Register.¹⁵

The next move came in 1869 when Sophia Jex-Blake and four other women were provisionally admitted by the University of Edinburgh. One of them, Edith Pechey, soon won a distinction in chemistry, the Hope Scholarship. The prize, however, was awarded to a male student on the

¹⁵For Blackwell's autobiography until she settled in Britain see Elizabeth Blackwell, Pioneer Work in the Opening of the Medical Profession: Autobiographical Sketches (London and New York: Longman's Green and Co., 1895). For biographies of Garrett Anderson see Louisa Garrett Anderson, Elizabeth Garrett Anderson (London: Faber and Faber, 1939); Jo Manton, Elizabeth Garrett Anderson (London: Methuen & Co., 1965).

grounds that the women were not full members of the class. When in 1870 the women were to start their practical training, male students organized a "riot" against the women. Jex-Blake alleged that the assistant of one of the professors had organized the disturbance. The assistant promptly sued Jex-Blake for libel. Matters worsened when in 1872 the Faculty refused to grant the women degrees. After prolonged legal battles, the University won a ruling that the admission of the women had been illegal and the University had no responsibility to them.¹⁶

Jex-Blake now moved to London where in 1874 she established the London School of Medicine for Women with the support of Elizabeth Blackwell, Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, the scientist T.H. Huxley and Dr. David Anstie, a fellow of the Royal College of Physicians.¹⁷ Blackwell and Garrett Anderson had both initially shown reservations to the scheme, fearing that a separate school for women would lead to women doctors being considered as subordinate and inferior to male physicians, but ultimately decided to support the project. The London School of Medicine, however, could neither offer clinical training, nor confer degrees. The turning point for women's medical qualification came when

¹⁶For a biography of Jex-Blake see Shirley Roberts, Sophia Jex-Blake: A Woman Pioneer in Nineteenth-Century Medical Reform (London: Routledge, 1993).

¹⁷Jex-Blake later, in 1886, also founded the Edinburgh School of Medicine.

the Irish College of Physicians and the Queen's University of Ireland agreed to admit women to examinations in 1876. The following year, in 1877, the Royal Free Hospital in London admitted women students to its wards.¹⁸

These institutional developments were accompanied by fierce debates on the nature of the sexes and how it related to their social roles. Notions of similarity and difference between men and women were brought into discussions about whether women as individuals should have the same right as men to education; whether they should receive a more thorough education precisely because of their difference; or whether women were naturally so different that they did not have the aptitude for such an education and a professional career.

¹⁸There is an extensive literature on women's entry to the medical profession. See, for example, E. Moberly Bell, Storming the Citadel: The Rise of the Woman Doctor (London: Constable & Co., 1953); Mary Roth Walsh, Doctors Wanted - No Women Need Apply: Sexual Barriers in the Medical Profession, 1835-1975 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); Thomas Neville Bonner, To the Ends of the World: Women's Search for Education in Medicine (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992); Catriona Blake, The Charge of the Parasols: Women's Entry in the Medical Profession (London: The Women's Press, 1990); Johanna Geyer-Kordesch and Rona Ferguson, Blue Stockings, Black Gowns and White Coats (1995). For women's involvement in the medical profession in the United States see Virginia G. Drachman, "Women Doctors and the Women's Medical Movement: Feminism and Medicine, 1850-1895" (Ph.D. dissertation, State University of New York at Buffalo, 1976); Regina Markell Morantz-Sanchez, Women Physicians in American Medicine: Sympathy and Science (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

The Emergence of the Women's Movement

Concerns about the rights of woman had been spurred by Enlightenment ideas about the rights of man. Mary Wollstonecraft's Vindication of the Rights of Woman, published in 1792, was a key text to be identified with the cause of women's rights.¹⁹ The political, economic and social changes brought about by industrial capitalism advanced the debate and led to the appearance of an organized women's movement around the mid-nineteenth century. The move towards an individualistic and

¹⁹There exists an extensive historiography on women and the Enlightenment, the complexities of which go beyond this thesis. See, for example, Sylvana Tomaselli, "The Enlightenment Debate on Women", History Workshop Journal, 20 (1985), pp. 101-124; *idem*, "Reflections on the History of the Science of Woman", History of Science, 29 (1991), pp. 185-205; Moira Gatens, "'The Opressed State of My Sex': Wollstonecraft on Reason, Feeling and Equality", in Mary Lyndon Shanley and Carole Pateman (eds), Feminist Interpretations and Political Theory (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), pp. 112-128; Melissa A. Butler, "Early Liberal Roots of Feminism: John Locke and the Attack on Patriarchy", in Shanley and Pateman (eds), Feminist Interpretations, pp. 74-94; Carole Pateman, The Sexual Contract (Oxford: Polity Press, 1988); Alice Brown, The Eighteenth Century Feminist Mind (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1987); Ludmilla Jordanova, Sexual Visions: Images of Gender in Science and Medicine between the Eighteenth and Twentieth Centuries (Hemel Hemstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989); Thomas Laqueur, Making Sex: Gender from the Greeks to Freud (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990); Londa Schiebinger, The Mind Has No Sex? Women in the Origin of Modern Science (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989); *idem*, Nature's Body: Sexual Politics and the Making of Modern Science (Glasgow: Pandora, 1994); Jane Rendall, The Origins of Modern Feminism: Women in Britain, France and the United States, 1780-1860 (Houndsmill, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985); Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, "Women and the Enlightenment", in Renate Bridenthal, Claudia Koonz and Susan Stuard (eds), Becoming Visible: Women in European History, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987), pp. 251-277.

egalitarian philosophy opened the way for women to join the challenge of authority by other traditionally insubordinate groups.²⁰ Hence Ray Strachey in "The Cause" declared:

It seems clear that this impulse [for the emergence of the women's movement] came from the doctrines and philosophies that inspired the French Revolution, and that it received a further impulse from the economic changes of the Industrial Revolution. The Women's Revolt was, in fact, a by-product of these two upheavals, and although it took more than half a century for anything deliberate to become manifest, the real date for the beginning of the movement is 1792.²¹

Giving rise to liberalism, the Enlightenment was important for the emergence of the women's movement. The movement, hence, is understood to be an offshoot of the emancipatory claims of liberalism. It was an application of the demand for enfranchisement of formally disfranchised groups. The movement sought to establish women's rightful position as free and equal individuals and achieve rights formerly denied, including property rights, access to educational institutions and the professions and the right to vote.²²

Up to the mid-nineteenth century under the law of coverture, married women were legally covered (or

²⁰Susan Kingsley Kent, Sex and Suffrage in Britain, 1860-1914 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 26-27.

²¹Strachey, "The Cause", p. 12.

²²For a postmodern criticism of this "liberal" view of feminism see Susan J. Hekman, Gender and Knowledge: Elements of a Postmodern Feminism (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), pp. 47ff.

represented) by their husbands. They became non-existent in the eyes of the law. This supposed that the rights over a married woman's property at marriage, and property acquired during marriage, passed to her husband. Equally, it meant that married women could not make a contract or will, that they could not sue or be sued, and that their debts were their husband's charge. They had virtually no legal protection against abuse by their husbands and very limited custody rights over their children. Divorce could be obtained only by Act of Parliament.²³

From the late 1850s onwards this legal situation began to change. The Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 created a court for divorce. Men now could divorce their wives on the grounds of adultery. Women could divorce their husbands on this basis if they could also prove bigamy, incest, cruelty, rape, sodomy, bestiality or desertion. A single standard of divorce was established in 1923. The Custody Act of 1839, which had given women custody of their children until the age of seven, at which age the father took control, was supplemented with the Guardianship of Infants Act in 1886, which gave mothers control over their children upon the death of the father. In 1925 women obtained full custody rights. The

²³Kent, Sex and Suffrage, pp. 27-29; Susan Moller Okin, "Introduction", in John Stuart Mill, The Subjection of Women (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1988), pp. vii-viii; Mary Poovey, Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England (London: Virago Press, 1989), pp. 51-52; Levine, Victorian Feminism, p. 134; Mary Lyndon Shanley, "'One Must Ride Behind': Married Women's Rights and the Divorce Act of 1857", Victorian Studies, 25 (1981), pp. 360-361.

Married Women's Property Acts of 1870 and 1882 gave women the right to own the property and earnings they brought into marriage.²⁴ Suffrage, although campaigned for since the 1860s, was granted only in 1918 to women over the age of thirty who were householders, the wives of householders, had a certain income or were graduates.²⁵

The Enlightenment Legacy Problematicized

The relationship between the emergence of universalistic claims of human equality and liberty and the emancipation of women, however, is more complex than a straightforward inclusion of women within these ideals.²⁶ This has been made particularly clear by studies of the scientific construction of gender since the

²⁴Kent, Sex and Suffrage, pp. 27-29. For the campaigns to change women's legal position see also Mary Lyndon Shanley, Feminism, Marriage and the Law in Victorian England, 1850-1895 (London: I.B.Tauris & Co., 1989); *idem*, "'One Must Ride Behind'", pp. 355-376; Levine, Victorian Feminism, pp. 128-155; *idem*, Feminist Lives in Victorian England: Private Roles and Public Commitment (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), pp. 103-125; Poovey, Uneven Developments, pp. 51-88.

²⁵For women's suffrage see, for instance, Strachey, "The Cause"; Kent, Sex and Suffrage, pp. 184-219; Constance Rover, Women's Suffrage and Party Politics in Britain, 1866-1914 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967); Sandra Stanley Holton, Feminism and Democracy: Women's Suffrage and Reform Politics in Britain, 1900-1918 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Brian Harrison, Separate Spheres: The Opposition to Women's Suffrage in Britain (London: Croom Helm, 1978).

²⁶See, for example, Fox-Genovese, "Women and the Enlightenment", pp. 251-277; Rendall, The Origins, chapter one; Barbara Caine, Victorian Feminists (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp. 19-21.

Enlightenment. The emergence of these claims was accompanied by the scientifically based elaboration of ideas of differences between the sexes. In Enlightenment thought science and medicine played an important role. They occupied a "privileged epistemological position", with regard to knowledge about gendered human nature.²⁷ Their methods were believed to provide empirically based knowledge of human nature, which would guide the establishment of a secular social order in which Nature, not metaphysics or religious dogma, defined the place of humankind.²⁸ Thus rather than seeing it as divinely ordained, women's social position started to be thought of in terms of what was natural to the female sex.²⁹

Londa Schiebinger and Thomas Laqueur have argued that during the eighteenth century the sexes came to be increasingly constructed as fundamentally different, incommensurable but complementary by nature. These views, Laqueur has maintained, replaced an earlier model of Galenic physiological homology between male and female reproductive organs, in which the lesser "vital heat" of woman made her an inferior version of man. Thus for a number of political theorists it was natural difference that dictated the political, legal and social inequality between the sexes in a context of ideas about universal

²⁷Jordanova, Sexual Visions, p. 24.

²⁸*ibid.*; Ornella Moscucci, The Science of Woman: Gynaecology and Gender in England, 1800-1929 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 3.

²⁹Rendall, The Origins, p. 8.

human equality and liberty.³⁰ Female nature was constructed as antithetical to the characteristics which were understood to be a prerequisite for participation in the public sphere. As Carole Pateman has explained: "[o]nly *men* are born free and equal. The contract theorists constructed sexual difference as a *political* difference, the difference between men's natural freedom and women's natural subjection."³¹ Men possessed the requirements for citizenship, such as the domination of emotion by reason and the capacity to develop a sense of justice. Women, unlike men, were constructed as dominated by their reproductive function and hence as unable to transcend their bodily nature.³² The female organization meant that in women emotion dominated over reason. Conceptualizing the female as not able to transcend their body implied women's exclusion of the civic public, seen to express the "impartial point of view of reason".³³ The

³⁰Londa Schiebinger, "Skeletons in the Closet: The First Illustrations of Female Skeletons in Eighteenth-Century Anatomy", Representations, 14 (1986), pp. 42-82; *idem*, The Mind has No Sex?, part. chapter 8; Thomas Laqueur, "Orgasm, Generation, and the Politics of Reproductive Biology", Representations, 14 (1986), pp. 1-41; *idem*, Making Sex, part. 193ff.

³¹Carole Pateman, The Disorder of Woman: Democracy, Feminism and the Political Theory (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), p. 5. Pateman's emphasis.

³²*ibid.*, p. 4. For an extensive discussion of the "sexual contract" underlying social contract theory, which established a "modern form of patriarchy" see Pateman, Sexual Contract.

³³Iris Marion Young, "Impartiality and the Civic Public: Some Implications of Feminist Critiques of Moral and Political Theory", in Seyla Benhabib and Drucilla Cornell (eds), Feminism as Critique: On the Politics of

relationship between liberalism and women's emancipation hence was double-edged and riddled with tensions: the emancipatory claims of liberalism were central to the nineteenth-century women's movement, as much as in the original formulation of liberalism the public and the private had been gendered through the construction of natural differences between men and women.³⁴

The Gendering of the Public and the Private Sphere

The separation of a private sphere of familial relations and a public sphere of politics, paid work and commerce was accompanied by a construction of a biological sexual difference in which women were seen to find naturally their fullest expression in the private sphere and men in the public sphere.³⁵ As has been well documented, the identification of women with different spheres of activity was central to late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries middle-class ideology.³⁶ Amanda

Gender (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p. 66.

³⁴For a present-day study of the "contradictory reality" between the "liberal underpinnings of feminist theory" and the "patriarchal underpinnings of liberal theory", which argues in favour of the potentially subversive nature of liberal feminism, see Zillah R. Eisenstein, The Radical Future of Liberal Feminism, 2nd ed. (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993).

³⁵Moscucci, Science of Woman, p. 3; Poovey, Uneven Developments, p. 77.

³⁶For the most detailed study of the role of gender in the rising middle-class see Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the

Vickery, however, in "Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History", has cast doubts upon the view that the industrializing process resulted in a separation of spheres which confined middle-class women to the home (in a state of invalidism)³⁷ and that this separation of spheres was central to the rise of the middle class in providing it with a distinct cultural identity.³⁸

Although the industrial revolution might not have brought about the demise of a "golden age" for women, it remains clear that in the period studied in this thesis, gender constituted a central factor of middle-class social organization. A "separation of spheres" might not have been unique either to the nineteenth century or to the middle class, but the association of middle-class women with the domestic sphere, as opposed to paid labour, was an important element of middle-class identity which was increasingly contested during the latter half of the century by the women's movement. With the expansion in their numbers, the position of middle-class

English Middle Class, 1780-1850, first published 1987 (London: Routledge, 1992).

³⁷For the argument that female invalidism became a status symbol see Lorna Duffin, "The Conspicuous Consumptive: Woman as Invalid", in Sara Delamont and Lorna Duffin (eds), The Nineteenth-Century Woman: Her Cultural and Physical World (London: Croom Helm, 1978), pp. 26-56.

³⁸Historical Journal, 30 (1993), pp. 383-414. See also Amanda Vickery, "Shaking Separate Spheres: Did Women Really Descend into Graceful Indolence?" Times Literary Supplement (12 March 1993), pp. 6-7 for a similar argument.

women became an issue of growing public concern. The separation of spheres did not constitute a separation of cultural realities for men and women, nor did it suppose the "imprisonment" of women in the home: the activities of the members of the women's movement for one are ample evidence against this notion. However, middle-class men and women were allotted different rights and spheres of activity, which went hand in hand with conceptions of differences between the sexes. What I will be considering in this thesis is the intellectual context in which feminists demanded the reconsideration of the exclusion from institutions of higher education and the broadening of their occupational possibilities. The emergence of the women's movement was a cause and a symptom of rethinking notions about female nature, which underlay conceptions of women's position in society.

At the time of the emergence of the women's movement at the mid-nineteenth century, ideas about mental and physical differences were underlying a sexual division of political and legal rights, as well as social and economic roles.³⁹ An important element of nineteenth-century middle-class ideology was the exclusion of middle-class women from paid labour. The distinction between female domestic labour and male paid employment established a boundary between the private sphere of familial relations and the public sphere of commercial activity, creating an alternative to marketplace

³⁹Poovey, Uneven Developments, p. 8.

competitiveness. The domestic sphere was conceptualized as a repository of moral values, as well as a shelter which offered tranquillity and security and thus tempered the effects of the outside world of competition and economic vicissitudes.⁴⁰

In the process of consolidating the middle class from the late eighteenth century, there occurred a relocation of virtue from class - noblesse oblige - to gender, as Mary Poovey has argued:

As the liberal discourse of rights and contracts began to dominate representations of social economic and political relations, in other words, virtue was depoliticized, moralized, and associated with the domestic sphere, which was being abstracted from the same time - both rhetorically and, to a certain extent, materially - from the so-called public sphere of competition, self-interest, and economic aggression.⁴¹

Although women contributed economically to the rise of the middle-class, their central role was represented as their emotional input, deriving from the maternal instinct. Morality was represented by the middle-class woman, a figure understood to be naturally immune to and incapable of competition and self-interest. Morality was thus preserved without hindering productivity.⁴² Tensions between intense application to business and religious aims were relieved. The role of the middle-class woman

⁴⁰Poovey, Uneven Developments, pp. 10, 52, 77-78, 144; Kent, Sex and Suffrage, p. 33.

⁴¹Poovey, Uneven Developments, p. 10.

⁴²*ibid.*

was to purify and spiritually refresh man when he left the outer world to enter the home, as well as to be the first educators and moral guides of the next generation. Whereas man was occupied in the world of business and politics, women through their moral capacity and influence were to re-create society from below.⁴³

The alignment of women with the domestic sphere and men with the public sphere was supported by articulations of difference between the sexes. Man was more ruled by reason and more capable of abstraction. He was more aggressive and competitive. Physically he was more apt to stand the strains of competition. In body and mind woman was more under the influence of her reproductive function. Emotion and instinct dominated over reason. Maternal instincts underlay woman's moral influence and made her more nurturing and non-competitive.

When the women's movement in the second half of the nineteenth century campaigned to reform middle-class women's education and to broaden the scope of employments for them, opponents voiced concerns about how this participation in the public would impact upon women's specific influence in the domestic sphere, and how it would affect its separation from the public. "The dignity of masculine life is often lost in its feverish competitions and restless acquisitions", the lawyer Herbert Cowell was to write in 1874, "[a]nd if the life of women is to be forcibly degraded to the same level,

⁴³Davidoff and Hall, Family Fortunes, p. 183.

where are we to seek the influences which are to refine and mitigate the bustling tumult which characterises modern society?"⁴⁴ Alarm was raised about the repercussions of turning the sexes into "rivals" and "competitors". Since the sexual division of labour was bound up with notions of male and female nature, anxieties were expressed about the physical and mental implications for women of changes in their social roles, as we shall see in Chapter Two.

The Gendered Mind

The concepts of gender difference which underpinned the attribution of different places and roles in society to the sexes allotted to men the realm of the intellect and to women the realm of emotions.⁴⁵ Although acknowledging the power of environmental influence, scientific writers deemed biology to be a crucial factor determining the female mental make-up. Difference between the sexes was a matter of the entire physiology and psychology of individuals.⁴⁶ Bodily difference was thought to be paralleled by mental difference: "The mind of a

⁴⁴[Herbert Cowell], "Sex in Mind and Education: A Commentary", Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 115 (1874), p. 749.

⁴⁵For example, James McGriggor Allan, "On the Real Differences in the Minds of Men and Women", Journal of the Anthropological Society of London, 7 (1869), pp. cci, cciii.

⁴⁶Moscucci, Science of Woman, p. 15.

woman differs from that of a man really as much as her body does."⁴⁷ A woman with a masculine mind was "as anomalous a creature, as a woman with man's breasts, a man's pelvis, a man's muscular leg, or a man's beard."⁴⁸

A direct analogy between the body and the mind led to controversial arguments that lesser physical strength (and related to this lesser vital energy) and a lesser brain size and weight indicated lesser mental power.⁴⁹ However, it was not just the difference of bodily strength which was reflected in the mental difference, but also the priority that was given to the reproductive system in understanding difference. Woman was understood to be more dominated in body and in mind by her reproductive function.⁵⁰ In the female mind emotion and instinct, particularly maternal instinct, dominated over reason or intellect.⁵¹

⁴⁷"Miss Becker on the Mental Characteristics of the Sexes", Lancet, 2 (1868), p. 320.

⁴⁸Allan, "Real Differences", p. ccii

⁴⁹Alexander Walker, Woman Physiologically Considered as to Mind, Morals, Marriage, Matrimonial Slavery, Infidelity and Divorce (London: A.H.Baily and Co., 1839), p. 11; Allan, "Real Differences", p. ccivff; Thomas Laycock, Mind and Brain: or, The Correlations of Consciousness and Organisation; Systematically Investigated and Applied to Philosophy, Mental Science and Practice, 2, 2nd ed. (London: Simkin, Marshall, and Co., 1869), p. 481ff. For a discussion of the question of female brain size see Elizabeth Fee, "Nineteenth-Century Craniology: The Study of the Female Skull", Bulletin of the History of Medicine, 53 (1979), pp. 415-433.

⁵⁰See, for example, McGriggor Allan, "On the Real Differences", pp. cc-cci.

⁵¹See, for example, Walker, Woman, p. 14; McGriggor Allan, "On the Real Differences", pp. cc-cci.

The difference in male and female minds was seen to be a quantitative difference of mental properties, constituted by the relative proportion of mutually opposed attributes.⁵² It was a difference of degrees:

The elements of the female mind ... are probably ... identical with those of the male ... No one would seriously deny that woman possesses emotion, will, senses, and intellect; or that man's mind is susceptible of precisely the same division. It does not, however, require even a knowledge of chemistry to discover that combinations of the same elements, in different proportions, will produce compounds of different qualities.⁵³

The perception of mental differences as qualitative incorporated the possibility of an abnormal gendering of the mind, constituting freaks of nature: "A few women have manifested the masculine faculties which lead to eminence in physical sciences, but these have been quite as rare as bearded women."⁵⁴ On the whole, woman was more emotional, more perceptive, more rapid, less capable of sustained mental effort, and of less intellectual power than man.⁵⁵ It was these mental differences, coupled to

⁵²Ornella Moscucci, "Hermaphroditism and Sex Difference: The Construction of Gender in Victorian England", in Marina Benjamin (ed.), Science and Sensibility: Gender and Scientific Enquiry, 1780-1945 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), pp. 187-188.

⁵³Luke Owen Pike, "On the Claims of Women to Political Power", Journal of the Anthropological Society of London, 7 (1869), p. lii.

⁵⁴Laycock, Mind and Brain, p. 483.

⁵⁵See, for example, Walter Johnson, The Morbid Emotions of Women: Their Origin, Tendencies and Treatment (London: Simpkin, Marshall and Co., 1850), p. 27; quoting W.B.Carpenter, Principles on Human Physiology; "Miss Becker", Lancet, p. 320.

bodily difference, scientists argued, which allotted men and women different social roles.

Equal Rights and Sexual Difference

The naturalization of gender roles mediated, but did not resolve, tensions between ideas of universal human equality and liberty and the inequality of rights between the sexes. The debates about women's right to the same education as men, instigated by the women's movement, were located in a complex context of tensions between notions of a common humanity and differences between the sexes. The education debates became a site for the negotiation of concepts of gender difference. Few people, scientists or non-scientists, assumed that gender had no biological basis. Yet, which characteristics precisely were due to nature and which to nurture, remained a highly contested issue over which male (and later female) scientists, lay men and women, those in favour and those against the women's movement, took up, discussed, debated and contested each others' views.

In 1869 John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) published The Subjection of Women, the most famous statement of a philosophical liberal position in support of women's emancipation.⁵⁶ As well as suffrage, Mill advocated a "better and more complete intellectual education" of

⁵⁶John Stuart Mill, The Subjection of Women (1869), ed. Susan Miller Okin (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1988).

women and access to the same fields of occupations as were open to men. By allowing women the free use of their mental faculties and by leaving them the free choice of employment, he argued, the "mass of mental faculties available for the higher service of humanity" would be doubled. It would also mean that women's influence in the formation of their sons' characters would become more beneficial.⁵⁷ Moreover, the educated wife would be a more adequate companion of her husband. If a wife could not be her husbands' companion in "ideas and mental tastes", and their companionship would be "unimproving and unstimulating", "young men of the greatest promise generally cease to improve as soon as they marry, and, not improving, inevitably degenerate. If the wife does not push the husband forward, she always holds him back".⁵⁸

Female education and freedom of occupation was justified by Mill as an application of the ideal of free and rational choice of how to lead one's life. Women's intellectual education was necessary to secure their own liberation from "slavery" where their only option was a life of servitude in marriage. At the same time, it was necessary to secure the benefits of the liberal creed for men through the establishment of a companionable marriage of equals.

Women's present social position, according to Mill,

⁵⁷*ibid.*, pp. 89-91.

⁵⁸*ibid.*, p. 102.

the inequality of rights, had "no other source than the law of the strongest." It was the "primitive state of slavery lasting on" which had not yet been abolished by the progressive application of equal justice.⁵⁹ Women (except for royalty) were the "solitary example in modern legislation" where birth imposed disabilities. For women "law and opinion" added artificial obstacles to natural ones. The social and legal subordination of women stood as an isolated fact, it was the "single relic of an old world of thought and practice exploded in everything else."⁶⁰

An important aspect of Mill's assertion of this cause of the subjection of women and his demand to give women the same rights and freedoms as men was a discussion of the natural versus the environmentally created characteristics of women. He rejected the assumption that scientists had established a clear knowledge about the nature of the sexes. Physicians and physiologists had to some degree ascertained the differences in bodily constitution. Yet, they were not psychologists and their observations about female mental characteristics "are of no more worth than those of common men".⁶¹ This was so because the "prevalent schools

⁵⁹*ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

⁶⁰*ibid.*, pp. 20-21. Mill maintained that although it might be difficult for men "of humble origin" to secure all those social advantages which were dependent upon wealth, the entire male sex, unlike the female one, was under no "legal ban" (see *ibid.*, p. 20).

⁶¹*ibid.*, p. 24.

both of natural history and mental philosophy" neglected the scientific study of environmental influence upon the formation of character.⁶² He pointed out that:

however great and apparently ineradicable the moral and intellectual differences between men and women might be, the evidence of their being natural differences could only be negative. Those only could be inferred to be natural which could possibly not be artificial - the residuum, after deducting every characteristic of either sex which can admit of being explained from education or external circumstance.⁶³

This supported his argument that "[w]hat is now called the nature of women is an eminently artificial thing - the result of forced repression in some directions, unnatural stimulation in others."⁶⁴

As recent scholars have pointed out, Mill's analysis of the relationship between the nature of woman and her environmentally determined character remained confusing.⁶⁵ His premise was that it was impossible to know what was acquired and what natural in the differences between the sexes: "I deny that any one knows, or can know, the nature of the two sexes, as long as they have been seen

⁶²*ibid.*, p. 71. In the 6th volume of the System of Logic (1843) Mill had elaborated on the importance of the scientific study of the laws of character formation (see Hekman, Gender and Knowledge, pp. 50-51).

⁶³*ibid.*, p. 24.

⁶⁴*ibid.*, p. 22.

⁶⁵See, for example, Julia Annas, "Mill and the Subjection of Women", Philosophy, 52 (1977), pp. 179-194; Hekman, Gender and Knowledge, pp. 50-52.

only in their present relation to one another."⁶⁶ Yet, at the same time he assumed that there existed something like a *female* nature; the residuum left after deducing those characteristics created by environmental influences. Throughout the tract, it remains unclear whether Mill saw the feminine characteristics he discussed as primarily environmentally produced or as results of woman's real nature. Mill argued that any of the mental differences that were supposed to exist between the sexes were but the "natural effect of the difference in their education and circumstances".⁶⁷ But at the same time he established a *possible* physiological explanation for these differences. Dismissing superior male brain size as an indicator of superior mental power, he continued to hypothesise that the "greater average finesse of quality in the brain and nervous system" of woman might offer an explanation of the "differences actually observed between the mental operations of the two sexes".⁶⁸

Moreover, although he advocated educational and occupational freedom for women, Mill drew in women's reproductive function with all its cultural baggage to assert his belief in the continuation of a sexual division of labour in which the husband earned the income and the wife would manage the household and bring up the

⁶⁶Mill, Subjection, p. 22.

⁶⁷*ibid.*, p. 57.

⁶⁸*ibid.*, p. 70.

children:

If, in addition to the physical suffering of bearing children, and the whole responsibility of their care and education in early years, the wife undertakes the careful and economical application of the husband's earnings to the general comfort of the family; she takes not only her fair share, but usually the larger share of the bodily and mental exertion required by their joint existence.⁶⁹

In an "otherwise just state of things", that is, if marriage were an equal contract, it was therefore not desirable that women should contribute by their labour to the income of the family.⁷⁰

From a late-twentieth-century point of view it has been argued that Mill ultimately "perpetuated the patriarchal division of male and female sexual spheres".⁷¹ But what he was mostly criticized for by his contemporaries was his lack of consideration of *existing* scientific knowledge about the nature of woman in his assertion that what was presently known to be female nature was an "eminently artificial thing". Hence, Charles Darwin was reported to have been "greatly excited" by the book, but commented that Mill "could learn some things from physical science; and that it is in the struggle for existence and (especially) the possession of women that men acquire their vigour and courage." He moreover asserted that inherited qualities

⁶⁹Mill, Subjection, pp. 50-51

⁷⁰*ibid.*, p. 51.

⁷¹Caine, Victorian Feminists, p. 37; quoting Zillah Eisenstein, Radical Future.

were more important than education in the formation of female character.⁷² "Philosophical speculations" on the nature of women and their position in society were contested with knowledge of the laws of Nature.⁷³ As we shall see in the following chapter, it was scientists, as those who decoded natural laws, who at the heights of the debates on women's education during the 1870s and 1880s, claimed the position as arbiters of social change.⁷⁴ In 1885 the evolutionist and socialist Karl Pearson thus declared that it was Mill's want of scientific investigation into the nature of woman which rendered much of his views valueless.⁷⁵ Around the same time, the evolutionist George Romanes asserted that "anatomical and physiological considerations ... bar *a priori* any argument for the natural equality of the sexes."⁷⁶

Yet, in terms of the education question, scientists' adherence to the concept of biological gender difference

⁷²Frances Power Cobbe, Life of Frances Power Cobbe, by Herself, 2, 3rd ed. (London: Richard Bentley & Son, 1884), p. 124.

⁷³See, for example, Pike, "Claims of Women", p. xlvii; Laycock, Mind and Brain, p. 494; Henry Maudsley, Body and Mind: An Inquiry into their Connection and Mutual Influence, Specially in Reference to Mental Disorders (London: Macmillan and Co., 1870), p. 32.

⁷⁴For the argument that Victorian scientists laid claim to the arbiters of social change in general see Moscucci, "Hermaphroditism", pp. 174-175.

⁷⁵Karl Pearson, "The Woman Question" (1885), in The Ethics of Freethought and Other Addresses and Essays, 2nd ed. (London: Adam & Charles Black), p. 356.

⁷⁶George Romanes, "Mental Differences Between Men and Women", Nineteenth Century, 21 (1887), p. 665.

did not warrant automatically opposition to the demands of the women's movement, as can be seen in the ideas put forward by the liberal Darwinian Thomas Huxley (1825-1895). In 1865 Huxley published an essay on "Emancipation - Black and White."⁷⁷ He pointed out that questions of emancipation were stirring the world, demanding that "classes of mankind" should be relieved from "restrictions imposed by the artifice of man, and not by the necessities of Nature". Huxley did not believe that humans were equal - Nature had made them unequal. But it was the "duty of man" that "not a grain is piled upon that load beyond what Nature imposes; that injustice is not added to inequality."⁷⁸ Other than the question of abolition, it was the "woman question" to which he dedicated his attention: "What social and political rights have women? What ought they to be allowed, or not allowed, to do, be, and suffer? And, as involved in, and underlying all these questions, how ought they to be educated?"⁷⁹

Huxley favoured the removal of "artificial restrictions upon the acquirement of knowledge by women".

⁷⁷T.H.Huxley, "Emancipation - Black and White", in Collected Essays, Vol. III, Science and Education, first published 1893 (London: Macmillan & Co., 1895), pp. 66-75. For a wider discussion of Huxley and the woman question see Evelleen Richards, "Huxley and Woman's Place in Science: The 'Woman Question' and the Control of Victorian Anthropology", in James R. Moore (ed.), History, Humanity and Evolution (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 253-284.

⁷⁸*ibid.*, p. 75.

⁷⁹*ibid.*, p. 68.

But it was precisely because women were biologically different that this would not affect the gender status quo:

Nature's old salique law will not be repealed, and no change of dynasty will be affected. The big chests, the massive brains, the vigorous muscles and stout frames of the best men will carry the day, whenever it is worth their while to contest the prizes of life with the best women. And the hardship of it is, that the very improvement of the women will lessen their chances. Better mothers will bring forth better sons, and the impetus gained by the one sex will be transmitted, in the next generation to the other. The most Darwinian of theorists will not venture to propound the doctrine, that the physical disabilities under which women have hitherto laboured in the struggle for existence with men are likely to be removed by even the most skilfully conducted process of educational selection.⁸⁰

So long as "potential motherhood is her lot" woman would be "fearfully weighted in the race of life".⁸¹

Huxley's assumption that Nature would regulate itself and maintain gender difference once the "artificial restrictions" upon women's acquirement of knowledge were abolished was not taken for granted by all scientists. As I shall explore in the following chapter, it was the perception that culture could interfere with nature which underlay many scientists' opposition to support female educational reforms.

⁸⁰*ibid.*, pp. 73-74.

⁸¹*ibid.*, p. 75.

Reforming Women's Education

I will now turn to examine the arguments upon which the campaigns of the women's movement for reforms in women's education and employment possibilities were based. In the following section I will turn to the ways in which feminists negotiated notions about female nature up until the establishment of Girton College in 1869 and the publication of The Subjection of Women in the same year.

Campaigners sought educational reforms for a range of reasons. Education as a way of increasing women's capabilities and qualifications for employment was of central importance. In the early discussion on women's education it was particularly the situation of the so-called "surplus" women which attracted attention.⁸² In the census of 1851 it had been found that 42 percent of women between the ages of twenty and forty were unmarried and

⁸²See, for example, Josephine Butler, "The Education and Employment of Women" (1868), in Dale Spender (ed.), The Education Papers: Women's Quest for Equality in Britain, 1850-1912 (New York and London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987), pp. 69-89; Emily Faithfull, On Some Drawbacks Connected with the Present Employment of Women (London: Emily Faithfull, 1862); Frances Power Cobbe, "What Shall We Do with Our Old Maids?" (1862), in Candida Ann Lacey (ed.), Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon and the Langham Place Group (New York and London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), pp. 354-377; Jessie Boucherett, "On the Obstacles to the Employment of Women" (1860), in *ibid.*, pp. 225-240; Millicent Garrett Fawcett, "A Short Review of that Portion of the Report of the Schools Inquiry Commission which Refers to Girls' Education" (1868), in Henry Fawcett and Millicent Garrett Fawcett, Essays and Lectures on Social and Political Subjects (London: Macmillan and Co., 1872), pp. 188-205.

that one third of the female population were earning their own living.⁸³ By 1861 the census showed that the two million spinsters and widows shown as supporting themselves in the 1851 census had increased by half a million.⁸⁴

Many middle-class families could not afford to maintain spinster daughters, yet they were not brought up to participate in the world of paid employment, nor were there many work opportunities which corresponded to good social standing. At mid-century the position of governess was the only occupation for middle-class women "in distress" considered to be genteel. Consequently, governessing was a greatly overcrowded and underpaid field of work.⁸⁵

The women's movement, particularly in its early stage, turned much of its energies to increasing the employment prospects of single women, such as by establishing classes to train women in skilled lower-middle-class occupations, as shop-assistants, book-keepers and clerks. During the second half of the nineteenth-century growing numbers of women entered the civil service. Others earned a living by their pen as novelists, essayists and journalists. Nursing and midwifery became increasingly middle-class occupations

⁸³Poovey, Uneven Developments, p. 4; Boucherett, "Obstacles" p. 225.

⁸⁴Butler, "Education and Employment", p. 70.

⁸⁵Levine, Victorian Feminism, pp. 83-86.

and a high number of women went into jobs created by the expansion of girls' formal education.⁸⁶

Through the inability of many middle-class families to maintain unmarried daughters, the figure of the spinster problematized the alignment of middle-class women with unpaid labour in the domestic sphere as daughters, wives and mothers.⁸⁷ Thus it was pointed out that "[t]hose who argued in the face of facts that woman's place was nowhere but by her own fireside, or the care of children were readily enough answered: the firesides were not always to be had and for every governess's situation there were fifty applicants."⁸⁸

It was not only the question of economic independence for unmarried women which fuelled the education reform movement, however. Educational improvements were also sought to inscribe women into ideals of the age. Liberal ideas were frequently marshalled to contest the exclusion of women from higher education and the barriers in employment. Arguments favouring the full cultivation of the mental powers for

⁸⁶For a discussion of middle-class women and employment see Lee Holcombe, Victorian Ladies at Work: Middle-Class Working Women in England and Wales, 1850-1914 (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1973) and Levine, Victorian Feminism, p. 82ff.

⁸⁷Poovey, Uneven Developments, p. 144. For a study of single women "as leaders in the ideological battle for women's rights" see Vicinus, Independent Women.

⁸⁸Faithfull, Drawbacks, p. 2-3. See also Cobbe, "Old Maids", p. 355; Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy, "The Education of Girls, its Present and its Future" (1869), in Spender (ed.), Education Papers, p. 162.

women to "attain to the dignity of rational human beings" were voiced.⁸⁹ Equally, there were demands for a "free trade in knowledge" and the right of the female individual, as much as the male, to choose what was and what was not suitable for her needs.⁹⁰ Hence it was argued in an article in the Victoria Magazine in 1869:

It is a fundamental law, as laid down in Political Economy, that 'The right of property consists in the right of every man to use his own faculties, and what he can produce by these faculties, together with the right to dispose of what he has produced as he may think fit.' Now these rights, which are simply just, ought not to be denied to woman; neither are they by some who have, in upholding the worth and dignity of the female sex, shown themselves to be men of truly enlightened and comprehensive understandings. Every man and woman has a right to the free use and development of his or her own faculties; and if a woman has the vocation, and undergoes the necessary training, she should be as free to enter the learned professions as men.⁹¹

⁸⁹Emma Wallington, "On the Admission of Women to the Learned Professions", Victoria Magazine, 13 (1869), p. 226.

⁹⁰See, for example, Harriet Taylor Mill, "Enfranchisement of Women" (1851), in Alice S. Rossi (ed.), Essays on Sex Equality - John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 100; Sophia Jex-Blake, "Medicine as a Profession for Women", in Josephine Butler (ed.), Woman's Work and Woman's Culture: A Series of Essays (London: Macmillan and Co., 1869), p. 98; Frances Power Cobbe, "The Education of Women, and how it Would be Affected by University Examinations" (1862), in Spender (ed.), Education Papers, pp. 37-38. The conservative Cobbe is an example that liberal language was not necessarily linked to an adherence of liberal national politics (see Caine, Victorian Feminists, p. 11 for the point that nineteenth-century feminist ideas cannot be understood by simply referring to feminists' other political convictions and p. 126ff for Cobbe's Conservative support).

⁹¹Wallington, "Admission of Women", p. 226.

But it was not only the conception that women had the same right as men to the free use of their faculties which informed feminist arguments. Members of the women's movement also claimed that women's gender-specific roles as daughters, wives, and mothers required a better education. The processes of industrialization were perceived to have reduced women's work within the domestic sphere, because the augmentation of wealth had increased the employment of servants and because goods were manufactured in the factory rather than at home.⁹² Many middle-class women, particularly daughters, it was argued, thus did not have anything left to do and were condemned to a life of boredom and idleness. Their days were passed in "laborious trifling", and their nights in dissipation. Frivolity was rife.⁹³ Rather than aping the life of the aristocracy, women of the middle class should partake in the values of their own class.⁹⁴ Idleness, "which is the root of all evil for men, is not particularly suited to be the root of all virtue for

⁹²Emily Davies, "Some Account of a Proposed New College for Women", Contemporary Review, 9 (1868), p. 548; see also W.E.H. Lecky, History of European Morals from Augustus to Charlemagne, 2, first published 1869, 12th ed. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1897), p. 371 for this argument.

⁹³Emily Davies, "Letters Addressed to a Daily Paper at Newcastle-upon-Tyne" (1860), in *idem*, Thoughts on Some Questions Relating to Women, 1860-1908 (Cambridge: Bowes and Bowes, 1910), pp. 2, 6.

⁹⁴Bessie Rayner Parkes, "What Can Educated Women Do?" (1860), in Lacey (ed.), Barbara Smith Leigh Bodichon, p. 169.

women".⁹⁵ It wasted the faculties of the mind, deteriorated women's tastes and habits and thus spread corruption over society.⁹⁶ Empty female lives did as much harm to society as "the wretchedness of an empty brain" did to individual lives.⁹⁷

The education that middle-class girls received, it was recurrently said, was only directed at making them marriageable.⁹⁸ As well as not preparing them to fend for themselves if they remained unmarried, it did not prepare them for the domestic role of a married woman.⁹⁹ Better education would make a companionate marriage viable.¹⁰⁰ The possibility for women to maintain themselves outside of marriage would provide a greater freedom of choice in husbands.¹⁰¹ It would make intellectual intercourse possible between the spouses. John Stuart Mill was not the only one to argue for the need of education to

⁹⁵Frances Power Cobbe, "The Final Cause of Women", in Butler (ed.), Woman's Work, p. 20.

⁹⁶Grey, Maria G. Grey and Emily Shirreff, Thoughts on Self-Culture, Addressed to Women (London: Edward Moxon, 1850), p. 18.

⁹⁷Power Cobbe, "Education of Women", p. 38.

⁹⁸Butler, "Education and Employment", p. 79; "Female Education in the Middle-Classes", English Woman's Journal, 1 (1858), p. 218.

⁹⁹Faithfull, Drawbacks, p. 5.

¹⁰⁰For a discussion of feminists' arguments to establish the legal basis for a companionable marriage see Shanley, "'One Must Ride Behind'", pp. 371ff.

¹⁰¹Jessie Boucherett, Jessie, "On the Education of Girls with Reference to their Future Position" (1860), in Lacey (ed.), Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon, pp. 247-248.

establish companionable marriages for its wider social benefits. The educationist and suffragist Millicent Garrett Fawcett,¹⁰² for example, declared in 1868 that wives with "inferior and ill-developed capacities" were sure to harm the minds of their husbands:

A woman whose whole life is bounded by her own domestic circle, and who has no thought or care for anything outside it, is certain to infect her husband with this sort of selfishness, to damp, and perhaps destroy his public spirit and sense of public duty. If she does everything she can to make him forget he is a citizen, he will in time partially or wholly forget it.¹⁰³

Cultivating women's minds was not only important because of the influence on their husband, but also because of the impact they possessed over the next generation.¹⁰⁴ A child's first "notions of duty, of right

¹⁰²Millicent Garrett Fawcett (1847-1929) is best known for her involvement in the suffrage campaign. She was educated at home and at a boarding school. In 1867 she married the blind MP, Henry Fawcett, a Professor of Political Economy at Cambridge. Fawcett acted as a secretary for her husband, which aided her in enlarging her knowledge of political and social issues. She started her involvement in the suffrage campaign by becoming a member of the first Women's Suffrage Committee in 1867 in London. In 1897, when the various suffrage committees merged, she became the President of the resulting National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, a position which she held until 1918 (see Spender (ed.), Education Papers, p. 352; Virginia Blain; Patricia Clements; Isobel Grundy, The Feminist Companion to Literature in English: Women Writers from the Middle Ages to the Present (London: B.T.Batsford, 1990). For biographies see Ray Strachey, Millicent Garrett Fawcett (London: John Murray, 1931); David Rubinstein, A Different World for Women: The Life of Millicent Garrett Fawcett (1991).

¹⁰³Fawcett, "Review", p. 204.

¹⁰⁴The Taunton Schools' Inquiry Commission concluded that an educated mother was of even more importance to the family than an educated father, Parliamentary Papers, Vol. 1 (Session 19 Nov. 1867 - 31 July 1868).

and wrong, of happiness, of a Supreme Being, of immorality" was received from its mothers;¹⁰⁵ the mother was the "child's first and chief educator, the plastic moulder of its mental nature, and the genial inspirer of its moral life."¹⁰⁶ The more the intellectual and moral standard among women was raised, the "more we shall advance and ennoble our country," it was declared in an article in the English Woman's Review in 1868.¹⁰⁷

Feminist arguments for educational reform thus combined concepts of the needs of "surplus" women who did not fit into the alignment of women with the domestic sphere with notions of the right of women to develop and make free use of their faculties. Parallel with these, ideas were formulated about the requirement of better education to enhance women's domestic role as wives and mothers. Women's education, as Millicent Garrett Fawcett pointed out, was thus an issue of national welfare.¹⁰⁸

Feminist Negotiations of the Female Mind and Body

Mary Poovey in her excellent study Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-

¹⁰⁵Fawcett, "Review", p. 202.

¹⁰⁶W. B. Hodgson, "The Education of Girls, Considered in Connexion with the University Local Examinations", Victoria Magazine, 3 (1864), p. 266.

¹⁰⁷"What Results should be Sought in the Education of Girls, and How Are such Results Most Likely Attained?", English Woman's Review (1868), p. 358.

¹⁰⁸Fawcett, "Review", p. 203.

Victorian England, has argued that "[e]ven more than with other subjects, the right to write about the body belonged to men at mid-century and to the medical expert in particular".¹⁰⁹ However, as the education debates make clear, women were not silent on the female body, nor the female mind, even before they entered the medical profession themselves. I will suggest in this section, and throughout the thesis, that feminists inserted themselves into the public discourse of gender difference and that their voices played an important role in the negotiation of ideas on the female mind and body.

Feminists articulated a variety of views on female nature, some emphasising female difference, others human sameness. As Carol Lee Bacchi has pointed out, these were not necessarily mutually exclusive concepts in the nineteenth-century women's movement. Rather a common assumption was that women were "equal, but different". These feminists generally believed that the maternal function made women different, but they also operated with concepts of a common humanity.¹¹⁰ Claims to equal

¹⁰⁹Poovey, Uneven Developments, p. 43.

¹¹⁰Carol Lee Bacchi, Same Difference: Feminism and Sexual Difference (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990), p. 6. For a text which engages with the present day "equality versus difference" dichotomy in feminist theory which argues that such an opposition is false, since a "political notion of equality...includes, indeed, depends on, an acknowledgement of the existence of difference" and proposes a solution of replacing the difference/equality opposition by a recognition of multiple *differences* "as the very meaning of equality itself", see Joan Scott, "Deconstructing Equality-Versus-Difference: Or, the Uses of Poststructuralist Theory for Feminism", Feminist Studies, 14 (1988), pp. 33-50.

rights were put forward on the basis of this common humanity, but they were often voiced in terms of enhancing a gender specific function within the home, as well as to bring feminine difference to bear upon the public sphere. The educationalist and suffragist Millicent Garrett Fawcett thus explained at the end of the century:

We do not advocate the representation of women, because there is no difference between men and women, but rather because of the difference between them. We want women's special experience as women, their special knowledge of the home and home wants, of child-life of the conditions conducive to the formation of character to be brought to bear on legislation. By giving women greater freedom, we believe that the truly womanly qualities will grow in strength and power.¹¹¹

It was not only liberal language of equal rights which informed nineteenth-century feminism. The domestic ideology which asserted women's difference from men was also important.¹¹² Notions of equal rights could be integrated with notions of gender difference. The negotiation of these two concepts - difference and equality - took on multiple forms.

Nineteenth-century feminists much explored the notion of women's moral superiority, transforming it into a capacity that was to leave the confines of the home and

¹¹¹Millicent Garrett Fawcett, "The Emancipation of Women", Fortnightly Review, 50 (1891), p. 676.

¹¹²See Caine, Victorian Feminism, p. 43.

come to bear upon the public.¹¹³ Hence ideas about specifically feminine moral qualities and social roles were important to feminist thought. As I have shown in the previous section, arguments for the cultivation of female minds were partly informed by the notion that women's influence within the domestic sphere thus could be made more valuable. In 1850, the sisters Maria Grey (1816-1906) and Emily Shirreff (1814-97), who were to launch the Women's Education Union in 1871, had put forward the claim that "knowledge, enlargement of mind, power of thought" was necessary to fully develop feminine difference.¹¹⁴ They propagated the self-improvement of girls with leisure at home. According to the sisters, women's role, as reflected in their different constitution from men, lay within the domestic sphere. This was where they wielded influence over the world by their influence over men as mothers.¹¹⁵ The importance of an education for women which would not neglect mental cultivation¹¹⁶ was that all mental faculties should be cultivated, so that women's specific morality could be

¹¹³For an excellent discussion of turn of the century feminists' endeavour to transform the relations between the sexes and the social order, and to establish a new morality see Lucy Bland, Banishing the Beast: English Feminism and Sexual Morality, 1885-1914 (London: Penguin, 1995).

¹¹⁴Grey and Shirreff, Self-Culture, p. 54.

¹¹⁵*ibid.*, p. 37.

¹¹⁶*ibid.*, p. 55.

developed to its utmost.¹¹⁷ The importance of "self-culture" for women was to exercise their moral influence to the fullest within the domestic sphere.

Emily Shirreff, who in 1870 was to become for a short time the mistress of Girton College, was to continue her argument eight years later. For her it was the domestic ideology which constituted the basis of her arguments to reform female education to the exclusion of liberal theory. The "dream of equality" of the sexes, she explained, was born of "wild political theory". If one read nature, instead of "indulging in proud dreams or ambitious theories", it was clear, she said, that men and women were different in mind and in body.¹¹⁸

By the 1860s, Shirreff's view on female education as solely directed at the fulfilment of domestic duties became uncommon. The "Spinster Question" acquired increasing importance in feminist circles and the first suffrage associations were set up. The notion that women should be better educated to increase their feminine influence continued to be formulated. But not only to be applied within the home. Feminists, such as Frances Power Cobbe (1822-1904) and Josephine Butler (1826-1906), now argued that women's influence should also be effective in

¹¹⁷*ibid.*, pp. 60-61.

¹¹⁸Emily Shirreff, Intellectual Education and its Influence on the Character and Happiness of Women (London: John W. Parker, 1858), pp. 422-423.

philanthropic and paid occupations outside of the home.¹¹⁹ This influence could only be exercised if all their mental faculties, including the intellect, were trained. It was precisely the preponderance of emotion and intuition in the female mental make-up which made a sound mental training desirable.¹²⁰ To develop the emotional part properly, the intellectual parts had to be trained in order to guide the emotions. Only then would they be of great advantage.¹²¹

Demands for reforms in women's education were supported by claims that the natural difference between the sexes was being distorted by societal restrictions.¹²² It was the mistake of women's detractors "to confound what *is* with what must *be*."¹²³ Equal rights for women would favour the establishment of a *real* femininity, unhampered by artificial constraints and male ideals. Feminists argued that artificial barriers were

¹¹⁹See Butler, "Education and Employment" in Spender (ed.), Education Papers, pp. 80ff; Cobbe, "Education of Women", in Spender (ed.), Education Papers, pp. 40-42.

¹²⁰Power Cobbe, "Education of Women", p. 44.

¹²¹*ibid.*; "Review of The Social and Political Dependence of Women", Fortnightly Review, 1 (1867), p. 765; see also "Female Education in the Middle-Classes", English Woman's Journal, 1 (1858), p. 218.

¹²²See, for example, Power Cobbe, "Old Maids", p. 371; Wolstoneholme Elmy, "Education of Girls", p. 167; Emily Davies, The Higher Education of Women, first published 1866 (London: Hambledon Press, 1988), pp. 158-161.

¹²³B.E.W., "Is Emulation a Lawful and Efficient Means of Promoting the Education of Women?", Englishwoman's Review (1867), p. 277. B.E.W.'s emphasis.

circumscribing women's lives, which was the result of male domination, a left-over from the past when the law of the strongest had reigned supreme. Now, however, the "dawn of a brighter day is breaking."¹²⁴ Women's emancipation was a sign of the "dethronement of the law of force".¹²⁵

Demands for educational reform, however, were not based on the idea that all difference between women and men would or should disappear. Rather, it was frequently assumed that equal rights in terms of education were part of the provision of space for women to develop as naturally gendered beings. "Our affair", declared Frances Power Cobbe,¹²⁶

is to give nature its fullest, healthiest play
and richest culture, and then the result will

¹²⁴Lydia E. Becker, "Is There Any Specific Distinction Between Male And Female Intellect?", Englishwoman's Review (1868), p. 486.

¹²⁵Emily Davies quoting Gladstone in Higher Education, p. 181.

¹²⁶Cobbe, born in Ireland, was the daughter of a landowner and magistrate. She was educated first by a succession of governesses and then was sent to a boarding school. Later in life, she was to censure the emphasis on "accomplishments" in her schooling. With the aid of a small inherited income sufficient to maintain her, she chose to remain unmarried and to pursue a career as a writer and social reformer. Power Cobbe was one of the most prolific authors of the women's movement. She took part in many campaigns, including women's suffrage, education, legal rights, and wife-abuse, as well as being involved in the anti-vivisection campaign. Power Cobbe introduced the question of women's access to university education in a paper she gave in 1862 on "The Education of Women and How it Would be Affected by University Examinations" (see Spender (ed.), Education Papers, pp. 350-351; Blain et al., Feminist Companion). For her autobiography see The Life of Frances Power Cobbe by Herself (1894).

be what the Lord of Nature has designed - a true woman; a being not artificially different from man, but radically and essentially, because *naturally*, different - his *complement* in the great sum of human nature, not a mere *deduction* from his own share of the sum.¹²⁷

Only when artificial restrictions were removed could woman become woman in her own right. Real femininity would show itself and replace male conceptions of femininity as the counterpart to the male norm.¹²⁸

Whereas some campaigners foregrounded difference between the sexes as the reason for a more intellectually oriented education, others explored the concept of a common humanity which underlay differences between the sexes. Sophia Jex-Blake (1840-1912), who was to become one of the first women physicians, made this point after she visited co-educational schools in the United States:

if there is, in fact, no fundamental education answering to the needs of common humanity, and, therefore, equally necessary both for men and women, - it follows that the difference of sex is more radical and more essential than is the common humanity that underlies it, - that man is more a man and woman more a woman, than each is a human being.

This position I suppose few people will care to maintain, and on it alone I think can logically rest any argument for denying a common education to both sexes, in as far as that education is calculated to cultivate the intellectual and mental powers common to humanity, and to develop in each human being the perfect 'homo', as distinguished from vir

¹²⁷Power Cobbe, "Education of Women", pp. 42-43, Cobbe's emphasis.

¹²⁸Power Cobbe, "Education of Women", pp. 42-43; Davies, Higher Education, p. 11.

or femina.¹²⁹

Common human nature thus was invoked to argue that females should undergo the same education as males. But these ideas of human communality did not necessarily exclude the notion that there existed differences between the sexes, such as women's specific morality and nurturing capacities. Sophia Jex-Blake, for example, maintained that women were by nature more suited for the ministration of the suffering.¹³⁰ Emily Davies (1830-1921), known for her insistence that women should receive exactly the same college education as men, thought that not only the differences between the sexes were much exaggerated by men and by women,¹³¹ but also that the specific differences between the sexes were not yet known.¹³² She did not doubt, however, that there was such

¹²⁹Sophia Jex-Blake, A Visit to Some American Schools and Colleges (London: Macmillan and Co., 1867), pp. 233-234.

¹³⁰Sophia Jex-Blake, "Medicine as a Profession for Women", in Butler (ed.), Woman's Work, p. 80. See also Emma Wallington, who argued that genius and talent had no sex, but thought moral influence to be essentially a female influence (Wallington, "Learned Professions", pp. 222; 228).

¹³¹[Emily Davies], "The Influence of University Degrees on the Education of Women", Victoria Magazine, 1 (1863), p. 264.

¹³²Emily Davies, "Special Systems of Education for Women" (1868), in Spender (ed.), Education Papers, p. 100. Although Davies was convinced that women's mental capacities were sufficient for successfully undergoing a college education, she did, however, think that the realm of excellence was probably a masculine realm. "I mean to say that very likely there will always be *some* men in every field who will do better than any woman." (See Letter to Mr Dyke Acland, 28 December 1864. Fawcett

a thing as "distinctive manhood and womanhood".¹³³

Whereas Davies saw the question of women's exact mental capacities in comparisons to men's ultimately as irrelevant¹³⁴, the suffragist Lydia Becker (1827-1890)¹³⁵ set out to argue that intellect was not at all linked to anatomical sex. Becker was one of the few feminists, who intervened in the education debates, who disregarded all notions of innate gender difference. That there should be no recognition by law of inequality between the sexes with regards to educational endowments was laid down by liberalism. No human being had the right to prescribe to another the limits of mental cultivation.¹³⁶ It was

Library: Autograph Letter Collection - Education of Women - Vol. 4.).

¹³³Davies, Higher Education, p. 159.

¹³⁴The discovery of a "general average of somewhat inferior mental strength in women" would be only a fact of scientific interest, but "surely not of very great importance" (see Davies, "Special Systems", p. 100).

¹³⁵Becker, except for a short period at a boarding school, was educated at home. Her interest in botany led her to correspond with Charles Darwin and to publish Botany for Novices: A Short Outline of the Natural System of the Classification of Plants under her initials in 1864. In 1865 she set up a Ladies Literary Society in Manchester, which was dedicated to the study of scientific subjects. Two years later she became the secretary of the newly established Manchester Women's Suffrage Committee. She also became active on the Married Women's Property Committee. In 1870 she founded the Woman's Suffrage Journal which she edited for the next twenty years. She became the Secretary of the London Central Committee for Women's Suffrage (see Blain *et al.*, Feminist Companion; Audrey Kelly, Lydia Becker and the Cause (Lancaster: Centre for North-West Regional Studies, 1992)).

¹³⁶Lydia E. Becker, "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity" (1874), in Jane Lewis (ed.), Before the Vote was Won: Arguments For and Against Women's Suffrage (New York &

science which informed her arguments that there was no natural foundation to the present situation.

In a paper which drew much comment¹³⁷ Becker put forward the notion that the mind was gendered, in that there existed masculine and feminine mental traits, but she denied that these qualities were linked to the sexed body. Becker refused to accept that "distinction of sex extends to mind" and that this supposed that "there is a 'sphere' or 'providence' assigned to each, within which it is the bounden duty of one sex, at least, to confine erratic genius".¹³⁸ There was no "necessary, nor even presumptive connexion between the sex of a human being, and the type of intellect and character he possesses."¹³⁹ For Becker, this could be seen from observing the animal kingdom in which, according to her, it was clear that sex did not extend to intellect.¹⁴⁰ The minds of men and women in terms of intellect were different, according to Becker, but this was not inherent to sex, but rather the result of circumstance. Whereas men were free to use their minds according to their natural bents, women were subjected to artificial lives and pushed by custom into

London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), pp. 231-232.

¹³⁷See, for example, McGriggor Allan, "Real Differences", p. ccii; "Miss Becker", Lancet, pp. 320-321.

¹³⁸Becker, "Distinction", p. 483

¹³⁹*ibid.*, p. 491.

¹⁴⁰*ibid.*, p. 485ff.

lives of intellectual vacuity.¹⁴¹

Conclusion

By the late 1860s middle-class women's position in society was debated by a multitude of men and women. Reforms in female education became an issue of much concern. The demands for these reforms were carried by the question of unmarried middle-class women; arguments for the extensions to women of rights granted to men; as well as perceptions of a need to increase women's gender-specific influence inside and outside of the home.

The demands of the women's movement were located in a complex context of co-existing notions of human equality and liberty and natural differences between the sexes, which allotted different spheres to men and women. Approaches to female education displayed an interplay between concepts of human sameness and sexual difference. The concept of gender-specific education was based upon assumptions that it reflected natural differences between men and women from which distinct social roles arose. But during the 1860s the lack of female educational and occupational freedom came to be presented as an instant of subjection which had not yet been abolished by progressive equal justice. This assumption, however, did not necessarily entail a critique of organizing society

¹⁴¹*ibid.*, pp. 483-484; Lydia Becker, "On the Study of Science by Women", Contemporary Review, Vol. 10 (1869), p. 388.

along gender divisions. Gender, as the consequence of natural difference, was to remain central, but women's liberty would replace an "artificial" femininity with "real" femininity.

Debates about female education became a site for the negotiation of the meanings of sex and its reflection in social roles. Feminists in their arguments explored notions of sameness and difference, foregrounding either in a variety of ways. Often they integrated the two concepts, arguing that women, on the basis of their common humanity, were equal to men and thus had the same right to education as they had, while at the same time adhering to concepts of gender difference.

During the 1870s and 1880s, when the debates on female higher education reached its peak, the notion that natural differences were of consequence in the roles of men and women in society provided the basis for the increasingly conspicuous contribution of scientists and physicians to the public discussions about the education of the female sex, as I shall explore in the following chapter. They claimed that the question should not be assessed by way of abstract ideals of human equality, but had to take into consideration those natural laws which made man and woman different.

CHAPTER TWO

SCIENCE AND GENDER:

THE EFFECTS OF EDUCATION ON THE FEMALE MIND AND BODY, c. 1870 - c. 1885

By the 1870s the reforms demanded and achieved by the women's movement had obtained a high profile. Besides the developments in women's education and occupations, most noted the appearance of the first women doctors, the first Married Women's Property Act had been passed in 1870, and suffrage societies were springing up. At this point, growing numbers of physicians and scientists went public with their views by publishing in lay journals. The psychiatrist Henry Maudsley thus caused a stir when he published "Sex in Mind and in Education" in a literary journal in 1874, in which he discussed female physiology.¹ As the lawyer Herbert Cowell rebuked him, "however appropriate to the pages of a medical publication, [this] is a novelty in English current Literature".² In her reply to Maudsley, the physician Elizabeth Garrett Anderson wondered whether "such a subject can be fully and with propriety discussed except in a professional journal",

¹Henry Maudsley, "Sex in Mind and Education", Fortnightly Review, 15 (1874), pp. 466-483.

²[Herbert Cowell], "Sex in Mind and Education: A Commentary", Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 115 (1874), p. 737.

but, since Maudsley had done so, took him up on these issues in the same journal.³

It was scientists who became the main contributors, as well as feminists, to the public debates about women's education. It was the notion that the natural aptitudes of the sexes formed the basis to their social roles, which formed the basis to scientists' claims that they should be the arbiters of establishing the right education for women. Extensive discussions were held about gender-specific mental and physical characteristics and the effects of altered educational and occupational circumstance upon them.

In studies of the Victorian scientific construction of gender the conception of a fundamental difference between the sexes has often been stressed.⁴ However, as Ornella Moscucci and Jill Matus have pointed out, this is only part of the story.⁵ As much as Victorian science focused on establishing differences between the sexes, it was also preoccupied with how these differences were

³Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, "Sex in Mind and Education: A Reply", Fortnightly Review, 15 (1874), p. 582.

⁴See, for example, Cynthia Eagle Russett, Sexual Science: The Victorian Construction of Womanhood (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989).

⁵Ornella Moscucci, "Hermaphroditism and Sex Difference: The Construction of Gender in Victorian England", in Marina Benjamin (ed.), Science and Sensibility: Gender and Scientific Enquiry, 1780-1945 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), pp. 174-199; Jill L. Matus, Unstable Bodies: Victorian Representations of Sexuality and Maternity (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1995), part. chapter one.

mutable. Notions that masculinity and femininity were not static essences underlay conceptions of differences between people of different classes and cultures.⁶

Throughout the Victorian period sex differences were not seen to be immutable, but responsive to environment and culture.⁷ The notion that gendered human nature was open to change implied, as Matus has observed, that "Nature could be shaped, improved upon, or indeed perverted by culture."⁸ Central to scientists' discussions about reforms in women's education and occupations were preoccupations with the impact of these altered environmental influences on female nature.

Darwin and the Evolution of Woman

An important step in the formulation of ideas on gender took place in 1871 when Charles Darwin elaborated his theories on the nature and causes of differences between the sexes in The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex,⁹ two years after the publication of

⁶Matus, Unstable Bodies, p. 21.

⁷Moscucci, "Hermaphroditism", p. 184; Matus, Unstable Bodies, p. 25.

⁸Matus, Unstable Bodies, p. 25.

⁹Charles Darwin, The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981); facsimile reprint of first edition 1871. For other discussion of Darwin and gender see Evelleen Richards, "Darwin and the Descent of Woman", in David Oldroyd and Ian Langham (ed.), The Wider Domain of Evolutionary Thought (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1983), pp. 57-111; Rosemary Jann, "Darwin and the Anthropologists: Sexual

Mill's The Subjection of Women (and the establishment of Girton College). People like Thomas Huxley and Frances Power Cobbe had already pointed to implications of Darwin's evolutionary ideas as laid out in The Origin of Species¹⁰ for theories on gender difference.¹¹ After Darwin directly addressed the issue of human evolution and evolutionary sexual differentiation between man and women in The Descent of Man, his theories of the biological basis of mental differences between the sexes came to occupy an increasingly important place in the debates about woman's nature.¹²

One of Darwin's central concerns in The Descent of Man, as the full title indicates, was with sexual selection and its application to various members of the animal kingdom, including human beings. Darwin had addressed sexual selection briefly in The Origin of Species. In the Descent of Man he dedicated more pages to sexual than to natural selection. Whereas Darwin defined natural selection as the survival of the better fitted in the struggle for existence, he saw sexual selection as

Selection and its Discontents", Victorian Studies, 37 (1994), pp. 287-306; Russett, Sexual Science, part. pp. 78ff.

¹⁰Charles Darwin, The Origin of Species, first published 1859 (London: Penguin, 1985), pp. 136-138.

¹¹For Huxley see chapter one, pp. 59-60. For Power Cobbe see chapter three, pp. 127-128.

¹²My discussion of Darwin's evolutionary theory will exclusively focus on its implications for conceptions of gender. For a wider discussion see, for instance, Peter J. Bowler, Evolution: The History of an Idea, 2nd rev. ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

dependent on the "advantage which certain individuals have over other individuals of the same sex and species, in exclusive relation to reproduction".¹³ Sexual selection operated through the combat between males for the possession of females, and, among animals, female choice of the more attractive males, giving those males a greater reproductive advantage.¹⁴

Differences between the sexes, in Darwin's view, were constituted by the primary sexual characters, i.e., the reproductive organs, and the secondary sexual characters, i.e., differences between the sexes which were not directly connected to the act of reproduction.¹⁵ It was in the development of the latter that, according to Darwin, sexual selection played an important, although not exclusive, role.¹⁶

¹³Darwin, Descent, I, pp. 256-257, II, p. 398.

¹⁴Richards, "Darwin", p. 64; Jann, "Darwin" p. 294; Darwin, Descent, I, pp. 328, 398.

¹⁵Darwin, Descent, I, p. 253.

¹⁶The theory of sexual selection was not readily accepted as the primary mechanism for the development of sexual difference by some scientists, including Darwinians. Patrick Geddes and J. Arthur Thomson, in The Evolution of Sex (1889) saw all sex characteristics as deriving from constitutional maleness and femaleness (see Moscucci, "Hermaphroditism", p. 183; Richards, "Darwin", 98-99; Russett, Sexual Science, p. 89). There existed a long-standing debate between Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace, who believed in the primacy of natural selection in the evolution of sexual characteristics (see Richards, "Darwin", p. 66; Russett, Sexual Science, p. 80). Herbert Spencer never directly engaged in the question of the validity of sexual selection as a mechanism of sexual differentiation. But his views on the origins of the differences between the sexes embraced natural selection, Lamarckian ideas on the inheritance of acquired traits, and different recapitulatory trajectories of men and women

Because of her maternal instinct, woman, in Darwin's view, differed from man mentally in her "greater tenderness and less selfishness". Man, on the other hand, "is the rival of other men; he delights in competition, and this leads to ambitions which leads too easily into selfishness."¹⁷ This was not the only mental difference, however. There was also a difference in mental powers, which was shown by "man attaining to a higher eminence, in whatever he takes up, than woman can attain - whether requiring deep thought, reason or imagination, or merely the use of the senses and hands."¹⁸

The causes of this, he explained, were partly to be found in sexual selection, and partly in natural selection. "Courage, perseverance, and determined energy" were of advantage in the contest of rival males for the possession of females in the half-human progenitors of man and in the savage state, as they were with animals.

(see Richards, "Darwin", pp. 98-99). However, others, such as the anthropologist W.L. Distant; the physiologist Harry Campbell; and Karl Pearson incorporated the theory of sexual selection into their ideas on gender. George Romanes, who became one of the most noted representatives of Darwinism in Britain saw sexual selection to be a crucial factor in constitution of the gendered mind (see W.L.Distant, "On the Mental Differences between the Sexes", Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, 4 (1874), pp. 78-87; Harry Campbell, Differences in the Nervous Organisation of Man and Woman: Physiological and Pathological (London: H.K.Lewis, 1891); Karl Pearson, "The Woman Question" (1885), in The Ethics of Freethought and Other Addresses and Essays, 2nd ed. (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1901), pp. 354-378; George J. Romanes, "Mental Differences between Men and Women", Nineteenth Century, 21 (1887), pp. 654-672).

¹⁷*ibid.*, II, p. 326.

¹⁸*ibid.*, II, p. 327.

In the human male, moreover, higher mental faculties were also an asset in the successful protection of females and their young and the provision for their joint subsistence: "But to avoid enemies, to attack them with success, to capture wild animals, and to invent and fashion weapons, requires the aid of the higher mental faculties, namely, observation, reason, invention or imagination."¹⁹

What Darwin in effect suggested was that the female of the human species had been exempted from the struggle for existence, in that she was no longer responsible for feeding and protecting herself, but that this was done for her by the male.²⁰ Because of this dependency on the male, mental powers in the female were not subject to the same mechanisms of natural selection, as, because of the lack of contest between females for the possession of males, they were not subject to the pressures of sexual selection. Moreover, Darwin argued that among humans males had gained the power of selection, contrary to animals where females were the main selectors. Women, thus had long undergone selective pressures primarily in terms of beauty.²¹ Thus, Darwin maintained that in terms

¹⁹*ibid.*, II, pp. 327-328, 382-383.

²⁰Jann, "Darwin", pp. 295-296; Russett, Sexual Science, pp. 83-84.

²¹Darwin, Descent, II, pp. 371-372. The inconsistency of the argument that "[m]an is more powerful in body and mind than woman, and in the savage state he keeps her in a far more abject state of bondage than does the male of any other species; therefore it is not surprising that he should have gained the power of selection." (*ibid.*, II, p.

of mental power "man has ultimately become superior to woman", continuing that it was fortunate that the law of the equal transmission of characters to both sexes had commonly prevailed among mammals, "otherwise it is probable that man would have become as superior in mental endowment to woman, as the peacock is in ornamental plumage to the peahen."²²

As Evelleen Richards has pointed out, Darwin personally did not oppose women's higher education. Quite the contrary: when women in 1881 were admitted to sit Cambridge examinations (without being granted degrees), he approved of it in a letter to his son George.²³ He did not think it very probable, however, that the inherent gender gap in intellectual endowment would ever be closed. He believed (although he maintained that it was a rule which did not always hold) that characters that were either developed or acquired at an early age were transmitted to both sexes, whereas characters that were acquired at a later period of life were transmitted only to the same sex.²⁴ Hence if girls were educated in the

371), has been pointed out by Rosemary Jann. Among animals males are often stronger than females too, yet they did not gain the power of selection (see Jann, "Darwin", p. 295).

²²Darwin, Descent, II, pp. 328-329.

²³Richards, "Darwin", p. 98.

²⁴Darwin, Descent, I, pp. 295-296; II, p. 329. For Darwin's acceptance of the notion that the evolutionary mechanisms of selection might be supplemented by that of the inherited effects of use and disuse, i.e. Lamarckianism, see Bowler, Evolution, pp. 171, 190.

same way as boys, they would transmit their acquired mental endowments equally to both sexes. If adolescent women were mentally trained to the highest point, however, they would in all probability pass on these qualities only to their female offspring. But the whole body of women, he pointed out, "could not be thus raised, unless during many generations the women who excelled in the above robust virtues [energy, perseverance, reason and imagination] were married and produced offspring in larger numbers than other women."²⁵

Moreover, although men did not engage in physical combat among themselves any more to obtain wives, and this mechanism of mental differentiation between the sexes had disappeared, it was men who underwent "a severe struggle in order to maintain their families; and this will tend to keep up, or even increase their mental powers, and as a consequence, the present inequality between the sexes."²⁶ Darwin's notion of male competitiveness and selfishness implied that men were naturally more suited to earn a living in the marketplace. At the same time as the sexual division of labour was based upon natural aptitudes, it favoured the continuation of differentiation in mental powers between the sexes.

²⁵*ibid.*, II, p. 329.

²⁶*ibid.*, II, p. 329.

Female Nature: Matters Might Be Different

Darwin's theories on natural and sexual selection came to play an important role in the debates about middle-class women's education and occupations. As has been pointed out before, Darwin naturalized gender difference in ways which explained and legitimized the different roles and rights of men and women.²⁷ The position of men and women in society was bound up with the history of human evolution. The two sexes had originally derived from an androgynous "extremely remote progenitor of the whole vertebrate kingdom".²⁸ Sexual differentiation was a central component of the evolutionary process.²⁹ Mental differentiation between men and women was an indication of evolutionary advancement. Among "savage races", the anthropologist William Lucas Distant (1845-1922) explained, man excelled in physical strength, but only surpassed woman a little in mental

²⁷See, for instance, Richardson, "Darwin", pp. 61, 95; Elaine Showalter, The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture, 1830-1980 (London: Virago Press, 1987), pp. 121-122. Janet Oppenheim has argued that feminism and evolutionary thought clashed ideologically (see Janet Oppenheim, "Shattered Nerves": Doctors, Patients, and Depression in Victorian England (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 182). However, as I will argue, Darwinian theory was also interpreted in ways which favoured a more intellectually oriented education of women, and it was appropriated and incorporated into feminist theory, particularly towards the end of the century, as I shall explore in chapter four.

²⁸Darwin, Descent, I, p. 207.

²⁹Moscucci, "Hermaphroditism", p. 182.

strength.³⁰ It was among the most evolved races that mental differentiation was greatest.

Opposition to making traditionally male education accessible to women was often rooted in the conviction that current arrangements reflected the path human evolution had taken. Thus the darwinian psychiatrist Henry Maudsley rhetorically asked

does it not appear that in order to assimilate the female to the male mind it would be necessary to undo the life-history of mankind from its earliest commencement? Nay, would it not be necessary to go still farther back to that earliest period of animal life upon earth before there was any distinction of sex?"³¹

Mental differences between the sexes were the product of the evolutionary process, and not to be meddled with. As we shall see later, for some evolutionists the notion of educating women in the same way as men - of assimilating the female to the male mind - was perceived as provoking the degeneration, or evolutionary decline, of the race.

The perseverance of Lamarckian notions of the inheritance of acquired traits, as well Darwin's theory that the differences between the sexes had been undergoing change throughout evolution following the pressures of natural and sexual selection, suggested that these differences could be affected by a conscious modification of the environment and by a different sexual

³⁰Distant, "Mental Differences", p. 81.

³¹Maudsley, "Sex in Mind", p. 471.

selection.³² This could be interpreted as meaning that if women were placed in a male life-environment female nature would undergo change. The question was not whether it was possible, but rather whether it was desirable. Thus, Benjamin Ward Richardson, a physician noted for his involvement in public hygiene reforms, pointed out that

[s]ince development by evolution has become the leading scientific idea, we have been led to conceive that those peculiarities in women which admittedly have rendered them incapable of performing masculine work in equality with men, is not due to any primitive failure incident to sex, but to a failure of development incident to the mode in which the so-called gentler sex has been brought up.³³

Evolutionary theory hence generated ideas that it was not simply the reproductive organs which lay at the root of gender difference. Sexual characteristics, as the darwinian physiologist Harry Campbell declared, were thus "in a manner accidental....: matters might have been different".³⁴ Female nature was bound up with the history of the female sex. The life-styles of previous generations were imprinted in the female mind. Women in the history of human evolution had lived in ways which

³²For this implication of Darwins' evolutionary framework see Moscucci, "Hermaphroditism", p. 183. It was not only that Darwin never completely broke with the Lamarckian theory of the inheritance of acquired traits, but the interaction of environment and human nature also proceeded through that the former was important in determining which characteristics gave greatest chance of survival.

³³Benjamin Ward Richardson, "Woman's Work in Creation", Longman's Magazine, 8 (1886), p. 609.

³⁴Campbell, Nervous Organization, p. 46.

had restricted mental development. Thus, when William Lucas Distant³⁵ addressed the question of the mental differences between the sexes, he argued that the "retardation" of the female mind was partly due to physiological reasons, but also to "external conditions and male selection". Not only had women been selected by men for their beauty, rather than mental endowments, but women's dependency on men had meant that they had lived in a "secluded" domestic environment, owing to the "jealously or precarious measures of men in preventing an intercourse with the outside world".³⁶ This had left its marks on the female mind:

The cares of the family and home might be generally accepted as involving much about the usual amount of mental anxiety and exercise in the midst of a more primitive as well as in a highly organized society, and hence, if that has been the only horizon of female mental activity in both those social conditions, we should expect to find what the facts show us, that in primitive peoples the brain of woman approximates more closely that of man than it does in a higher state of civilisation, because man has comparatively alone pursued those avocations and undergone that educational discipline that tends to produce a highly developed cranial capacity. By educational discipline I do not allude to the mere teaching of schools or of books, but to those habits of inductive analysis which are incidental and necessary to maintain a position in the mental struggle for existence in a society which is ever approaching a higher evolution both in the conception and of natural conditions and in the power to make use of the same.³⁷

³⁵Distant was the honorary secretary of the Anthropological Institute from 1878-1881 and secretary of the Entomological Society from 1878-1880.

³⁶Distant, "Mental Differences", pp. 81-82.

³⁷*ibid.*, p. 83.

The relationship between men and women had hence shaped up in a way that human mental progress had proceeded through males. This could be understood to be an evolutionary necessity. But following the basic assumption that the differential evolution of men and women had been subject to external factors, in the question about women's education and occupations the implications of evolutionary theories were also interpreted in ways which favoured the demands of the women's movement, precisely because it postulated that although gender difference was biological, human nature was evolving and open to progress. In S. Tolver Preston's³⁸ view, to keep women from developing intellectually was to hinder human mental progress. By "hindering woman from performing her natural share in her work of brain development", human mental progress had been carried forward only by the male. Women had to a great part "*inherited* her share at his expense." The "obstacles thrown for centuries in the way of [women's] advance", which were "sometimes of such a kind as almost to amount to a tax on liberty", due to the inheritance of traits to the offspring of both sexes, thus had entailed "the partial extinction of the progress of the race." If woman had been allowed to contribute to the common good, "it may be inferred with tolerable safety that the race would then have been elevated far above its present

³⁸No biographical data available.

status."³⁹

The relationship between the level of evolution and female nature were thus not only discussed in terms of difference, but also in terms of men and women's union within evolutionary development. An anonymous author of an article in the Westminster Review, believed that women had always lagged behind men in evolution. However, difference was one of degrees, and not of kind, and "the women of our land and time" were nonetheless, like their male counterparts, standing on the "pinnacle of evolution". The mainly physical "functions of primitive man" had inaugurated a sexual division of labour. This had given power to man which he had used and abused. But the environmental conditions which had favoured this sexual division of labour was presently undergoing change: the excess numbers of women over men supposed that not all women could be looked after and maintained by men any more. And "[a]s environment changes, the organism adapts itself or perishes", the author asserted.⁴⁰ Women had to adapt to their "surplus condition" and were justified in assailing "the male stronghold of the professions themselves."⁴¹ Woman should not "stand aside from the march of progress and be as she has been". Better education was desirable. "Advanced

³⁹S.Tolver Preston, "Evolution and Female Education", Nature, 22 (1880), pp. 485-486. Preston's emphasis.

⁴⁰"Female Poaching on Male Preserves", Westminster Review, 129 (1888), pp. 290-291.

⁴¹*ibid.*, pp. 293-294.

women" would hand down their "own acquired adaptation to the new environment."⁴²

The implications of heightened mental development for individual women and society at large became highly debated, however. Ideas about the relationship between the female mind and body underlay questions which particularly physicians raised about the effects of increased mental efforts upon women's bodies and thus upon the future generations. Questions of environmental conditions were not only important in terms of the incorporation of external influences into the biological make-up of women. In the nineteenth century, the environment, second only to organic factors, was also seen to affect the health and disease of individuals. Such was not only the case with geographical and climactic conditions, but also circumstances created by human culture. Life-style, including education and occupation, were important in shaping the physiology of individuals.⁴³ Questions of women's social position in this way were tied up with preoccupations about female health.

Improving Female Health Through Mental Occupation

Physicians particularly voiced concerns that if women were to undergo the same continuous intellectual

⁴²*ibid.*, p. 296.

⁴³Moscucci, Science of Woman, p. 23.

application as men and the strains of a professional life, injured health would ensue, as we shall see later.⁴⁴ In a parallel way, however, there also existed theories that too *little* mental occupation was detrimental to the health of women, a theory which was extensively explored by feminists, as I will show in chapter three. Hysteria, Thomas Smith Clouston (1840-1915), the medical superintendent of the Royal Edinburgh Asylum, thus asserted in 1882, "may result from idleness just as it does from over-brain work, the one being as much contrary to the laws of nature as the other".⁴⁵

In nineteenth-century medical discourse the nervous system had paramount importance in the determination of

⁴⁴Nineteenth-century medical theories about the injurious effects of too much mental effort frequently have been addressed in the historiography. See, for example, Showalter, Female Malady, pp. 124-126; Anne Digby, "Women's Biological Straitjacket", in Susan Mendus and Jane Rendall (eds), Sexuality and Subordination: Interdisciplinary Studies of Gender in the Nineteenth Century (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), pp. 192-220; Carol Dyhouse, "Social Darwinistic Ideas and the Development of Women's Education in England, 1880-1920", History of Education (London), 5 (1976), pp. 41-58; Joan N. Burstyn, Victorian Education and the Ideal of Womanhood (London: Croom Helm, 1980), pp. 84-98; Janice Law Trecker, "Sex, Science and Education", American Quarterly, 26 (1974), pp. 352-366.

⁴⁵T.S. Clouston, Female Education from a Medical Point of View (Edinburgh: Macniven & Wallace, 1882), p. 42. Clouston was educated in Aberdeen and Edinburgh universities, graduating M.D. in 1861. From 1863 to 1873 Clouston was the superintendent of the Cumberland and Westmore Asylum at Carlisle. From 1873 to 1908 he was the physician-superintendent of the Royal Asylum in Edinburgh. Clouston contributed to theories about mental hygiene in education for both sexes; alcoholism; and eugenics and marriage. At his death, the Lancet called Clouston one of the leading alienists of his time (see Lancet, I (1915), p. 936).

the health and disease of both sexes.⁴⁶ As much as alienists related mental disease to pathological brain conditions,⁴⁷ somatic and environmental factors could trigger off insanity or nervous derangements through the nervous system in both sexes.⁴⁸ Yet, the female nervous system was more "highly strung" and less subject to the will.⁴⁹ It was more sensitive to physical and external problems.⁵⁰ Physical problems which reflected upon the nervous system were often believed to originate in the female reproductive system.⁵¹

Nervous disorders, in the Victorian period, were perceived to be characteristic afflictions of the age.⁵² In the late-nineteenth century, ideas about the hereditary nature of insanity and nervousness dominated. Although hereditary causes were seen to predominate, the medical profession agreed that nervous derangements could also be acquired within a lifetime, without hereditary

⁴⁶Oppenheim, "Shattered Nerves", pp. 13-14; Nancy M. Theriot, "Women's Voices in Nineteenth-Century Medical Discourse: A Step Toward Deconstructing Science", Signs, 19 (1993), p. 7.

⁴⁷Oppenheim, "Shattered Nerves", p. 43.

⁴⁸Theriot, "Women's Voices", p. 8.

⁴⁹Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Hysterical Woman: Sex Roles and Role Conflict in Nineteenth-Century America", in Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 206. See Oppenheim, "Shattered Nerves", pp. 43ff for the concept of will and its role in physiology.

⁵⁰Theriot, "Women's Voices", p. 8.

⁵¹Oppenheim, "Shattered Nerves", p. 52.

⁵²*ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

predisposition.⁵³ Environmental factors could constitute a trigger to an inherent predisposition, or they could lay the basis for ill-health in future generations.⁵⁴ The nervous system was seen in terms of a nervous economy. The malfunctioning of the nervous system was attributed to abnormalities in producing or regulating the use of "nerve force, power, or energy".⁵⁵ Excessive use of nervous power could occur in both sexes when they applied themselves too much to studying, when they indulged in "luxurious living" and had too many late nights, or when businessmen worried too much about their businesses and spent too many hours at the office, without resting and exercising.⁵⁶

However, nervous and mental health was not only constantly threatened by a depletion of nervous force, caused by the demands of the many "pressures of modern life".⁵⁷ It was also those who wanted occupation who suffered mental strain. This was particularly the case with upper and middle-class women, more so when they were

⁵³*ibid.*, p. 91.

⁵⁴*ibid.*, pp. 89-91. See, for example, Herbert Spencer, The Principles of Biology, I (London: Williams and Norgate, 1864). p. 251; Andrew Wynter, The Borderlands of Insanity, excerpt reprint in Vida Skultans, Madness and Morals: Ideas on Insanity in the Nineteenth Century (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 237.

⁵⁵Oppenheim, "Shattered Nerves", pp. 79, 84, 89..

⁵⁶*ibid.*, 91.

⁵⁷Herbert Spencer, Education: Intellectual, Moral and Physical, first published 1861 (London: Williams and Norgate, 1878), p. 157.

unmarried. Nineteenth-century medical discourse embraced notions that women's social roles could be detrimental to health. The demands of women's domestic roles, disappointment in love, and abusive husbands could all lead to nervous symptoms.⁵⁸ Moreover, idleness, boredom, and lack of occupation were causes of nervous and mental disease, particularly hysteria.⁵⁹ Thus the consulting physician in mental diseases, Daniel Hack Tuke (1827-1895), pointed out that "[o]ver-work is often confounded with the opposite condition - want of occupation". A young woman's idle life frequently lead to hysteria. It was clear that she was

the very child of a highly-organised society, that is of a high state of civilisation, and yet that such a young lady is not the victim of high pressure or mental strain in her own person, although it is certainly possible that she may inherit a susceptible brain from an over-worked parent. However, the remedy is work, nor rest; occupation, not idleness.⁶⁰

⁵⁸Theriot, "Women's Voices", p. 8.

⁵⁹For discussions on nineteenth-century hysteria see, for instance, Smith-Rosenberg, "The Hysterical Woman", pp. 197-216; Showalter, Female Malady; Oppenheim, "Shattered Nerves", Mark S. Micale, "Hysteria Male/Hysteria Female: Reflections on Comparative Gender Construction in Nineteenth-Century France and Britain", in Benjamin (ed.), Science and Sensibility, pp. 200-239.

⁶⁰Daniel Hack Tuke, Insanity in Ancient and Modern Life, with Chapters on its Prevention (London: Macmillan, 1878), pp. 105-106. Tuke in 1852 became a member of the Royal College of Surgeons and received his M.D. a year later from the University of Heidelberg. He was a medical officer at his family's asylum, the York Retreat until 1859, a consulting physician for mental diseases in London from 1875-1895. In 1880 he became a joint editor of the Journal of Mental Science. The following year he was appointed president of the Medico-Psychological Association and in 1891 he became a founding member of the Neurological Society (see "Daniel Hack Tuke",

An idle life which wanted either "healthy intellectual excitement", the occupation of business, or the "necessary duties of a family" lead to the deterioration of the mind.⁶¹

Ideas were formulated which favoured a more intellectually oriented education for all middle-class women and the provision of work opportunities for unmarried women. Andrew Wynter thus thought alcoholism to be caused by a life of *ennui*. A "fatal appeal to the bottle" was the result where "this incipient form of insanity is present". A different education for women was thus desirable:

For this reason we believe that the great cure for the evil that has begun to show itself within the sacred precincts of home, is a good intellectual training of women. If our wives knew anything about art, if they could draw, paint, model, or write, we should hear far less of the sherry bottle. The few hours that elapsed before the husband's return from business would be bridged over by some occupation that delighted and satisfied the mind; at least the demon that, unknown to themselves, exists within themselves, may not be called into life.⁶²

Ideas about the deleterious effects of the lack of intellectual stimulation also underlay calls for an expansion of unmarried women's work opportunities. Thus an anonymous author in the Lancet in 1874 traced the

Dictionary of National Biography).

⁶¹Tuke, Insanity, p. 106.

⁶²Wynter, Borderlands of Insanity, p. 237. Wynter (1819-1876) became a member of the Royal College of Physicians in 1861. He was the Editor of the British Medical Journal from 1856.

"dreary, monotonous lives" of unmarried women which lacked "all healthy stimuli to intellectual and physical work" as the source of many of the nervous affections of the female sex. The author concluded that "it is time that women should be educated to take broader views of life, and taught to disregard some of society's fetters by undertaking other employments than those which practically amount to a kind of genteel starvation", i.e., governessing. The author did not only think about employing women as replacement housemistresses when the real ones were incapacitated by illness, but also of opening employments to women which were now "unworthily followed by men". The writer continued:

Where delicacy, tact, and accuracy are needed, instead of more bodily strength, they are the superiors of men; and much of the business of life which is in England discharged could be performed, and well performed ... by women. The number of shopkeepers might surely be diminished, and their places taken by women; and there are other employments of a similar character to telegraphy which might offer a good sphere for them.⁶³

Although the author was confident that few women would go down this path, there was also medicine, for which women could be trained separately.⁶⁴

Hence, there existed medical ideas which supported a more intellectually oriented education for middle-class women and expanded job opportunities for them. Women's

⁶³"A Cry from the Women", Lancet, I (1874), pp. 910-911.

⁶⁴*ibid.*, p. 911.

restricted social roles could be detrimental to their health. Women's social roles had also moulded their character. These ideas did not necessarily lead to support for the demands of the women's movement. It did, however, lead to a criticism of female education. This was the case with the psychiatrist Henry Maudsley (1835-1918)⁶⁵, who was to cause a stir in 1874 with the publication of "Sex in Mind and Education". Maudsley was to rise to prominence as advocating a hereditary theory of mental disorder and contributing to ideas that evolutionary progress was reversible.⁶⁶

In his first book The Physiology and Pathology of the Mind⁶⁷ (1867), Maudsley condemned the "present system of female education" for its failure to store "the mind with useful knowledge, and to train up a strong

⁶⁵Maudsley was the superintendent of the Cheadle Royal Hospital, Manchester from 1858 to 1861, joint editor of the Journal of Mental Science from 1862 to 1878, consulting physician in mental disease to the West London Hospital from 1864 to 1874, and professor of medical jurisprudence at University College London from 1869 to 1879. He became a fellow of the Royal College of Physicians in 1869. In 1866 he married Anne Caroline Conolly, the daughter of John Conolly, the head of Hanwell Asylum (see Daniel Pick, Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, c. 1848-c. 1918 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 206); for Maudsley see also Trevor Turner, "Henry Maudsley: Psychiatrist, Philosopher, and Entrepreneur", in W.F. Bynum; Roy Porter; and Michael Shepherd (eds), The Anatomy of Madness: Essays in the History of Psychiatry, Vol. 3, The Asylums and Its Psychiatry (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 151-189).

⁶⁶For a discussion of Maudsley's views on degeneration see Pick, Faces of Degeneration, p. 203ff.

⁶⁷(London: Macmillan & Co., 1867).

character."⁶⁸ Next to an inherited nature, Maudsley argued, there existed an acquired nature which owed to the circumstances of education. With education, he explained, "I mean not the education which is called learning alone, but that education of the nature of the individual, that development of the character, which the circumstances of his life have determined."⁶⁹

The circumstances of women's lives over the generations had moulded the female character. It had been made "feeble by long habit of dependence; by the circumstances of her position the sexual life has been undesignedly developed at the expense of the intellectual." Men, the stronger sex, had appropriated "all the means of subsistence by labour, to the almost entire exclusion of women, the feebler sex". Because women were "necessary to the gratification of man's passions, indispensable to the comfort of life, they are not crushed out of existence, they are only kept in a state of subjection and dependence." Women thus had "no honourable outlook but marriage in our social system" and unmarried women of the "better classes" had no "aim in life to work for, no opening of the employment of their energies in outward activities." According to Maudsley, they were thus driven to "morbid self-brooding," and "through the character produced by the position which they have so long held in the social system, their

⁶⁸Maudsley, Physiology (1867), p. 209.

⁶⁹*ibid.*, p. 208.

organic life is little able to withstand the consequences of an unsatisfied sexual instinct." Disturbances of all kinds ensued - failure in their "life-aim" was a common source of insanity among women.⁷⁰

By the time of the third, revised edition in 1879,⁷¹ at a time when girls' schools were springing up all over the country, Maudsley asserted that the system of female education which he had condemned in the first edition was falling to pieces fast. Emotional sensibility was no longer heightened at the same time as reason was weakened.⁷² With the improvement of female education and the openings of new fields of labour, he claimed,

we may expect the predominance of the affective life to be somewhat lessened, the resources for work to be systematically used, and higher aims than frivolous amusements to be pursued; and the reaction of a different mode of life upon female education and upon female nature cannot fail to be considerable.⁷³

The location of female nervous and mental disorders within women's restricted social role, did not, however, encompass a questioning of the sexual division of labour. Although an education which strengthened the intellect was welcomed, as were the broadening of spheres of activity for unmarried women, female difference meant that women found their fullest expression within marriage

⁷⁰*ibid.*, p. 202-203.

⁷¹Henry Maudsley, The Pathology of Mind (London: Macmillan & Co., 1879).

⁷²*ibid.*, p. 163.

⁷³*ibid.*, p. 164.

and motherhood. The reproductive function predominated and dwarfed other interests in woman's nature, which belied the claims of the women's movement for "equality of pursuits".⁷⁴

Over-taxing Female Energy Resources and the Creation of a "Puny Race"

At the same time as there existed medical arguments which favoured changes in female education, many physicians opposed the institution of the *same* education for women as for men and a fundamental change in the sexual division of labour. Aspects of women's social position could be a causative agent of female ill-health. A degendering of the social organization, however, was thought to be the invitation to much greater trouble.

As I have shown above, there existed notions that sex characteristics were mutable. There was a continuous interaction between nature and culture. This led Havelock Ellis (1859-1939) to conclude his detailed study on Man and Woman (1894) that it had been impossible to determine "the radical and essential characters of men and women uninfluenced by external modifying conditions."⁷⁵ Lacking this precise knowledge, for Ellis, who supported women's

⁷⁴Henry Maudsley, The Pathology of Mind: A Study of Its Distempers, Deformities, and Disorders (London: Macmillan and Co., 1895), p. 388.

⁷⁵Havelock Ellis, Man and Woman: A Study of Human Secondary Sexual Characters, first published 1894, 3rd ed. (London: Walter Scott, 1899), p. 387.

entry into higher education and the professions, cast doubt upon the legitimacy to "dogmatise rigidly concerning the respective spheres of men and women".⁷⁶

However, one thing Ellis did know about the difference between the sexes: So long as women were "unlike in the primary sexual characters and in reproductive function" they could never be absolutely "alike".⁷⁷ The scientific construction of gendered human nature from the late eighteenth century onwards had prioritized the female reproductive system as the central factor of difference.⁷⁸ Physiological difference underwrote the existence of two genders. The woman of the future could be distinct from contemporary woman. Man and woman could not, however, be the same. Unless the two-sexed body disappeared, gender remained. Education could either heighten or lessen the predominance of emotion over reason in women, it could not, however, abolish mental differences without interfering with the female body.⁷⁹

Ideas about the female reproductive system hence played an important role in the negotiation of the

⁷⁶*ibid.*, p. 386.

⁷⁷*ibid.*, p. 17.

⁷⁸Mary Poovey, Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England (London: Virago Press, 1989), p. 6.

⁷⁹Henry Maudsley, Body and Mind: An Inquiry into their Connection and Mutual Influence, Specially in Reference to Mental Disorders (London: Macmillan and Co., 1879), p. 32.

capacities and potentials of women. Thus, for example, as shown above, the anthropologist W.L. Distant thought that women's mental powers had been moulded by their secluded life-style and by male selection. However, it was not possible for women to arrive at an "equal, much less acquiring a superior, position to men in the mental struggle", because there were "physiological conditions" which tended against this.⁸⁰ Whereas the differences determined by "sexual selection, difference of education, and force of custom" were "arbitrary, tentative and temporary, and therefore capable of amelioration and improvement", those differences which arose from physiology, were "final and unalterable". Distant concluded: "The first gives hope of sure and certain progress to be effected by a higher evolution of society; the second shows only a physiological check to excessive mental expenditure."⁸¹

Much of the education debates turned around the definition of what constituted "excessive mental expenditure" for women. Views on the proper education of women were intertwined with notions of its compatibility with female physiology. Ideas that the female mind and body was responsive to environment and culture supposed that the conditions of female life should conform to medical knowledge about healthy living: "to prevent disease," Thomas Clouston claimed, "one must control the

⁸⁰Distant, "Mental Differences", p. 84.

⁸¹*ibid.*, p. 85.

conditions of life."⁸² It was physicians who claimed authority to be the judges of what women's education should be like. Thus John Thorburn, a professor of obstetric medicine at the co-educational Victoria University Manchester, declared that

there can be no more important work for the physician than to make himself acquainted with the details and to insist upon the observance of natural laws, both as regards his own patients and as regards public or private educational institutions. I would by no means detract from the value of brilliant operations for the saving of life or prevention of suffering under special circumstances, but a nobler and more important work is performed by those who are able to inculcate the observance of hygienic laws, and thus to save the young and rising generation from evils which tend to demoralisation, suffering and decay.⁸³

To ensure female health, women's life-style had to be in harmony with female physiology. Female physiology was responsive to external factors which modified the organism.⁸⁴ The onset of menstruation, for example, was influenced by external factors such as climate, diet, occupation and education.⁸⁵ Herbert Spencer hence in 1864 established that in France working-class women reached the "reproductive age" a year later than middle-class women and attributed it to inferior nutrition and the

⁸²Clouston, Female Education, p. 5.

⁸³John Thorburn, "Female Education from a Physiological Point of View", in Six Introductory Lectures (Manchester: J.E.Cornish, 1884), p. 83.

⁸⁴Moscucci, "Hermaphroditism", p. 184.

⁸⁵Moscucci, Science of Woman, p. 23.

exertions of muscular occupation.⁸⁶ Not only menstruation, but also female capacity to reproduce was subject to these influences. Spencer thus maintained that a "deficiency of reproductive power" prevalent in upper-class girls in comparison to girls "belonging to the poorer classes" was caused by the overtaxing of their brains. The "diminution of reproductive power is not only shown by the greater frequency of absolute sterility; nor is it shown by the earlier cessation of child-bearing; but it is also shown in the very frequent inability of such women to suckle their infants."⁸⁷

Since the female body interacted with the cultural environment, physicians examined demands for reforms in women's education in the light of the impact of changed conditions would have upon female physiology. Subjecting women to a male life-environment - i.e. the same intellectual application and fending for their livelihood in the same occupations as men - was said to interfere with the functioning of the female body and thus "unsex" women. The female body would be deprived of its specificity, such as the workings of the reproductive system, the growth of breasts, and the capacity to breast-feed.⁸⁸

⁸⁶Herbert Spencer, The Principles of Biology, 1 (London: Williams and Norgate, 1864), pp. 484-485.

⁸⁷*ibid.*, p. 485-486.

⁸⁸See, for example, Dr Withers Moore, "Address to the British Medical Association, Fifty-Fourth Annual Meeting, Brighton 1886", British Medical Journal, II (1886), pp. 315; Maudsley, "Sex in Mind and in Education", p. 476.

During the later nineteenth century the human organism was understood to be ruled by a fixed stock of vital energy, which was divided up between the different organs. This theory of a closed human energy system originally derived from physics. In the 1840s the law of conservation and transformation of energy was formulated, which stipulated that the energy of a system always remained constant. Apparent loss of energy in reality was the transformation into another form of energy. The law was soon applied to the vital forces of the human organism.⁸⁹ "Let it never be forgotten", Herbert Spencer reminded in 1861, "that the amount of vital energy which the body at any moment possesses, is limited; that, being limited, it is impossible to get from it more than a fixed quantity of results."⁹⁰

For Spencer, this notion formed the basis of a theory that in women individual evolution stopped earlier than in men, because an extra amount of vital energy was needed to meet "the cost of reproduction". This earlier arrest in individual evolution resulted in women's lesser growth and had its effects on the mind. Woman, according to Spencer, lacked the latest products of human evolution: the power of abstract reasoning and the

⁸⁹See Russett, Sexual Science, p. 104ff for a discussion of this.

⁹⁰Spencer, Education, p. 162.

sentiment of justice.⁹¹ Spencer, who adhered to the theory of the inheritance of acquired traits, suggested that the mental differences which resulted from woman's earlier arrest, might in the future be changed under the influence of the "higher culture of women". This higher culture, however, had to be administered so as not to unduly "tax the *physique*."⁹²

The theory of a closed human energy system had important implications for the education debates. In the context of this theory it was believed that excessive use of one particular organ would weaken others: "Nature is a strict accountant", Herbert Spencer declared, "and if you demand of her in one direction more than she is prepared to lay out, she balances the account by making a deduction elsewhere".⁹³ In both sexes, mismanagement of energy resources led to disorders, such as neurasthenia, a condition of nerve exhaustion.⁹⁴ Over-study could constitute such a mismanagement. During the late nineteenth century, the proper education of children of both sexes was an issue of much medical consideration.⁹⁵ Particularly the effects of "cramming" upon the nervous

⁹¹Herbert Spencer, The Study of Sociology, first published 1873 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1894), pp. 373-374.

⁹²*ibid.*, p. 379. Spencer's emphasis.

⁹³Spencer, Education, p. 16.

⁹⁴Russett, Sexual Science, pp. 113-115.

⁹⁵For a discussion of Victorian ideas on "nervous children", see Oppenheim, "Shattered Nerves", p. 233ff.

health of children were widely debated.⁹⁶

The female sex, however, in childhood and adulthood, was especially susceptible to "over-study". The female nervous system was inherently particularly susceptible, and because of their smaller bodies, it was thought, women had a lesser amount of nerve force to draw upon than men. Thus equal mental or physical application posed greater strains upon women's resources. Moreover, the female energy economy was dominated by the development and maintenance of a highly complex reproductive system.⁹⁷ For females to attempt to spend as much energy on mental development and exertion as males, physicians warned, would divert energy allotted for the reproductive system to the brain. This was especially the case during puberty, when much energy was needed for the body to develop its feminine specificity to the full.

Characteristics associated with masculinity and femininity were not a static essence. They developed in a

⁹⁶See, for instance, Francis E. Anstie, Neuralgia and the Diseases that Resemble It (London: Macmillan & Co., 1871), p. 214; Tuke, Insanity, pp. 109-114; Alexander Keiller, "What May be the Dangers of Educational Overwork for Both Sexes, with Special Reference to the Higher Class of Girls's Schools, and the Effects of Competitive Examinations?", Transactions of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science (1880), pp. 434ff.

⁹⁷Thomas Clouston, for instance, was concerned about wrongfully managing male and female energy resources in education. But he asserted that danger of mental exertion interfering with other bodily functions was greater in women, due to their reproductive systems (see T.S. Clouston, Clinical Lectures on Mental Diseases (London: J & A Churchill, 1882), pp. 526-529).

dynamic process throughout a lifetime.⁹⁸ Sexual differentiation, although manifest at birth, only came into full being during puberty. Puberty represented a parting of ways between the sexes with their paths only approximating each other again after the reproductive years.⁹⁹ Bodily changes were paralleled by a mental transformation: "The great changes which take place in the nervous system coincidently with the development of the reproductive organs make themselves known by a complete revolution, or, more correctly speaking, evolution, of the mind".¹⁰⁰

Female puberty, more so than male "sexual development", was fraught with dangers due to the precarious establishment of menstruation.¹⁰¹ This aspect of difference meant that adolescent women could not be subjected to the same educational strain as their male counterparts, "a strain which pays little or no regard to the necessity of periodical rest of body and mind", without injury to their constitution.¹⁰² The working of the reproductive system throughout the reproductive years taxed the vital energy resources and limited the amount of force that could be spend upon mental exertion. Injury during adulthood might be reparable, however. Injury

⁹⁸Moscucci, Science of Woman, p. 16.

⁹⁹Matus, Unstable Bodies, p. 26.

¹⁰⁰Henry Maudsley, Pathology of Mind (1879), p. 449.

¹⁰¹Thorburn, "Female Education", p. 82.

¹⁰²*ibid.*, p. 82.

during puberty, on the other hand, generally irreparably impeded the development into proper femininity.¹⁰³

Conceptions that women could not sustain the same mental and physical strains as men did not necessarily lead to opposition against women's higher education. The gynaecologist and surgeon Robert Lawson Tait (1845-1899),¹⁰⁴ for example, in 1874 declared himself to be in favour of opening medical education to women.¹⁰⁵ Tait had proclaimed himself to be a disciple of Darwin after the publication of The Origin of Species in 1859. He entered into correspondence with Darwin and in the mid-1870s lectured women who attended his biology classes on Darwinism.¹⁰⁶

In a paper to the Birmingham and Midland Branch of the British Medical Association on the medical education of women he professed an "unlimited admiration for free trade." Although he approved of the "repression of free trade in medicine", he condemned the exclusion of women from the study of medicine as not "liberal".¹⁰⁷ A woman, he said, "if she has the fitness for survival in the

¹⁰³Thomas Clouston, Female Education, p. 18.

¹⁰⁴Tait graduated in 1866 from Edinburgh. From 1871 he was a surgeon at the Birmingham Hospital for Women and from 1887 professor of gynaecology at Queen's College, Birmingham (see "Robert Lawson Tait", Dictionary of National Biography).

¹⁰⁵Lawson Tait, "The Medical Education of Women", Birmingham Medical Review (1874), pp. 81-94.

¹⁰⁶Moscucci, Science of Woman, p. 22.

¹⁰⁷Tait, "Medical Education", pp. 81-84.

struggle of any line of life, she has an undoubted right to share in that survival."¹⁰⁸ Tait's notion that the medical profession should not remain closed to women was sustained by arguments that the average woman would not have the fitness to compete with men. It would be only "very few women" who were competent and would want to enter the profession. As for women's difference, Tait believed women's physical organization would be the "great governing influence which will keep women out of our profession". It would only be very few exceptional women, who would want to join the medical profession, and that these few women would enter the "great struggle of life," could only be of advantage, because in it, "the law of the fittest obtains, and new species, as well as great advances, are all brought about by the survival of the best possible material."¹⁰⁹

By 1883, however, Tait had considerably modified his

¹⁰⁸*ibid.*, p. 84.

¹⁰⁹*ibid.*, p. 90. This argument did not remain isolated. In 1881 an anonymous author in the Westminster Review, for instance, claimed that the argument about injury to women's health by the competitive examinations of higher education could be easily disposed of. These examinations, rather, would "weed out the weak, and deservedly punish those among them who seek to gain undeserved success by futile attempts to conceal that weakness". So far as outward influences were concerned, "it is by an Aeonian process of competitive examinations that the monad has been developed into the man. The whole upward progress of civilization equally involves the unrestricted operation of the law of competition. To destroy competition is to destroy the possibility of healthy evolution." These considerations, the author believed, applied to both sexes (see "Should University Degrees be Given to Women?", Westminster Review, 59 (1881), p. 498).

views on the benefits of women's higher education. Questions of women's rights, he now believed, "are to be settled, not on the platform of the political economist, but in the consulting room of the gynaecologist." Female higher education was wholly "unnecessary in the interests of human progress".¹¹⁰ By now, the question of women's rights for Tait turned around the "mischief women will do to themselves, and to the race generally". Those who advocated the "equal treatment of the sexes" should bear in mind that "great culture" in women would unfit them for motherhood, unlike men, whom it would help in the struggle for existence. Women would "tax" themselves to such an extent, "as will, in all probability, make her functions imperfect."¹¹¹

Tait's change of opinion took place within a decade in which considerations about the effects of alterations in women's social position became ever more interlinked with considerations about the race. Karl Pearson,¹¹² hence in the opening address to his brainchild, the Men and Women's Club, presented the question of women's higher education as one in which it had to be established whether it would "connote a general intellectual progress for the community", or whether it would result in "a

¹¹⁰Lawson Tait, The Pathology and Treatment of Diseases of the Ovaries, 4th rev. ed. (Birmingham: Cornish Brothers, 1883), p. 91.

¹¹¹*ibid.*, pp. 91-91.

¹¹²For biographical details see chapter four, footnote 14.

physical degradation of the race, owing to prolonged study having ill-effects on woman's child-bearing capacity." The question of women's right to education had to be balanced against questions about their reproductive duties to society.¹¹³

The detrimental implication of submitting women to an environment of "male" education and professional employment for the race became a pervasive thread in discussions about women's education. Thus the president of the British Medical Association, Dr Withers-Moore, addressing the Annual Meeting in 1886 argued that

it is *not* for the good of the human race, considered as progressive, that women should be freed from the restraints which law and custom have imposed upon them, and should receive an education intended to prepare them for the exercise of brain-power in competition with men.¹¹⁴

Educational rights for women put at risk evolutionary advance, which depended upon women's reproductive function. Its impairment invited evolutionary decline. Underlying the re-direction of questions of women's right to educational and occupational freedom to questions of the effects it would have on the female body and its reproductive capacity were theories of degeneration.¹¹⁵ In

¹¹³Pearson, "Woman's Question", p. 355.

¹¹⁴Withers Moore, "Address", p. 296.

¹¹⁵On degeneration see Pick, Faces of Degeneration. Pick has made clear that the diversion of questions of rights unto the body did not only take place with regard to the woman question. Galton, for instance, he has argued, in addressing the prospect of a widening electoral constituency dissolved politics into biology

1874 Henry Maudsley caused waves when he discussed these issues in a literary journal,¹¹⁶ which has resulted in his name becoming most associated with ideas about degeneration in the debates about women's education, although he was not the only one to formulate such thoughts.¹¹⁷ Notions that the environment could have harmful effects upon the human organism which then were passed down through the generations supposed that it was not only the health of individual women at risk by over-expenditure of energy on their minds, but also that of future generations.

(see *ibid.*, p. 199).

¹¹⁶Henry Maudsley, "Sex in Mind". For responses see, for instance, Garrett Anderson, "Sex in Mind", pp. 582-594; [Herbert Cowell], "Sex in Mind and Education: A Commentary", Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 115 (1874), pp. 736-749; "American Women: Their Health and Education", Westminster Review, 46 (1874), pp. 456-499; [George L. Bennett], "The Education of Women", Edinburgh Review, 166 (1887), pp. 89-114; H.T., "Sex in Education", The Examiner (18 April 1874), pp. 399-400; "Sex in Mind and Education", Lancet, I (1874), pp. 663-664; "Female Education", Lancet, I (1874), pp. 880-881; "Sex in Education", British Medical Journal, I (1874), pp. 530-531; "Sex in Education", Saturday Review, 37 (1874), pp. 584-586; Sophia Jex-Blake, "Sex in Education", The Examiner (2 May 1874), p. 457.

¹¹⁷See also, for example, Thomas Clouston, "Female Education"; Thorburn, "Female Education"; *idem*, Practical Treatise on the Diseases of Women (London: Charles Griffin and Company, 1885), p. 102. The belief that "male" education would injure women's health was not unanimously held by male physicians. The surgeon T. Spencer Wells, for instance, was all in favour that the education of both sexes of the middle-class had to be expanded and that women should be given the option to engage in occupations other than those of domestic life. He was of the opinion that want of mental occupation was a much greater source of health break-down than mental overstrain (see T. Spencer Wells, "Inaugural Address Delivered before the Sanitary Congress", Lancet, II (1886), pp. 570-573).

Female specificity destined women for motherhood and the exposure of the female body to the same kind and pace of male education could not take place without "injury to their functions as the conceivers, mothers and nurses of children."¹¹⁸ If women, who had spent their energies on their brains, married, Thomas Clouston warned, they seldom had more than one or two children, and "only puny creatures at that, whom they cannot nurse, and who either die in youth or grow up to be feeble-minded folks."¹¹⁹ The advantages of "a quantity of female intellectual work" would be outweighed, as Maudsley put it, by the creation of a "puny, enfeebled and sickly race."¹²⁰

Conclusion

From the 1870s onwards scientists became key contributors to the debates about middle-class women's education and their engagement in paid employment. They discussed these issues in a number of different ways. The central theme of their engagement with the question was how it would affect female nature. Sex characteristics were not understood to be immutable "givens by nature." Rather they interacted with the environment within a life-time and within the span of generations.

Darwinian theory proposed that the nature of the

¹¹⁸*ibid.*, pp. 471-472.

¹¹⁹T.S. Clouston, Clinical Lectures, p. 528.

¹²⁰Maudsley, "Sex in Mind", p. 472.

female mind had been moulded by human evolutionary history. This suggested that if the external factors which had provided the stimuli of biological change were to be modified female nature would change. This assumption was sometimes interpreted as suggesting that to make it possible for women to develop mentally would favour the mental advancement of the race. However, there also existed ideas that there was a factor which impeded women to reach the mental heights of men: the female reproductive system. Notions of an internal energy economy postulated that for women to spend the amount of energy on mental development as men, was to interfere with the proper functioning of the reproductive system.

Physicians formulated theories which favoured a more intellectually oriented education for women and the engagement unmarried women to some kinds of paid labour, as remedy against the deleterious effects of idleness, and the sexual/emotional unfulfillment of spinsters. Yet, these theories more often than not did not question the sexual division of labour. The submission of women to the same education as men and engagement in professional employment would lead to alarming bodily modifications.

In the wake of increasing evolutionary pessimism from the 1880s onwards, physicians claimed authority to decide on social change. Their guidance had to ensure that the conditions of female life conformed to medical knowledge about the interaction between the female body and the environment, and thus the degeneration of the

female body could be prevented. They re-located questions about women's right to educational and occupational freedom to questions of women's reproductive role in the continuance of evolutionary progress. Woman's position in the social order had to be determined in light of her body's potential to degenerate, and its biological implications for society.

Medico-scientific approaches to the implications of changing women's life-style had an important impact upon feminist theory, as I shall explore in the following chapter. Feminists participated in the construction of the female mind and body, exploring and developing theories that social changes were not detrimental, but advantageous for the female sex. At the turn of the century, in the light the politicization of reproduction by eugenicists, discussed in chapter four, feminists increasingly argued that such changes were not only required for women, but also for the race.

CHAPTER THREE

FEMINISM AND SCIENCE:

NEGOTIATING THE FEMALE MIND AND BODY, c. 1870 - c. 1890

The theories formulated by scientists and physicians laid out in the previous chapter had a profound influence on feminist writings. They set boundaries, yet they were explored in alternative ways, debated and reinterpreted by feminists. In their analyses of the relationship between female nature and social organization, feminists refuted the idea that the social order reflected the prescripts of Nature. In many instances they highlighted the contradiction in the claim that it was Nature who dictated the social roles of the sexes, but that it was so open to violation that it had to be protected by social custom and the law. Could not the "order of nature" rather be left to take care of itself?¹ The physician Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, for example, maintained that Nature would ultimately protect herself. Hence "when we are in doubt, we may be guided by the general principles of equality and common sense, while

¹Millicent Garrett Fawcett, "The Emancipation of Women", Fortnightly Review, 50 (1891), p. 685; Clarissa Dixon, "Woman and Nature", Westminster Review, 169 (1908), p. 284; Maria Grey, "Men and Women", Fortnightly Review, 26 (1879), p. 680.

waiting for the light of a larger experience."²

It was pointed out that the pronouncements of medical men and scientists and the rights of the individual did not always agree. Hence Eliza Orme in 1886 declared that to the former "men are as chess pawns, to be moved here or left there as science dictates", not taking into account the frictions this produced with the exercise of free will. Orme believed that scientists thus ultimately hardly affected legislation.³ Scientists were rebuked for wanting "to map out the whole of human life with tape measure and ruler, and to carry the idea of division of labour into fields where it has no true application", as Millicent Garrett Fawcett put it.⁴

Responding to the allegations that the women's movement aimed at an assimilation of the sexes, feminists made their standpoint clear: there was no intention to "annihilate the difference of sex."⁵ Although some women

²Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, "Sex in Mind and Education: A Reply", Fortnightly Review, 15 (1874), p. 594.

³Eliza Orme, "Woman's Work in Creation", Longman's Magazine, 9 (1886), p. 155. Orme was the holder of a LL.D. She published Lady Fry of Darlington in 1898 and wrote the introduction to The Trial of Shama Charan Pal: An Illustration of Village Life in Bengal, published in 1894. No other biographical date available.

⁴Fawcett, "Emancipation", p. 683. Fawcett made this statement in response to an article by the positivist Frederic Harrison (see Frederic Harrison, "The Emancipation of Women", Fortnightly Review, 50 (1891), pp. 437-452). For Fawcett's biographical details see chapter one, footnote 102.

⁵Fawcett, "Emancipation", p. 677; see also Garrett Anderson, "Sex in Mind", p. 583.

put forward theories which proposed a degendering of the mind, most campaigners argued that higher education for women was not aimed at an assimilation of the female mind to the male mind, nor was a degendering of the mind an envisaged outcome. Those who promoted female higher education only wanted to make the best "of the material at their disposal".⁶ Gender would continue to exist, but the gendering of intellectual capacity would take on a different form. It was not so much the notion that men and women were different that was contested, but the conception that the relationship between gender difference and social organization was one in which female nature gave women only role within the home as child-bearers and rearers.

Feminists and the Development of the Female Mind

Feminists claimed that women's mental, or intellectual rank could only be established once women were given the opportunity to employ their mental powers freely. Thus a reviewer of Herbert Spencer's Study of Sociology, Sara S. Hennell, pointed out that women, as opposed to Spencer, claimed that "no settled opinion" with regards to the limitations of the female intellect were yet possible.⁷

⁶Garrett Anderson, "Sex in Mind", p. 583.

⁷Sara S. Hennell, "Mr Spencer and the Women", The Examiner (7 February 1874), p. 135. No biographical details available.

There was little doubt that contemporary women on the average had enough mental power to successfully undergo college education. After all, since 1869 women had shown that they could:

It is known, or should be known, to all, from frequent repetition, that in all matters of simple acquirement, competing [college] women have won for themselves such a place as is likely materially to stimulate the exertions of men, and that without the advantage of a single generation of hereditary preparation.⁸

Feminists' concepts of female mental powers, however, often acknowledged that the intellectual capacities of contemporary women were not as highly developed as men's. But they argued that female mental powers could and would be greater in future generations when "artificial restrictions" upon women's education and intellectual occupations were impeding no longer mental development. The poet and writer Emily Pfeiffer (1827-1890) in 1888 thus declared:

The remarks that I have hazarded on the circumstances conditioning the development of the two sexes, are the expression of no vain desire to claim for women a present equality with men in force of intellect, or, in some respects, of character; their object is to vindicate, as at least an open question, the inherent capacity of the retarded sex for illimitable progress upon its own lines.⁹

⁸Emily Pfeiffer, Women and Work: An Essay Treating on the Relation to Health and Physical Development of the Higher Education of Girls, and the Intellectual or More Systematized Effort of Women (London: Trübner & Co., 1888), pp. 38-39.

⁹Pfeiffer, Women and Work, p. 171. Pfeiffer received little formal education herself. Many of her poems reflected concerns about issues of the women's movement and upon her death she left a large sum of money towards

That female nature was open to progress was without doubt. Otherwise, "civilization would have had no influence on them, and they would have remained savages, or else, if we accept theories contained in 'The Descent of Man', jelly fish."¹⁰

In feminist constructions the contemporary female intellect was the product of the conditions of life and education, as well as inherited aptitudes.¹¹ It was subjected to an environment of restricted mental application which had shaped women's mental powers over the generations. Already in 1869 Frances Power Cobbe had argued that it was Charles Darwin, who had offered central information on the origins of the female character. Two years before the publication of The Descent of Man (1871), Cobbe believed that Darwin's observations on animals provided information about humans. Darwin, she pointed out, had described how rabbits, when tamed over the generations, grew increasingly stupid since they were in no need to "exert even the small intelligence of rabbinical existence in the construction of holes and the escape from weasels."

women's higher education (see Virginia Blain, Patricia Clements, Isobel Grundy, The Feminist Companion to Literature in English: Women Writers from the Middle Ages to the Present (London: B.T. Batsford, 1990).

¹⁰Millicent Garrett Fawcett, "The Education of Women" (1871), in Henry Fawcett and Millicent Garrett Fawcett, Essays and Lectures on Social and Political Subjects (London: Macmillan and Co., 1872), p. 225.

¹¹See, for example, Grey, "Men and Women", p. 678; Frances Power Cobbe, Life of Frances Power Cobbe, by Herself, 2 (London: Richard Bentley & Son, 1884), p. 211.

She continued:

Whether Mr. Darwin intended it, we dare not surmise, but did he not in these interesting observations furnish us with a very parable in the manner of Æsop concerning the development of women in an artificial and hutch-like state of existence?¹²

From the first "primitive division of labour", it was pointed out, women had never been placed in an environment which was favourable to mental achievement and they had been cut off from educational institutions.¹³

It was the notion of changeability of human nature of Darwinian, as well as Lamarckian, evolutionary theory which feminists explored in their arguments that inferior mental power could not constitute an argument against the expansion of women's sphere. Thus the writer and trade-unionist Edith Simcox (1844-1901) claimed that even if women had so far been intellectually inferior, this did not mean that, with changing conditions, this would always have to be so. She declared:

Of course, it will be said that the existing distinction has emerged and survived because of its natural fitness; that is, that it has proved favourable to the life and development of the higher vertebrates; but there is a difference between things practically useful under given material conditions and things belonging to the eternal and immutable 'nature of things'. Science teaches us that nature is

¹²Frances Power Cobbe, "'The Subjection of Women' by John Stuart Mill", The Theological Review, 6 (1869), p. 626. Cobbe was much pleased with Mill's analysis, but she criticised him for not sufficiently considering the influence of inheritance in the formation of female character. For Cobbe's biographical details see chapter one, footnote 126.

¹³*ibid.*, pp. 394, 395, 397.

eminently mutable, and that all elaborate qualities are the products of lengthy and complex processes of manufacture.¹⁴

Notions of the capacity of development of the female mind underlay the request of women to give their sex greater possibilities for such a development and the freedom and right of a greater participation in the public sphere. For Edith Simcox this was part of putting forward ideas that the future of humanity did not lay with a "continued difference between the functions and ideals of the sexes", but in the "evolution of an ideal of human character and duty combining the best elements in the two detached and incomplete ideals," which would replace an attribution of morality to women and intellect to men.¹⁵

¹⁴Edith Simcox, "The Capacity of Women", Nineteenth Century, 22 (1887), p. 392. Simcox's article was a response to one by the Darwinian George Romanes, in which he had asserted that mental differences between the sexes were secondary sexual characters (see George J. Romanes, "Mental Differences between Men and Women", Nineteenth Century, 21 (1887), pp. 654-672). Simcox was a writer and a journalist. She contributed for more than twenty-five years to The Academy, as well as writing for The Nineteenth Century, The Fortnightly Review, Women's Union Journal and Labour Tribune. In 1875 she co-founded a shirt-making co-operative in which she continued to be involved until the early 1880s. She was one of the first women delegates to the Trades Union Congress in 1875 in Glasgow. In 1872 Edith Simcox first met George Eliot with whom she was to maintain a friendship until Eliot's death, developing passionate feelings for her (see Blain *et al.*, Feminist Companion; Pam Johnson, "Edith Simcox and Heterosexism in Biography: A Lesbian-Feminist Exploration", in Lesbian History Group, Not a Passing Phase: Reclaiming Lesbians in History, 1840-1985, 2nd ed. (London: Women's Press, 1993), pp. 55-76; K. A. McKenzie, Edith Simcox and George Eliot (London: Oxford University Press, 1961).

¹⁵*ibid.*, p. 401-402.

Contrary to Simcox, however, mainstream feminists generally envisaged a future society of gender dualism. Notions of women's difference continued to be important in feminist thought, underlying assumptions that the female intellect was capable of development. Thus Millicent Garrett Fawcett, for instance, who criticised the intent of mapping out human life with "tape measure and ruler," herself had clear-cut ideas about the implications of sex: "We recognize the difference between men and women, and maintain ... that this difference ... influences character, conduct, methods of looking at things, and modes of action in innumerable and infinitely complex ways." Truly feminine qualities included maternal instincts, mercy, fidelity and purity.¹⁶ To develop female minds was important because of women's difference. The newly educated women, hence, should not "become like men". Rather they should become "more women", raise the existing ideal and "carry their womanhood intact into any work to which they can substantiate their calling."¹⁷

Sophia Jex-Blake and the Right and Need for Women to Become Physicians

Feminists argued that freedom of education and occupation would lead women to gravitate to occupations for which they were naturally best fitted - a natural

¹⁶Fawcett, "Emancipation", p. 676.

¹⁷Pfeiffer, Women and Work, p. 175.

division of labour would succeed the artificial one which had hitherto been maintained.¹⁸ One profession for which natural qualifications, it was argued, fitted women to a marked degree was medicine.¹⁹ It was women who were the "natural tenders and soothers of the sick and suffering". Edith Huntley, a student of the London School of Medicine for Women, pointed out that nature "assigned medicine chiefly to women, and education, which is regulated and controlled by society, gives it exclusively to men".²⁰ Not only were women naturally suited for the medical profession, but they were also needed to prevent female ill-health. Turning to a male doctor violated the "natural instincts" of modesty, which meant that many ailments were only discovered and treated at an advanced stage, leading in many cases to lifelong invalidism.²¹

These were two conceptions which Sophia Jex-Blake (1840-1912)²², who after Elizabeth Blackwell and Elizabeth Garrett Anderson was one of the figures most associated with the entry of women into the medical profession in

¹⁸Grey, "Men and Women", p. 684; Millicent Garrett Fawcett, "The Future of Englishwomen: A Reply", Nineteenth Century, 4 (1878), p. 352.

¹⁹Pfeiffer, Women and Work, p. 12.

²⁰Edith A. Huntley, The Study and Practice of Medicine by Women (Lewes: Farncombe & Co., 1886), pp. 10-11.

²¹Frances Power Cobbe, "The Little Health of Ladies", Contemporary Review, 31 (1878), pp. 293-294. See also Huntley, Study and Practice, p. 30.

²²For Jex-Blake's role in gaining access to medical education see chapter one, pp. 35-36.

Britain and who was also one of the most prolific writers on the subject, agreed with. Of the two sexes "women have more love of medical work, and are naturally inclined, and more fitted for most of it than men," she claimed. Not only that, but also "natural instincts and social propriety alike" spoke in favour of the availability of female physicians for female patients.²³

On the whole, Jex-Blake, unlike Elizabeth Blackwell and Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, spent relatively little time discussing female physiology and its implications for mental application, perhaps partly because she published most of her works before she received her medical degree in Bern in 1877.²⁴ Female specificity had little bearing on whether women had the *right* to study medicine and to become physicians for Jex-Blake. She ignored the construction of gendered subjects and sought to inscribe women as equal individuals into the liberal promise of universal equality and freedom. Jex-Blake

²³Sophia Jex-Blake, The Medical Education of Women (London, 1874), pp. 3-4.

²⁴For a short response she wrote to Maudsley's article see Sophia Jex-Blake, "Sex in Education", The Examiner (2 May 1874), p. 457. The main thrust of Jex-Blake's publications on women and the medical profession was to give historical accounts of women's involvement in medicine and to outline contemporary developments and obstacles for women to study medicine, as well as women's successes as physicians (see Sophia Jex-Blake, Medical Women: A Thesis and a History, 2nd rev. ed. (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1886); *idem*, Medical Education; *idem*, The Practice of Medicine by Women, Fawcett Library, Medical Education Pamphlets (also published in Fortnightly Review, 17 (1875), pp. 392-407); *idem*, "Medical Women", Nineteenth Century, 22 (1887), pp. 692-707.

portrayed herself and four other women who tried to study medicine at the University of Edinburgh as "fighting a true battle of liberty against tyranny, for the powers of light against the powers of darkness".²⁵

Liberal ideals continued to provide a space to accommodate demands for the extension of educational and occupational rights for women. The question of the nature of the sexes missed the essential point in the medical education question, according to feminists like Jex-Blake: what was at stake was an issue of equal rights; everything else Nature would take care of herself. Hence Jex-Blake argued that even if the "special suitability" of women for the study of medicine were "totally denied", women were still included in what she called her most comprehensive argument: "the right possessed by every intelligent human being to choose out of his or her own life-work, and to decide what is and what is not calculated to conduce to his or her personal benefit or happiness.", for the reinforcement of which she cited Harriet Taylor Mill:

We deny the right of any portion of the species to decide for another portion, or any individual for another individual, what is and what is not their 'proper sphere'. The proper sphere for all human beings is the largest and highest which they are able to attain to. What this is, cannot be ascertained without complete liberty of choice.²⁶

²⁵Jex-Blake, Medical Women, p. 69. For the events at the University of Edinburgh see chapter one, pp. 35-36.

²⁶*ibid.*, p. 6. The citation comes from [Harriet Taylor Mill], "Enfranchisement of Women", Westminster Review (1851).

The exclusion of women from the medical profession was an instance where British law was - wrongfully - upholding a monopoly. This, Jex-Blake declared, opposed the "sole legitimate ground of action" and the principle that was "at once the most comprehensive, the most just, and the only one never liable to error and abuse": the natural law of selection.²⁷ It was this law which ensured that many occupations were practically restricted to particular groups, as much as if there existed legislation:

It has been well said that no law is needed to prohibit weak-armed men from becoming blacksmiths, because their natural incapacity for success would be the strongest of all barriers to exclude them from the trade; and the same principle is certainly not less trustworthy when the considerations and conditions involved are not solely of a physical nature. Wherever attempts have been made to set aside the operation of this law, and to substitute for it an arbitrary prohibition, in the supposed interest of some one class of persons the attempt has invariably found to result in cruel injustice and ultimate failure.²⁸

Thus it was beside the question whether "women will be happier if excluded from all professions", or if they would make bad doctors, or even less if they would find no employment as such:

Even if every one of these assertions were true, the principle I have cited would remain the same, - whether we choose well or ill wisely or unwisely for our own welfare, we still have an indisputable right to make our choice; and if failure and disappointment

²⁷Jex-Blake, "Practice of Medicine", pp. 1-3.

²⁸*ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

ensue, the penalty will be ours also. If women do on the whole make worse doctors than men, they will simply fail in competition with them; if their sister women do not desire their services, they will not obtain practice, and the thing will die out of itself. Where, then, is the need of opposition and prohibition?²⁹

Jex-Blake, however, was neither unaware of contemporary views about female physiology that were so hotly debated in the education question, nor did she reject ideas of female difference as such. For her, rather than disqualification, they meant qualification for women to become physicians. Thus she believed women to be the "most natural advisers" of their own sex, the ones who would be most able to understand and sympathise and who could "often far more fully appreciate her state, both of mind and body." Not only this, but in "these days of education pressure", there was a need for female physicians in girls' schools:

I know of no more useful function for medical women than the constant and careful supervision of growing girls during their period of study, and I am sure that a great part of the evil results now justly deprecated could be with certainty avoided, if a sensible medical woman were entrusted with the oversight of physical health in every large centre of education for girls.³⁰

²⁹*idem*, Medical Education, pp. 6-7.

³⁰*idem*, "Medical Women", p. 700. For a similar argument by a woman physicians see Mary M. Marshall, MD, "Medicine as a Profession for Women", The Woman's World (1888), p. 109.

Reconstituting Female Physiology: Elizabeth Blackwell and Elizabeth Garrett Anderson

Sophia Jex-Blake also believed that female physicians had the role to encourage women to "live full and useful lives", as well as to impart knowledge on physiology and hygiene, so that they would not harm their physical and mental well-being.³¹ Although Jex-Blake herself did not spend much time on considering the meanings of female physiology for the education question, the two other early women physicians, Elizabeth Blackwell and Elizabeth Garrett Anderson engaged in imparting written knowledge on the subject. They reconstituted notions of female physiology in ways which renegotiated its implications for female life-style, based upon their own scientific authority.

Elizabeth Blackwell not only reconstructed conceptions of the female body, but also of the male. Blackwell, the first woman to be placed on the British Medical Register in 1858,³² was a member of philanthropic

³¹Jex-Blake, "Sex in Education", p. 457. In Medical Women she argued that women physicians had an important role to play in the prevention of ill-health among their own sex. Poor health, "now so sadly common in our sex", was often due to ignorance of sanitary laws. The advent of women doctors thus would bring about a "generation of women far fitter in mind and body to take their share in the work of the world" (see pp. 50-51).

³²For biographical details see chapter one, pp. 34-35.

as well as social purity organizations.³³ In her views on science and medicine, she believed that they ought to integrate and confirm Christian morality. Raised as a Congregationalist, in 1882 she became a Christian Socialist and joined the Christo-Theosophical Society in 1891.³⁴ In 1885 Blackwell was rejected for membership of the Men and Women's Club, for being a "Christian physiologist", since her faith, according to Pearson, "prostitutes the name of science".³⁵

Blackwell believed that understanding the "physiological meaning of the differences in organization between the sexes" was crucial for the establishment of "satisfactory" relations between the sexes.³⁶ The Christian assertion that "male and female are as one under the guidance and judgement of divine law" was not

³³For the social purity movement see Sheila Jeffreys, The Spinster and Her Enemies: Feminism and Sexuality, 1880-1930 (London: Pandora Press, 1985); Lucy Bland, Banishing the Beast: English Feminism & Sexual Morality, 1885-1914 (London: Penguin, 1995); Lesley Hall, "'No Virtue in Evasion': Feminism and Sex Reform in Britain 1880-1920" in Judith Forrai (ed.), Civilisation, Sexuality and Social Life in Historical Context (Budapest: The Institute of the History of Medicine and Social Medicine, 1996), pp. 52-60.

³⁴Bland, Banishing the Beast, p. 68. For a discussion of Blackwell's ideas in terms of their location within present-day feminist theories, see Regina Morantz-Sanchez, "Feminist Theory and Historical Practice: Rereading Elizabeth Blackwell", History and Theory: Studies in the Philosophy of History, Beiheft 31 (1992), pp. 51-69.

³⁵Bland, Banishing the Beast, p. 5. For the Men's and Women's Club see chapter four, p. 175.

³⁶Elizabeth Blackwell, "The Human Element in Sex" (1880), in Essays in Medical Sociology, 1 (London: Ernest Bell, 1902), p. 10.

enough. It was up to the "Christian physiologist" to "use the light of principles underlying physical truth in order to understand the meaning of facts which arraign and would destroy Christianity."³⁷ The "finest development of our race" would be secured by the true laws, established by physiology, which should govern the relations between the sexes.³⁸

In her conceptions of male and female physiology Blackwell elaborated upon the belief that human embryos in the earliest period of intra-uterine life were sexually indifferent. From this period of initial sexual indifference, male or female genitalia developed by a gradual process of differentiation. From this basis, she argued for the analogy of "the organs or parts which produce the ova and semen": "each part in the female corresponds to a similar part in the male".³⁹ There also existed analogy in physiological processes. For Blackwell, unlike for the physician Elizabeth Garrett Anderson (see below), menstruation did not constitute *the* physiological difference between men and women. Seeing it as the discharge of unused ova, she argued that it was a process which had its parallel in the male body in the form of sperm emission. According to Blackwell, both functions procured the mastery of individuals over their

³⁷*ibid.*, p. 47.

³⁸Elizabeth Blackwell, "The Moral Education of the Young in Relation to Sex" (1876), Essays, 2, p. 181.

³⁹Blackwell, "Human Element", p. 19.

natures, because it implied a constant readiness for procreation, instead of limiting it to any special season. Thus ovulation and menstruation and "spermatation" and sperm emission ensured that both, male and female sexuality could be governed by reason.⁴⁰ Menstruation, then, for Blackwell was not the source of woman's submission to the "tyranny of her organization", as Henry Maudsley, for example, had asserted,⁴¹ but rather it ensured her control over her nature.

Although Blackwell argued that there existed parallel physiological processes, she still believed that there was a central physical difference between the sexes which was reflected in their mental make-up. There existed a "striking deficiency" in the male body: the lack of a womb. "The life of sex", that was "all that belongs to the life of the race, as distinguished from the existence of the individual becomes continuously and for a long time inseparable from the woman's personal existence."⁴² The "more important share" in parentage was reflected in the "greater complication and elaboration of sexual structure and function."⁴³ This meant that the bodily actions of ovulation and menstruation in woman

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 24-26.

⁴¹ Henry Maudsley, "Sex in Mind and Education", Fortnightly Review, 15 (1874), p. 468.

⁴² Blackwell, "Human Element", p. 19.

⁴³ *ibid.*, p. 29.

were less subject to the control of will.⁴⁴ She believed that the sexes had "equal general vital power". Once physical sex was fully developed a greater proportion of vital force was "demanded from or given by women to all that is involved in sexual life".⁴⁵ Men, she believed, unlike women, could regulate the amount of nervous force that was spent upon the sexual function, by limiting "sexual secretion" through spending an increased amount of it upon the "active exercise of the intellectual and moral faculties."⁴⁶

However, Blackwell rejected the view of "some medical men" that women were "more tyrannically governed than men by the impulses of physical sex" and that sex limited them in the "power of perfect human growth". This, she argued, would be the case were sex simply a physical function.⁴⁷ Sex, however, was no such thing. As Blackwell elaborated in a lecture at the London School of Medicine for Women, what for her was the essential fact of woman's nature, was the "spiritual power of maternity".⁴⁸ The "impulse towards maternity", she

⁴⁴*ibid.*, pp. 30, 32.

⁴⁵*ibid.*, p. 49.

⁴⁶*ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

⁴⁷*ibid.*, p. 55.

⁴⁸Elizabeth Blackwell, "The Influence of Women in the Profession of Medicine" (1889), Essays, 2, p. 9. Blackwell herself never married. At the age of 35 she adopted an orphan girl, Katherine Barry (see Margaret Jackson, The Real Facts of Life: Feminism and the Politics of Sexuality, c. 1850-1940 (London: Taylor & Francis, 1994), p. 62).

believed, was "an inexorable but beneficent law of woman's nature, and it is a law of sex."⁴⁹ Blackwell, in her views on the role of women, did not centralize biological motherhood, but the biological basis of women's difference: "These spiritual mothers of the race", she asserted, "are often more truly incarnations of the grand maternal life, than those who are technically mothers in the lower physical sense."⁵⁰

The spiritual elements which derived from the "material facts" of woman's involvement in gestation and child care, according to her, were expressed in the

subordination of self to the welfare of others; the recognition of the claim which helplessness and ignorance make upon the stronger and more intelligent; the joy of creation and bestowal of life; the pity and sympathy which tend to make every woman the born foe of cruelty and injustice; and hope - *i.e.* the realization of the unseen - which foresees the adult in the infant, the future in the present.⁵¹

This put upon women the responsibility of being moral guides. Sound intellectual growth made it possible for the range of moral influence to grow. And it would be through "the moral, guiding the intellectual that the beneficial influence of women in any sphere of activity will be felt". Women had to "seek a high moral standard as their ideal, and acknowledge the supremacy of right

⁴⁹Blackwell, "Human Element", p. 51.

⁵⁰Blackwell, "Influence", p. 10.

⁵¹*ibid.*, p. 9.

over every sphere of intellectual activity".⁵² For Blackwell thus, women's intellectual development was a right and a necessity precisely because of woman's difference.

Women were not only morally superior because of their female specificity. Moral behaviour was also inherited.⁵³ Blackwell, as Laqueur has put it, believed that "cultural progress, increasingly moral behaviour, was imprinted on the flesh of succeeding generations".⁵⁴ What differentiated humans from animals was that the mind ruled the body. Human progress was marked by the increased "mental or moral aspects" which the "sexual functions" assumed in humans, as opposed to being purely a physical instinct as was the case in animals.⁵⁵ According to Blackwell, it was a misconception that the male sexual urge was stronger and uncontrollable. It was a misconception upon which an "enormous practical edifice of law and custom" had been built.⁵⁶ Male sexuality was controllable because procreation was continually possible because of the power of self-adjustment through sperm emission. Blackwell asserted the physical nature of women's sexuality. But within female sexuality the mental

⁵²*ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

⁵³*ibid.*, p. 10.

⁵⁴Thomas Laqueur, Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 205.

⁵⁵Blackwell, "Human Element", pp. 9-11.

⁵⁶*ibid.*, pp. 48, 51.

and moral element of sex was greater than in male sexuality.⁵⁷ Chastity and continence were the "higher growth of reason" and a crucial part to human progress: "In the savage state, in semi-barbarous countries and in the slums of all great towns, both men and women are grossly unchaste." Chastity could become "inseparably interwoven with the essential structure of our physical organization", through the transmissible workings of habit upon the human organization.⁵⁸ Morality in sex constituted the essence of all morality and in the relations between men and women were to be found "the chief cause of national decline, or the promise of indefinite future progress".⁵⁹ The transmissible nature of sensuality and its implications could be observed in Islamic cultures, where, she said, women were considered to be morally inferior.

If we compare the mental and moral status of women in a Mohammedan country with the corresponding class of women in our own country, we perceive the effect which generations of simple sensual unions have produced on the character of the female population.⁶⁰

The particular embodiment of morality by women⁶¹ thus made women the agents of progress of the race. In Blackwell's construction thus the "superiority" of the Christian,

⁵⁷*ibid.*, pp. 51-53.

⁵⁸*ibid.*, p. 61-65.

⁵⁹Blackwell, "Moral Education", p. 178.

⁶⁰*ibid.*, p. 198.

⁶¹*ibid.*, p. 238.

white "race" was constituted through the morality of its female component. And continued progress depended on women's moral reforms. To give increased efficiency to women's moral qualities, women's intellectual horizons had to be enlarged.⁶²

Elizabeth Garrett Anderson (1836-1917), like Blackwell, believed that the aim of providing women with access to traditionally male educational possibilities was to assimilate women to men.⁶³ Garrett Anderson, the second woman to become a licensed physician in Britain,⁶⁴ was a less prolific writer and less of a theorist than Blackwell. However, when Henry Maudsley published "Sex in Mind and in Education" in the Fortnightly Review, Garrett Anderson, upon being approached by her friend Emily

⁶²Blackwell, "Influence", p. 12.

⁶³Garrett Anderson, "Sex in Mind and Education", p. 583.

⁶⁴Garrett Anderson was put on the British Medical Register in 1866, after obtaining the licentiate of the Society of Apothecaries for which she had prepared in private study (For her moves to become a licensed physician see chapter one, p. 35). In 1870 she obtained a medical degree from the Medical School of Paris. Garrett Anderson founded the New Hospital for Women in London, staffed entirely by women and became involved in the establishment of the London School of Medicine, being appointed its dean in 1883. From 1873 to 1892 she was a member of the British Medical Association. She had joined the British Women's Suffrage Committee in 1866 but soon withdrew. In 1907 she joined the militant suffragette movement. In 1908 she was elected Mayor of Aldeburgh, to become the first woman mayor in England. Elizabeth Garrett, who in 1871 married James Skelton Anderson, was a close friend of Emily Davies and the sister of Millicent Garrett Fawcett. For biographies see Louisa Garrett Anderson, Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, 1836-1917 (London: Faber & Faber, 1939); Jo Manton, Elizabeth Garrett Anderson (New York: E.P.Dutton & Co., 1965).

Davies, the founder of Girton College, undertook to write a reply.⁶⁵ In this reply Garrett Anderson explored Maudsley's assertion that the promotion of the same education for women as men received opposed the teachings of physiology and constituted a rebellion of women against the "tyranny of their organization".

In her model of physiological difference, Garrett Anderson resisted the positioning of the male body as the norm. She maintained that the question of women's education could not be answered by proving that men and women were different, but that it had to be solved by looking at women in their own right. She argued that menstruation did not exhaust the energy resources of women, but rather that it got rid of a surplus of nutritive material - a margin kept ready for the demands to be made in childbearing. In adult life, when proceeding normally, menstruation did not involve any "loss of vigour to the woman".⁶⁶

Garrett Anderson concurred that the development of the reproductive system taxed the nutritive powers in ways which produced a "temporary weakness". Allowances had to be made for it, she declared. But puberty was a

⁶⁵Barbara Stephen, Emily Davies and Girton College (London: Constable & Co., 1927), pp. 290-292.

⁶⁶Garrett Anderson, "Sex in Mind and Education", pp. 585-586. For a discussion of the view's of American women physician on menstruation see Virginia G. Drachman, "Women Doctors and the Women's Medical Movement: Feminism and Medicine 1850-1895" (PhD Diss., State University of New York at Buffalo, 1976), pp. 62ff.

precarious time not only for girls. The "period of immature manhood" was also frequently one of weakness. Although the physiological demands made upon them might not be as heavy as those made upon women, their resources were more taxed by lifestyle: by "drinking, smoking, unduly severe physical exercise, and frequently by late hours and dissipation generally."⁶⁷ Moreover, college education for women started only at the age of eighteen or nineteen, when, according to her, woman's development was complete.⁶⁸

The notion that "the physiological difference between men and women" - menstruation - should interfere in adult life with women pursuing higher education and careers was met by asserting the sameness of the working-class and middle-class female body. Healthy women, Garrett Anderson thus declared, as a rule nearly completely disregarded "their special physiological functions" in the labour of life, and that was most prominently to be observed among working-class women.⁶⁹

Female ill-health owed much to middle-class lifestyle. But rather than attributing it to a perceived convergence of male and female lifestyles, Garrett Anderson maintained that a way of life which would develop only the "specially and consciously feminine side" of female nature, a life which over-stimulated the

⁶⁷Garrett Anderson, "Sex in Mind", pp. 586, 588.

⁶⁸*ibid.*, p. 589.

⁶⁹*ibid.*, p. 585.

"emotional and sexual instincts" and weakened the "guiding and controlling forces which these instincts so imperatively need" was much more detrimental from a physiological point of view:

The stimulus found in novel-reading, in the theatre and ball-room, the excitement which attends a premature entry into society, the competition of vanity and frivolity, these involve far more real dangers to the health of young women than the competition for knowledge, or for scientific or literary honours, ever has done, or is ever likely to do.⁷⁰

Middle-class female health, however, was most endangered by the circumscribed lives that allowed no outlet of energies. Garrett Anderson explored medical notions of the detrimental effects of idleness for the health of middle-class women.⁷¹ Through arguing that the workings of the female reproductive system did not exhaust female energy resources, she could expand on the extent of mental application which would redress such ill-effects and include higher education into it. For every woman whose health was injured by too much study, there were many more whose health had deteriorated through the lack of occupation. As Garrett Anderson asserted, it was this which made women "morbid, self-absorbed, or even hysterical." Intellectual work, including college education, and the focus of interest it

⁷⁰*ibid.*, p. 590.

⁷¹See chapter two, pp. 96ff.

would provide, would remedy many of these cases.⁷²

A Male Medical Conspiracy? Negotiating and Appropriating Medical Ideas on Female Health and Lifestyle

Issues of women's health with regard to education were not only addressed by women physicians. The conception that women's bodily difference disqualified them from undergoing equal mental efforts as men without injury to health, constituted an important issue in feminist writings on female education. With the growth and profile of the literature from the early 1870s which raised alarm about the effects of traditionally male education upon the health of women and their offspring, women campaigners engaged increasingly with the theory that female constitution was a barrier to women's entry to the world of higher education and self-gained economic independence. In 1888 Emily Pfeiffer thus identified the issue of female health playing the primary role in retarding the satisfactory solution of the education

⁷²*ibid.*, pp. 590-591. In a letter to The Times Anderson in 1881 reasserted this position that women over the age of 18 could undergo hard intellectual work with advantage to health if they had not been "unduly stimulated" during puberty ("Examinations for Girls", 17 February 1881, p. 8); in 1897 she maintained that women studying medicine had better health than "average young women", and that cases of break-down were exceedingly rare among them (see Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, "Medical Training of Women in England" in Countess of Warwick (ed.), Progress in Women's Education in the British Empire: Being the Report of the Education Section, Victorian Era Exhibition 1897 (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1898), pp. 87-88).

question.⁷³

The question of female health permeated approaches to female education. A couple of years after the appearance of Henry Maudsley's article in the Fortnightly Review, the Englishwoman's Review, an important feminist periodical of the period, ran an article on "High Pressure" in which, evoking the objections of Maudsley, the anonymous author reaffirmed that severe study could have ill-effects upon girls. The author continued to stress that it had been pointed out that the problem was not only confined to girls - boys could also suffer evil consequences from too much strain.⁷⁴ The "educational problem of the present" was identified as securing a "more thoroughly-instructed and at the same time a physically better developed race than we have hitherto had." The specific problem was that, although it was possible for an individual, "increased mental force" could never be attained "for a nation" by the sacrifice of physical strength. Vital strength had to be handled carefully: a sound body was needed to contain a sound mind.⁷⁵ Following these assertions the author requested reforms in the early education of girls and boys which would spread the strain over a greater number of years. The standards of examination should not be lowered, but

⁷³Pfeiffer, Women and Work, p. 4.

⁷⁴"High Pressure", Englishwoman's Review (1876), pp. 10-11.

⁷⁵*ibid.*, p. 11.

the pace of education slowed.⁷⁶

However, more commonly educationalists, rather than expanding the problem to include the male sex, engaged in asserting that the subjection of women to modes of traditionally male education need not lead to injury of health. Sophia Jex-Blake, for instance, branded such theories as "alarmist".⁷⁷ Feminists challenged these theories, but there was a widespread acknowledgement that there was a risk of injury, which should be considered and monitored either by students themselves, or by female physicians. Pfeiffer, for instance, in her 200-page examination of the question concluded that it was a fact that facilities for "advanced education" had increased and that the "alarm raised from time to time by remonstrant from without" found no echo among the conductors of the movement. Nevertheless, she asserted that the competitive educational system "pressed harder" on women than on men.⁷⁸ Millicent Garrett Fawcett in an address to women students of Bedford College in 1886 found it necessary to remind her audience that

Over-work is a real snare and danger at the present time, and nothing gives the enemy so much occasion to blaspheme as a case of breakdown from overwork. The student who really wish, more than for any personal success, to help the women's cause, must anxiously avoid over-work; they must pay due attention to the claims of health, they must rest and amuse themselves as well as work with a will while

⁷⁶*ibid.*, p. 12.

⁷⁷Jex-Blake, "Sex in Education", p. 457.

⁷⁸Pfeiffer, Women and Work, pp. 131-132.

they are at their work.⁷⁹

In 1890, Eleanor Sidgwick, who had been involved in the establishment of Newnham College, published a statistical survey of the health of over 500 women who had attended college. In it, she concluded that higher education was not injurious to the constitution of women. It did not involve "any greater strain than they can ordinarily bear without injury." Equally, those college women who married turned out to be "mothers of healthy families." Overwork could occur, as "want of attention to well known laws of health" could lead to a deterioration of health. However, with "reasonable care" on part of the student it could be prevented.⁸⁰

In their engagement with the question of female health women campaigners often explored concepts in which female health was endangered, more than by the strains of education and professional lives, by the narrowness of conventional middle-class women's lives, passed in idleness and emotional over-excitement.⁸¹ Frances Power

⁷⁹Millicent Garrett Fawcett, "The Use of Higher Education to Women", Contemporary Review, 50 (1886), p. 726.

⁸⁰Mrs Henry Sidgwick, Health Statistics of Women Students of Cambridge and Oxford and of their Sisters (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1890), pp. 22, 91.

⁸¹Already in 1868 Emily Davies, who the following year was to open what was to become Girton college, referred to Henry Maudsley's "medical testimony" (she referred to the ideas laid out in The Physiology and Pathology of the Mind (1867), discussed in chapter two), who did not support the idea that "starving the brain is to keep it healthy", but rather endorsed the need of

Cobbe thus in 1878 maintained that the ill-health prevalent among upper- and middle-class women was in great part caused by the lack of exercise of the mind and the body, induced by the conventional female middle-class lifestyle. This, however, was changing, since "more intelligent and more active pursuits" for women were presently multiplying.⁸²

Not denying that "the daughters of women who have never used their brains may not have inherited rather soft and tender organs of cognition to start with", Cobbe maintained that

for one woman, whose health is injured by excessive study (that is, by *study itself*, not the baneful anxiety of examinations superadded to study), there are hundreds whose health is deteriorated by *want* of wholesome mental exercise.⁸³

If women were to have "larger interests and nobler pursuits", "their affections" would become less sickly. If they were to have a "sounder mental culture", their emotions, which for so long had been fostered exclusively

increased educational training of women (see Emily Davies, "Some Account of a Proposed New College for Women", Contemporary Review, 9 (1868), p. 552). Sophia Jex-Blake, in her letter to The Examiner, cited above, also referred to these ideas of Maudsley. For further arguments about the improvement of female health see, for instance, Pfeiffer, Women and Work, pp. 90ff; Orme, "Woman's Work", pp. 156-157.

⁸²Cobbe identified as other causes "inherited mischief"; conceptions that ill-health was lady-like; the influences of an unhappy home; and fashionable dress, which ruined the health of women, and through them that of their children (see Frances Power Cobbe, "Little Health", pp. 279-289).

⁸³*ibid.*, p. 291.

would

return to the calmness of health, and we shall hear no more of the intermittent feverish spirits, the causeless depressions, and all the long train of symptoms which belong to Protean-formed Hysteria, and open the way to madness on one side and sin on the other.⁸⁴

Feminists thus appropriated medical conceptions of the potentially deleterious effects of aspects of middle-class female lifestyle, applying them to their arguments for women's access to higher education and traditionally male occupations.

At the same time, the motives of male physicians who maintained that the extension of female mental application in such a way was incompatible with female health were questioned by women campaigners. Physicians were charged with "trade-unionism" and the protection of a male monopoly over the profession of medicine.⁸⁵ None was more dismissive of medical arguments against the demands of the women's movement than Frances Power Cobbe. Cobbe, an anti-vivisectionist, was critical towards the medical profession as such. In an article she published anonymously in 1881 on "The Medical Profession and Its Morality", she lamented the rise in influence which she believed the medical profession had gained in public life during the past century:

As medical officers in parishes and unions,
factory and prison surgeons, public

⁸⁴ *ibid.*

⁸⁵ See, for example, Huntley, Study and Practice, p. 22; Grey, "Men and Women", pp. 681-682.

vaccinators, medical officers of health, inspectors of nuisances, and very commonly as coroners, the doctors are daily assuming authority which, at first, perhaps, legitimate and beneficial, has a prevailing tendency to become meddling and despotic.⁸⁶

The rise of doctors had gone hand in hand with an increase among the laity of bodily care. And thus, according to Cobbe, "in every department of public and private life the doctors are acquiring power and influence, and coming to the front."⁸⁷

Cobbe did not believe that "advances in therapeutics" could justify such an influential role. Not only did she condemn the "hecatombs of bloody sacrifices" which these scientific developments had demanded, but she questioned the entire idea that there had been something like an advance.⁸⁸ Moreover, Cobbe questioned the "general moral status" of British doctors. In her eyes, they constituted a "*parvenu* profession, with the merits and defects of the class".⁸⁹ It was not only out of scientific and humanitarian motives, but also for mercenary reason

⁸⁶[Frances Power Cobbe], "The Medical Profession and Its Morality", Modern Review, 2 (1881), pp. 297.

⁸⁷*ibid.*, pp. 298-299. In her essay of 1878, "The Little Health of Ladies", Cobbe argued that the "great Medical Order" had taken on the position of the "priesthood of former times". It assumed "the same airs of authority, claims its victims for torture (this time among the lower animals), and enters every family with a latch-key of private information, only comparable to that obtained by the Confessional." (See p. 292).

⁸⁸Cobbe, "Medical Profession", p. 299.

⁸⁹*ibid.*, p. 300.

that men became physician.⁹⁰ Pursuits of financial benefit, she argued, often led to the sacrifice of the interests of the patient.⁹¹

Cobbe's own gentry background and her belief that physicians were all drawn from the lower middle class, as Barbara Caine has argued, gave her a sense of social superiority which provided her with a "speaking position" from which to publicly criticise the medical profession. Class allowed Cobbe to confront medical authority, which she saw as based upon middle-class male access to formal education and professional status.⁹² Cobbe not only objected to the social influence of physicians in general; she also questioned the specific role medical authority played in women's lives. She held the medical profession responsible for conspiring to prescribe unhealthy life-styles to "ladies",⁹³ rejecting physicians claims to be the guardians of women's health.

Cobbe developed the idea that physicians were for a great part responsible for the prevalent state of ill-health among middle and upper-class women in an article published in 1878. There she declared that female valetudinarianism could not be in the intensions of Providence, nor of the "laws of beneficent Nature".

⁹⁰*ibid.*, p. 301.

⁹¹*ibid.*, pp. 311-313.

⁹²Barbara Caine, Victorian Feminists (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 144.

⁹³Cobbe, "Medical Profession", p. 322.

Opinion which depicted women of those classes as naturally liable to ill-health was both absurd and deplorable:

That the Creator should have planned a whole sex of Patients - that the normal condition of the female of the human species should be to have legs which walk not, and brains which can only work on pain of disturbing the rest of the ill-adjusted machine - this is to me simply incredible.⁹⁴

In Cobbe's view a great share of the blame for the prevalent "little health of ladies" lay with medical men. Out of pecuniary interest, that is due to the financial benefits for doctors of the existence of "a sex of patients", doctors did not prevent women from unhealthy customs, such as "tight-lacing, late hours, and excitement".⁹⁵ Instead, physicians warned against changes which could improve the health of women:

'Women beware!', [this warning] cries. 'Beware! you are at the brink of destruction! You have hitherto been engaged only in crushing your waists; now you are attempting to cultivate your mind! You have been merely dancing all night in the foul air of ball-rooms; now you are beginning to spend all morning in study! You have been incessantly stimulating your emotions with concerts and operas, with French plays and French novels; now you are exerting your understanding to learn Greek and solve propositions in Euclid! Beware, oh beware! Science pronounces that the woman who - *studies* - is lost!'⁹⁶

⁹⁴Cobbe, "Little Health", p. 278. Cobbe lost her religious faith before the age of twenty, was an agnostic for some time, and then established her own set of beliefs based on the idea that God's moral laws were evident to individuals through their own intuition (see Caine, Victorian Feminists, p. 116).

⁹⁵Cobbe, "Little Health", pp. 292-294.

⁹⁶*ibid.*, p. 293.

Thus for Cobbe, although she accepted that the pressure of examinations might be injurious to health, the medical idea that mental application would incur ill-health was attributable to physicians' economic interest in generating ill-health among women, as well as to their defence of the profession against the entry of women. By 1882 Cobbe included in her dismissal of medical opinion ideas that education was not only injurious to individual women, but also had implications for the race, when she repeated her theory of a male medical conspiracy:

when there was a movement for the Higher Education of women, and it became obvious that one of the aims of that education would be to fit lady doctors to enter the market as competitors with the men who had hitherto monopolised the profits of the profession. Then, indeed, the doctors grew earnest and made a grand discovery - namely, that mental labour is peculiarly injurious to the weaker sex, much worse, it would appear, for their feeble constitutions than any amount of ball-going and dissipation; and that, in short, a term at Girton was worse than five London seasons. Women would perish, and the human race cease to multiply, if female intellects ascended from gossip to Greek!⁹⁷

Feminists thus developed theories, most assertively expressed by Power Cobbe, that it was not that the changes sought by the women's movement were inviting interference with female health. Rather, it was custom and conventional female lifestyle which was conducive to promoting ill-health among women.

⁹⁷Cobbe, "Medical Profession", pp. 322-323.

Opposing the Women's Movement

Not all women, of course, supported the causes of the women's movement. Opposition against feminist demands was often rooted in scientific ideas about female nature and the injurious effects of changes in women's sphere. Eliza Lynn Linton, the first salaried woman journalist in Britain, established and maintained her reputation by criticizing the women's movement.⁹⁸ Her writings on women first rose to fame and notoriety when she anonymously published "The Girl of the Period" in the Saturday Review in 1868, in which she attacked the social behaviour and aspirations of modern women.⁹⁹ Later in life she is recorded to have summed up her views on the "Woman Question" as "I think now, as I thought then, that the sphere of human action is determined by the sphere of sex, and that there does both exist natural limitation

⁹⁸Linton (1822-1898) at the age of twenty-three, she left her family home (her mother had died in her early childhood) in Cumberland and went to live in London, where she earned her living as a journalist. Her first novel, Azeth the Egyptian was published in 1846. She married in 1858 the writer and engraver William James Linton. They started to live apart six years later (see Blain *et al.*, Feminist Companion. For biographies see Nancy Fix Anderson, Woman against Women in Victorian England: A Life of Eliza Lynn Linton (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); Herbert Van Thal, Eliza Lynne Linton: The Girl of the Period. A Biography (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1979).

⁹⁹George Somes Layard, Mrs. Lynn Linton: Her Life, Letters, and Opinion (London: Methuen & Co., 1901), pp. 138-139, 143.

and natural direction."¹⁰⁰

Linton's objection to the women's movement relied upon notions of evolutionary differences between men and women. One of the "plainest facts of nature" was that "the higher the organism the more complete the differentiation between the sexes."¹⁰¹ Women's physical constitution put "her on a different plane from that whereupon men stand."¹⁰² It was this underlying assumption which led her to argue in 1886 that an ill-handling of the issue of female education and occupations would have dangerous biological effects.¹⁰³ Linton based these arguments upon male scientific authority. Medical men, she argued, were the "only trustworthy judges" in the matter, and they were saying that higher education and professional lives were prejudicial to the health of women and damaging their reproductive capacities.¹⁰⁴

According to Linton, the crux of the question of women's work was how unmarried middle-class women could undertake remunerative work "without damage to their health and those interests of the race and society which

¹⁰⁰Layard, Mrs. Lynn Linton, p. 145.

¹⁰¹E. Lynn Linton, "Woman's Place in Nature and Society", Belgravia: A London Magazine, 29 (1876), p. 355.

¹⁰²*ibid.*, p. 350.

¹⁰³E. Lynn Linton, "The Higher Education of Women", Fortnightly Review, 40 (1886), pp. 498-510.

¹⁰⁴*ibid.*, pp. 503-504, 508. For similar arguments against women who wanted to "directly influence imperial politics", see E. Lynn Linton, "The Wild Women: No 1 - As Politicians", Nineteenth Century, 30 (1891), pp. 79-88.

are bound up with their well-being".¹⁰⁵ She argued that women should concentrate on expanding "their own natural work" and that middle-class women should undertake this work without considering it as a slide in social positions.¹⁰⁶ Education should focus on "mental development", but not be geared towards "intellectual specialization" and professional instruction.¹⁰⁷

Linton opposed female suffrage, but showed a great interest in national politics, her allegiances lying with the Liberals.¹⁰⁸ In 1876 Linton had already explained that equality of the sexes did not mean absolute likeness, identity and parallelism.¹⁰⁹ A decade later, Linton asserted that the "world" was in the midst of undergoing a "great revolution", one of the main aspects of which was the "universal claim for individual freedom."¹¹⁰ The "doctrine of rights" had become so prominent, that the question of duties was being neglected. The "general good" was not taken into account. But this was exactly the central issue of women's individuality - their biological obligations to society. A female was "something more than an individual", she was "the potential mother of a race; and the last is greater and

¹⁰⁵*ibid.*, p. 498.

¹⁰⁶*ibid.*, p. 509.

¹⁰⁷*ibid.*, pp. 504-505.

¹⁰⁸Layard, Mrs Lynn Linton, p. 200.

¹⁰⁹Linton, "Woman's Place", p. 356.

¹¹⁰Linton, "Higher Education", p. 506.

more important than the first." A woman, who nevertheless decided to disregard the restrictions of sex and went for competitive examinations and competition with men in the professions, should "forego the exercise of that function the perfection of which her own self-improvement has destroyed."¹¹¹

Women's reproductive function was also central to Arabella Kenealy's view on women's rights and appropriate life-styles. Kenealy, herself of a generation for whom higher education and medical degrees were attainable, based her argument on her own authority as a trained physician.¹¹² In an article she published in 1890, she reinforced this position by framing her arguments in a narrative of encounters with patients in her consulting room.¹¹³ From this vantage point she endorsed the view that women should be provided with an education which would enable them to live an economically independent life as long as they were unmarried, although she reminded her readers that this education had to be carefully administered, so as not to "spoil her woman-power". Once married, however, women had to give

¹¹¹*ibid.*, p. 508.

¹¹²Kenealy (1864-1938) was educated at home and at the London School of Medicine for women. She practised medicine between 1888 and 1894 in London and Watford. She retired from practice after a serious illness. She continued, however, to publish medical and scientific books and articles, as well as novels (see Blain, *et al.*, Feminist Companion).

¹¹³Arabella Kenealy, "The Talent of Motherhood", National Review, 16 (1890), pp. 446-459.

themselves up to motherhood - the ultimate essence of womanhood - which was incompatible with an "emancipated" lifestyle.¹¹⁴

Expanding on contemporary ideas on degeneration and atavism, that is, evolutionary throwbacks, Kenealy argued that continuous strain upon the nervous forces through mental and physical exertion during pregnancy would be drawing on the unborn child's resources. The embryo which, as recapitulation theory postulated, in its individual development would be going through all the evolutionary stages of the human species, would be stopped short in its development. It would belong to "an inferior type - anterior to the age in which it was born."¹¹⁵

Women, thus, participated in the construction of woman as different in ways in which her female reproductive function established a different sphere of aptitudes and hence of rights. Female reproductive duties to the race were central to the establishment of their proper lifestyles. Contemporary scientific knowledge on

¹¹⁴*ibid.*, p. 457-458, 453. The following year, in 1891, Kenealy expanded her argument that not getting married was a feasible possibility for a woman and that she should act wisely "in providing herself with some occupation, which by engaging her interests, shall give her an alternative life, shall render her more independent of marriage, actually and morally - independent entirely she may never be, so long as human nature is as it now is, but she will be far happier unmarried and absorbed in the avocation of her choice than she could be married unsuitably." (See Arabella Kenealy, "A New View of the Surplus of Women", Westminster Review, 136 (1891), p. 471).

¹¹⁵Kenealy, "Talent of Motherhood", pp. 448, 456.

gendered human nature formed the basis to the formulation of the arguments of these two women in opposition to the women's movement.

Conclusion

Scientists' and physicians' intervention in the Woman Question during the 1870s and 1880s were sometimes reflected and developed by women who opposed the feminist movement. They also had an important impact upon feminists' theories. Women campaigners formulated their arguments in light of medico-scientific theories on gendered human nature, debating, exploring and reinterpreting them.

Female physiology and the effects of education upon the health of women became an important factor in the discussion of female education. The motives of male physicians for the development of theories which rejected the demands of the women's movement as being beyond the reach of female capacity were questioned. However, medical theories permeated feminists' discussions of female mental application. They reconstructed and appropriated them in accordance with their aims of change in women's position. That mental strain could adversely affect the body was widely acknowledged. Sometimes the gendering of this idea was questioned, but most commonly feminists negotiated these theories so that the possibility of it did not exclude higher education, as

well as professional employment from the limits of female capacity.

Notions of widespread ill-health among middle-class women were part of feminists' arguments. But rather than seeing the provision of higher education and the possibility of economic independence as causal agents, many feminists explored and developed alternative ideas in which the demands and changes supported by the women's movement were not the cause of, but rather the remedy against ill-health.

Women campaigners rejected notions that male physicians and scientists should be the arbiters of social change and often asserted that Nature itself would regulate this change. The theory of natural selection, in the case of Sophia Jex-Blake, came to be used to argue that women had the right to employ their faculties in the way they chose. The law of natural selection itself established a division of occupations and thus there was no need to have it enforced by law or social custom.

From the early 1870s women campaigners integrated aspects of evolutionary theory into arguments that female mental powers had been shaped by the history of the female sex and that they were open to development in the future. Thus women should be given the freedom to develop their mental powers. During the 1870s and early 1880s feminist theory resisted the importance of women's role as the biological mothers of the race. Although the refutation of the ideas that their demands were

incompatible with female well-being carried an underlying engagement with the question of the health of future generations, their main focus was on engaging with this question in terms of the implications for women themselves.

Whereas some women, such as Jex-Blake, put notions of the rights of women as individuals to the foreground of their arguments, others, such as Elizabeth Blackwell, centralized notions of the role of women as "mothers". For Blackwell it was "spiritual" motherhood which was crucial to racial progress. Feminist openness to evolutionary theories, as well as concepts of women's central role in racial progress through their moralizing function foreshadowed an increasing importance from the late 1880s in feminist theory of notions of women as the biological mothers of the future generations having a pivotal role in evolutionary advancement, as I will explore in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

EUGENICS AND FEMINISM:

THE POLITICS OF REPRODUCTION AND WOMEN'S ROLES

AS MOTHERS OF THE RACE, c. 1885 - c. 1914

By the 1890s women could obtain degrees at a growing number of universities across Britain, as well as being able to attend colleges at Cambridge and Oxford, although without obtaining official degrees. Against this backdrop, concerns about the ill-effects upon women's health of too much mental application continued to be voiced until well into the twentieth century.¹ But at the end of the nineteenth century attitudes towards female higher education also became part of eugenical concerns about procuring high rates of reproduction by the "fittest" women. Ideas about the physical and mental decline of the British population promoted the emergence

¹For continuing concerns about the effects of strain of an education similar to the male one upon female health see for example James Crichton Browne, "An Oration on Sex in Education", Lancet, I (1892), pp. 1011-1018; *idem*, "Should Women be Educated?", The Englishwoman, 2 (1895), pp. 454-462; Havelock Ellis, Studies in the Psychology of Sex, 4, Sex in Relation to Society, first published 1910 (Philadelphia: F.A.Davies Company, 1920), pp. 64, 66, 71. For ideas which focused rather on the effects of the strains of professional lives see George J. Romanes, "Mental Differences Between Men and Women", Nineteenth Century, 21 (1887), p. 671; Frederic Harrison, "The Emancipation of Women", Fortnightly Review, 50 (1891), pp. 443-444. The positivist Harrison advocated a future society in which women of all classes would dedicate themselves only to domestic duties and child-rearing.

of the eugenics movement, which formulated theories of how to improve the biological quality of the race by manipulating human reproduction.² Much of eugenic interaction with the Woman Question centred upon the identification of women with the potential to improve the race and to encourage them to have large families.³

It was Francis Galton (1822-1911), Charles Darwin's cousin, who in 1883 coined the term "eugenics", to denote a science of improving the human stock by giving "the more suitable races or strains of blood a better chance of prevailing speedily over the less suitable."⁴ Already in 1869, in Hereditary Genius,⁵ Galton had argued that ability was determined by inheritance rather than

²For a history of the British eugenics movement see Lyndsay Andrew Farrall, The Origins and Growth of the English Eugenics Movement, 1865-1925 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1985). For a comparative history of eugenics in the Britain and the USA see Daniel J. Kevles, In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986). For discussions of eugenics and feminism see, for instance, Lorna Duffin, "Prisoners of Progress: Woman and Evolution", in Sara Delamont and Lorna Duffin (eds), The Nineteenth-Century Woman: Her Cultural and Physical World (London: Croom Helm, 1978), pp. 76ff; Richard A. Soloway, Demography and Degeneration: Eugenics and the Declining Birth-Rate in Twentieth-Century Britain (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), pp. 110ff.

³Soloway, Demography, p. 116.

⁴Francis Galton, Inquiries into the Human Faculty (London: Macmillan, 1883), pp. 24-25; quoted in Kevles, Eugenics, p. ix.

⁵Francis Galton, Hereditary Genius: An Inquiry into its Laws and Consequences (London: Macmillan and Co., 1869).

education or environment.⁶ From this basis he advocated that to ensure the maintenance of the biological standards of the race, individuals with high abilities had to be encouraged to have large numbers of children, through measures such as giving the professional classes tax relief for each child. Next to this strategy of "positive eugenics", as he was to call it later, he promoted "negative eugenics", or the curtailment and prevention of procreation of those with least ability, to be found, according to him, mainly in the lower classes.⁷

The initial reaction to Galton's views was not very favourable, but at the turn of the century these views gained increasing popularity,⁸ in the face of faltering confidence in Imperial economic supremacy and internal upheavals. "British governments were ... facing one national crisis after another - cyclical economic depressions, organized labour unrest, socialist revival, the demand for Irish Home Rule, the Women's Movement, and ... the increasingly militant activities of the suffragettes."⁹ Galton in 1904 founded the research-based National Eugenics Laboratory. Three years later, in 1907,

⁶For Galton's theories of inheritance see Kevles, Eugenics, pp. 3ff.

⁷Peter J. Bowler, Evolution: The History of an Idea, rev. ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), pp. 291-292.

⁸*ibid.*, p. 292.

⁹Lucy Bland, Banishing the Beast: English Feminism and Sexual Morality, 1885-1914 (London: Penguin, 1995), p. 223.

the Eugenics Education Society was established, whose outlook was educative and popularizing. In 1909 the Society launched its journal, the Eugenics Review.¹⁰

Eugenic approaches had a class aspect in that they often aimed at curtailing the reproduction of sections of the working-class (most of all the casual poor, or "residuum"), considered to be physically and mentally "unfit", as well as encouraging large families among the "fit" members of society, which for most eugenicists were to be found in the middle class. Eugenics also had a gendered dimension to it, with views about women's reproductive role and how it was affected by their social roles and position in society.¹¹

At the end of the nineteenth century it was increasingly noted that there was a reversal in demographic trends. Statistics on the birth-rate showed that it had been falling since 1876. By 1901 fertility had dropped by more than 24%, and by 1914, 33%.¹² What concerned eugenicists was not only that the birth-rate was falling, but also the differential nature of the decline in fertility. It was among the upper and middle

¹⁰Bowler, Evolution, p. 292; Bland, Banishing the Beast, p. 227.

¹¹Greta Jones, "Women and Eugenics in Britain: The Case of Mary Scharlieb, Elizabeth Sloan Chessier, and Stella Browne", Annals of Science, 51 (1995), p. 484; Bowler, Evolution, p. 292.

¹²Richard Allen Soloway, Birth Control and the Population Question in England, 1877-1930 (Chapel Hill: University of North of Carolina Press, 1982), p. xi

classes that the decline was greatest.¹³ For Karl Pearson (1857-1936),¹⁴ who in 1911 became the first Galton Professor of Eugenics at University College London after the chair had been offered to him upon the express wish of Galton, thus the differential birth-rate demanded the "most thorough investigation."¹⁵ Pearson in his ideas merged socialist and evolutionist beliefs. His socialism came to centre around the imperial conflict between races rather than the internal conflict between classes.¹⁶ Racial fitness was a requirement for success in inter-racial struggle. However, there was a tendency visible that "educated men and women often do not marry or marry late" and they had fewer children than their "more animal fellows". If the "best women" increasingly restricted child-bearing, the continuation of the species would be left to the "coarser and less intellectual of its members." Was it not that educated men and women owed a

¹³Bland, Banishing the Beast, p. 225.

¹⁴Pearson had started his academic career in 1875 by studying mathematics at King's College, Cambridge, followed by studies of mathematics and philosophy at the University of Heidelberg and Berlin (see Churchill Eisenhart, "Pearson, Karl", in Charles Coulston Gillispie (ed.), Dictionary of Scientific Biography (New York: Charles Scribner's sons, 1970-1976), 10, pp. 447ff.) For a discussion of Pearson's eugenic ideas see Kevles, Eugenics, pp. 20ff.

¹⁵Karl Pearson, "The Woman Question" (1885), in The Ethics of Freethought and Other Addresses and Essays, 2nd ed. (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1901), p. 374.

¹⁶Daniel Pick, Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, c. 1848 - c. 1918 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 218.

duty to society in this respect?¹⁷

Older concerns that women's higher education and paid employment was interfering with women's child-bearing capacity were supplemented by eugenicists with concerns that "emancipated" women *abstained* from child-birth or at least limited their families.¹⁸ Eugenicists spelled out the assumption which since the 1870s had informed arguments about racial degeneration: "The race should always be more carefully considered than the individual in any scientifically ordered community."¹⁹ Individuals, particularly women, existed pre-eminently for the race.²⁰

Eugenicists, who generally put forward "hard" theories of inheritance in which character was predetermined by inheritance, and the environment left no transmittable biological traces to be passed on as Lamarckianism supposed,²¹ were not so much concerned with

¹⁷Pearson, "Woman Question", p. 374.

¹⁸For a discussion of feminism and contraception see Bland, Banishing the Beast, pp. 189ff.

¹⁹T.S.Clouston, "The Psychological Dangers to Women in Modern Social Developments", in anon. (ed.), The Position of Woman: Actual and Ideal (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1911), p. 110.

²⁰C.W. Saleeby, Woman and Womanhood: A Search for Principles (London: William Heinemann, 1912), p. 27.

²¹August Weismann in the 1880s had formulated the idea that heredity was predetermined by the constitution of the germ plasm. The rediscovery of the theories of Gregor Johann Mendel in 1900 and the rapid development of Mendelian genetics thereafter provided a new basis to scientific theories about hard inheritance (see Bowler, Evolution, pp. 250ff; 270ff; 294).

college women transmitting an enfeebled constitution to their offspring, as with the perception that members of the women's movement in general, and college women in particular, were among the racially most valuable women, who should be encouraged to have a large number of children. Galton himself thus throughout his life opposed the granting of degrees to women, which he expressed in 1897 by voting against it in Cambridge. This stand was based on the belief that the women's colleges diverted women from their reproductive duties, rather than that it unfitted women for reproduction.²² That women should have a choice between either taking up culture and intellectual work or a domestic life was unacceptable, as Thomas Clouston pointed out. It went against the proposition of eugenics that "[t]he fit must be selected. The unfit may be allowed to lapse into non-existence".²³

The role of women, mentally fit enough to qualify for traditionally male higher education, was not to develop and explore their mental capacities and make use of them for their own lives. Rejecting notions of the inheritance of acquired characteristics refuted the assumption that increased intellectual training for women would further the mental powers of the coming generations. Women were to be the vessels through which high mental ability was passed on to a large number of offspring. In Galton's Hereditary Genius few women

²²Soloway, Demography, p. 121.

²³T.S.Clouston, "Psychological Dangers", p. 109.

appeared in his pantheon of outstanding intellectual achievers. Rather than being geniuses themselves, women could have a part to play in transmitting ability to their sons:

A mother transmits masculine peculiarities to her male child, which she does not and cannot possess; and similarly, a woman who is endowed with fewer gifts of a masculine type than her husband, may yet contribute in a large degree to the masculine intellectual superiority of her son.²⁴

Galton's main preoccupation in his work, however, lay with male inheritance. But other eugenicists saw female inheritance as a crucial factor to be accounted for. "Mothers of high brain power", Thomas Clouston maintained, "are as much needed for an advancing race as fathers - rather more so in fact".²⁵ The worthiest women in terms of their reproductive qualities were thought often to be found in the women's movement, a group perceived to have a worryingly low marriage and birth rate. It was those women who thus had to be convinced of their importance as biological mothers, as Caleb Saleeby (1878-1940)²⁶ made clear:

It is that the best women, those favoured by Nature in physique and intelligence, in character and their emotional nature, the women who are increasingly to be found enlisted in

²⁴Galton, Hereditary Genius, p. 62. The women he did list were Sarah [sic] Austen (he was referring to Jane Austen); Charlotte Brontë; and Mme de Stael (see pp. 173, 174, 184).

²⁵Clouston, "Psychological Dangers", p. 110.

²⁶Saleeby was a physician and medical researcher. He was a member of the National Temperance League and of the Eugenics Education Society.

the ranks of Feminism, and fighting the great Fight for the Women's Cause, shall be convinced by the unchangeable and beneficent facts of biology, seen in the bodies and minds of women, and shall direct their efforts accordingly; so that they and those of their sisters who are of the same natural rank, instead of increasingly deserting ranks of motherhood and leaving the blood of inferior women to constitute half of all future generations, shall on the contrary furnish an ever-increasing proportion of our wives and mothers, to the great gain of themselves, and of men, and of the future.²⁷

For Saleeby, like for Galton, the question of higher education was not that college women would transmit an enfeebled constitution to their offspring. Rather, he was preoccupied with how higher education (based upon male higher education) diverted women from their reproductive role, leading to a low marriage and birth-rate for these women.²⁸ He thought that there existed women who were by nature more masculine than normal women. These individuals, he believed

like all others, are entitled to the fullest and freest development of their lives, and it is well that there shall be open to them, as to the brothers they so closely resemble, opportunities for intellectual satisfaction and self-development.²⁹

For the majority of other women, however, the course of higher education should take into account that the individual, particularly if a woman, existed for parenthood. It should be based on the principle that

²⁷Saleeby, Woman, p. 14.

²⁸*ibid.*, pp. 78-79; pp. 152-153.

²⁹*ibid.*, p. 152.

woman was not the same as man, with special interests and duties. Female education should be oriented towards motherhood.³⁰

Karl Pearson and Alfred Russel Wallace: Female Economic Independence and Race-Improvement

Concerns with ensuring the biological quality of the race did not necessarily lead to the advocacy of maintaining the traditional middle-class female role. Karl Pearson and Alfred Russel Wallace, both socialist eugenicists, rather developed ideas in which social change, which would make women economically independent of men, was crucial for the advancement of the race. They did, however, differ over who should have the ultimate control over reproduction. Whereas Pearson believed that this should be the role of the state, Wallace thought that women's free agency in sexual selection would by itself ensure the fitness of the future race.

Pearson considered the "movement for the complete emancipation of women" and socialism to be the two most important movements of his time.³¹ His interest in the woman question led to him becoming an active founding member of the Men and Women's Club in London in 1885, a club established to discuss the relations between the

³⁰*ibid.*, pp. 128, 151.

³¹Karl Pearson, "Socialism and Sex" (1886), in The Ethics of Freethought and Other Addresses and Essays, 2nd ed. (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1901), p. 415.

sexes.³² It was at the Club that Pearson met Olive Schreiner, with whom he established an intense friendship,³³ and in 1890 he married another member of the Club, Maria Sharpe.

Pearson's contention was that the question of women's emancipation had to be discussed in light of the effects this would have on woman's function as race-reproducers.³⁴ He came to advocate the economic independence of all women.³⁵ When this was the case, procreation would no longer be the main social role of women. This was important since not everyone was fitted to become parents of the future race. Possible objections to female economic independence on the grounds that women's domestic duties were women's real and only labour contribution to the community he thus disclaimed:

So far as such duties have to do with the rearing of children, I at once admit that they *may* indeed form an all important contribution to the social stock. But the possibility of

³²See Judith R. Walkowitz, City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London (London: Virago Press, 1992), pp. 135ff and Bland, Banishing the Beast, pp. 3ff. on the Men and Women's Club.

³³For Schreiner's relationship with Pearson see Brandon, The New Women and the Old Men, pp. 44ff.

³⁴Karl Pearson, "The Woman Question", p. 355.

³⁵Soloway has suggested that Pearson's commitment to the necessity of economic independence for women was spurred by his mother's unhappiness in her conventional marriage (see Soloway, Demography, p. 117). His own wife, however, Maria Sharpe, as Pearson was to reflect on late in life, also spend an unhappily married life, "looking with slender means after home and children" and "working for her husband's purposes" (see Brandon, New Women, p. 75).

this depends entirely on the social (moral) right of the particular man and woman to propagate under the present pressure of population. By physique and mental power a particular man and woman may be fitted to carry on the race, or they may not. If they are fitted, it does not follow that they have the social right to an unlimited family.³⁶

Every human being, man or woman (unless disabled) had no moral right to be a member of Pearson's future community unless he or she was "contributing to the common labour stock".³⁷ This duty to work provided the basis to the right to have "educational and professional institutions thrown open" to women.³⁸ Pearson established a distinction between "child-bearing and non-child-bearing women". Although women might pass and repass from one to another category, they were to hold different positions in society. Between the non-child-bearing woman and man, there would exist no legal, social, or economic distinction.³⁹ The child-bearing woman would also be economically independent of the "father and lover". In her case, it was the state which would provide her economic independence.⁴⁰

It was the child-bearing woman who would make up the

³⁶Pearson, "Sex and Socialism", p. 419. Pearson's emphasis. For Pearson's Neo-Malthusianism and the convergence of the woman question and the population question in general see Soloway, Birth Control, pp. 133ff.

³⁷*ibid.*, p. 416.

³⁸*ibid.*, p. 421.

³⁹*ibid.*, p. 424-425.

⁴⁰*ibid.*, p. 428.

great bulk of the female sex, Pearson was sure.⁴¹ The claim to "equality of opportunity", which had been formulated by a narrow class of mainly unmarried middle-class women, should thus not be the driving principle of social change. Equality of opportunity was an idle demand when one party alone had to carry a "peculiarly heavy part of the social burden".⁴² For Pearson it was no longer that women subjected to too much strain would pass on an enfeebled constitution. Rather the issue was that if during pregnancy the average woman was submitted to the intellectual worry and ceaseless anxiety of modern professional life or more generally to the wear and tear of the modern competitive system, it would prove harmful to the developing new life. Hence, the "race must degenerate if greater and greater stress be brought to force woman during the years of child-bearing into active and unlimited competition with man."⁴³ The demand of labour as a social duty from all members of society had to be accompanied by "special protection for peculiar disabilities", in terms of a national insurance of motherhood, which would allow the regulation of labour of married women during their child-bearing years.⁴⁴

Maternity was an activity which gave women a special

⁴¹Karl Pearson, "Woman and Labour", Fortnightly Review, 55 (1894), p. 568.

⁴²*ibid.*, pp. 566-567.

⁴³*ibid.*, pp. 559-560.

⁴⁴*ibid.*, pp. 574, 576.

claim on the community at large. It also demanded serious thought on her part. Careful sexual selection was important, because the "unlimited production of bad stock" was bad for the community, as well as for women because it lessened the value for maternity.⁴⁵ Women thus had an important role to play in ensuring the quality of future generations. However, in the future, when the race would be conscious of the "vital problems of heredity" and child-bearing and rearing was no longer the "accidental result" of private relation between individuals, the decision of who should become the parents of the future race would mainly be taken by the State.⁴⁶

Whereas Pearson thus endorsed state interference in reproductive processes, Alfred Russel Wallace (1823-1913),⁴⁷ who simultaneously with Charles Darwin formulated the principle of natural selection as the mechanism of evolution, rejected such proposals. Rather than advocating the State as the decision-maker over the right of procreation, Wallace believed that female economic independence was the entire key to the future fitness of the race.

Wallace published prolifically throughout his

⁴⁵*ibid.*, pp. 574, 576.

⁴⁶*ibid.*, pp. 574-575.

⁴⁷For biographies of Wallace see Wilma George, Biologist Philosopher: A Study of the Life and Writing of Alfred Russel Wallace (New York: Abelard-Schuman, 1964); Martin Fichman, Alfred Russel Wallace (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1981).

lifetime on evolution. In the elaboration of his ideas on social evolutionism he incorporated biology, spiritualism, land nationalisation and socialism.⁴⁸ In the public declaration of his socialist ideas, an article on "Human Selection" published in 1890,⁴⁹ Wallace also engaged with the question of women's rights and socio-biological role. He reported that

[i]n one of my latest conversations with Darwin he expressed himself very gloomily on the future of humanity, on the ground that in our modern civilisation natural selection had no play, and the fittest did not survive. Those who succeed in the race for wealth are by no means the best or the most intelligent, and it is notorious that our population is more largely renewed in each generation from the lower than from the middle and upper classes.⁵⁰

For Wallace, however, there was less reason for gloom. He had proposals of how to make sure that fittest should continue to survive: sexual selection had to take the place of natural selection. Wallace concurred that Galton and Weismann's theories of heredity had shed "grave doubts" upon whether "education, hygiene and social refinement" lead to the steady improvement of "all civilised races". The belief that qualities acquired after birth were not hereditary meant that "some form of selection" was "the only possible means of improving the

⁴⁸Fichman, Wallace, p. 152.

⁴⁹Alfred R. Wallace, "Human Selection", Fortnightly Review, 48 (1890), pp. 325-337.

⁵⁰*ibid.*, p. 325.

race."⁵¹

Positive eugenics, in the eyes of Wallace was unobjectionable, but not very effective. It was an option which would only raise the standard of "our best of men", yet "[w]hat we want is, not a higher standard of perfection in the few but a higher average, and this can best be produced by the elimination of the lowest of all and a free intermingling of the rest." He strenuously objected, however, to the notion of negative eugenics which would make parentage the privilege of the comparatively few. These measures might ensure the object aimed at, but they supposed an interference with personal freedom, unacceptable to him.⁵²

He promoted instead social change which would spontaneously bring into action a system of selection which "will steadily tend to eliminate the lower and more degraded types of man, and thus continuously raise the average standard of the race." In the society Wallace was envisaging every one, regardless of sex and class, received the "fullest and best training, both intellectual and physical; every one is encouraged to follow out those studies or pursuits for which they are best fitted, or for which they exhibit the strongest inclination." Following education, men and women alike would participate "in the ranks of the industrial army in which they serve for three years." After this they could

⁵¹*ibid.*, p. 326.

⁵²*ibid.*, pp. 328-329.

choose what "department of public service" they would enter. Hence, working-class women would not be obliged to "work long hours daily for the barest subsistence", nor would middle-class women be forced into "more or less uncongenial marriages as the only means of securing some amount of personal independence or physical well-being."⁵³

It was in this society that continuous improvement of the race could take place through selection. The agency of this selection would be female choice in marriage:⁵⁴ "In a society in which women were all pecuniarily independent, were all fully occupied with public duties and intellectual or social enjoyments, and had nothing to gain by marriage as regards material well-being", the number of unmarried women would increase since women would only marry men they "love and esteem." Marriage would not take place until a worthy husband was found. Since in men the "passion of love" was more general and stronger, a passion which in the future could only be gratified in marriage, women were sure to receive offers of marriage: "thus a powerful selective agency would rest with the female sex."⁵⁵ This female selection would remedy the check which the higher attributes of

⁵³*ibid.*, p. 330-332.

⁵⁴It is rather paradoxical that Wallace who used to disagree with Darwin about the importance of female choice in sexual selection, and from the mid-1860s onwards increasingly saw natural selection as the major agent of the evolutionary process (see Fichman, Wallace, pp. 141-149), by this time regarded sexual selection as the agent of human race improvement.

⁵⁵*ibid.*, p. 335.

human nature had put upon the "wholesome process" of the extinction of the unfit, which although a moral improvement, had been antagonistic to the physical and intellectual "race-improvement". The installation of a society which removed the disparity of wealth and class was the premise to a racial improvement for which the "cultivated minds and pure instincts of the Woman of the Future" would be responsible.⁵⁶ Women's sexual selection would play the same role as natural selection did in the animal world:

[t]he idle and the selfish would be almost universally rejected. The diseased or the weak in intellect would also usually remain unmarried; while those who exhibited any tendency to insanity or to hereditary disease, or who possessed any congenital deformity would in hardly any case find partners, because it would be considered an offence against society to be the means of perpetuating such diseases or imperfections.⁵⁷

Education was important both as part of the process which would lead women to economic independence, and also as the basis of right exercise of the power of selection.⁵⁸

⁵⁶*ibid.*, p. 337.

⁵⁷*ibid.*, pp. 335-336.

⁵⁸*ibid.*, p. 335. By 1908 Wallace, still adhering to his belief in the importance of female selection of the improvement of the race, had expanded the emphasis he put upon the importance of a general "sympathetic and ethical" education for the improvement of human character (see Alfred Russel Wallace, "Evolution and Character", Fortnightly Review, 83 (1908), pp. 23-24).

Women Physicians as Eugenacists

From the very beginning of its foundation in 1907 the Eugenics Education Society, formally committed to having female members, had a high number of women amongst their rank and file. It has been estimated that by 1914 the proportion was nearly 50%.⁵⁹ Eugenic politicization of reproduction invited women's involvement.⁶⁰ Lucy Bland has pointed out that the discourse of eugenics provided women with a double function. Women constituted objects of reproductive intervention. Women were the mothers of the future generations, giving them the critically important biological duty of procreation. At the same time women also constituted subjects in the politics of eugenics. They had the role of educating the coming generations, as well as the working class, into eugenical practices.⁶¹ Women eugenicist explored the notion that it was upon women that the welfare of the race depended.⁶² When women, Edith Ellis said in 1912,

once realize that to produce a perfect citizen
is the most distinguished of all work, and when
they also face the fact that to bring a human

⁵⁹Jones, "Women and Eugenics", p. 482, citing Ian Brown, "Who Were the Eugenacists? A Study of Formation of an Early Twentieth Century Pressure Group", History of Education, 17 (1988), pp. 295-307. For discussions of eugenics and feminism see *idem*; Soloway, Demography, pp. 127ff; and Bland, Banishing the Beast, pp. 229ff.

⁶⁰Jones, "Women and Eugenics", p. 485.

⁶¹Bland, Banishing the Beast, p. 230.

⁶²Mary Scharlieb, Womanhood and Race-Regeneration (London: Cassell & Company, 1912), p. 7.

being into the world, so handicapped by disease or mental instability as to be a danger to his fellows is to commit the most pitiable of all errors, we shall be approaching the time when artificial morals will give place to a real morality.⁶³

The physicians Mary Scharlieb (1845-1930)⁶⁴ and Elizabeth Sloan Chesser (1878-?)⁶⁵ adopted this eugenical position, dedicating themselves to writing educational texts upon health and hygiene in which they examined hereditary factors and environmental factors in terms of promoting hygienic education. Thus Chesser explained in 1914 that human beings were the products of two conditions - nature and nurture:

A healthy heredity is the birthright of generations to come, and eugenics is the

⁶³Mrs Havelock Ellis, "The Maternal in Domestic and Political Life" (1912), in The New Horizon in Love and Life (London: A. & C. Black, 1921), pp. 124-125. Edith and Havelock Ellis' decision not to have children was taken upon the grounds of Edith's faulty inheritance: her mental "health and ancestry" left something to be desired (see Brandon, New Women and the Old Men, p. 106).

⁶⁴Scharlieb married a barrister who practised in India in 1865. In 1875 she entered the medical school in Madras. After graduating three years later and receiving the Licence of Medicine, Surgery and Midwifery, she continued her medical studies at the London School of Medicine for Women, from which she graduated in 1882 with an MB. In 1887 she became the first woman to graduate with an MD from the University of London. She subsequently lectured at the LSMW. Scharlieb was a member of the National Council for Combating Venereal Disease, a subsidiary organization of the Eugenics Education Society (see Jones, "Women and Eugenics", pp. 484-485).

⁶⁵Chesser graduated from Queen Margaret College, Glasgow in 1901. She gave up her medical practice the following year upon her marriage until after her children were grown up. She continued, however, to write medical books throughout. Chesser was also a member of the National Council for Combating Venereal Disease (see Jones, "Women and Eugenics", p. 486).

science concerned with good breeding or race culture, by encouraging healthy and worthy parenthood and the better care of offspring, and by preventing as far as possible the propagation of 'unfit' human beings. The idea that girls and boys should be trained in hygiene and physiology is already accepted. Young people should be taught how to preserve health and to prevent disease.⁶⁶

In carving out their space as the disseminator of knowledge about healthy living, both women continued to engage with the theory of the detrimental effects for female health of too much and continuous mental strain. Both of them favoured the education of women, but differed in their specific views on the issue. Mary Scharlieb, of the first generation of female physicians, emphasised adolescence as a critical time in the establishment of girls' physical and mental peculiarities in which "unwise over-stimulation" of the body and mind could have a "triad of malignant influences".⁶⁷ She believed that particularly women's college education should allow

for a certain elasticity in academic arrangements which would permit those who are temporarily or permanently less vigorous having a chance of taking more time and working less strenuously without necessarily giving up their careers.⁶⁸

⁶⁶Elizabeth Chessser, Physiology and Hygiene for Girls' Schools and Colleges (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1914), p. 87.

⁶⁷Mary Scharlieb, "Adolescent Girlhood under Modern Conditions, with Special Reference to Motherhood", Eugenics Review, 1 (1909-10), p. 177.

⁶⁸*ibid.*, p. 179.

Moreover, she believed that the effects of modern education upon "individual and national health" should be studied carefully. It should be established whether contemporary educated women were as strong, well-developed and competent as women of the previous generation; whether the modern intellectual training interfered with the pre-natal life of their offspring; what the average age of marriage of educated women was and the number of healthy children; and whether education was leading to the "evolution of a more efficient race" or not.⁶⁹

Elizabeth Chesser, belonging to the second generation of women students, though, had fewer doubts about the beneficent effects of education. She believed that educational pressure at school could produce a "severe tax upon [a girl's] health", a condition a mother should watch over.⁷⁰ Yet for her

no girl's education should stop when she leaves school, whether she requires her own living afterwards or not. She should go in for 'higher' education, which will fit her to be useful, healthy and efficient.⁷¹

Although higher education had been blamed for overstraining girls mentally and physically, they were generally healthier and happier, Chesser maintained, when they had to work steadily, rather than when they were

⁶⁹*ibid.*, pp. 182-183.

⁷⁰Elizabeth Sloan Chesser, Perfect Health for Women and Children (London: Methuen & Co., 1912), pp. 95-97.

⁷¹*ibid.*, p. 43.

lacking occupation. It was this which was a common cause of ill-health. Many doors had been opened to women, and the "net result" was good. She acknowledged that education wrongly directed might produce overstrain and induce permanent damage. It was up to women to utilize the new freedoms in the best possible manner. Women should be educated, including in practical knowledge of the domestic arts, trained "as workers", and thus gain economic independence. From a eugenic point of view this was positive, Chesser explained. Women would thus cease being of the "frivolous, clinging, parasitic type" and rather become comrades of their husbands.⁷² Moreover,

[t]he great need is for women to be healthy and efficient. The nation requires for its full life a high standard mental, physical and moral worth from the women and girls who are to hand their qualities to posterity. A sense of social responsibility is growing amongst English women, and the number of healthy and intelligent women is increasing.⁷³

After all, the standard of a nation depended on the quality of its womanhood.⁷⁴

Women as Mothers of the Race: Feminist Theories at the Turn of the Century

Concepts of race became an integral part of much of the feminist theories of the turn of the century. In

⁷²*ibid.*, pp. 43-45.

⁷³*ibid.*, p. 44.

⁷⁴*ibid.*

arguments for changes in women's social position, the implications for the race became a central aspect. Notions of women as "mothers of the race" became pervasive in feminist thought. Following the contemporary usage, there existed an implicit slippage in the meaning of race. It could denominate the human race or different population groups which were seen to share certain biological hereditary mental and physical characteristics. The concept of "mothers of the race," as Lucy Bland has pointed out, implicitly carried simultaneously various different meanings:

women were the mothers, the creators indeed, of humankind (their evolutionary role), but they were also the mothers of a 'superior' race, be it white, Anglo-Saxon or British (their national role).⁷⁵

Part and parcel of the expanding importance of concepts of race within feminist beliefs was the increasing integration of evolutionary theory into the analyses of the relationship between female nature and social organisation.

Feminist ideas about gendered human nature for some time had incorporated aspects of Darwinian theory, often in combination with Lamarckian ideas, mainly to argue that female mental powers could be progressively developed, as I have shown in chapter three. For many feminists of the following generation, however, concepts of evolution and women's role within it, constituted the

⁷⁵Bland, Banishing the Beast, p. 231.

central framework of their theories. The underlying assumption of Darwinian theory that man and woman were not static unities, but developing and evolving with changing conditions continued to be explored to argue for reforms in women's social position. Thus the South-African-born writer Olive Schreiner (1855-1920), a one-time member of the Men and Women's Club, argued that

Nothing has been more fluid, nothing more continually changing with the development of the race, than sex manifestations ... A wonderful history of change is opened to us when we look back, every material and external social surrounding affecting sex manifestation and sex condition reacting on all else.⁷⁶

⁷⁶Olive Schreiner, "Introduction to the Life of Mary Wollstonecraft and the Rights of Woman", History Workshop Journal, 37 (1994), p. 191. Schreiner was born on the border of Basutoland in South Africa and grew up on an isolated farm. She was educated mainly by her mother at home. She worked as a governess from 1870 until 1881. At that point she left for Britain, to train as a nurse, an endeavour which she abandoned because of her asthma. She had brought with her the manuscript of The Story of an African Farm, which upon its publication in 1883 under a pseudonym brought her to fame in Britain. Schreiner knew Herbert Spencer and became close friends with Karl Pearson, Havelock Ellis and Eleanor Marx (for these relationships see Brandon, The New Women and the Old Men), as well as Edward Carpenter. In 1889 she returned to South Africa where she married Samuel Cronwright in 1894, a year after which she gave birth to her only child, which died the following day, and became involved in the politics of her country of birth, which led her to being sent to Britain in 1899 to plead the Boers' cause to the government. In 1908 she became one of the founding members of the Women's Enfranchisement League of the Cape Colony and was appointed its vice-president. She returned to live in Britain in 1913, returning to South Africa in 1920 soon after which she died. For two interpretations of Schreiner's evolutionary feminism see Rosaleen Love, "Darwinism and Feminism: 'The Woman Question' in the Life and Work of Olive Schreiner and Charlotte Perkins Gilman", in David Oldroyd and Ian Langham (eds), The Wider Domain of Evolutionary Thought (Dordrecht: R. Reidel, 1983), pp. 113-131; and Carolyn Burdett, "A Difficult Vindication: Olive Schreiner's Wollstonecraft Introduction", History Workshop Journal, 37 (1994), pp.

This realization was still used to argue that to refuse rights to women on the grounds of the specificity of the female mind and body was indefensible because it was based on the assumption that contemporary female nature was the only possible one. That "women have become what they are" by their circumstances, Henrietta Müller, a member of the Men and Women's Club argued, meant that "our present system of society is wrong and unjust, inasmuch as it still places one sex in a dependent and cramped position."⁷⁷

Feminists at the turn of the century explicitly engaged with notions of the implications for the race of changes in the position of the female sex. They, however, often put forward ideas that such changes would further evolutionary advancement, rather than imperil it. Men and women were tied up together in evolution. Without female development there was no progress for men. The "first primitive human males and females", Schreiner thus declared in a book which became known to many as the

177-187.

⁷⁷*ibid.*, p. 65. [Henrietta Müller], "What Woman is Fitted For", Westminster Review, 71 (1887), pp. 64-75. The article was published anonymously. I am grateful to Lucy Bland for letting me know that Müller was its author. Müller (d. 1906) was born in Chile, as daughter of a German businessman. In 1873 she became one of the early students of Girton College where she studied Classics. She was an active suffragist and between 1885 and 1888 she was a member of the Men and Women's Club. From 1888 onwards she edited the *Women's Penny Paper* (see Bland, Banishing the Beast, pp. 164-165).

"Bible of the women's movement",⁷⁸ could only develop into

the Sapphos, Aristotles, and Shelleys of a more expanded civilisation, if side by side, and line by line, male and female forms have expanded together; if, as the convolutions of his brain increased in complexity, so increased the convolutions in hers; if, as her forehead grew higher, so developed his; and that if the long upward march of the future is ever to be accomplished by the race, male and female must march side by side, acting and reacting on each other through inheritance; or progress is impossible.⁷⁹

The Female Body: Moulded by Subjection

Whereas earlier on feminists had put their efforts into arguing that the female constitution was able to stand the strains of higher education and professional lives, now ideas were formulated that women were indeed constitutionally "handicapped". This was not the reflection of woman's original organization, however. In the age "which Darwin had enlightened", Henrietta Müller said, it had become clear that the physical incapacities of the female sex were the result of circumstances: "the frame adapting itself through ages of inheritance and natural selection to the surroundings

⁷⁸Jane Graves, "Preface", in Olive Schreiner, Woman and Labour, first published 1911 (London: Virago, 1978), p. 9.

⁷⁹Schreiner, Woman and Labour, p. 131. Schreiner had already put down most of the argument she elaborated on in Woman and Labour in "The Woman Question", published in The Cosmopolitan in New York in 1899 (reprinted in Carol Barash (ed.), An Olive Schreiner Reader: Writings on Women and South Africa (London: Pandora, 1987), pp. 63-100).

that formed its destiny".⁸⁰ Whereas the hereditary impact of the female live environment some time had informed feminist views about female mental powers, now it was also applied to the female body.

Müller believed that the female "handicap" would at first constitute an obstacle for women to "go out into the world of savage competition". However, the removal of social and legal disabilities was "demanded by justice and is a step in the direction of progress". The injustices women had endured in the past would "haunt them and their descendants for many generations". But they had to be faced to embrace the new order, a social organization in which present female nature would give way under the influence of the new environment to the mentally and physically "truly womanly woman who develops her power that is within her freely and without reference to artificial ideals".⁸¹

Feminist ideas hence embraced the perception that male dominance had biologically moulded women and that a change of women's social position would in turn have an impact on the bodies, as well as minds, of future women. The gendered body would not disappear, but reappear in a different form. The most comprehensive argument that social arrangements had become inscribed in the female

⁸⁰Müller, "What Woman", p. 64.

⁸¹*ibid.*, p. 70-71.

body, was formulated by "Ellis Ethelmer".⁸² Ethelmer argued that menstruation was an

acquired and inherited bodily result of ages of corporal subjugation and ill treatment by her quondam brute companion and master; an ailment peculiar to herself, and which indubitably has the characteristics of being the outcome of persistent and inconsiderate excess and wrong usage by the male portion of the race. Owing to this treatment the periodic 'spontaneous ovulation', which is in other female animals a painless and inconspicuous operation of Nature, has in woman developed an attending wearisome and sometimes hazardous infirmity.⁸³

From the early days of the "creature's race" until the present day, males had the habit of "obtruding their visits upon the female at all times and seasons; even forcibly, and without any regard to her own repugnance, her bodily immaturity or unfitness, or her already immanent maternity". Abortion of the foetus had been the

⁸²Ellis Ethelmer was a pseudonym either for Elizabeth Wolstoneholme Elmy (1834?-1913), or her husband Ben Elmy (1836-1906), or for both of them. Historians have made differing attributions of the pseudonym. Sheila Jeffreys believes Elizabeth Wolstoneholme was behind the pseudonym (see The Spinster and Her Enemies: Feminism and Sexuality, 1880-1930 (London and New York: Pandora, 1985), p. 29); Susan Kingsley Kent attributes the writings to both (see Sex and Suffrage in Britain, 1860-1914 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 110); Sandra Stanley Holton also thinks that there is good reason to believe that the writings were collaborative efforts (see "Free Love and Victorian Feminism: the Divers Matrimonials of Elizabeth Wolstoneholme and Ben Elmy", Victorian Studies, 37 (1994), p. 219); Lucy Bland cites evidence which might suggest that the pseudonym was Ben Elmy's although she argues that his wife could have collaborated with him (see Bland, Banishing the Beast, pp. 339-340).

⁸³Ellis Ethelmer, Life to Woman (Congleton: Wolstoneholme Elmy, 1896), p. 8. The argument had already been made in 1893 in the poem Woman Free (Congleton: Women's Emancipation Union, 1893).

frequent result of this. Male excess had led to the female generative organs being "perpetually subject to a stimulative or irritative influence from the male element." Thus a periodical abortive preparation for pregnancy (the building up of the placenta with "the necessary effusion of the blood resultant from the incited but useless uterine contestation") had "become so developed a habitude in the feminine economy as to be now generally hereditary, and to exhibit itself even in the female who has never experienced any masculine approach".⁸⁴

Woman's position in society was thus not the result of natural law, but rather due to man's sexual transgression. The "slavery of the mothers of the race", woman's placement in a condition of "mental ignorance and physical incapacity" had been instated to achieve "her non-resistance to inordinate masculine passion".⁸⁵ Menstruation, the acquired weakness, constituted indeed a "periodic waste of physical substance and psychic force".⁸⁶ It was a habit which had hitherto "persistently sequestered and carried off from woman's organism the blood force that should have gone to the brain." The disappearance of the "waste" of menstruation supposed an increase of brain power.⁸⁷ This view of a female

⁸⁴*ibid.*, pp. 51-54.

⁸⁵*ibid.*, p. 9.

⁸⁶*ibid.*, p. 64.

⁸⁷Ethelmer, Woman Free, p. 123.

hereditary pathological condition became a not uncommon concept which accepted the view of the physically debilitating and mentally limiting implications of the menstrual cycle. But rather than seeing it as a crucial factor determining women's social position, in this view it was its product.⁸⁸

Women's subjection had not only been to the detriment of women themselves. It had also been to the detriment of the race. The disappearance of menstruation through female volition and male restraint, would result "not alone in fuller LIFE TO WOMAN, but in vigour which will be the still more liberal heritage of her daughters and her sons."⁸⁹ Man had not used the same forethought with woman as he had with domestic animals; with those the male and female line had been given equal prominence, with himself he had only paid attention to male inheritance:

in the instance of man only has the male potency been deemed sufficient to ensure that was requisite in the ensuing propagation, and continual shortcomings in the engendered result fail to convince him of his error. So the race at large drags on an existence crippled indeed

⁸⁸See, for example, Frances Swiney, The Awakening of Women: Or Women's Part in Evolution, first published 1898 (London: William Reeves, 1908), pp. 26-27; Mona Caird, "A Defence of the 'Wild Women'", in The Morality of Marriage and Other Essays on the Status and Destiny of Woman (London: George Redway, 1897), p. 175; and Edward Carpenter, "Woman in Freedom", in Love's Coming-of-Age: A Series of Papers on the Relations of the Sexes (London: George Allen & Company, 1913), p. 184 for the acceptance of this view on menstruation.

⁸⁹Ethelmer, Life to Woman, pp. 56-57, 64. See also Woman Free, p. 23: "The mother - and the race - robuster health shall share".

in comparison to that which would be resultant from the union of higher natures.⁹⁰

With the disappearance of menstruation and the difference of sex in social status and the law, Ethelmer argued,

woman's specific intellect and talent, which is already rendering splendid fruit for the slight tillage received, will no more be sequestered and repressed; but will be encouraged and welcomed alike with that of man, to its rightful place and application and influence in the learned halls of our Universities, the active employments of our life, the chambers of the Senate, the council of the world...⁹¹

For some other feminists, however, things were more complicated than that. For Henrietta Müller there was an issue of how "our ideal, the free development of womanhood, and through it a larger development for all humanity" could take place without "injury to women and the race of too great a competition upon their undeveloped systems", as well as without the "sacrifice of those feminine qualities which are good to keep".⁹²

Rejecting the proposition of dividing women into two groups: domestic mothers and working single women,⁹³ she argued for the development of a new ideal of marriage, which based upon the notions of freedom and equality, rather than rights and duties, could make it possible for women to develop their emotional and intellectual sides.

⁹⁰*ibid.*, p. 64.

⁹¹*ibid.*, p. 66.

⁹²Müller, "What Woman", p. 73.

⁹³*ibid.*

As for the injury to the female body, the strain upon it would be reduced through that a large family would be regarded as a "bitter wrong, above all to the woman, but also to the children and society." The burden of incessant child-bearing not only stood in the way of the joint advancement of men and women, but when less common, it would also be seen as "the cruellest and most degrading bondage under which a human being can suffer".⁹⁴

But not only this. Changes in the "social arrangement" of capitalist competition would facilitate (middle-class) women's entry into a reformed labour market. At the same time, Müller argued, implicitly distinguishing between working and middle-class women, the presence of the latter in the world of paid employment would further these changes. Once "from the shoulders of the labourer, be he in what so-called 'class' he may, the burden of excessive labour for inadequate payment", was removed, the "present crazy race for wealth" would be slackened by the elimination of the fear of poverty. In such changed conditions,

⁹⁴*ibid.*, p. 74. Feminists very often argued against the dedication of women to the role of "incessant" child-bearing. See, for example, Schreiner, Women and Labour, p. 63. Mona Caird, for example, believed that "[t]he dedication of a whole sex to this exhausting function has gone far to destroy the healthy balance of the racial constitution, physical, mental, and moral." (See Caird, "Defence", p. 172). For Caird, indeed, danger to women's health did not arise from mental overwork, but rather from its combination with "having children year after year" and superintending them and the home. But rather than avoiding mental toil, it was this "treadmill" of childbearing and domestic toil that demanded modification (*ibid.*, pp. 185-187; see also Caird, "The Morality of Marriage" (1890), in Morality, pp. 135-136.)

women, married or single, might then safely take their part in the outside work of the then more brotherly and gentler world, which their presence would tend always to make *more* brotherly and *more* gentle.⁹⁵

Müller was not the only one to believe that middle-class female entry into the "fierce battle for existence" in itself could pose problems for women and the race. The novelist, anti-vivisectionist, and feminist Mona Caird (1855-1932) thought that this change was not so much a desirable thing as an "unhappy necessity". This necessity arose out of many women's need to earn a living, as much as out of all women's need and right to independence. Yet, to live the life men were living now, to add to "that great body of struggling men another body of struggling women", was perilous to themselves and the race.⁹⁶

Unlike Müller, Caird did not believe that middle-class women's participation in the labour market would induce transformation. The simple entry of women into capitalist competition could not bring about the "hopes which we may hold for the future of the race."⁹⁷ Yet those were the opportunities which were on offer, and "by what right does society refuse their demand?" Men with their

⁹⁵*ibid.*, p. 74

⁹⁶Caird, "Defence", p. 164. Caird was associated with the Men and Women's Club, but never really became a member of it. Her main contribution to feminist ideas focused on the institution of marriage, intersecting liberalism with evolutionary theory (For a discussion see Bland, Banishing the Beast, pp. 126ff).

⁹⁷Caird, "Defence", p. 164.

lifestyle were "imperiling the well-being of the race" day by day and "on what principle are women only to be restrained?"⁹⁸

Caird put universal equal rights above the duties to the race and she believed that the "rights of the existing race are at least as great as those of the coming one"⁹⁹, but notions of the effects of these rights upon the race had become part of her conceptual framework.

The Mothers of the Race: Social Change and Evolutionary Advancement

Changes in women's social position, according to many feminists, would have a transformative effect upon society as such. As Müller maintained that the entry of middle-class women into the labour market would reform capitalism, other feminists argued that women's emancipation would bring about wider social reforms. Frances Swiney¹⁰⁰ thus lay down the "problems of pauperism, of over-population, of degeneracy, of congested cities, of uncultivated lands, of unemployed,

⁹⁸*ibid.*, p. 166.

⁹⁹*ibid.*, p. 183.

¹⁰⁰ Swiney (1847- ?) who was born in India, started to write in the 1890s. She was a theosophist, the vice-president of the Cheltenham Food Reform and Health Association and a member of the Women's Branch of the Malthusian League. She was a friend of Elizabeth Wolstoneholme Elmy.

of submerged tenths, of class antagonism, of the strife between labour and capital, of the war of sects, of sex antagonism and sex-competition"¹⁰¹ at the feet of the supplantation of matriarchy by patriarchy.¹⁰²

According to Swiney this had displaced women from their original position at the centre of the race, made it develop along militaristic lines of aggression and conquest, and imposed upon women the function of bearing a too high number of frequently diseased children, instead of a low number of "healthy and vigorous" ones.¹⁰³ Contemporary social concerns were the revenge of nature upon the infringements of her laws.¹⁰⁴ Swiney was confident that the future history of Western civilisation entailed the "reinstatement of women to their primal supremacy."¹⁰⁵

For Olive Schreiner future change did not entail a reinstatement of woman to a natural position of superiority. For her, British society had reached a stage where both the necessity for muscular force and the pugilistic arts were loosing their primary necessity. And

¹⁰¹Frances Swiney, "Women among the Nations. Part II", Westminster Review, 164 (1905), p. 542. Swiney argued that Burmese society had progressed along "natural lines", i.e. women were the "equal, if not superior" to men, and thus faced none of these problems.

¹⁰²Frances Swiney, "Women Among the Nations. Part I", Westminster Review, 164 (1905), p. 417.

¹⁰³*ibid.*, pp. 410, 417, 415-416.

¹⁰⁴*ibid.*, p. 419.

¹⁰⁵Swiney, "Women... Part II", p. 512.

she thought that this heralded the inversion of woman's place in the scale of social values.

Woman, according to Schreiner, because she had for age-long years been reduced to servitude and physical subjection and because of her experience as child-bearer and protector of infancy, had been endowed with the secondary sexual characteristic of an additional strength of social instinct, human sympathy and instinctive comprehension. This supposed that in the future, woman as woman, by right of how she differed from the male, would have to play an all-important role in the activity of the race. And, as she saw it, this increased female importance would suppose that the dominant activity of this future race would not be mainly destructive, but conservative, focusing not on "inter-destruction of part by part", but on the building up and developing of humanity.¹⁰⁶

Women's emancipation was a crucial factor for the advancement of the race. For Swiney this argument was based on the notion that females, including those of the human species, were superior to males. Swiney based her claims on the female-centred theory of evolution of the American palaeontologist and sociologist Lester Ward, and believed the mother cell to be the origin of all organic life.¹⁰⁷ According to Swiney, women's subjection had started only after an age of matriarchy, which

¹⁰⁶Schreiner, Woman and Labour, pp. 214-215.

¹⁰⁷Bland, Banishing the Beast, p. 220.

disappeared when man wrested control from woman.¹⁰⁸

The emancipation of women, "intellectually, socially and politically", for Swiney was the key to the future advancement, not only of women, but of the race as well.¹⁰⁹ Men had hitherto been the selectors, but women showed greater caution in selecting their husbands - "manly and intellectual qualities having greater weight than outward adornments". And it was brain-power, as well as adaptability, rather than mere physical strength, which ensured the survival of the fittest among the human races:

The big-limbed, abnormally powerful negro-races are subordinate to the smaller intellectual European; the stalwart, athletic North-American Indian, and gigantic Patagonian, are disappearing before the ever encroaching stride of the white man; for survival, withers away as Western civilisation encircles his retreat. The artistic, imitative Japanese keeps pace with his white brother through sheer force of intellectual power, while the handsome, beautifully proportioned South-Sea Islander dies out.¹¹⁰

Survival depended on the "best adapted for the work of the future", the development of a higher phase of physical and mental evolution.¹¹¹ To this achievement of a higher phase of evolution women's emancipation was crucial. Woman was the higher evolutionary principle, it was she who would counteract the "vice, disease, insanity

¹⁰⁸*ibid.*, p. 217.

¹⁰⁹Swiney, Awakening, p. 78.

¹¹⁰*ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

¹¹¹*ibid.*, p. 39.

and misery" that was ever increasing.¹¹² She had to render man

moral; to work for temperance, soberness and chastity; to counteract and modify through a true knowledge of the functions of womanhood, the abnormal and destructive tendencies of the masculine nature.¹¹³

True civilisation had been retarded by not adding to women's superior moral attributes a "more extended knowledge of all subjects relating to social and political life", since moral superiority, to be effective had to be united with superior wisdom.¹¹⁴

All the same, woman's evolutionary mission was moral, not intellectual. To date, women were far below men in intellectual ability. They would have to make "tremendous headway" before "as a body" they would be on par with the male. But even then, they would not be likely to dwarf men in their specific mental achievements: the female sex did not tend to such extreme variety as the male sex did,¹¹⁵ and their physiology did not tend to strenuous spasmodic bursts of activity.¹¹⁶

¹¹²*ibid.*, p. 45.

¹¹³*ibid.*, p. 72.

¹¹⁴*ibid.*, p. 69.

¹¹⁵For the idea of greater male variability see Stephanie Shields, "The Variability Hypothesis: The History of a Biological Model of Sex Differences in Intelligence", *Signs*, 7 (1982), pp. 769-797.

¹¹⁶Swiney, *Awakening*, p. 69. Swiney here was referring to Patrick Geddes and J. Arthur Thomson's model of katabolic and anabolic energy laid out in *The Evolution of Sex* (1889).

Although these sex differences gave women but a small place in the history of genius, for Swiney they also constituted the basis of her argument that degeneracy was working upon the male body, rather than the female one. Experience in Britain and the United States had shown that

the highly educated girl is well up the average physical health, and performs her special feminine functions in the production of children as much up to standard as those of ignorant mothers.¹¹⁷

It was rather the male organism, "with its greater variability, activity, and exhaustive energy" to which the constant stimulus of the "cram-system" at schools was detrimental. It was this which was responsible for the physical degeneration of civilised man.¹¹⁸

But whether women were capable of the same intellectual achievements of men or not, to be able to exercise their "lever toward the regeneration of mankind", they had to combine the moral and intellectual attributes in equal proportion,¹¹⁹ and be freed from the "man-made and unnatural" disabilities, which had "limited and defined her capacity of service for humanity" and "irretrievably hampered her in the race for life."¹²⁰

Swiney's argument that the female constituted an

¹¹⁷Swiney, Awakening, p. 37.

¹¹⁸*ibid.*, p. 38.

¹¹⁹*ibid.*, p. 69.

¹²⁰Frances Swiney, Woman and Natural Law, first published 1908 (London: C.W. Daniel, 1912), p. 44.

evolutionary superior organism to the male, was not widely accepted. More frequent were views that women's role within the progress of the race did not derive so much from their superiority, but rather from being the biological mothers of the race. Few stated this more clearly than Olive Schreiner. With each generation, she pointed out, the entire race passed through "the body of its womanhood as through a mould" and

the intellectual capacity, the physical vigour, the emotional depth, forms ... an untranscendable circle, circumscribing with each generation the limits of expansion of the human race.¹²¹

Schreiner believed that the demand of the women's movement for access to "professional, political, and highly skilled labour"¹²² was an evolutionary necessity. According to her, the "modern conditions of our modern civilisation", i.e. industrialisation, were creating an ever increasing group of "sex-parasites", i.e. women who did not labour in any way. They were sinking into a state of "more or less absolute dependence on their sexual function alone".¹²³ The result of "sex-parasitism" was the "decay in vitality and intelligence of the female". Schreiner ignored the presence of working-class women in the labour market, and believed that the mechanizing process would ultimately lead to the disappearance of the

¹²¹Schreiner, Woman and Labour, pp. 129-130.

¹²²*ibid.*, p. 123.

¹²³*ibid.*, pp. 114-115.

"ancient forms of female, domestic, physical labour of even the women of the poorest classes", and sex-parasitism might soon threaten the entire female sex.¹²⁴ The exclusive dependence of woman on the sexual function, however, led to "all the other elements of human nature in her becoming atrophied and arrested through lack of exercise", and when her evolution was arrested, "the evolution of the whole race will also be arrested in her person." Thus, if woman was to be saved from "degeneration and parasitism, and the body of humanity from arrest", she had to receive a training which would cultivate all her mental and physical faculties and the freedom to employ them.¹²⁵ Hence her motto for the women's movement: "Give us labour and training which fits for labour! We demand this not for ourselves alone, but for the race."¹²⁶

Conclusion

At the turn of the century the question of middle-class women's position in society became part of the discourse of eugenics. Within this discourse the question of women's rights was submerged in preoccupations with the maintenance and improvement of the biological quality of the race. The individual, particularly if female,

¹²⁴*ibid.*, p. 78.

¹²⁵*ibid.*, pp. 153-154.

¹²⁶*ibid.*, p. 33.

existed for the race. Women's all important role was to reproduce. Theories of inheritance which rejected the concept of the transmission of acquired traits supposed that the passing on of a feeble constitution, acquired through mental overstrain, was no longer at the centre of approaches to female college education. In the alignment of fitness with middle-class women, higher education was rather perceived as diverting these women from their reproductive duties. The question of mental overstrain, though, reappeared in concerns that working during pregnancy could harm the foetus. However, eugenic beliefs did not inevitably lead to opposition to the women's movement. Alfred Russel Wallace, for instance, put forward ideas in which female emancipation was the key to racial improvement.

Eugenics proved an appealing discourse for a number of women. It centralized women's importance as the procreators of the future generation. It also created an important role for women educators into eugenic lifestyles. But it was not only women who were directly involved in the eugenics movement who engaged with eugenical concepts. Notions of race and women's role within racial advancement permeated feminist theory. It became located in the discourse of racial fitness. Women campaigners developed ideas in which women's emancipation was not detrimental, but advantageous for evolutionary developments. Some women, like Mona Caird, put the rights of women as individuals before their duties to future

generations. Many others, however, related changes in women's social position to the impact it would have upon the race. They put forward claims to changes in women's position not only in the name of women, but also of the race. Women's emancipation, for these feminists, had become an evolutionary necessity.

PART TWO: GERMANY

CHAPTER FIVE

THE *BILDUNGSBÜRGERTUM* AND THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT:

APPROACHES TO FEMALE EDUCATION UNTIL c. 1888

Reforms in women's education and to achieve middle-class women's access to a greater range of paid occupations was the dominant concern of the German bourgeois women's movement from its very emergence, and until the early twentieth century it remained a much more central preoccupation than suffrage. Reforms in education were sought as preparation for paid employment for middle-class women. But this was not the only concern of the women's movement. Feminists did not only approach education in terms of women's *Ausbildung* (education as preparation for employment), but also in terms of their *Bildung* (self-formation through education).

Bildung was a central concept in the eighteenth century *bürgerliche*, or civic,¹ movement for cultural, moral and political reform. It was viewed as the means of liberation from mental subjection and as leading to the establishment of a "community of like-minded people in a free, enlightened and progressive cultural sphere."²

¹There is no exact equivalent for "*bürgerlich*" in English. As well as "civic", it means "bourgeois".

²James J. Sheehan, "Wie bürgerlich war der deutsche Liberalismus?", in Dieter Langewiesche (ed.), Liberalismus im 19. Jahrhundert: Deutschland im europäischen Vergleich (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck &

Bildung was to lead to mental and moral maturity in people; it was the premise of participation in the *bürgerliche* society.³ This eighteenth-century concept of *bürgerliche Verbesserung* (improvement) was integrated into nineteenth-century liberal ideology.⁴

Although *Bürgerlichkeit* (as liberalism) was understood as a universalistic system, in effect it displayed gender and class boundaries.⁵ At the end of the eighteenth century voices were heard which demanded the extension of the civil rights which men were claiming for themselves to women, as did Theodor von Hippel, a civil servant from Königsberg, in an anonymously published tract Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Weiber (On the Civil Advancement of Women) in 1792. However, commonly civic political theory was based upon notions of natural differences between the sexes. Not everyone had the necessary requirements to be a *Bürger*, or citizen. It was only those who were economically independent, and who also had the necessary "natural" qualifications. A citizen, Immanuel Kant was to declare in 1793, was "not a

Ruprecht, 1988), p. 32.

³Margaret Kraul, "Bildung und Bürgerlichkeit", in Jürgen Kocka (ed.), Bürgertum in 19. Jahrhundert: Deutschland in europäischen Vergleich, Vol. 3 (München: dtv, 1988), p. 45.

⁴Sheehan, "Liberalismus", p. 36.

⁵*ibid.*, p. 38.

child, not a woman", but an adult male.⁶ As in Britain the public and the private were gendered through the construction of natural aptitudes and capacities of men and women. Women's sphere was within the home and the family.⁷

Following notions of the different spheres, rights and duties, men and women were educated in different ways. *Bildung* as a universal concept was aimed against all privileges indefensible by enlightened reason, and was supposed to be extended to include all people. From the early nineteenth century onwards, however, it was increasingly associated with a classical secondary and university education, which restricted access to men with the necessary economic means. The acquisition of *Bildung* was also gendered in that middle-class girls went to separate secondary schools, which were not conceived of,

⁶Immanuel Kant, Von Verhältniss der Theorie zur Praxis im Staatsrecht (1793), cited in Ute Frevert, "Bürgerliche Meisterdenker und das Geschlechterverhältnis: Konzepte, Erfahrungen, Visionen an der Wende vom 18. zum 19. Jahrhundert", in *idem* (ed.), Bürgerinnen und Bürger (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988), p. 22.

⁷For discussions of ideas about gender at the turn of the nineteenth century see Claudia Honegger, Die Ordnung der Geschlechter: Die Wissenschaften vom Menschen und das Weib (Frankfurt a.M.: Campus, 1991) for a French/German study; and Frevert, "Bürgerliche Meisterdenker", pp. 17-48; *idem*, Frauen-Geschichte zwischen bürgerlicher Verbesserung und neuer Weiblichkeit (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1986), Chapter 1, pp. 15-62; Karin Hausen, "Family and Role-Division: The Polarisation of Sexual Stereotypes in the Nineteenth-Century - An Aspect of the Dissociation of Work and Family Life", in Richard J. Evans and W.R. Lee (eds), The German Family: Essays of the Social History of the Family in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Germany (London: Croom Helm, 1981), pp. 51-83.

nor accepted, as preparation for university education. Their education ended at the latest between the ages of 15 and 16.⁸ Different types of education for middle-class men and women established and reinforced boundaries between their different spheres of occupation.⁹

Bildung became a means for the *Bildungsbürgertum*, or educated middle-class, of drawing boundaries against the aristocracy, as well as the "*Ungebildeten*", the uneducated lower classes.¹⁰ In the first half of the nineteenth century, the *Bildungsbürgertum* constituted the most important section of the middle-class.¹¹ Unlike

⁸For a detailed study of the developments of female education throughout the nineteenth century see James C. Albisetti, Schooling German Girls and Women: Secondary and Higher Education in the Nineteenth Century (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

⁹For a study of the implications of the importance of *Bildung* as a factor of class identity for the role of women of educated middle-class and the aims of the women's movement see Ulrich Engelhardt, "'...geistige Fesseln'? Zur normativen Plazierung der Frau als 'Kulturträgerin' in der Bürgerlichen Gesellschaft während der Frühzeit der deutschen Frauenbewegung", in M. Rainer Lepsius (ed.), Bildungsbürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert, Vol. 3 Lebensführung und ständische Vergesellschaftung (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1992), pp. 113-175.

¹⁰Hans-Ulrich Wehler, "Deutsches Bildungsbürgertum in vergleichender Perspektive - Elemente eines 'Sonderwegs'?", in Jürgen Kocka (ed.), Bildungsbürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert, Vol. 4, Politischer Einfluß und gesellschaftliche Formation (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1989), pp. 231, 222-223.

¹¹David Blackbourn, "The German Bourgeoisie: An Introduction", in David Blackbourn and Richard J. Evans (eds), The German Bourgeoisie: Essays on the Social History of the German Middle Class from the late Eighteenth to the Early Twentieth Century (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 6. For a history of the elite of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, the university professors, see Fritz K. Ringer, The Decline of the German Mandarins: The German Academic Community (Cambridge, MA: Harvard

Britain, where business people were the central constituent of the middle-class, in Prussia and other German states the early nineteenth century saw the growth of an "educated middle-class" whose male members went to the *Gymnasien* (secondary schools with emphasis on classics) and to the universities. Many of them were recruited into the expanding state bureaucracies. Throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, the expansion of the bourgeoisie was fuelled by the increasing numbers of state officials, such as administrators, judges, doctors in state employment, school teachers and university professors.¹² The *Bildungsbürgertum* not only comprised state officials, but also liberal professionals, artists and writers.

Members of the *Bildungsbürgertum* came from a comparatively heterogeneous social background. Many were not "born" as *Bildungsbürger*, but came from the petty bourgeoisie. What united the members of this section of the bourgeoisie was not so much social background, but

University Press, 1969).

¹²Blackbourn, "German Bourgeoisie", pp. 4-5. For discussions of the relationship between the medical profession and the state see Claudia Huerkamp, Der Aufstieg der Ärzte im 19. Jahrhundert (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985); Paul Weindling, "Bourgeois Values, Doctors and the State: The Professionalization of Medicine in Germany 1848-1933", in Blackbourn and Evans (ed.), German Bourgeoisie, pp. 198-223. For a discussion of the legal profession see Michael John, "Between Estate and Profession: Lawyers and the Development of the Legal Profession in Nineteenth-Century Germany", in *ibid.*, pp. 162-197.

their secondary and tertiary education.¹³ In Britain, there did not really exist an equivalent to the *Bildungsbürgertum*. Even when towards the end of the nineteenth century tertiary education became more important and increasing numbers of professionals appeared, "professionals" referred to specific jobs, more than to a common education and self-identity.¹⁴

The bourgeoisie is historically associated with liberalism. The weakness of political liberalism in Germany has raised a historical controversy regarding its implications for the bourgeoisie. It has been argued that the failure of liberalism was the consequence of the weakness of the bourgeoisie as social class. Germany is said to never have witnessed a successful "bourgeois revolution"; the process of "embourgeoisement" remained deficient. Thus Hans-Ulrich Wehler in 1973 maintained that in the Second Empire the bourgeoisie was feudalized - it submitted to the authoritarian state and took on board aristocratic values.¹⁵ Yet this view has undergone revision in more recent years, and the conflation of the political (liberalism) with the social and economic

¹³Jürgen Kocka, "Bildungsbürgertum - Gesellschaftliche Formation oder Historikerkonstrukt?", in *idem* (ed.), Bildungsbürgertum, p. 19.

¹⁴*ibid.*, p. 16.

¹⁵Hans-Ulrich Wehler, The German Empire, 1871-1918, trans. Kim Traynor (Leamington Spa: Berg Publishers, 1985), originally Das deutsche Kaiserreich, 1871-1918 (1973).

(bourgeoisie) has been called into question.¹⁶ Although the bourgeoisie became increasingly politically disunited and ineffective, it nonetheless had distinctive values and protected its status.¹⁷

The industrial take-off during the 1850s and 1860s, followed by the rapid "second industrial revolution" from the 1890s onwards, led to the increase of a commercial and industrial bourgeoisie, or the *Besitzbürgertum*.¹⁸ The division between those two sections of the bourgeoisie was not absolute. Although there exists evidence that a preference for marriage with their own kind in both sectors led often to the formation of interrelated "clans" among the *Besitzbürgertum* and *Bildungsbürgertum*, intermarriages between the two sectors were not uncommon, more so towards the end of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century.¹⁹ Within the bourgeoisie appreciation of culture, in terms of artistic, musical,

¹⁶Geoff Eley, "Liberalism, Europe, and the Bourgeoisie", in Blackburn and Evans (eds), German Bourgeoisie, p. 296.

¹⁷Blackburn, "German Bourgeoisie", pp. 1-45; Eley, "Liberalism", in *idem.*, pp. 293-317.

¹⁸Blackburn, "German Bourgeoisie", pp. 6-7.

¹⁹*ibid.*, p. 8; Kocka, "Bildungsbürgertum" p. 13. Kocka argues that the *Bildungsbürgertum* was a less cohesive social class than the propertied bourgeoisie. Kocka does, however, acknowledge that in international comparison, there existed "despite all limitations something like a distinct, and moreover influential *Bildungsbürgertum* in Germany in a markedly greater extent than in Western, and also Eastern Europe." (See *ibid.*, p. 15).

and intellectual works, was a common denominator.²⁰ A distinction can be drawn between the *Bildungsbürgertum* and the *Besitzbürgertum*, in that in the former the lifestyle of the male members was based upon the "possession" and utilization of *Bildung*, whereas in the latter it was based upon property. However, towards the end of the nineteenth century, these lines became less clear, since more and more male members of the propertied middle-class received higher education. Moreover, with the simultaneous increasing specialization of education in the light of professionalization, *Bildung* in itself became more fragmented into specialized education.²¹

The renown of German scholarship and culture, however, continued to be associated with the *Bildungsbürgertum*. Demands of reforms in middle-class women's education sparked off intense debates in which contesting notions about the claims to universality of the concept of *Bildung* and its gendered application were negotiated, as well as the respective roles of middle-class men and women in the production and reproduction of cultural goods and values.

Reforming Female Education

In 1865 the *Allgemeiner Deutscher Frauenverein* (ADF - General German Women's Association) was founded in

²⁰Blackbourn, "German Bourgeoisie", p. 9.

²¹Kocka, "Bildungsbürgertum", pp. 13-14.

Leipzig by Louise Otto (1819-1895), Auguste Schmidt (1833-1902), and others. The association established as its task working for an expanded *Bildung* of the female sex and the removal of obstacles to female employment.²² The foundation of the association indicated the re-appearance of demands for female educational reforms and occupational opportunities which had flared up around the revolution of 1848. Thus Louise Otto had declared in 1847 that to seek continuous mental improvement (*sich geistig immer mehr vervollkommen*) was the responsibility of every human being. The aim of *Bildung* was that interest in higher things should be kept awake in women and they should be encouraged to independent thinking and personal self-improvement.²³ *Bildung*, it was asserted, made human beings "independent and free" and turned them "into a living member of human society".²⁴ The women's associations which emerged during this period were closely connected to the liberal-democratic movement and

²²Elisabeth Boedecker (ed.), 25 Jahre Frauenstudium in Deutschland: Verzeichnis der Doktorarbeiten von Frauen, 1908-1933, Vol. 1 (Hannover: C. Trute, 1939), p. xxiv.

²³Louise Otto, "Die Theilnahme der weiblichen Welt am Staatsleben", quoted in Margrit Twellmann, Die Deutsche Frauenbewegung in Spiegel repräsentativer Frauenzeitschriften: Ihre Anfänge und erste Entwicklung, 1843-1889, Vol. 1 (Meisenheim am Glan: Anton Hain, 1972), p. 7.

²⁴Frauenzeitung, 3 (1851), p. 309; quoted in *ibid.*, p. 9.

fell victim to the ensuing political repression.²⁵

In the wake of the Law of Association of 1851 which forbade women to participate in political associations and gatherings,²⁶ unlike the earlier associations, the *Allgemeiner Deutscher Frauenverein* retained a distance from political parties and associations. It established educational reforms and to create occupational opportunities for women as its main aim.²⁷ Although the ADF incorporated issues of working-class women's education and occupations, its main preoccupation lay with middle-class women,²⁸ and it is upon their education that I will focus.

Education was to remain one of the key issues of the women's movement over the next decades. As in Britain, in Germany the figure of the unmarried middle-class women became an important driving force in educational reforms. The "Woman Question" (*Frauenfrage*) thus was frequently couched in terms of the "Social Question" (*soziale Frage*), the question of the social (and political) consequences of industrialization. Not only *Bildung*, with

²⁵On the women's movement during the 1840s see Frevert, *Frauen-Geschichte*, pp. 72-80, 113; Twellmann, *Deutsche Frauenbewegung*, pp. 1-25; Ann Taylor Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood in Germany, 1800-1914* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991), esp. pp. 58ff.

²⁶See Richard Evans, *The Feminist Movement in Germany, 1894-1933* (London and Beverly Hills: Sage, 1976), p. 25.

²⁷Frevert, *Frauen-Geschichte*, p. 113; Albisetti, *Schooling*, p. 96.

²⁸Frevert, *Frauen-Geschichte*, p. 114.

all its connotations of inner development, but also *Ausbildung* (education as preparation for employment) was a concern of the newly arising women's organizations. In the 1860s much of the stress on educational reforms derived from its use for the preparation to paid employment.²⁹

A year after the foundation of the ADF, Adolf Lette established the Lette-Association in Berlin with the aim of opening up new occupational possibilities for unmarried middle-class women, through petitioning the *Reichstag*, establishing an employment bureau and a vocational school. The Lette Association was soon followed by the setting up of similar associations in other cities. Unlike the ADF, the Lette-Verein initially explicitly dissociated itself from claims for the political emancipation of women, i.e. suffrage.³⁰ After the death of its founder, however, the association moved during the 1870s towards a position where suffrage was not rejected on principle any longer, but its demand was considered to be premature.³¹

The late 1860s and early 1870s also witnessed the

²⁹Ute Gerhard, Unerhört: Die Geschichte der deutschen Frauenbewegung (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1990), pp. 81-82.

³⁰Adolf Lette, "Denkschrift über die Eröffnung neuer und die Verbesserung bisheriger Erwerbsquellen für das weibliche Geschlecht" (1865), in Anne Schlüter (ed.), Quellen und Dokumente zur Geschichte der gewerblichen Berufsbildung von Mädchen (Köln: Bohlau, 1987), pp. 89-92.

³¹Frevert, Frauen-Geschichte, pp. 115-116; Gerhard, Unerhört, pp. 83-88; Albisetti, Schooling, pp. 101-103.

establishment of institutions which offered further training to young women not directed at a practical career training, such as the Victoria Lyceum founded in 1869 in Berlin under the protectorate of Empress Victoria of Prussia.³² The Lyceum provided lecture courses to women by university professors. Similar institutions soon followed in other cities.³³ The Victoria Lyceum in 1888 introduced more rigorous study programmes designed to train women teachers.³⁴

Although since its foundation the ADF had discussed the admission of women into the medical profession and the academic training of female teachers, it was not until the late 1880s that there was a concerted effort by the women's organizations to achieve women's access to the universities. Until 1900 the *Abitur*, the final examination of the *Gymnasien*, was a pre-requisite for entry to university.³⁵ The possibility of women's access to higher education was thus contingent upon reforms in girls' secondary education.

³²Victoria's influence and support of reforming women's education was to be cut short through the early death of Emperor Friedrich III in 1888 (see Elke Frederiksen, "Einleitung: Zum Problem der Frauenfrage um die Jahrhundertwende", in *idem.* (ed.), Die Frauenfrage in Deutschland, 1865-1915: Texte und Dokumente (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1981), p. 24).

³³Albisetti, Schooling, pp. 117ff.

³⁴*ibid.*, p. 306.

³⁵In 1900 school-leavers of *Realgymnasien*, and *Oberrealschulen* (that is schools of the same duration as the *Gymnasien*, but with less emphasis on the classical subjects) were admitted to university (see Huerkamp, Aufstieg der Ärzte, p. 85).

The nineteenth century witnessed a continuous expansion of private and public higher schools for middle-class girls, which in 1867 led one British observer to comment on the educational advantages of German girls over British ones.³⁶ These schools, although often financially supported by municipalities and sometimes state governments, were much less state-regulated than boys' schools. If supervised, this was done by those officials in charge of elementary education, rather than those who oversaw boys' schools, and there existed no mandatory curriculum.³⁷ The only possibility which women had during the later part of the century for further institutional education was to attend classes or seminars to be trained as teachers for elementary girls' schools and the lower grades of secondary schools.³⁸

The early 1870s saw a concerted effort, mainly advocated by male directors and teachers of girls' schools in a conference in Weimar in 1872, to improve the

³⁶"Female Education in Germany", Cornhill Magazine (1876); quoted in Albisetti, Schooling, p. 23.

³⁷*ibid.*

³⁸*ibid.*, p. 24. See pp. 58ff for the expansion of women teachers. For a study of the development of the teaching profession and the debates surrounding it see Maria W. Blochmann, "Laß dich gelüsten nach der Männer Weisheit und Bildung": Frauenbildung als Emanzipationsgelüste, 1800-1918 (Pfaffenweiler: Centaurus, 1990). Men generally dominated in the staff of public schools, whereas women mostly outnumbered men in private schools (see James C. Albisetti, "Could Separate Be Equal? Helene Lange and Women's Education in Imperial Germany", History of Education Quarterly (1982), p. 302).

standard of those schools and increase state regulation through the introduction of qualifications that had to be met to reach secondary status. These schools, like boys' schools were then supposed to be placed under the supervision of provincial school boards.³⁹ The intention expressed at the Weimar conference was to guide girls' education along the lines of "the harmonious development of the intellect, the spirit, and the will in a religious national sense on a realist aesthetic-basis." The aim of increased intellectual training was to fit women better for their vocation: "It is desirable to make possible for the woman an education equivalent in its breadth of interest (but not in its subject matter or length) to the intellectual cultivation of man, so that the German husband will not be bored at his hearth or crippled in his devotion to higher interests through the spiritual shortsightedness and narrow-mindedness of his wife."⁴⁰ The requests of the Weimar Congress were adapted over the next few years in Baden, Hessen, Saxony and Württemberg. Prussia waited until 1883 until it commenced to grant secondary status to some schools.⁴¹

In the mid-1890s the first courses were established to prepare women for the *Abitur*. In 1887 a group of women had sent petitions to the Prussian Ministry of Education and the House of Deputies. This was the inauguration of a

³⁹Albisetti, Schooling, pp. 104-108.

⁴⁰quoted in *ibid.*, p. 109.

⁴¹Albisetti, "Separate", p. 303.

long row of petitions to the various state governments by several women's organizations.⁴² In the 1887 petition it was requested that women teachers should play a greater role in the upper grades of girls' schools and that the state should establish institutions which would provide the necessary training for women teachers. The petition was accompanied by a pamphlet, the so-called "Yellow Brochure", written by Helene Lange. In it, Lange criticised the resolution of the Weimar congress that girls should be educated for the benefit of their future husbands, rather than for their own development.⁴³ Whereas she was willing to leave the teaching of science and grammar to men (due to her perception of men's greater capacity for abstraction), she argued that women should teach the more ethically oriented subjects to girls including in the higher grades.⁴⁴ Belief in female difference made Lange support a continuing separation of male and female education.⁴⁵

Lange's approach to female education was to be modified after a trip to England in 1888, where she met Emily Davies. She was convinced that women should pursue the same education as men, since this was the only one

⁴²See Albisetti, Schooling, pp. 160ff.

⁴³Helene Lange, Die höhere Mädchenschule und ihre Bestimmung: Begleitschrift zu einer Petition an das preußische Unterrichtsministerium und das preußische Abgeordneten Haus (Berlin: L.Oehmigke, 1887).

⁴⁴Albisetti, "Separate", p. 305.

⁴⁵Frevert, Frauen-Geschichte, p. 122.

which would be recognised as "profound and sufficient enough" by men. Yet this view conflicted with her criticism of secondary male education as over-emphasising the study of classics. Thus she advocated a similar education from the age of fourteen only for those girls' who intended to continue their studies.⁴⁶

Lange ultimately in 1889 helped to establish *Realcourses* for women, soon after the *Frauenverein Reform* (Women's Reform Association), founded in 1888 and supporting co-education, had petitioned the state governments to open the *Abitur* to women.⁴⁷ In 1893 Lange's courses were converted into courses which prepared for the *Abitur*. The right to take it was granted two years later in 1895 by the Prussian government. The following year six women passed it. They were still not allowed to enter university, but only to audit classes.⁴⁸ Once the Prussian government opened its universities to male graduates from *Realgymnasien* and *Oberrealschulen* in 1900,⁴⁹ Lange's school returned to the *Realcourses*. In 1893, the *Frauenverein Reform*, which now was called the *Verein Frauenbildung-Frauenstudium* (Association for Women's Education), had opened a classical school in

⁴⁶Albisetti, "Separate", p. 307.

⁴⁷*ibid.*, p. 308.

⁴⁸*ibid.*, p. 309; see also Mechthild Engel, "Helene Lange: Gegen Gemütsmastkur - für geistige Kost", in Ilse Brehmer (ed.), Mütterlichkeit als Profession? Lebensläufe deutscher Pädagoginnen in der ersten Hälfte diese Jahrhunderts (Pfaffenweiler: Centaurus, 1990), pp. 27-28.

⁴⁹See footnote 35.

Karlsruhe in Baden, with its first class graduating in 1899. In Leipzig the ADF opened classical courses in 1894, and in Stuttgart a girls' *Gymnasium* was opened in 1898.⁵⁰

Female Higher Education and the Women's Movement

The *Abitur* as a pre-requisite for entry to university was an obstacles to women's entry to the universities. But during the late 1860s and 1870s there appeared a steady trickle of mainly foreign women auditors at German universities, at the same time as some German woman students went abroad to seek higher education, particularly to Zurich. In Zurich full matriculation had been opened to women in 1867. This followed the application by Nadezhda Suslova, who had been studying natural sciences since 1865, to be admitted to graduate as a doctor, a request which she was eventually granted.⁵¹ After this, a steady number of Russian women students, who had been excluded from attending university lectures by statute in Russia in

⁵⁰Albisetti, "Separate". pp. 309-310.

⁵¹Thomas Neville Bonner, To the Ends of the Earth: Women's Search for Education in Medicine (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 33-37. For a history of women students at Zurich see Hanny Rohner, Die ersten 30 Jahre des medizinischen Frauenstudiums an der Universität Zürich, 1867 - 1897 (Zürich: Juris, 1972).

1863,⁵² went to Zurich. In 1873, the Russian government issued a decree in which it ordered the more than a hundred Russian female students at the University of Zurich to leave if they did not want to face permanent exile. Accused of immoral sexual behaviour and of putting aside scholarly pursuits for political activism, it was claimed that these women were "lured" by the likes of Bakunin, who was among the many political exiles residing in the city, "into their net."⁵³ Almost all the Russian women students left Zurich. A few transferred to the University of Bern and completed their studies there.⁵⁴

German women also went abroad to study. Henriette Hirschfeld (later Hirschfeld-Tiburtius) in 1867 had entered the Women's Medical College in Pennsylvania. After her graduation as a dentist two years later, she returned to Berlin, where she opened a successful practice treating women and children. Soon afterwards, Emilie Lehmus and Fransiska Tiburtius (Hirschfeld-Tiburtius' sister in law) matriculated in Zurich to study medicine, graduating in 1875 and 1876 respectively. Some other women followed Hirschfeld-Tiburtius' example and studied dentistry in the United States.⁵⁵

⁵²For female students in Russia see Ruth A. Dudgeon, "The Forgotten Minority: Women Students in Imperial Russia, 1872-1917", Russian History/Histoire Russe, 9 (1982), pp. 1-26.

⁵³Bonner, To the Ends of the World, p. 46.

⁵⁴Albisetti, Schooling, pp. 127-128.

⁵⁵*ibid.*, pp. 123-125.

Under the Prussian commercial code of 1869 medicine had been declared a trade and physicians were recognised as tradespersons. Only the title of "physician" remained protected. It had been introduced as a result of pressure by physicians to decrease state control of the medical occupation.⁵⁶ The code, which was extended to the whole *Reich* after unification, made it possible for women who had received a medical education at a Swiss university to practice medicine in Germany, before they had access to the German certification examination to become a licensed physician.⁵⁷ It was not only medicine, however, which attracted German women students. In the 1880s some earned doctorates in German Literature and History from the Swiss universities.⁵⁸

Women students had also appeared on the scene in Germany in the later 1860s and 1870s. Thus such universities as Munich, Heidelberg and Leipzig, admitted handfuls of mainly foreign female auditors. A few were granted degrees, as was the case with the Russian Johanna Ereanova who received a law degree from Leipzig in 1873; Sofia Kovalevskia, who was later to hold a chair of

⁵⁶Huerkamp, Aufstieg der Ärzte, p. 306.

⁵⁷James C. Albisetti, "The Fight for Female Physicians in Imperial Germany", Central European History, 15 (1982), p. 104. For a history of German women's entry into the medical profession see also Bonner's comparative study, To the Ends of the World.

⁵⁸*ibid.*, p. 137. For Ricarda Huch's recollection of her studies of history which she began in 1887 in Zürich see Ricarda Huch, Frühling in der Schweiz, first published 1938 (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1982).

mathematics at the University of Stockholm, was granted a doctorate *in absentia* by the University of Göttingen in 1874, and the Austrian Susanna Rubinstein who received a doctorate of philosophy from Leipzig in the same year.⁵⁹ However, the University of Leipzig, which had been the most receptive to female students, was informed by the Saxon minister of education in 1879 that decisions concerning admissions were henceforth down to his ministry, and to not individual professors as it had been before. As a result no more women entered the university for a decade.⁶⁰

It was at the time of the establishment of new women's associations during the late 1880s that access to the universities became an important aim of the women's movement. The establishment of the *Frauenverein Reform* in 1888 by Hedwig Kettler (later it became the *Verein Frauenbildung-Frauenstudium*) and the *Verein Frauenwohl* (Women's Welfare Association), founded by Minna Cauer in 1889, was the beginning of the split of the bourgeois women's movement into what contemporaries already called the "moderate" and "radical" wings. The two wings pursued different policies with regard to educational reform, but also differed in other ways. Education constituted and remained the main focus of the moderate section of the movement (which included the ADF). The radicals, however, took also an interest in legal rights issues and the

⁵⁹Albisetti, *Schooling*, p. 123.

⁶⁰*ibid.*, pp. 128-129.

abolition of police control of prostitutes (which led to the formation of an Abolitionist Association). Attitudes to the issue of suffrage differed as well. Although the moderates also wanted female suffrage, they saw it as a goal of the future; the radicals saw it as an immediate aim, and in 1902 a suffrage society was established. Another radical organization arose with the establishment of the *Bund für Mutterschutz* (Association for the Protection of Mothers) in 1905.⁶¹

In 1894 an umbrella organization for the different women's association, the *Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine* (BDF - Federation of German Women's Associations) was created, with Auguste Schmidt, a co-founder of the *Allgemeiner Deutscher Frauenverein*, as its first president. A year after its foundation, the Federation contained 65 member associations with around 50,000 members.⁶² Radicals, unlike the moderate majority, favoured co-operation with the social democratic women's movement. The Federation, dominated by the ADF, decided to exclude working-class women's associations. Clara Zetkin, the leader of the social-democratic women's movement, took this as an opportunity to voice her views on the necessity of a "clean separation" between the

⁶¹Thomas Nipperdey, Deutsche Geschichte, 1866-1918, Vol. 1, Arbeitswelt und Bürgergeist (München: C.H.Beck, 1990), pp. 82-85; see also Evans, Feminist Movement, chapter two.

⁶²Evans, Feminist Movement, p. 37.

proletarian and bourgeois women's movements.⁶³ Radical impatience with failing to convert the BDF to points of its programme led to the formation of another organisation the *Verband Fortschrittlicher Frauenvereine* (Union of Progressive Women's Associations) in 1899. The foundation of this new union did not constitute a complete split from the BDF; many associations which joined the Union of Progressive Women's Association remained members of the BDF at the same time. In the same year, 1899, the presidency of the moderate Auguste Schmidt was taken over by the radical Marie Stritt, who was to remain in office until 1910, when the post went to the moderate Gertrud Bäumer.⁶⁴

Among the various associations the envisaged educational reforms differed. The *Allgemeiner Deutscher Frauenverein* favoured separate girls' schools and focused its attention on the opening of the medical faculties and the academic qualification of women teachers. The *Frauenverein Reform* and the *Verein Frauenwohl* wanted girls' secondary education to be the same as boys, if not to set up co-educational schools; the admission of women to the *Abitur* and the opening of all the university

⁶³Elke Frederiksen, "Einleitung: Zum Problem der Frauenfrage um die Jahrhundertswende", in *idem* (ed.), Die Frauenfrage in Deutschland: Texte und Dokumente (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1981), pp. 18-19. For a history of socialist feminism see Jean H. Quataert, Reluctant Feminists in German Social Democracy, 1885-1917 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).

⁶⁴Evans, Feminist Movement, pp. 47-53.

faculties.⁶⁵ In 1888 the newly founded *Frauenverein Reform* petitioned all the ministries of education to admit women to the *Abitur* and all university faculties. Two years later it sent the same petition to all the state-parliaments, and a petition to the *Reichstag* to admit women to medical education and the profession. The *Verein Frauenwohl* in 1891 petitioned the Prussian parliament to admit women to the medical and philosophical faculties. The ADF, for its part, in 1888 petitioned the 12 state-governments which had universities, and the following year the *Reichstag* to admit women to the medical profession, as well as to provide academic training for female teachers. In 1891 the ADF repeated its petition to the *Reichstag* to admit women to medical education, this time accompanied by over 50,000 signatures. Both the ADF and the *Frauenverein Reform* continued to petition the state governments in the early 1890s.⁶⁶

1891 became the year in which higher education for women was debated for the first time by the *Reichstag*, followed by further debates in 1896 and 1898.⁶⁷ In 1896 the Prussian minister of education ruled that women could

⁶⁵Margaret Kraul, "Höhere Mädchenschulen", in Christa Berg (ed.), Handbuch der deutschen Bildungsgeschichte, Vol. 4, 1870-1918: Von der Reichsgründung bis zum Ende des Ersten Weltkriegs (München: C.H. Beck, 1991), p. 283.

⁶⁶See the detailed chronology in Boedeker, 25 Frauenstudium.

⁶⁷Kristine von Soden, "Zur Geschichte des Frauenstudiums", in *idem* and Gaby Zipfel (eds), 70 Jahre Frauenstudium: Frauen in der Wissenschaft (Köln: Pöhl-Rugenstein, 1979), pp. 13-16.

audit lectures if they had the prior consent of the professor.⁶⁸ Three years later in 1899, the *Bundesrat* decreed that women could be licensed as physicians.⁶⁹ In 1900 the Baden government opened matriculation to women on the same terms as to men. Bavaria followed suit in 1903, Württemberg in 1904, and Saxony in 1906. Prussia followed this example in 1908.⁷⁰

The Women's Movement and Women's *Bildung*, c. 1865 - c. 1880

The early years of the rise of the organized women's movement on a national level were those of the unification of German states and the creation of the second German Empire. The 1860s and 1870s constituted a peak of liberalism, which left its marks upon the women's movement. Notions of equal rights for the sexes were rife during the period. These notions did not necessarily take on the form of a generally applicable principle. Thus Adolf Lette, who was to found the Lette Association the following year, declared in 1865 that the denial of equal

⁶⁸Albisetti, "Fight", p. 117.

⁶⁹*ibid.*, pp. 115-120.

⁷⁰*ibid.*, p. 120; Albisetti, Schooling, pp. 242-249. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine the terms of the parliamentary debates and the developments within the ministries of education. For studies which consider these see *ibid.* and Konrad H. Jarausch, Students, Society, and Politics in Imperial Germany: The Rise of Academic Illiberalism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).

rights to paid occupations for middle-class women was an injustice, which revealed a low state of civilization. Civilization, for Lette, stood for "moral freedom, humanness and justice".⁷¹ Yet Lette vehemently opposed any notion of equal political rights. This, he said, was not in accordance with Nature and woman's vocation. Nature, according to Lette, also set boundaries to the occupations which men and women could and should undertake.⁷²

Some feminists, however, developed arguments which rejected the idea of a natural separation of capabilities and activities. Among the most uncompromising defenders of equal rights for women, including suffrage, was Hedwig Dohm (1831-1919).⁷³ Dohm, also a novelist, started to write feminist tracts from the early 1870s onwards. She was familiar with the developments of the British women's movement, and frequently referred to John Stuart Mill to back up her arguments. Through emancipation, Dohm thought, women would become human beings (*Menschwerdung*

⁷¹Lette, "Denkschrift", p. 90.

⁷²*ibid.*, p. 89.

⁷³Dohm, who was born in Berlin as the daughter of Echanan Cohen Schlesinger, a tobacco manufacturer, and Wilhelmine Henriette Schlesinger (born Jülich) was educated at a higher girls' school. After an unhappy upbringing, in 1853 she married the chief editor of the satirical magazine Kladderadatsch, Ernst Dohm, with whom she had five children (see Gerhard, Unerhört, p. 104). The protagonist of Dohm's semi-autobiographic novel, Schicksale einer Seele, was to declare that during 1848, she had become a "democrat", a "blood-red revolutionary" (see Hedwig Dohm, Schicksale einer Seele, first published 1899 (München: Frauenoffensive, 1988), p. 68).

des Weibes), and cease their effacement as individualities.⁷⁴ In 1874 she published a book on the Academic Emancipation of Woman, in which she demanded that universities should be opened to women:

Thus it should be in the name of justice, thus we women want it to be by virtue of our right to individual freedom and our human dignity.⁷⁵

Dohm was exceptional in her (often ironic) rejections of constructions of a specific female nature which gave women a specific sphere of action. Much of her writing focused on counterpositioning conflicting theories about female nature and exposing the contradictions and inconsistencies within them. In terms of female mental powers, it was custom, not Nature, according to Dohm, which was keeping women from intellectual achievement and provided them with a deficient education.⁷⁶ As Virginia Woolf was later to ask of Shakespeare in A Room of One's Own (1929), Dohm posed the question of what would have happened to Friedrich Schiller if he had come to the world as "Friederike".⁷⁷ What, she asked, would have become of little Friederike if she had gone to Marbach's girls' school? Nothing outstanding, of this Dohm was sure.⁷⁸

⁷⁴Hedwig Dohm, Die wissenschaftliche Emancipation der Frau (Berlin: Wedekind & Schwieger, 1874), p. 29.

⁷⁵*ibid.*, p. 47.

⁷⁶*ibid.*, 29ff.

⁷⁷Friederike is the female form of Friedrich.

⁷⁸Dohm, wissenschaftliche, p. 42.

She asserted that the difference between man and woman, in terms of sexual functions were only physical, and subordinate. The human soul was above sex.⁷⁹ Knowledge and cognition were the highest good of humankind, which should not be kept from women. Moreover, women *should* study, because every human being had a right to the individual freedom to follow their inclinations. Freedom in the choice of occupation was the indispensable ingredient for individual happiness. But even Dohm did not entirely dismiss notions of gender difference. Referring to Thomas Buckle, she explained that another reason why women should study was that "in all probability", woman possessed a different "mental organization", which would bring about new knowledge and new directions of thought in scholarship.⁸⁰

Dohm was not the only one who believed that the present manifestation of the female mind was not necessarily a reflection of their natural disposition. Jenny Hirsch (1806-1902) who translated Mill's Subjection of Women (1869) into German and from 1870 to 1882 edited the Frauen-Anwalt, argued that until women could develop unhampered, it could not be known to what extent physical differences determined mental differences between the sexes, or how much the present female mind was the

⁷⁹*ibid.*, p. 168.

⁸⁰*ibid.*, pp. 178-180.

product of age-old human made custom and education.⁸¹

Yet, feminists' arguments for equal rights were not necessarily opposed to notions of gender difference. Louise Otto, later Otto-Peters, who had been active in the revolution of 1848 and was one of the founders of the *Allgemeiner Deutscher Frauenverein*, thus linked equal rights for women with notions of specifically female duties to society. Otto in 1844 replied to an article published in a Saxon journal which asked whether women had the right to participate in matters of the State, that they had not only the right, but also the duty to do so.⁸² The ideal of humanity, she was to assert in 1866 in a tract on the right of women to paid occupation, could only be achieved through equal rights for both sexes on all accounts where Nature, who had created man and woman differently, had not set boundaries.⁸³

Her claim was not for women to dismiss their femininity. Rather, she demanded the space and freedom that woman could develop her specificity to the full.⁸⁴ New occupations had to be opened to middle-class women, and they had to be educated in conceiving of the

⁸¹Jenny Hirsch, "Rezension zu Hermann Klencke: Das Weib als Gattin", *Der Frauen-Anwalt*, 4 (1873/74), p. 71; quoted in Herrad U. Bussemer, "Bürgerliche Frauenbewegung und männliches Bildungsbürgertum, 1860-1880), in Frevert (ed.), *Bürgerinnen*, p. 193.

⁸²Louise Otto, *Das Recht der Frau auf Erwerb: Blicke auf das Frauenleben der Gegenwart* (Hamburg: Hoffman und Campe, 1866), p. 76.

⁸³*ibid.*, pp. 61-62.

⁸⁴*ibid.*, p. 62.

importance of economic independence.⁸⁵ If middle-class women would gain economic independence, marriages would only be made on the basis of love, not of economic calculation. This was important because the well-being and morality of the nation depended, she argued, on the morality of the family. Thus those who formed families had a responsibility to the nation.⁸⁶ Moreover, if women were allowed to know a wider world than the home, they would not obstruct their husbands, when those subordinated small domestic interests to those of the fatherland and their occupations.⁸⁷

It was not only within the family that the beneficial effects of women's independence would be felt. Changing the status of women was not aimed at imitating men and entering in competition with them. Rather, its aim was that men and women would work together within marriage, and next to each other outside it. Thus, the eternal feminine would achieve its full weight and lead humanity to perfection. Only when the dominion of man's superior physical strength and reason, as well as his sharper logic was complemented by woman's more profound emotional life, her receptivity for all things great and beautiful, as well as her imagination and direction towards the ideal, this could be achieved.⁸⁸ Individual

⁸⁵*ibid.*, p. 36.

⁸⁶*ibid.*, p. 35.

⁸⁷*ibid.*, p. 61.

⁸⁸*ibid.*, pp. 62-63.

freedom was not to be put at the service of the individual, but rather at the service of the community.⁸⁹

The emphasis of equal rights for women not for their personal benefit, but for the benefit of society was an important theme in feminist arguments. According to Henriette Goldschmidt, the law of modern cultural development was the right to individual freedom.⁹⁰ Goldschmidt (1825-1920), who emerged as a democrat from the revolution of 1848, had moved in 1853 to Russia with her husband. Six years after their return in 1859, she participated in the foundation of the *Allgemeiner Deutscher Frauenverein*. A supporter of German unification,⁹¹ Goldschmidt believed that women were now awaking to the fact that they had to fulfil social duties.⁹²

Women's development was conditioned by the culture of the time and of the *Volk*.⁹³ Modern times were characterised by the individual finding themselves, as much as the century was reflected in individuals. Whereas

⁸⁹*ibid.*, pp. 75-76.

⁹⁰Henriette Goldschmidt, Die Frauenfrage eine Culturfrage (Leipzig: Oskar Leiner, 1870), p. 4.

⁹¹Ann Taylor Allen has pointed out that Goldschmidt, despite her support for unification, criticised warfare as a way of community building, and argued that women had a special role in overcoming hatred and replacing it by love, and thus building community (see Feminism, pp. 100-101).

⁹²Goldschmidt, Frauenfrage, p. 11.

⁹³*ibid.*, p. 10.

in previous times woman's natural vocation had been for marriage, now the demand for women's emancipation encompassed the demand for freedom of the heart, a freedom which left the choice of spouse up to the individual, as well as the choice not to get married. Marriage should be a union made of love, determined only by one's own free choice. In accordance with the understanding that culture affected character, changes in marriage patterns were not only due to external transformations, but also to internal ones, according to Goldschmidt. The Woman Question was hence a cultural question.⁹⁴

Contemporary cultural developments were not without flaws, however. The freedom of the heart which had been granted to women, Goldschmidt argued, had not led to the "original right" of every being: the right for existence. On the contrary it was a freedom which threatened existence. It also had not led to the "original right of a human personality: the possibility of asserting oneself morally and to be morally and mentally active." Freedom gave the possibility of a moral existence, rather than actually embodying it. Yet freedom awoke desire, and women's freedom of the heart had woken desires which longed for fulfilment: for the development of a "real personality" (*Persönlichkeit*), heart and mind had to work together, permeate each other, and reach oneness.⁹⁵

⁹⁴*ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

⁹⁵*ibid.*, p. 7.

For Goldschmidt, one of the greatest defects of modern culture was the perception that idleness was a proper state of being for women. As in Britain, middle-class female idleness was problematized by the women's movement, in that it excluded women from the bourgeois ethic of work. Whereas in the British women's movement, this idleness figured as an enforced state of being, Goldschmidt focused upon female choice and agency on this issue. Idleness was opposed to the formation of character through the use of the mind. Emancipation, the right for self-determination, she argued, did not include the right to idleness and to expect to be given the material means for this by a husband. Rather, the freedom that was aimed at was one which produced "healthy conditions". Human society was an organism in which the healthy parts had to overcome the diseased ones.⁹⁶ For this, women had to work so that the female mind (*Geist*) could be in unison with the emotional life:

Work, which has proved to be so beneficial in all aspects of life, and the education of the mind, which in our men heightens the emotional life, is supposed to be more dangerous for women than the development of the imaginative and pleasurable life? I think that even the most extensive academic education, even a one-sided occupational education puts us on the ground of duty and forms (*bildet*) the human being. Because the entire human being has to work, not the imagination nor the heart on their own. In work the heart and the mind come to permeation, to harmony, to oneness. Work produces character, and also women should have character...⁹⁷

⁹⁶*ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

⁹⁷*ibid.*, p. 11.

In the British women's movement during this period it was perceived that modern times stood in opposition to a previous state in which the law of the strongest had reigned supreme, and thus the laws and social regulations which had been imposed on women, maintained them in a state of subjection, and denied them individual freedom, had to be abolished. This would lead to a society of free individuals, male and female alike, both at freedom to affect society with their specificity. Many members of the German women's movement, for their part, put the emphasis on women's own responsibility to form their characters and thus to change society.⁹⁸ The granting of individual freedom (which for many did not include suffrage) was the first step for women to take up their social duties.

These social duties were often linked to notions of female specificity. As the school-director Marie Stoephasius explained, society was an organism. The importance of the individual derived from the fact that every human being, according to his or her natural specificity, had a particular meaning for the entirety. Every human being had a part to play in the advancement

⁹⁸For arguments that women were responsible for their position in society see, for instance, Marie Stoephasius, Ziele und Wege der weiblichen Erziehung nach der Anforderung der Gegenwart: Ein Beitrag zur Lösung der Frauenfrage (Berlin: Wiegandt & Grieben, 1868), p. 35; Minna Pinoff, Die Erziehung der Frau zur Arbeit: Ein Beitrag zur Lösung der sozialen Frage der Frauen (Breslau: Maruschke und Berendt, 1867).

and well-being of humanity.⁹⁹ For Stoephasius, who argued for the increased importance of female teachers in the higher girls' schools, as well the continued education of women after they left these schools,¹⁰⁰ women's importance derived from the importance of the family for society. They had to become aware that "the state arises from the family, why, that the state is a great family". Within this women were indispensable members, and their recognition as such depended upon the moral and mental strength of their activity. Women thus had to leave the state of moral and mental debasement and achieve real *Bildung*, and relieve the present social and domestic mischief.¹⁰¹ Stoephasius did not reject notions of the "greater mental and physical endowment" of men, which justified their dominion of the world. But she demanded that "they let us do and learn that for which we possess the strength and aptitude".¹⁰²

In nineteenth-century Britain notions of middle-class female moral superiority were pervasive and competed with a traditional conception of linking morality to reason and thus to the male body. Female education was often perceived by feminists as necessary to enhance women's moral influence. In Germany, however, the concept of morality remained closely linked to the

⁹⁹Stoephasius, *Ziele und Wege*, p. 7.

¹⁰⁰*ibid.*, pp. 4, 24-25, 70.

¹⁰¹*ibid.*, pp. 8-9, 47-48, 58-59.

¹⁰²*ibid.*, p. 73.

concept of *Bildung*. Feminist arguments thus turned around the achievement of morality in women through *Bildung*, rather than perceiving it as something which was already present.

Women's role in the advancement of the morality of the nation not only consisted in being moral members of society themselves. They also had a special role in making morality to a common good of the community through their roles as mothers, that is, educators of the coming generations. Women had a task of advancing the nation. Since *Bildung* was the means to develop morality, women's education had to be improved.¹⁰³ This implicitly middle-class female function did not only focus upon the coming generations of the bourgeoisie, but also upon the lower classes.¹⁰⁴ Modern times, hence, were in need of thorough female education, which would create the woman "who does not only feel, but also thinks".¹⁰⁵ According to Marie Calm, a private school director, in this way, Germany, as was the case in politics, would in terms of its domestic and social life regain the outstanding position which she used to hold in previous times, and which was necessary

¹⁰³See, for instance, Amalie Thilo, Die Bildung der Frau in Beziehung auf ihre nationale Aufgabe: Ein Wort zu den Reformen des weiblichen Schulwesens (Breslau: Schletter, 1876).

¹⁰⁴Goldschmidt, "Frauenfrage", p. 12

¹⁰⁵Marie Calm, "Die Frau unserer Zeit", Deutscher Frauen-Anwalt, 5 (1878), p. 132.

for her moral greatness.¹⁰⁶

It was only from the late-1880s onwards that there emerged a concerted effort by the women's movement to expand notions of a "more thorough education" for women to include university education. The late 1860s and the 1870s had seen developments in this area with women, including German ones, being admitted and granted degrees by the university of Zurich. Additionally, women auditors had attended lectures at German universities. The decision of the Saxon minister of education that female auditors henceforth had to be given permission to attend lectures at the University of Leipzig by the ministry (see above), marked a rupture within the development of women's higher education. It was the late 1880s and the 1890s which became the period of the most extensive debates on the admission of women to the universities.

August Bebel: A Supporter of Higher Education for Women

Before the organized bourgeois women's movement engaged in a concerted campaign to open the universities to women, at the time when only some individual women, such as Hedwig Dohm, were making such demands, support for this cause also came from August Bebel (1840-1913), the co-founder of the Social Democratic Party in 1869. In 1879 he published Woman and Socialism, which in its

¹⁰⁶M. Calm, "Die deutsche Frau der Gegenwart", Die Gegenwart, 12 (1877), p. 200.

second revised edition, published in 1883 after the passing of the anti-Socialist laws, was called Woman in the Past, Present and Future.¹⁰⁷ It was soon translated into various languages and went through many (revised) editions (by 1929 it had reached fifty).¹⁰⁸

In this book Bebel offered an extensive socialist analysis of sexual oppression. The basis of sexual oppression, as of all other oppression, according to Bebel, was economic dependence on the oppressor, which had been the condition of women in the past and still was in the present. The woman question, Bebel declared, was indisputably one of the most important issues of the day. It was the question about the position women should have in the social organism and how they could develop their capacities to the full to become useful members, with equal rights, of society. It was thus part of the question about the form and organization society should acquire so that exploitation and oppression gave way to a society that was "physically and organically sound".¹⁰⁹

Bebel contested the argument that there was no such thing as a woman question, because women's position was circumscribed by their natural calling which designated them to be a wife and mother, and restricted them to the

¹⁰⁷August Bebel, Woman in the Past, Present and Future, trans. H.B. Adams Walther, introduced by Moira Donald, trans. and rpt. of 1883 ed. (London: Zwan, 1988).

¹⁰⁸August Bebel, Die Frau und der Sozialismus, rpt. of the 50th ed. 1929 (Bonn: J.H.Dietz, 1980).

¹⁰⁹Bebel, Woman, p. 1.

domestic sphere. It was a nonsensical assertion in the face of the fact that "millions of women" were unable to dedicate their lives exclusively to these tasks.¹¹⁰ For Bebel women's position in society was not the consequence of their nature, but the outcome of human history:

Servitude which lasts for hundreds of generations ends by becoming a habit. Inheritance and education teach both parties to regard it as the natural state.¹¹¹

Woman had been the "first human being that tasted bondage". She was "a slave before the slave existed".¹¹² Unlike Friedrich Engels, who a few years later was to formulate the theory that women's oppression was inaugurated with the development of the monogamous family and the ownership of private property,¹¹³ Bebel contended that women were already subjected before this stage in human history. Prior to monogamy, among the "first human community",¹¹⁴ women were already the "property of the horde ... They were made use of just like any other common belonging."¹¹⁵ The bondage of primeval woman, who was mentally and physically on a par with her male counterpart, resulted from her need of his protection

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 2.

¹¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 7.

¹¹² *ibid.*

¹¹³ Friedrich Engels, Der Ursprung der Familie, des Privateigentums und des Staates, in Marx/Engels Gesamtausgabe, first published 1884 (Berlin: Dietz, 1990).

¹¹⁴ Bebel, Woman, p. 7.

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 9.

during periods of pregnancy, birth and lactation. Her bondage had continued through the times that followed.¹¹⁶ For Bebel, as for Engels, the rise of the monogamous family and private property inaugurated a sexual division of labour. For Bebel, however, it was man's desire for the possession of a woman which constituted the foundations of private property, family, tribe and state, rather than the other way round, as Engels saw it.¹¹⁷

Age-long subjection had left its marks on women. It had lead to an increasing differentiation of physical and mental powers.¹¹⁸ There could be no dispute that at present the female sex on average was mentally inferior to the male sex.¹¹⁹ Yet women were only that which men, their masters, had made them.¹²⁰ Both Marx and Darwin, whose scientific theory, according to Bebel, was "eminently democratic",¹²¹ had shed light on that

relationships of supremacy, character and bodily peculiarities of individuals, as well as of whole classes and nations depend primarily on the *physical conditions of existence, in other words, on the social and economic distribution of power.*¹²²

In terms of the female sex this meant that under improved

¹¹⁶*ibid.*, p. 8.

¹¹⁷*ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

¹¹⁸*ibid.*, p. 8.

¹¹⁹*ibid.*, p. 64.

¹²⁰*ibid.*, p. 65.

¹²¹*ibid.*, p. 127.

¹²²*ibid.*, p. 126. Bebel's emphasis.

conditions women could be raised to a "degree of perfection of which we have no idea today."¹²³

Bebel did not argue that there existed no natural differences between the sexes, but that the only dissimilarity which had the right of permanence was the one deriving from the fulfilment of the "natural purpose." Nature had set boundaries which neither sex could overstep. However, this was no justification for the exclusion of women from the "common rights of humanity".¹²⁴ Rather, the aim was to create conditions, laws and institutions which allowed all individuals alike to develop their faculties to their own advantage and that of the community.¹²⁵

The approach of the bourgeois women's movement to the emancipation of women, according to Bebel, was not the ultimate solution of the woman question. Their demands did not exceed the limits of the present framework of society, and although it might change the situation of a few women, it left the great majority of women in an unaltered position of subjection. The real solution of the woman question lay with socialism.¹²⁶ However, the endeavour to achieve access to the universities, to enter the liberal professions, and to leave the narrow confines of the home and participate

¹²³ *ibid.*, p. 121.

¹²⁴ *ibid.*, p.122.

¹²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 127.

¹²⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 3, 5.

fully in the public world and the cultural tasks of humankind was still an important matter of principle. All these demands aimed at the exercise of mental capacities in the "higher walks of life". To grant these demands was an important step in the urgent necessity to disprove the fallacy that women were and always had to remain mentally inferior to men.¹²⁷

Bebel's book became the most popular socialist text in its time.¹²⁸ It became an important point of reference among socialist feminists, and also among feminists of the bourgeois women's movement who sought the approximation with the socialist movement.¹²⁹ At the same time, Bebel's support of women's higher education spurred fears among some commentators of the educated middle-class that the higher education movement was about a destabilization of the social order, the destruction of the family, and the dissolution of culture.

¹²⁷*ibid.*, pp. 3; 117.

¹²⁸Moira Donald, "Introduction", in *ibid.*, p. i.

¹²⁹Bebel did not always find endorsement, however. Clara Zetkin, a central figure in the socialist women's movement from the 1890s, criticised Bebel, for failing to give class differences between women its due weight and endorsing working-class and middle-class women's collaboration (see Jean H. Quataert, Reluctant Feminists in German Social Democracy, 1885-1917 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 69).

***Bildungsbürger* and the Female Academic**

The creation of women's organizations, the demand for reformed female education, the developments within the German universities and in Switzerland, as well as the appearance of the first (non-certified) women doctors in Germany did not go unperceived among German academics. During the 1870s male *Bildungsbürger* started to respond to the idea of higher education for women.

Bildung was not a concept which excluded women *per se*. The point of contest (as in Britain) was whether middle-class women should receive the same education as men, not that they should be educated. *Bildung* as an attribute which defined social class, included the female members of this class. Thus Richard Weber, a gynaecologist in Berlin, saw *Bildung* as a necessary quality of the wives of *gebildete* men. *Bildung*, in terms of its mental and emotional components, was a relative concept, Weber pointed out. Women should possess the *Bildung* which accorded to the occupation and social standing of their husbands. They should be able to understand their husbands' train of thought and their sphere of activity. Moreover, when socializing, they had to be representatives of their husbands' standing, prestige, and occupation. Thus, women's *Bildung*, Weber thought, should not only be promoted at home through reading good books and private lessons, but also through

a thorough school education.¹³⁰

It was not only middle-class women's role as the representatives of their husbands' social status which demanded education. It was also required by their role as the educators of the coming generation of citizens and by virtue of the influence they had over their spouses. The professor of philosophy at the University at Bonn, Jürgen Bona Meyer, thus believed that greater *Frauenbildung* was desirable. The exclusion of women from the mental participation in male aspirations had to be disadvantageous. In "troubled times" women's lack of understanding and interest could operate as a hindrance to the activities of men. But also in times of calmness mothers were incapable of having a beneficial influence. According to Meyer, the right relationship between the individual and the public could only come about through a long education in subordinating the individual to the general law. The individual had to get used to the strict exercise of duty towards the community. This, however, could not be achieved if the indifference of mothers loosened what the father and the school tried to secure. A more thorough *Bildung* for women was thus demanded.¹³¹

Whereas Meyer found it necessary to educate women so that they would not work against the formative influences

¹³⁰Richard Weber, Das Weib als Gattin und Mutter: Seine Naturgemäße Bestimmung und seine Pflichten: Ein medizinisches Handbuch (Berlin: Hugo Steinitz, 1889), pp. 33-34.

¹³¹Jürgen Bona Meyer, Zum Bildungskampf unserer Zeit (Bonn: Adolf Marcus, 1875), pp. 53-54, 57.

which boys were subjected to outside of the home and by their fathers, others gave women a more central role in the educative process of children. Rudolf Virchow (1821-1902), the cellular pathologist who was also a leading liberal politician, in 1865 argued that the education that took place within the home was crucial. Whereas the state could only educate *en masse*, for Virchow it was in the family that individuals could develop freely according to their natural talents and capabilities. It was the family where individual development was secured, which formed the prerequisite for the development of the *Persönlichkeit* and a feeling of responsibility upon which the attributes of independence, order and freedom were based.¹³² *Bildung* and the progress of a *Volk* could only be assured if they found a haven in the family¹³³. But the family was nothing without the "woman and mother". The father might be the head of the family, but it was the mother who constituted its centre.¹³⁴ That was why she should be a participant of the *Bildung* of a *Volk* and should not be excluded from its general development. And that was why she had to be educated according to her specific nature, and not in the way men were educated, so that she could fulfil her natural and highest calling,

¹³²Rudolf Virchow, Ueber die Erziehung des Weibes für seinen Beruf (Berlin: Th. Chr. Fr. Enslin, 1865), pp. 7, 18.

¹³³*ibid.*, p. 9.

¹³⁴*ibid.*, p. 11.

that of wife and mother, adequately.¹³⁵

Bildung, hence, was also a desirable attribute of women. But it was a gendered *Bildung*. Women's education should fit them for their natural roles within the family. Opposition arose around the issue of degendering *Bildung* in terms providing both sexes with the same education, including higher education, and in terms of making education the basis of middle-class paid employment. The national liberal historian Heinrich von Sybel (1817-1895), thus declared in a lecture which he gave in 1870 on the emancipation of women that the German nation could do no better than provide both sexes with sufficient and adequate sources of *Bildung*. Yet, these had to be in accord with natural laws:

A nation cannot attend to its general prosperity more effectively than through advancing the right development of the female sex; it cannot poison the foundations of its existence more badly than through alienating women from their noble natural vocation.¹³⁶

Sybel favoured changes in girls' education, and greater employment opportunities for unmarried women, yet dismissed women's admission to university.¹³⁷ Change was needed in middle-class female education: it was this which would lead to a "real improvement and liberation of the female sex". The education of girls should fulfil the

¹³⁵*ibid.*, pp. 11, 16-17.

¹³⁶Heinrich von Sybel, "Ueber die Emancipation der Frauen" (1870), in Vorträge und Aufsätze (Berlin: A. Hofmann & Co., 1874), p. 79.

¹³⁷*ibid.*, pp. 59-79.

same primary function as boys' education: the exercise and strengthening of all mental powers. For this, the teaching of Greek and Latin should be included in the female curricula. Yet, the sexes should not be co-educated. Other than the classical languages, education should be different: girls' should be educated for their roles as wives and mothers, whereas boys should be prepared for subsequent academic study. Since there was no assurance that girls could marry after their schooling, there should be more institutions for a further education of women. These should not, however, be the universities - these were directed at preparing men for their education.¹³⁸

The emancipation of women which sought to interfere with the sexual division of labour, Rudolf Virchow maintained, could only take place at the expense of the family. Thus the future of humanity would be put into question for the sake of the "seeming" freedom of women.¹³⁹ Also Heinrich Sybel did not believe that "freedom" had the same meaning for women as for men. He professed his adherence to the notion that "every rational being has the same right to legal status and protection". He had no doubts that women, as much as men, were rational beings.¹⁴⁰ What he questioned was that women were living in a state of subjection, as John Stuart Mill

¹³⁸*ibid.*, pp. 74-76.

¹³⁹Virchow, Erziehung des Weibes, pp. 18-19.

¹⁴⁰Sybel, "Emancipation", p. 59.

had argued.¹⁴¹ Rather, women's position was a reflection of the "great law of division of labour" which was as valid for the family, as it was for the community. For spouses, the division of labour, and with it their different legal position, was laid down by Nature - neither human will, nor progress could change this. Nature had allotted to women the task of motherhood, an occupation which put her in need of protection and incapacitated her for any other exertions. Her child laid claim to her whole existence.¹⁴² The sphere of woman was the home; the sphere of man was "the wide world, scholarship, the legal order, and the state."¹⁴³

The foundation of the sexual division of labour upon notions of natural difference between the sexes also raised concerns about the implications of a female influx into masculine domains of scholarship. Although in Britain the question of relative mental powers was highly contested and an issue of much negotiation, it was never much of an issue of whether women would have the mental capacities to undergo higher education. The question of whether women could reach outstanding male intellectual achievements was debated. Yet in terms of simply taking a degree, it was the female body, not the female mind, that was the focus of attention.

In Germany this was different. The question of

¹⁴¹*ibid.*, pp. 60ff.

¹⁴²*ibid.*, pp. 67-68.

¹⁴³*ibid.*, p. 69.

whether women actually had the mental capacity to go to university was intensely debated. Structurally, this was heightened by the fact that in Germany, due to *Länder* control of universities, it was impossible for women to set up their own colleges, as British women had done, and show through experience that women had the necessary mental capacities. Yet, it was also due to the much more important cultural connotations of mental creation in Germany. The figure of the mental creator (*geistig Schaffender*) was closely linked to the institution of the university. Thus the concept of female mental inferiority in Germany made the prospect of women's higher education raise questions about the effects of female admission upon scholarship, which was an important point of *Bildungsbürgertum* identity, as well as national identity. Thus the ophthalmologist Wilhelm von Zehender declared in a discussion of whether women should be admitted to the study and practice of medicine:

Above all we have to be wary of being seduced, without careful and profound consideration, by the example of foreign nations, or perhaps by the cleverness of isolated intriguing and ambitious women, to give our universities up for an experiment which presumably can easily lead to - I would think probably would lead to - lower them from their present scholarly and moral heights.¹⁴⁴

Zehender maintained that women themselves had to be the ultimate judges of whether they had the capacity or

¹⁴⁴Wilhelm von Zehender, Ueber den Beruf der Frauen zum Studium und zur praktischen Ausübung der Heilwissenschaft (Rostock: Schiller'sche Hof und Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1875), p. 11.

not to study medicine and to work as physicians.¹⁴⁵ Yet the decision to open universities had to be carefully weighed. He pointed out that there had existed cases of women physicians in history. However, they had constituted rare exceptions. None of them, he argued, could be compared to the "first coryphaeus of our science".¹⁴⁶ As far as developments in other countries were concerned, Zehender pointed at the ultimate rejection of Sophia Jex-Blake and the other women at the University of Edinburgh. He believed that the newly founded London School of Medicine for Women in London - a separate institution for women - ,would not be able to provide recognised medical degrees in the near future.¹⁴⁷ He suggested that the influx of Russian women in the University of Zurich, most of whom had disappeared after the Ukase of 1873, was explicable through the miserable position of women in Russia. It was due to those national circumstances that Russian women were keen on free marriages and free occupation. Moreover, the "ignorance of the Greek clergy", that is the orthodox Christian church, was incapable of solving for Russians any doubts about "the world, God, and man", which had led to Russian nihilism. It was in this nihilism, combined with a search for bourgeois emancipation, that the Russian women's

¹⁴⁵*ibid.*, p. 11.

¹⁴⁶*ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁴⁷*ibid.*, pp. 11-14.

attempt to study medicine was rooted.¹⁴⁸ As for the United States, medical colleges were of low standards, and degrees easily obtainable. This meant that women physicians themselves were not valued very much.¹⁴⁹

These countries thus could not provide an example for Germany. If some isolated women would renounce the essence of German femininity, follow the example of foreign examples, and choose an occupation which would alienate them from their domestic roles, no harm would be done, according to Zehender. In terms of a general trend, however, "our German women" had to remain the way they were, if the following generation was not to run the risk of descending from the heights, "upon which today they are still standing". Universities had to remain all-male institutions.¹⁵⁰

The possibility of female entry into the professions also created concerns about the standing of these professions. This was the case with none more than the medical profession. Particularly from the 1880s onwards, the figure of the female doctor fed into concerns that the medical profession was already over-crowded as it was and that incomes were continuously decreasing.¹⁵¹ Whereas

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p. 18.

¹⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. 19.

¹⁵⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 21-22.

¹⁵¹ Whether these feelings of financial insecurity and concerns about a "proletarianization" reflected reality has been questioned. Weindling thus argues that, although there existed a great diversity in terms of income, most doctors at the end of the nineteenth century were able to

among the professionals who formed part of the civil service, increasing numbers of graduates were reflected most of all in longer waiting periods before taking up work, graduates in medicine immediately entered practice and thus posed a material threat to the self-employed doctors. Physicians thus actively tried to control the output of graduates.¹⁵²

In this atmosphere, physicians had not only to contend with the possibility of women entering the professions, but from the late 1870s onwards there had also been pressure to achieve the admission of *Realschulleavers*¹⁵³ to the medical faculties. The initial preference for the medical faculties came from the importance of the scientific subjects in the curricula of these schools.¹⁵⁴ The issue was solved when in 1900 an imperial decree ruled that both types of schools provided the qualification for university access.¹⁵⁵

During the 1870s, however, it was not so much the spectre of an increase of medical graduates which raised

live a bourgeois lifestyle (see Weindling, "Bourgeois Values", p. 211). Huerkamp equally asserts that compared to other professionals physicians showed a broader range of incomes, but on the whole it was not unfavourable. Physicians on average earned far more than the general average income (see Huerkamp, *Aufstieg*, pp. 211-212).

¹⁵²Huerkamp, *Aufstieg*, p. 112.

¹⁵³*Realschulen* were alternative schools to the *Gymnasien*, of the same duration, but with less importance given to the study of classical subjects.

¹⁵⁴Huerkamp, *Aufstieg*, p. 86.

¹⁵⁵*ibid.*, pp. 84-85.

professional concerns about the admission of women. Rather, it was the effect upon the standing of the medical profession which came to be involved in the question. Theodor von Bischoff (1807-1882),¹⁵⁶ professor of anatomy and physiology in Munich, published a pamphlet against the admission of women to the medical profession soon after the introduction of the Prussian commercial code and its extension to the *Reich* after unification.¹⁵⁷ He pointed out that in a time in which it was thought that "uneducated shepherds and knackers, shoemakers and women" knew about disease and had cures against them of which scientific medicine had no knowledge, it was no surprise that women deemed themselves capable to study and practice medicine.¹⁵⁸ Yet, according to Bischoff, women could never be anything but medical craftspersons.¹⁵⁹

Differences in brain weight, size and structure

¹⁵⁶Theodor Ludwig Wilhelm von Bishoff studied natural sciences and medicine in Bonn, Heidelberg and Berlin. He graduated as Dr. med. in 1832. In 1836 he became a senior lecturer at the University of Heidelberg, and in 1843 he was made professor. He moved to the University of Munich in 1854, retiring in 1878 (see "Bischoff, Theodor Ludwig Wilhelm", in Julius Pagel (ed.), Biographisches Lexikon hervorragender Ärzte des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts (Berlin and Wien: Urban & Schwarzenberg, 1901); and in A. Hirsch (ed.), Biographisches Lexikon der hervorragenden Ärzte aller Zeiten und Völker (Berlin and Wien: Urban & Schwarzenberg, 1929-1934).

¹⁵⁷Theodor L. W. von Bischoff, Das Studium der Medicin durch Frauen (München: Th. Riedel, 1872).

¹⁵⁸*ibid.*, p. 2.

¹⁵⁹*ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

supposed differences in mental disposition.¹⁶⁰ Man was the creating principle of human society, woman was the preserving principle.¹⁶¹ Mental differences between the sexes supposed that women had no capacity to access "in a creative manner" the natural sciences, nor were they capable to receive general knowledge from scientific schooling: they would get stuck with details, unable to generalise and apply them to other questions.¹⁶² The harm of letting women enter the medical profession lay in that it would hinder the endeavour to rid medicine of craftspersons and to populate it increasingly with "scientifically educated, thinking, and acting" physicians, which would elevate practical medicine to a "rational activity."¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰*ibid.*, p. 19. These claims did not go uncontested. Carl Bernhard Brühl, the director of the zootomical institute of the university of Vienna thus argued that brain anatomy was no indicator of mental capacity (see Carl Bernhard Brühl, Einiges über das Gehirn der Wirbelthiere mit besonderer Berücksichtigung jenes der Frau (Wien: Selbstverlag des Vereines zur Verbreitung naturwissenschaftlicher Kenntnisse in Wien, 1879). See also Viktor Böhmert, Das Studieren der Frauen mit besonderer Rücksicht auf das Studium der Medicin (Leipzig: Otto Wiegand, 1872). Böhmert, a political economist at the university of Zurich, was to write prolifically in favour of the admission of women to higher education. Lily Braun was to call it an "irony of nature" that an autopsy on Bischoff revealed that his brain weighed less than the average female one (see Braun, Die Frauenfrage: Ihre geschichtliche Entwicklung und wirtschaftliche Seite (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1901), p. 190).

¹⁶¹Bischoff, Studium, p. 20.

¹⁶²*ibid.*, p. 26.

¹⁶³*ibid.*, pp. 32-33.

Conclusion

The concept of the acquisition of *Bildung* as a process of inner development was a central aspect of the demands for middle-class women's educational reforms as they evolved from the mid-1860s onwards. These demands were located in a context of tensions between the understanding of *Bildung* as a universalistic ideal and its differential application to middle-class men and women. Whereas men underwent *Bildung* to be prepared for their role outside of the home, women ought to be educated to fulfil their role within the home, as socially adequate companions of their husbands, as well as of consolidating social and cultural values through passing them on to the next generation.

Feminists claimed educational rights frequently on the basis of giving women the same right as men to develop into free personalities. The concept of equal rights was not always understood as a generally applicable principle. It was also not a concept which inevitably implied rejections of notions of women's difference. The advocacy of educational reforms was carried along by notions of the character-forming influences of *Bildung*. The mind had to be brought into harmony and oneness with the emotions. Often these went along with the view that the thus *gebildete* women had a gender-specific role to play within the social organism. Hence, feminists developed notions of rights for women in

combination with specifically female duties to society. Female education was important for female character formation so that women could take up their duties to society. The rights of the female individual were to be put at the service of the community.

The spectre of providing women with the same education as men and of admitting them to the professions, particularly the medical one, raised opposition on the basis that women had to be educated for their specific and central role within the family. Women and men, it was claimed, were not entitled to the same rights. Nature had laid down a division of labour which established different spheres for the sexes. Natural differences between the sexes were also expressed in women's mental inferiority. Once the women's movement started to petition the state governments and ministries of education to admit women to their universities, as I shall discuss in the following chapter, the question was not only discussed in terms of what it would mean for the social organism and the family, but also in terms of the effects of a female influx into the institutions where culture and scholarship was transmitted and produced.

CHAPTER SIX

THE SEXUAL DIVISION OF LABOUR:

CULTURE AND SOCIETY, c. 1888 - c. 1900

With the inauguration of the organized campaigns of the women's movement to gain access to the higher education for the female sex, laid out in the previous chapter, the 1890s became the decade of the most intensive debates on women's admission to the universities. In 1897 a journalist from Berlin, Arthur Kirchhoff, published a survey of contemporary opinion on "the academic woman".¹ Significantly, he had gathered his testimonies among the elite of the *Bildungsbürgertum*. In his frequently referred to volume, the great majority of contributors were university professors (around one third of whom were professors of medicine). Others included male (i.e. academically trained) teachers, and writers. It was academics, as well as members of the women's movement (whose arguments I shall explore below), who were most conspicuous in the public debates about women's higher education during the last decade of the century.

In Britain these debates centred around the effects of higher education on the bodies and minds of women, and

¹Arthur Kirchhoff (ed.), Die Akademische Frau: Gutachten hervorragender Universitätsprofessoren, Frauenlehrer und Schriftsteller über die Befähigung der Frau zum wissenschaftlichen Studium und Berufe (Berlin: Hugo Steinitz, 1897).

the implications that arose from this. As I will outline in chapter seven, the impact of university education upon the female body and issues of racial degeneration were also a component of the debates in Germany. However, it was not only potentially modified female biology which preoccupied nineteenth-century *Bildungsbürger* in the question of women's admission to university. For many it was changes to the social organism through a disruption of the sexual division of labour; changes to cultural production; and changes in the universities as institutions which raised opposition.

In all these issues notions of natural differences between the sexes played an important role. Nature, it was continuously argued, had laid down fundamentally different roles for men and women in society and culture. Women's role as wife and mother was termed in the language of their natural vocation. Nature had allotted to woman the function of reproduction, and to man that of mental production. In this conceptualization, "[a]mazons are also in the mental sphere contrary to nature", as Max Planck, the subsequently famous physicist, put it in 1897.² Yet, as explained, the universalistic understanding of the concept of *Bildung* and its gendered application created tensions, as did the function of *Bildung* as a class-constituting factor, a class to which educated bourgeois women belonged.

In Britain the tensions between concepts of

²In Kirchhoff (ed.), Akademische Frau, p. 256.

universal rights and women's exclusion from it were a central motor in the education debates. In this context biology played an all important role in the constitution of different social roles. The education debates focused on how the notion of equal rights applied to female individuals, and it was (contested) notions of female nature and the effects that higher education would have upon it which were crucial in informing arguments. Consequently, physicians and natural scientists played a central role in the debates.

As in Britain, in Germany too, physicians (who often were professors of medicine at the same time) were particularly conspicuous in the education debates. Medicine was a field which was especially targeted by the women's movement.³ But as in Britain, this was not the only reason why physicians engaged in debates about women's tertiary education. It was also that their field of knowledge imbued them with special authority to speak on the female mind and its relationship to the body.

³For discussions of physicians' attitudes to women's higher education see Raymond Hollmann, "Die Stellungnahme der Ärzte im Streit um das Medizinstudium der Frau bis zum Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts" (M.D. diss, Wilhelms-Universität Münster, 1976); Johanna Geyer-Kordesch, "Geschlecht und Gesellschaft: Die ersten Ärztinnen und sozialpolitische Vorurteile", Berichte zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte, 10 (1987), pp. 195-205. For a discussion of the arguments that were brought forward and against female higher education see George Bernstein and Lottelore Bernstein, "Attitudes Toward Women's Education in Germany, 1870-1914", International Journal of Women's Studies, 2 (1979), pp. 473-488; and James C. Albisetti, Schooling German Girls and Women: Secondary and Higher Education in the Nineteenth Century (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 169-203.

Physicians thus often claimed to be the most qualified people to assess the situation.⁴ Some posited themselves as the arbiters of the question whether women could and should go to university in general or study medicine in particular not only by virtue of their training, but also by virtue of their gender. Theodor von Bischoff⁵ thus declared that the attempts by women to change their position in society were not surprisingly often misguided: the female sex lacked the capacity for accurate self-knowledge.⁶

Yet, in the German debates, it was not only natural scientists who were vociferous on the male side during the late nineteenth century. It was rather academics as such. As explained before, universities as institutions, notions of *Bildung*, the pre-eminence of German scholarship and culture were central to the self-understanding of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, and none more than its elite, the university professors. The prospect of introducing women into the universities which constituted the central institutions for the dissemination of *Bildung* and creation of scholarship

⁴See, for example, Max Runge, Das Weib in seiner Geschlechtsindividualität (Berlin: Julius Springer, 1896), p. 5.

⁵For biographical details see chapter five, footnote 156.

⁶Theodor L. W. von Bischoff, Das Studium der Medicin durch Frauen (München: Th. Riedel, 1872), p. 1; see also P.J. Möbius, Über den physiologischen Schwachsinn des Weibes, rpt of the 8th rev. ed. 1905 (München: Matthes und Seitz, 1990), p. 67.

rallied academics to take a stand on the issue.

At the same time, German political theory was less dominated by concepts of natural law and social contract which emphasised the individual's rights against absolutist government; notions of natural law and social contract were less anti-absolutist. During the late-nineteenth century the interrelationship between the individual and the state was one in which the former transferred many rights to latter. The idealized state "became a moral agent, an educational institution, and the freedom from external restraint was transformed into the 'inner freedom' of the ethically self-directed individual."⁷ In the education debates, the question of the denial of equal rights to women as individuals was not as important as in Britain. What was best for the individual was not necessarily best for society as a whole. The question of whether women had the right to study was much discussed. But for many the answer lay within considering whether there was a need for the state, the social organism, the universities, (single) women, the middle-class and the different professions to have female students and graduates. It was not only natural scientists who became involved in establishing this answer but also *Geisteswissenschaftler* - humanistic scientists.

⁷Fritz K. Ringer, The Decline of the German Mandarins: The German Academic Community, 1890-1933 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), pp. 113-114.

The Sexual Division of Labour: Society and Class

The woman question, as defined by the Meyers Konversations-Lexikon of 1893, was the question of the position of woman in the social organism.⁸ Opponents of higher education for women often contended that women's participation in the public and their engagement in paid employment was incompatible with their domestic function.⁹ The natural occupation of woman was to be a wife and mother, and "nothing in the life of the *Volk* was as important as the influence of women in the family".¹⁰ Whether the female sex was capable of undergoing higher education was sometimes declared to be a secondary issue: the point was that employment was "never compatible" with the role of wife and mother.¹¹ Legally, this perception was supported by that from the early nineteenth century onwards women teachers and other public employees were forbidden by state laws to combine marriage and employment. The requirement of dismissal of female professional employees upon marriage was upheld

⁸"Frauenfrage", Meyers Konversations-Lexikon: Nachschlagewerk des allgemeinen Wissens (Leipzig und Wien: Bibliographisches Institut, 1893).

⁹See, for example, Franz Riegel (professor of internal medicine at the university of Gießen), in Kirchhoff (ed.), Akademische Frau, p. 77.

¹⁰Leo Pochhammer, Beitrag zur Frage des Universitätsstudiums der Frauen: Rede zum Antritt des Rektorats der Christian-Albrechts-Universität in Kiel (Kiel: Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1893), p. 12.

¹¹Franz Riegel, in Kirchhoff (ed.), Akademische Frau, p. 77; see also Carl Schweigger, in *ibid.* p. 102.

throughout the century.¹²

It was marriage which was the basic unit of the nation and "the most important pillar of the state".¹³ The view that the admission of women to university and academic occupations would lead to the diminishing of marriages raised concerns that female education not directed at a preparation for women's domestic roles would lead to an "atomization" of society.¹⁴

Eduard von Hartmann (1842-1906), a graduate from the University of Rostock and retired artillery officer who turned to philosophy but never held an academic post, had argued in the Philosophy of the Unconscious (1869),¹⁵ against making the female sex too rational. In his construction woman was "related to man, as instinctive or unconscious to rational or conscious action". Therefore

the genuine woman is a piece of Nature, on
whose bosom the man estranged from the
Unconscious may refresh and recruit himself,
and can again acquire respect for the deepest

¹²Ann Allen Taylor, Feminism and Motherhood in Germany, 1800-1914 (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991), p. 164. For a discussion of the views of female teachers on the celibacy clause see Maria W. Blochmann, "Laß dich gelüsten nach der Männer Weisheit und Bildung": Frauenbildung als Emanzipationsgelüste, 1800-1918 (Pfaffenweiler: Centaurus, 1990), pp. 203ff.

¹³Wilhelm Alexander Freund (Director of the women's hospital of the University of Strasbourg), in Kirchhoff (ed.), Akademische Frau, p. 111.

¹⁴August Dorner (professor of theology and philosophy at Königsberg), in *ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁵Eduard von Hartmann, Philosophy of the Unconscious: Speculative Results according to the Inductive Method of Physical Science (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1931); originally Die Philosophie des Unbewußten (1869).

and purest spring of all life. And to preserve this treasure of the eternal feminine, the woman should also be as far as possible shielded by the man from all contact with the rough struggle for life, where it is needful to display conscious force, and should be restrained in the sweet natural bonds of the family.¹⁶

Nearly three decades later, in 1896, Hartmann intervened directly in the woman question with an essay on the "Spinster Question".¹⁷ Hartmann there acknowledged that this was an issue which needed addressing. According to him, there existed a dangerous tendency to dissolve organic social formations into atomistic isolated individuals. For Hartmann, it was only the radical section of the women's movement, however, who in union with the Social Democrats actually favoured these

¹⁶Hartmann, Philosophy, p. 43. Hartmann tried to reconcile Schopenhauer, Hegel, Schelling and Leibniz. The ultimate reality for Hartmann was unconscious. It had two attributes: will and idea, the former being responsible for the existence of the world, the latter for the nature of it, reconciling optimism and pessimism. As the cosmic process advances, idea prevails over will. The development of the intellect renders possible higher pleasures, yet it also increases the capacity for suffering, and material progress suppresses spiritual values. Ultimate happiness thus is not attainable by endless progress. This is an illusion by the unconscious to induce humankind to propagate itself. There will be a time, according to Hartmann, in which consciousness will be so developed that it will shed all illusion and a cosmic suicide will take place (see Frederick Copleston: A History of Philosophy, Vol. 7, Fichte to Nietzsche (London: Burns and Oates, 1963), pp. 290-291; "Hartmann, Eduard von", in Ted Honderich (ed.), The Oxford Companion to Philosophy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Sonu Shamdasani, "Philosophies of the Unconscious", unpublished paper, 1996). Woman, thus in the present state of civilization in which it represented the instinctive and unconscious provided the counterweight to the dominion of consciousness.

¹⁷Eduard von Hartmann, "Die Jungfernfrage", in Tagesfragen (Leipzig: Hermann Haacke, 1896), pp. 99-132.

developments. The moderates, according to him, acknowledged this process to be damaging, but they were only trying to find a solution to a state of affairs in which spinsters found it difficult to assert themselves in the struggle for existence.¹⁸

To find this solution in the opening of male middle-class occupations to these women, however, was an error - they would not be able to be successful with respect to men. Their entry into "subordinate" occupation was no solution either: it would eventually lead to a decline in their social status.¹⁹ The real solution was the institution of a state pension for spinsters.²⁰ This way an abstract "human dignity" would not replace a "male dignity" and "female dignity". The essential female occupation would remain within the domestic sphere, and womanhood would retain its closer union with nature. It was a blessing for the female sex that so far they had been kept away from the institutions which would alienate them from their natural roots, as was the case of man. The result of this alienation from nature could be nothing but the degeneration (*Entartung*) of the race.²¹

Otto Gierke (1841-1921), the legal historian and professor of law at the Friedrich-Wilhelms University in Berlin, did not share Hartmann's reservations about

¹⁸*ibid.*, pp. 103-104.

¹⁹*ibid.*, pp. 113-114.

²⁰*ibid.*, p. 128.

²¹*ibid.*

universities as institutions. Yet, he equally displayed concerns about the socially "atomizing" effects of women's admission into the public world of competition and paid employment, as well as the rejection of the concept of equal rights. Thus, he declared that from the point of view of the individual, it could be argued that women's admission to university was a demand for justice. In this light, all reservations against female admission evaporated. Yet, what were put into question were social institutions which were part of the foundations upon which the national cultural life had been constituted. If they were to be changed, what had to be examined were the effects upon the "social body, the blossom of our national characteristics (*Volkstuhm*), ... the health of the community".²²

The admission of women to occupations through university graduation was an issue where an individualistic approach and one which was directed at the whole clashed. It supposed the abolition of the distinction of the male public and female private occupation. However,

[t]he community is not a heap of sand, but an organism. Sexless individuals do not constitute a *Volk*. The basic unit of the social body is the family. The national destiny is dependent upon the health and strength of the family. No sophistry could ever cast into doubt the truism, that normally woman's occupation is within family life, and man's in public life.²³

²²Gierke, in Kirchhoff (ed.), Akademische Frau, pp. 21-22.

²³*ibid.*, p. 25.

Competition as it was, according to Gierke, was already turning into an uncontrollable struggle for existence, which made it more and more difficult for men to support families: the social body was slowly being eaten up by disease. The wishes of individuals became irrelevant in light of the dangers which they supposed for the social body.²⁴

Otto von Gierke was not the only one to think that the issue of female admission was not simply one of women's right to study. Not only the impact upon the social organism, but also the interest of the state had to be considered. Did the state, who had to pay for the establishment of girls' *Gymnasien* and special sections for women at the universities, have a need for female admission?, Emanuel Mendel, a professor of psychiatry at the University of Berlin, asked. If it was simply a question of rights, the state would also have to turn the *Volksschulen* (elementary schools) into pre-*Gymnasien*, to give the less well-off the chance to go to university. Yet, there existed no need to increase the number of university graduates. Universities were already overcrowded.²⁵

There was a widespread perception, however, that one

²⁴*ibid.*, p. 26.

²⁵Emanuel Mendel, in Kirchhoff (ed.), *Akademische Frau*, p. 131. In 1870 there were 14,000 students enrolled at Germany's universities. In 1880 this figure had changed to 21,000, and by 1914, after the admission of *Realschulen* leavers, the numbers had jumped to 61,000 (see Ringer, *Mandarins*, p. 52).

issue concerning middle-class women had to be solved: the question of the "surplus women" - unmarried middle-class women. There was little doubt among nineteenth-century German academics that it was woman's natural vocation to be a wife and mother. The sexual division of labour which allotted to women the domestic sphere, however, as in Britain, was problematized through the figure of the unmarried middle-class woman. It was pointed out that the "modern conditions of life" were "unnatural": many women had to find an occupation outside the home.²⁶ For some this constituted a justification to admit women to universities and to the occupations that required a higher degree, even though in an "ideal condition" women should have no need to engage in an occupation outside of the house and the family.²⁷

Others, however, contested this conception on the grounds that women's admission into the middle-class occupations would create more problems than it would remedy. There was a widespread perception that the universities and academic occupations, particularly the medical profession, were already overcrowded.²⁸ The struggle for existence, bad as it was already, would

²⁶Hermann Strack (professor of theology at the Friedrich-Wilhelms University in Berlin), in Kirchhoff (ed.), Akademische Frau, p. 14.

²⁷Julius Bernstein, in Kirchhoff (ed.), Akademische Frau, p. 42.

²⁸See, for example, Birch-Hirschfeld, in Kirchhoff (ed.), Akademische Frau, p. 63; Emanuel Mendel, in *ibid.*, pp. 131-132. For the issue of the overcrowded medical profession see chapter five, pp. 260-261.

become even more severe with increased competition through an influx of women.²⁹ "No legislator" should open without compelling reason the medical profession to free competition for the female sex, and thus shake a profession in which the "lower thousands" were already struggling for their daily bread.³⁰ In addition, if women were to enter into competition with men, the increased supply of labour would decrease incomes and even fewer men would be in the position to form a family. In this way the initial problem of the unmarried woman would ultimately be increased rather than decreased.³¹

Moreover, the entry of women into middle-class occupations would interfere with one of the important tenets of middle-class life: the absence of middle-class women from the labour market. If middle-class women were, like their husbands, to engage in paid employment, the middle-class family would become like the working-class. Husband and wife would both have to work to support the family instead of the husband being the bread-winner.³²

A frequently proposed solution for the "Spinster Question" was to establish and expand specific female

²⁹Karl von Bardeleben, in Kirchhoff (ed.). Akademische Frau, p. 35.

³⁰Hermann Munk (Member of the Academy of Sciences at the University of Berlin), in Kirchhoff (ed.), Akademische Frau, p. 52.

³¹Riegel, in Kirchhoff, (ed.), Akademische Frau, pp. 76-77; Dorner, in *ibid.*, p. 4.

³²Wilhelm His (Director of the Anatomical Institute of the University of Leipzig), in Kirchhoff (ed.), Akademische Frau, p. 38.

middle-class occupations, rather than to admit them to the male middle-class professions. Since women were not "scientifically productive", nor capable of working independently, rather than physicians they should become "medical assistants" of an higher order. This way the natural relationship of complementarity between the sexes would be maintained.³³ It became a common proposition to absorb these women into nursing and midwifery jobs which did not require an academic training.³⁴ Either a corps of trained middle-class "medical assistants" who would hierarchically be located in an intermediary position between the physician and the unskilled working-class nurses and midwives should be created,³⁵ or nursing and midwifery should be turned into middle-class occupations.³⁶

This solution, however, brought its own problems. It was pointed out that the search for paid employment for unmarried middle-class women was not only a search for employment as such, but rather a search for employment which corresponded with the "*Bildung* and social position"

³³Birch-Hirschfeld, in Kirchhoff (ed.), Akademische Frau, pp. 60-65.

³⁴Runge, in Kirchhoff (ed.), Akademische Frau, p. 123.

³⁵See, for example, Leonard Landois (Director of the physiological Institute of the University of Greifswald), in Kirchhoff (ed.), Akademische Frau, pp. 50-51; Martin, in *ibid.*, p. 119.

³⁶Max Runge, Männliche und weibliche Frauenheilkunde (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1899), pp. 18-21.

of these women.³⁷ Yet, nursing and midwifery were no such thing. They were occupations of the *Ungebildeten*, and the simple participation of middle-class women would not turn them into middle-class occupations. Thus they were unsuitable for women of the bourgeoisie to engage in.³⁸

There would be no question of a slide in social status, however, if these women could become physicians. Amongst all the opposition of many physicians against women's entry into the profession, there were also a number of them, and other professionals, who favoured the admission of women to the medical profession.³⁹ This would solve the "Spinster Question". Additionally, it would also protect the modesty of female patients by providing them with female physicians. These could also play a special role in the protection of female hygiene in the family and schools.⁴⁰

³⁷Hans Hacker, Die Ärztin: Forderungen, Leistungen, Aussichten in diesem Berufe (Leipzig: E. Kempe, 1899), p. 19.

³⁸Hacker, Ärztin, pp. 19-21. For Eduard von Hartmann, the idea that women's engagement in what he called "subaltern occupation" would lead to a slide in social status was one more reason to establish a pension for spinsters (see Hartmann, "Jungfernfrage", p. 110).

³⁹See, for example, Prof Dr Oscar Lassar, Das medicinische Studium der Frau (Berlin: S. Krager, 1897).

⁴⁰Dr Ritter, Frauen und Ärzte (Berlin: Hugo Steinitz, 1893); Hacker, Ärztin; Prof. Dr. Hermann v. Meyer, "Die Frauen und der ärztliche Beruf", Die Gartenlaube, 40 (1890), pp. 674-675; Dr Ludwig Schwerin, Die Zulassung der Frauen zur Ausübung des ärztlichen Berufes (Berlin: Carl Habel, 1880), pp. 12-13.

The Gendering of Culture

In Germany definitions of the nation often operated through the culture specific to the *Kulturstaaen* or -*völker* (states/peoples of culture), a concept which often stressed differences among Western nations.⁴¹ In the gradual emergence of nationalism during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, in light of the absence of a unified German state, the nation was primarily defined in cultural terms.⁴²

Opposition to women's entry to the universities arose out of notions that cultural production was gendered. Man was constructed as the agent of culture, whereas woman was the element which remained near to nature. Hence, the problem of introducing women to the institutions so closely linked to cultural creation was by none more succinctly put than by the professor of surgery at the University of Vienna, Eduard Albert:⁴³ Human culture had been created exclusively by men.⁴⁴ Woman

⁴¹See Norbert Elias, The History of Manners: The Civilizing Process (Volume 1), first published 1939, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987).

⁴²Ringer, Mandarins, p. 117.

⁴³Albert (1841 -?) was born in Bohemia and studied in Vienna. His pamphlet made waves in Germany and was frequently cited.

⁴⁴E. Albert, Die Frauen und das Studium der Medicin (Wien: Alfred Hölder, 1895), pp. 1ff. See Paul Julius Möbius, Ueber den physiologischen Schwachsinn des Weibes (Halle a.S.: Carl Marhold, 1900), p. 13; Frederick Bettex, Mann und Weib (1897), p. 155 for similar arguments.

was bound to nature through the repetitive activity of reproduction and nurture, which lay outside the realm of historicity and was timeless and unchanging.⁴⁵ While men eventually had become "heroes, statesmen, artists, scholars, and technicians", women had looked on and continued with their age-old occupations of child-bearing and rearing. Now, however, "the being that represents nature within the human couple is supposed to become a cultural being."⁴⁶

The association of man with culture and woman with nature operated through the ability of man to dissociate himself from reproduction and sexuality. As the gynaecologist Max Runge argued: "The act of copulation, ... for man is the only sexual act altogether, and with its completion, man exits the sexual sphere again...". For woman, however, sexual intercourse was only the smallest and least important constituent of her sexuality. It was only the overture to a whole series of sexual activities "whose main instinct is yearning for children".⁴⁷ Man was a cultural being through his

⁴⁵Albert, Frauen, pp. 7-8. See Seyla Benhabib, "The Generalized and the Concrete Other: The Kohlberg-Gilligan Controversy and Feminist Theory", in *idem* and Drucilla Cornell (eds), Feminism as Critique: On the Politics of Gender (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), esp. p. 86 for a discussion of the relegation of woman to a timeless private universe in early modern political theory.

⁴⁶Albert, Frauen, p. 8.

⁴⁷Runge, Das Weib, p. 9. Heinrich Max Runge (b. 1849) after having studied in Jena, Bonn, Leipzig, Strasbourg and Vienna, became professor of gynaecology in 1883. In 1888 he moved in this capacity to Göttingen, where he

dissociation from sexuality and body, and the relegation of reproduction to woman: "what for man is cognition, is for woman motherhood."⁴⁸ Woman was "bound to eternal laws" from which she could not withdraw. Woman's vocation was to be a wife and mother, and everything else "lay more or less outside her sphere".⁴⁹ Menstruation, pregnancy, child-birth and breast-feeding made woman unsuitable for the outside world, as much as her instincts tied her to the domestic sphere.⁵⁰

The fact that humanity consisted of two sexes, constituted "one of the greatest, maybe the most important elements that furthers culture".⁵¹ The sexual division of labour, that is the exercise of activity within the natural boundaries thus benefited the whole. The maintenance and development of the "high goods of our cultural life" was dependent upon the differentiation of the sexes. Man and woman thus had to complement each other in the human ideal. The opening of the medical

also became the director of the university's women's hospital (see "Runge, Max", in Julius Leopold Pagel (ed.), Biographisches Lexikon hervorragender Ärzte des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts (Berlin und Wien: Urban und Schwarzenberg, 1901).

⁴⁸Max Runge, Das Weib in seiner geschlechtlichen Eigenart, 4th, rev. ed. (Göttingen: Julius Springer, 1900), p. 9; quoting the writer Lenau

⁴⁹Runge, Das Weib (1896), pp. 16-17.

⁵⁰*ibid.*, p. 7.

⁵¹Wilhelm Waldeyer, "Das Studium der Medizin und die Frauen", Tageblatt der 61. Versammlung deutscher Naturforscher und Ärzte in Köln vom 18. bis 23. September 1888 (Köln: Albert Ahn, 1889), p. 42.

profession of women thus had to be opposed, according to the anatomist Wilhelm Waldeyer (1836-1921).⁵² It would induce the opening of all other academic jobs, and this would lead to cultural disadvantages. Woman would aspire to things which had been allotted to man, rather than complementing him through her difference.⁵³ Through her association with reproduction, woman was constructed as a *Gattungswesen* (species-being). As such woman had not made the transition from unity and been differentiated into individuals. Woman was defined by a universality against which all differences receded.⁵⁴ Woman's closeness to

⁵²Waldeyer studied medicine at the universities of Göttingen, Greifswald and Berlin. He taught at the universities of Königsberg, Breslau, Strasbourg (after the Franco-Prussian War), and Berlin. He established himself a name through his lectures, as well as publications (see "Waldeyer-Hartz, Wilhelm von", in Charles Coulston Gillispie (ed.), Dictionary of Scientific Biography (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970-1976).

⁵³Waldeyer, "Studium", p. 43. By 1898 Waldeyer had changed his views. Now he believed that since many women could not follow their natural vocation and be mothers and wives, special universities for women should be opened. He rejected co-education because, according to him men and women learned in different ways, according to their mental characteristics. Separate institutions would maintain gender specific characteristics (see Wilhelm Waldeyer, Ueber Aufgaben und Stellung unserer Universitäten seit der Neugründung des deutschen Reiches: Rede zum Antritt des Rektorates der Königlichen Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität in Berlin (Berlin: W. Büxenstein, 1898), pp. 10-15).

⁵⁴Adolf Lasson, in Kirchhoff (ed.), Akademische Frau, p. 162. For another argument that only men developed into *Persönlichkeiten* see Dr. med. Kluge, Männliches und weibliches Denken: Ein Beitrag zur Frauen- und Erziehungsfrage (Halle a.S.: Carl Marhold, 1902), p. 22. Schopenhauer in 1851 had similarly argued that women existed for procreation and hence identified more with the *Gattung*, rather than as individuals (see Arthur Schopenhauer, Über die Weiber - from Parerga und

nature turned her into a spring of refreshment for man. Her universal disposition constituted the opposite to man's specialization.⁵⁵

The Universities: Institutions of Scholarship and *Bildung*

Related to the gendering of cultural creation, scholarship was constructed as a male, as well as middle-class, domain. It came as no surprise that the women's movement attempted to achieve access to the universities in light of the power that resided in *Bildung*. Feminists had rightly perceived that in the nations of culture the members who "held the first place" had mainly achieved this position through university education.⁵⁶ Yet, to give women access to it questioned what was perceived to constitute the premise for the status and renown of the universities: its male character.

The relative tardiness of the German debates supposed that other Western nations were frequently looked to for comparison. The access of women to higher education in such countries as the United States, England, Russia and Switzerland, was invoked sometimes to argue that women did have the mental capacities to

Paralipomena, vol. 2, ch. 27 (1851) - (Bonn: Götz Schwippert, n.d.), pp. 14-16.

⁵⁵Adolf Lasson, in Kirchhoff (ed.), Akademische Frau, p. 167.

⁵⁶Waldeyer, Aufgaben, pp. 10-11.

undergo higher education,⁵⁷ and that no such thing as the ruin of the family, society and state would be the outcome.⁵⁸ But foreign developments were not taken by all as a measure of how to proceed in Germany on the question. To do so, the graduate in medicine and professor of philosophy at the University of Freiburg, Hugo Münsterberg, asserted, would be to assume that the mental and physical organization of German women was the same, as for example, that of American women.⁵⁹ This was wrong, because there existed considerable "racial differences" among the "cultivated nations".⁶⁰

Foreign examples were also dismissed on the grounds of the outstanding quality of Germany's university education and scholarship, as well as the perceived different aim of the German universities compared to those of other Western nations. At the time academics

⁵⁷See, for example, Arthur König (philosophy and psychology, Friedrich-Wilhelms University, Berlin), in Kirchhoff (ed.), Akademische Frau, p. 158; Hans Buchner (professor of hygiene, University of Munich), in *ibid.*, p. 143; Ottomar Rosenbach, in *ibid.*, p. 79.

⁵⁸Dr Otto Neustätter, Das Frauenstudium im Ausland: Ein Ueberblick über die Zulassung der Frauen zu Mittel- und Hochschulen, sowie zu den akademischen Berufen in den außerdeutschen Kulturländern (München: August Schupp, 1899), p.4.

⁵⁹Münsterberg, in Kirchhoff (ed.), Akademische Frau, p. 343. The professor of economics at the University of Halle, Johannes Conrad similarly argued that to submit women to the same education as men might in exceptional cases not cause damage, and maybe also in other countries, but not in Germany (see *ibid.*, p. 197).

⁶⁰Max Hofmeier (professor of paediatrics at the University of Würzburg), in Kirchhoff (ed.), Akademische Frau, p. 91.

mostly saw the function of the university as a combination of teaching and research. Students themselves were expected to participate to a degree in the pursuit of research. It was acknowledged that the preparation for occupational specialities had to be part of university education, but towards the turn of the century there was much preoccupation that university education was becoming too specialized.⁶¹

Creative power (*Schöpfungskraft*) was thus one of the qualities required of the university student. Creative power, however, was associated with masculinity. For the professor of theology and doctor of philosophy of the Friedrich-Wilhelms University in Berlin, George Runze, who was not adverse to the idea of establishing one university exclusively for women in the Empire, the difference between English and French universities on the one hand, and German ones on the other was that the former were a continuation of school-education and practical exercise, a simple passing of courses. German universities, however, gave guidance to free investigation, to "productive-philosophical pursuit of scholarship".⁶² This meant, to Adolf Lasson, a *Gymnasial* professor and lecturer in philosophy and psychology at the Friedrich-Wilhelms University, Berlin, for instance, that German scholarship more than any other was a male domain. The developments in Russia and the United States,

⁶¹Ringer, *Mandarins*, pp. 106-107.

⁶²Runze, in Kirchhoff (ed.), *Akademische Frau*, p. 11.

according to him, had no bearing on the assessment of the situation in Germany: "Our men are different and our women are different from what they are there." Moreover, German universities were more exclusive. Where scholarly institutions allowed a certain popularization, women might be more easily admitted. But German scholarship was more severe. Thus, "German scholarship is a men's enterprise".⁶³

To Dr Felix Lindner, extraordinary professor of Romance and English Philology at the University of Rostock, what made all the difference between German universities and others was German student-life. Although other countries occasionally produced outstanding scholars, foreign students, according to him, were generally far behind German ones.⁶⁴ Referring to the neo-humanist ideal which stressed the moral impact of learning through "inner growth" and self-development, Lindner declared that the aim of university education was not only to produce a learned person, but a "whole, relatively perfect human being".⁶⁵ Also in accordance with the neo-humanist relationship to classical sources in which the student did not only come to know these sources, but was innerly affected and ultimately

⁶³Lasson, in Kirchhoff (ed.), Akademische Frau, p. 165.

⁶⁴Dr Felix Lindner, Vom Frauenstudium (Rostock: H. Warkentien, 1897), p. 10.

⁶⁵*ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

transformed by their moral and aesthetic examples,⁶⁶ for Lindner, his ideal human being was achieved through a re-living by the individual of the stages of human history. In the *Gymnasien* (which emphasised classical learning) boys became familiar with antiquity and attempted to emulate the men of old. At university, the adolescent "so to speak passes through the middle-ages", emulating medieval customs, such as duelling, drinking, and wooing.⁶⁷

These developments, however, were inaccessible to the female sex. There were no ancient role-models for girls to emulate. Hence they could not access the "spirit of antiquity". Even worse were the middle-ages: female medieval life was not appropriate to be re-lived by contemporary women. Thus women could not leave university as "innerly perfected human being". Rather, they would be but little changed.⁶⁸ Because women could not participate in student life, one of the most important means of *Bildung* would escape them: "they would have to remain approximately on the level of foreign students."⁶⁹

More frequently, however, there was concern that the introduction of women into the sphere of male scholarship would threaten its quality. Hence Wilhelm Waldeyer, in a lecture on medical education and women, which he gave in

⁶⁶Ringer, *Mandarins*, p. 87.

⁶⁷Lindner, *Frauenstudium*, pp. 9-10.

⁶⁸*ibid.*, pp. 11-13.

⁶⁹*ibid.*, p. 14.

1888 to the Congress of German Natural Scientists and Physicians, maintained that woman was mentally more receptive, and man more productive. He rejected the notion that women were mentally inferior, rather than different. Yet, it was man who was inclined to "initiative, action, to the generation of new thoughts and ideas". The male disposition made man more capable to engage in and further scholarship and art. Thus, in the interest of scholarship itself, he argued, medicine should remain in the hands of men.⁷⁰ Ten years later, in 1898, at the 26th German Physicians' Congress it was agreed that female admission into the medical profession would not only harm the "general welfare", but it would also be of no benefit for "the German universities and scholarship" and it would reduce the standing of the medical profession.⁷¹

As in Britain, in turn of the century Germany the dominant discourse was one of a gendered mind/body relationship. Just as sex permeated the entire bodily organization of woman, it determined her mental life.⁷² Unlike man, woman's mental characteristics were determined by her reproductive function. Maternal

⁷⁰Waldeyer, "Studium", p. 40. Also with regards to female physicians, developments in other countries were frequently dismissed as not applicable to Germany (see, for example, Runge, Das Weib, p. 17).

⁷¹"XXVI. Deutscher Ärztetag", Deutsche Medicinische Wochenschrift, 24 (1898), p. 435.

⁷²See, for example, Adolf Lasson, in Kirchhoff (ed.), Akademische Frau, p. 164.

instinct was of overwhelming importance,⁷³ and emotion dominated over reason,⁷⁴ or as it was frequently put: woman worked more with emotions, man with thoughts.⁷⁵ Woman was more concrete, intuitive, impulsive, receptive and reproductive. Man was more abstract, deductive, logical, productive and creative.⁷⁶ With the gradual development of the concept of "intelligence", it was often argued that women, on average, had less of it than men.⁷⁷

⁷³Runge, Das Weib, p. 17.

⁷⁴See, for example, Hofmeier, in Kirchhoff (ed.), Akademische Frau, p. 91.

⁷⁵See, for example, Runge, Das Weib, p. 19; Hermann Ploss, Das Weib in der Natur- und Völkerkunde. Anthropologische Studien, Vol.1, 3rd, rev. ed. by Max Bartles (Leipzig: Th. Grieben, 1891), p. 8.

⁷⁶Bettex, Mann, p. 14; Conrad, in Kirchhoff (ed.), Akademische Frau, p. 197; Emanuel Mendel (professor of psychiatry at the Friedrich-Wilhelms University in Berlin), in *ibid.*, p. 132; Otto Dornblüth, Die geistigen Fähigkeiten der Frau (Rostock: Wilhelm Werther, 1897), p. 7. These conceptions of mental differences were not only held by opponents of the women's movement. Auguste Forel, for example, who had been the director of the "Burghölzli" Asylum in Zurich from 1879 to 1898, favoured the "complete emancipation of women" and for them to "acquire in society rights and duties equal to those of men (in accordance to sexual differences)". But he also perceived the male and female mind to be different in such ways (see Auguste Forel, The Sexual Question: A Scientific, Psychological, Hygienic and Sociological Study for the Cultured Classes, first published 1905 (C.F.Marshall (New York: Rebman Company, 1908)).

⁷⁷See, for example, Erb, in Kirchhoff (ed.), Akademische Frau, p. 126. For a study of the concept of "intelligence" in the United States and France see John Carson, "Talents, Intelligence, and the Construction of Human Difference in France and America, 1750-1920" (PhD Diss, Princeton University, 1994); for gender and the notion of intelligence see Loraine J. Daston, "Weibliche Intelligenz: Geschichte einer Idee", in Lepenies, Wolf (ed.) Wissenschaftskolleg - Institute for Advanced Study

Although it was occasionally argued that it was not clear what the female mind would be capable of under different educational circumstance,⁷⁸ it was generally acknowledged that woman was less capable for higher education and its ideal of mixing instruction with mental production. However, there was an acknowledgement that some exceptional women had mental powers equal to those of some men.⁷⁹ This notion could function to conceptualize the occurrence of successful female students as exceptions which proved the rule which could not be taken as point of reference for the female sex.⁸⁰ But it also provided the rationale for favouring female admission to the universities in view of these exceptional women.⁸¹ Julius Bernstein, professor of physiology at the University of Halle, thus argued that although men generally had more mental power than women, individual

- zu Berlin: Jahrbuch 1987/1988 (Berlin: Nicolaische Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1989), pp. 213-229; for women's role in the construction of a notion of "sexless intelligence" in the United States see Rosalind Rosenberg, Beyond Separate Spheres: Intellectual Roots of Modern Feminism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

⁷⁸See, for example, Senator in Kirchhoff (ed.), Akademische Frau, p. 86; Albert Moll, in *ibid.*, p. 141.

⁷⁹Dornblüth, geistigen Fähigkeiten, p. 23.

⁸⁰See, for example, Wilhelm Erb (professor of psychiatry at the University of Heidelberg) in Kirchhoff, (ed.), Akademische Frau, pp. 125-126; Karl von Bardeleben (professor of anatomy at the University of Jena), in *ibid.*, p. 34; Dorner, in *ibid.*, p. 3.

⁸¹See, for example, Ernst von Leyden (Director of the *Königliche Charité* in Berlin), in Kirchhoff (ed.), Akademische Frau, p. 75; Hermann Senator, in *ibid.*, p. 86; Hofmeier, in *ibid.*, p. 92.

deviations could be so great that a number of women were equally capable as the same number of men, and thus there existed no reason to keep women out of the universities.⁸² Indeed, as the nerve doctor Otto Dornblüth argued, universities should become more exclusive in that they admitted only the "really competent", regardless of sex.⁸³

But the notion that the mental differences between the sexes postulated that generally "woman does not have a scholarly disposition"⁸⁴ for others raised questions about the effects of women's inclusion into the sphere of scholarship. Not only would women not enrich scholarship⁸⁵ - the "sacred object of universities"⁸⁶ -, but women's admission to the universities would lead to a "weakening" and "watering down" of scholarship. The renown of German scholarship would become a thing of the past.⁸⁷ "Our universities", Otto von Gierke argued, "are men's universities". They were adapted to the male mind, to admit women would suppose that it they would have to cater to the female mind:

The heavy armoury of rigid scholarship will be

⁸²Bernstein, in Kirchhoff (ed.), Akademische Frau, pp. 42-43.

⁸³Dornblüth, geistige Fähigkeiten, p. 25.

⁸⁴Bettex, Mann, p. 139; see also Dorner, in Kirchhoff (ed.), Akademische Frau, p. 5.

⁸⁵Möbius, physiologischen Schwachsinn, p. 13.

⁸⁶Jacob Caro (professor of history at the University of Breslau), in Kirchhoff (ed.), Akademische Frau, p. 186.

⁸⁷Bettex, Mann, pp.172-73.

excluded more and more from instruction, ... the way of thinking will become shallow. This would not be the old German university any more, not the distinguished school of male mental power, not the valiant fighter, who helped to gain the primacy of our nation.⁸⁸

The masculinity of scholarship and university education was not only an element which had brought about the "primacy of our nation". It was also a crucial factor of class society. The German bourgeoisie defined itself against the urban working class, providing a negative point of reference. From the 1860s onwards, a mid-century bourgeois ideal of class harmony had been increasingly replaced by a growing class antagonism. Working-class organization was perceived by the propertied bourgeoisie as a challenge to the rights of capital, which became ever greater with the enormous growth of the Social Democratic Party after the lifting of the anti-Socialist laws in 1890.⁸⁹ But the social democratic movement was also perceived a threat to the educated middle-class and their special "property" - education and culture. Hence, the social democratic and the women's movement were sometimes perceived to be a threat both to contemporary society and its class divisions. It was no surprise that the Social Democrats who sought to bring all classes

⁸⁸Gierke, in Kirchhoff (ed.), Akademische Frau, p. 24.

⁸⁹David Blackbourn, "The German Bourgeoisie: An Introduction", in *idem* and Richard J. Evans (eds), The German Bourgeoisie: Essays on the Social History of the German Middle Class from the Late Eighteenth to the Early Twentieth Century (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 16-17.

"into disarray", argued Wilhelm Alex Freund, the director of the women's hospital of the University of Strasbourg, had made inroads among the women's movement who equally attempted to change the social order.⁹⁰ The women's movement, in its endeavour to open the universities to women, was associated by some with the social democratic movement. Just as socialism in its "all levelling aspirations" was not only an enemy of property, but also sought to degrade the "ideal goods of scholarship", the admission of women to medical education, with its standard lowering effects, would constitute a "cultural regression".⁹¹

The view that women's admission to the universities would have detrimental effects upon scholarship and culture and would be an invitation to "regression" was not unanimously held, however. For some, such as the professor of theology at the Friedrich-Wilhelms University in Berlin, Hermann Freiherr von Soden, it was rather a "welcome sign of cultural progress". It was the universalist assumptions of the ideal of *Bildung*, explained in chapter five, which led to such argumentation. The acquisition of scholarly *Bildung*, according to Soden, was a "human right", not a "male

⁹⁰Wilhelm Alex Freund (b. 1833), in Kirchhoff (ed.), Akademische Frau, pp. 104-105.

⁹¹Sänger, "Zur Frage weiblicher Ärzte in Deutschland", Monatsschrift für Geburtshilfe und Gynaecology; quoted in Hacker, Die Ärztin, pp. 6-7.

right".⁹² The waste of a "great amount of mental power" was a loss to "our cultured world".⁹³ Following this assumption, Wilhelm Preyer, professor of psychology at the University of Berlin, declared that the reasons to admit women to the universities were that

the nation on the whole, scholarship and technology, the progressive development of humanity altogether, would be rendered a very great service by this admission.⁹⁴

Although the army, navy, government, law and church had no place for women, scholarship and art did. If young women, childless wives and widows could direct their capacities towards these fields, rather than waste them on "null and void, useless, harmful, even illicit ephemeral diversion and superfluous externals", an "unmeasurable amount of energy" could benefit

⁹²Hermann Freiherr von Soden, in Kirchhoff (ed.), Akademische Frau, p. 12. Vincenz von Cernzy (b. 1842) of the university of Heidelberg similarly argued that "(f)rom the point of view of general culture (*allgemeine Kultur*) all human capacities should be given the opportunity of development and in the interest of progress it is surely opportune that also women take an interest in all stirrings (*Regungen*) of the human *Geist*." (see *ibid.*, p. 95). Arthur König of the Friedrich-Wilhelms University of Berlin (philosophy and psychology) equally believed that women's admission to university was *Kulturfortschritt*, and that women, just as men, should have the right to enjoy all the elements of *Bildung* of a certain culture (see *ibid.*, p. 156).

⁹³Josef Kohler (professor of law), in Kirchhoff (ed.), Akademische Frau, p. 28.

⁹⁴Preyer, in Kirchhoff (ed.), Akademische Frau, p. 170.

scholarship.⁹⁵

To admit women to universities was to inscribe them into the neo-humanist concept of *Bildung*. Ottomar Rosenbach, professor of internal medicine at the University of Breslau, thus argued that neither the natural scientist, nor the historian or philosopher should try to deny any one individual or "class" of people the possibility of "higher development" out of either scientific, ethical or social reasons. Also those people who were impeded by artificial or natural factors in their development, that was to say "less perfect beings", should be given access to "the blessings of culture".⁹⁶ There existed no reason to be "completely hostile" to the demand of women to depart the "stage of mental childhood" and enter that of independence.⁹⁷

Moreover, as Rosenbach argued, it was women who would particularly represent the "ideal striving for scholarship for its own sake".⁹⁸ During the turn of the century, the increasing specialization of higher education in light of professionalization threatened the perceived function of the university as the centre of the

⁹⁵*ibid.*, pp. 170-171. Albert Moll, consulting physician and sexologist also argued that women with an higher education would be useful to society (*Allgemeinheit*) through an academic occupation. New workers would be gained for scholarly and scientific research (see *ibid.*, pp. 139, 142)

⁹⁶Rosenbach, in Kirchhoff (ed.), Akademische Frau, p. 78.

⁹⁷*ibid.*, p. 84.

⁹⁸*ibid.*, p. 81.

spread of *Bildung*.⁹⁹ It raised concerns among academics about that higher studies were turning simply into a *Brotstudium* ("bread-education", education for the purpose of earning a living).¹⁰⁰ Women, according to Rosenbach, more than anyone else could go to university free from all accusations of undertaking a *Brotstudium*.¹⁰¹

Although some, like Wilhelm Wundt, the director of the Institute for Experimental Psychology of the University of Leipzig, compared the exclusion of women from universities with the maintenance of privileges of class,¹⁰² for others it was women's role in the consolidation of the values of the educated middle-class, which provided the rationale to favour increased female *Bildung*. Bourgeois women's role as wives and mothers of *Bildungsbürger*, as explained in the previous chapter, involved the perception that they had the role to

⁹⁹Rüdiger von Bruch, "Gesellschaftliche Funktionen und politische Rollen des Bildungsbürgertums im Wilhelminischen Reich", in Jürgen Kocka (ed.), Bildungsbürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert, Vol. 4, Politischer Einfluß und gesellschaftliche Formation (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1989), p. 150.

¹⁰⁰Eduard von Hartmann thus argued that wanting access to the universities was based on the misconception that they were the only place where *Bildung* could be obtained. But the universities had turned into institutions of vocational education. Reading was the proper way to achieve *Bildung* and access to higher education thus superfluous (see Hartmann, in Kirchhoff (ed.), Akademische Frau, pp. 152-153; and *idem*, "Jungfernfrage", p. 127).

¹⁰¹Rosenbach, in Kirchhoff (ed.), Akademische Frau, p. 84.

¹⁰²Wundt (b. 1832), in Kirchhoff (ed.), Akademische Frau, p. 179; see also Arthur König, in *ibid.*, p. 161.

transmit the values of the educated middle-class to the following generations.¹⁰³ Women's task was to make that which had crystallized from the different and competing currents as durable *geistiger* cultural progress, the lasting *geistige* property of the new generation.¹⁰⁴ By the end of the century this conception led some to argue in favour of higher education. Women who had received a university education and were in the "full possession of the knowledge of their times" could undertake this educational mission of theirs even better.¹⁰⁵ In the eyes of Otto Dornblüth, women's *Bildung* was also what really led to domesticity. This became clear, he argued, when comparing the domesticity of bourgeois families with that of the working-class, i.e. of *Ungebildeten*.¹⁰⁶

Thus a space was opened to favour greater *Bildung* for women to increase their role in the cultural enterprise of the educated middle class in a reproductive sense. It led Hugo Münsterberg, professor of philosophy at the university of Freiburg, for example to argue that special institution for higher learning should be opened

¹⁰³Ulrich Engelhardt, "'...geistige Fesseln'? Zur normativen Plazierung der Frau als 'Kulturträgerin' in der Bürgerlichen Gesellschaft während der Frühzeit der deutschen Frauenbewegung", in Rainer M. Lepsius (ed.), Bildungsbürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert, vol. 3, Lebensführung und ständische Vergesellschaftung (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1992). p. 163.

¹⁰⁴Hans Hacker, quoting Bismarck in Ärztin, p. 35.

¹⁰⁵*ibid.*, p. 80; see also Lassar, Das medicinische Studium.

¹⁰⁶Dornblüth, geistige Fähigkeiten, p. 40.

to women. Through the "serious contact with the best goods of culture", a free personality would be formed. It was the *gebildete* woman who, in the service of the living and coming generations, was really the "carrier" and "guardian" of ideals, since she was spared the "rough male struggle for existence".¹⁰⁷

The Women's Movement and the *gebildete* Woman

Feminists, affiliated to all kinds of different organizations, in their intend of introducing women into the universities hence sparked off public debates on whether or not women should be admitted. As in Britain they engaged in negotiations of legitimizing this change. During the late nineteenth century, an important aspect of the arguments of members of the women's movement for female educational reforms continued to be the surplus number of middle-class women over men.¹⁰⁸ Although it has been questioned by some historians wether the statistical

¹⁰⁷Münsterberg, in Kirchhoff (ed.), Akademische Frau, pp. 352-353.

¹⁰⁸See, for example, Helene Lange, Frauenbildung (Berlin: L. Oehmigke's, 1889) pp. 85, 114; Elisabeth Gnauck-Kühne, Das Universitätsstudium der Frauen: Ein Beitrag zur Frauenfrage (Oldenburg and Leipzig: Schulzsche Hof-Buchhandlung und Hof-Buchruckerei, 1891), p. 2; Ottilie von Bistram, Frauenbildung - Frauenstudium (1893), p. 7; Lina Morgenstern, Ein offenes Wort über des medizinische Studium der Frauen an Herrn Prof. Dr. W. Waldeyer (Berlin: Verlag der Deutschen Hausfrauen Zeitung, 1888), p. 12.

estimates of unmarried women were correct,¹⁰⁹ there was a wide-spread perception among contemporaries, not only feminists as we have seen, that there existed a "Spinster Question", which was central to the women's movement. Indeed, one commentator suggested that the motto of the movement should be "Spinsters of the world unite".¹¹⁰

Hedwig Kettler, the founder of the *Frauenverein Reform*, thus argued in 1888, the year of the formation of the association, that

[t]he central point of the Woman Question in Germany today is to be seen in that, on the one hand, a great percentage of women, who formerly got married, do not get married nowadays any more, but that, on the other hand, this percentage of women, who do not find their maintenance through marriage, nevertheless do not have the possibility any more to gain it outside of marriage.¹¹¹

There were "one million" women in the *Reich* who could not marry, partly because there were not enough men, and partly because not all men married. Yet, women were educated solely for marriage. Industrialization had led to a situation where it was not so much that women were trying to remove themselves from their sphere, but

¹⁰⁹Ute Frevert has argued that demographical conditions actually bear no relationship to the estimated number of unmarried women, nor did the marriage rate go down to the extent it was maintained (see Ute Frevert, Frauen-Geschichte: Zwischen Bürgerlicher Verbesserung und Neuer Weiblichkeit (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1986), p. 117.

¹¹⁰quoted in Hedwig Dohm, Die Antifeministen: Ein Buch der Verteidigung (Berlin: Ferd. Dümmler, 1902), p. 165.

¹¹¹Frau J. [Hedwig] Kettler, "Der Kernpunkt der Frauenfrage", Der Frauenberuf, 2 (1988), p. 14.

that this sphere was being removed from them. The domestic occupations of old had been taken over by mechanized mass-production. Hence, women's hands had not only been left idle within the home, but the economic changes had also done away with an extended family structure. Unmarried women could not be maintained any more by male relatives. It was unmarried middle-class women who in these social and economic changes had their place taken away, but society had not yet given them a new one.¹¹² It was the "most basic human right" for which women were battling: the right for existence. To achieve this, middle-class female education had to be reformed.¹¹³

To members of the bourgeois women's movement the education and occupation question was often one specific to the middle-class. In the working-class women engaged in class-specific occupations and thus were equals to men in terms of their work, as well as in the education they received. The "Woman Question" in the working-class was part of the "Social Question". In the "upper ten thousand" women were not subjected to material hardship, and had easier access to education. It was hence in the middle-class that men were privileged over women. There was a mental gap between the sexes which not only interfered with familial harmony, but also kept women who were not provided for by a husband without the

¹¹²Frau J. [Hedwig] Kettler, Was ist Frauen-Emancipation? (Weimar: Frauenberuf-Verlag, 1891), pp. 4, 6, 8.

¹¹³*ibid.*, pp. 11, 14.

possibility of engaging in status-adequate employment.¹¹⁴ Unprovided for middle-class women needed to maintain themselves, yet they did not have the right, nor the necessary "mental property" to work.¹¹⁵ Instead of problematizing the prospect of competition between the sexes in middle-class occupations, the avoidance of competition between middle- and working-class women was emphasised:¹¹⁶ middle-class women should be given employment which corresponded with their social standing (or their *Bildung*) and which they did not have to "steal" from working-class women.¹¹⁷

The spinster who needed employment constituted a powerful figure for the demand for female higher education. But these demands did not only focus on this. The concept of *Bildung* remained a central aspect of the demands of the women's movement and the spinster was not the only women who should be more *gebildet*. To deny women

¹¹⁴Lange, Frauenbildung, p. 86; Kettler, Was ist, p. 8; Gnauck-Kühne, Universitätsstudium, pp. 4-5, 11-12; Henriette Fürth, "Die Ehefrage und der Beruf: Sozialistische Betrachtungen", Die Frau, 4 (1896/97), pp. 710-718; Anna Kuhnov, Gedanken und Erfahrungen über Frauenbildung und Frauenberuf (Leipzig: Hermann Haacke, 1896), pp. 6-7; S. Binder, Weibliche Aerzte: Eine Studie (Stuttgart: G.J.Götschen, 1892), pp. 3-4.

¹¹⁵Gnauck-Kühne, Universitätsstudium, pp. 13-14.

¹¹⁶See also Marianne Schmidbaur, "Hedwig Kettler und der Verein Frauenbildung Reform", in Ilse Brehmer (ed.), Mütterlichkeit als Profession? Lebensläufe deutscher Pädagoginnen in der ersten Hälfte dieses Jahrhunderts (Pfaffenweiler: Centaurus, 1990), p. 45 for this.

¹¹⁷Kettler, "Kernpunkt", p. 19.

in general *Bildung* was a obstacle to progress.¹¹⁸

Increased female *Bildung* would create

more competent women, wives and mothers. Whether as a member of the family, or a member of society, the woman, whose mind, will and feeling are truly *gebildet*, whose thinking is sharpened, who in time has learned to take her duties seriously, will, where ever life positions her, be able to be active more beneficially than the woman with the although frequently manifold, but dispersed and superficial *Bildung*, which until now is thought to be fit for her.¹¹⁹

What women would gain in *Bildung* would be an investment in the future of humanity.¹²⁰

That female *Bildung* could extend to university education had been shown by the developments in other countries. During the late nineteenth century, feminists frequently stressed the international dimensions of the women's movement.¹²¹ Developments in other countries were proof that women (including German women as seen in Switzerland) were capable of higher education.¹²² Moreover, it was pointed out, if the country of "thinkers and poets" did not want to start lagging behind the other *Kulturstaaen*, they had to put more effort into women's

¹¹⁸Bistram, Frauenbildung, p. 11.

¹¹⁹*ibid.*, p. 19.

¹²⁰*ibid.*, p. 29.

¹²¹See, for example, Gnauck-Kühne, Universitätsstudium, p. 16

¹²²See, for example, Eliza Ichenhäuser, Die Ausnahmestellung Deutschlands in Sachen des Frauenstudium (Berlin: Hermann Walther, 1897); Morgenstern, Offenes Wort, pp. 14ff.

Bildung.¹²³ Or, as the member of the *Verein Frauenbildung - Frauenstudium*, Ottilie von Bistram, rhetorically asked

should the Japanese woman be mentally so superior to the German one - the daughter of the greatest philosophers - that even she gets permission to study at university...?¹²⁴

Women Physicians

With the renewed upsurge of feminist activity a strong movement for the admission of women to the medical profession emerged. For radicals the demand for female physicians was part of the campaign to admit women to all faculties. Moderates, however, developed ideas that there existed a special need of female physicians to protect the modesty of female patients. This argument was frequently taken up outside the women's movement.

The ADF in its petition of 1888 thus declared that the access of women to the medical profession was not sought in the interest of those few women who would engage in this occupation, but in the interest of the "sanitary and moral advancement of the entire female sex".¹²⁵ The petition was accompanied by a pamphlet by Mathilde Weber in which she expanded on this theme of the

¹²³Bistram, Frauenbildung, p. 18

¹²⁴*ibid.*

¹²⁵"Petition des Allgemeinen Deutschen Frauenvereins", in Elke Frederiksen (ed.), Die Frauenfrage in Deutschland, 1865-1915: Texte und Dokumente (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1981), p. 226.

"ethical and sanitary" need of female physicians. This pamphlet was also published independently, and by 1893, it was in its fifth edition.¹²⁶ For Weber, a member of the executive committee of the ADF, who was married to a professor at the University of Tübingen, the question of female physicians was thus "not only a question of rights and predicament, but also an ethical question."¹²⁷ She insisted that female doctors were a necessity for female patients, because many ailing women, out of modesty, did not see a male doctor in time.¹²⁸ This, as it was sometimes pointed out, was a problem of particularly important dimension because the female reproductive system was the source of many diseases and ailments.¹²⁹

In the claims for female medical training, developments in other countries also became part of the argument that women could successfully be physicians.¹³⁰

¹²⁶Mathilde Weber, "Ärztinnen für Frauenkrankheiten eine ethische und sanitäre Notwendigkeit" (1888), in Margrit Twellmann, Die deutsche Frauenbewegung: Ihre Anfänge und Erste Entwicklung, Vol. 2, Quellen, 1843-1889 (Meisenheim am Glan: Anton Hain, 1972), pp. 441-444; Mathilde Weber, Ärztinnen für Frauenkrankheiten eine ethische und sanitäre Notwendigkeit, 5th rev. ed. (Berlin: L. Oehmigke, 1893).

¹²⁷Weber, Ärztinnen, p. 6.

¹²⁸*ibid.*, p. 17.

¹²⁹E. Kattner, Zur Aerztinnenfrage: Warum verlangen wir weibliche Frauen-Aerzte? (Tübingen: Franz Fues, 1891), pp. 5-9.

¹³⁰See, for example, Frau Dr. H.B. Adams, "Frauenstudium und Frauentauglichkeit", Deutsche Medicinische Wochenschrift, 22 (1896), p. 28; Anna Kraußneck, Die Ärztin im XIX Jahrhundert: Vortrag gehalten im Verein "Frauenwohl" (Berlin: U. Winser, 1888), part. p. 10; Dr. Agnes Bluhm, "Die Entwicklung und

For Mathilde Weber, always focusing on the need of women physicians for female patients, comparison with other countries also took on another meaning. The German women's associations were not going to rest until women as patients received the same consideration as those of other nations of culture:

We German women, who have always been praised for our decency, should not for much longer blush in front of foreigners, because in the case of sexual ailments we can only, with painful conflict with our innate delicacy and our acquired customs find cure through - male help, while in other countries the existence of numerous practising women physicians has already proved the possibility of such a thing, which here is still frequently denied on theoretical grounds.¹³¹

It was not only that there was a need for female physicians and that women had proved to be able to be physicians. As Sidonie Binder¹³² argued, women were also particularly suited for the medical profession. Not only could they acquire all the necessary knowledge and skills, but moreover they had an advantage over men in the emotional input that was needed for the job. Human love was stronger in women, and readiness to help, the spirit of sacrifice, patience and friendliness were

der gegenwärtige Stand des medicinischen Frauenstudiums in den europäischen und aussereuropäischen Ländern", Deutsche Medicinische Wochenschrift, 21 (1895), pp. 648-650; Dr med. Anna Dahms, "Der ärztliche Beruf der Frau", Deutscher Frauen-Anwalt, No 12 (1878), pp. 353-363.; Binder, Weibliche Aerzte, p. 18.

¹³¹Weber, Ärztinnen, pp. 15-16.

¹³²No biographical details available, other than that she was associated with the moderates.

female virtues.¹³³

This and the need for female physicians supposed that for those middle-class women for whom marriage was not possible and who thus turned away from the task of reproduction to focus on the "duties of an individuality", medicine as a particularly suitable occupation.¹³⁴ Neither Binder nor Weber thought that this would constitute a problem for the medical profession in that it would increase competition: the opening of medical education would not attract flocks of female students. Most women would continue to dedicate themselves to domestic occupation.¹³⁵

Helene Lange: Motherhood and *Bildung*

A central figure of the moderate women's movement during the 1880s and 1890s was Helene Lange (1848-1930).¹³⁶ It was reforms of female education not only for

¹³³*ibid.*, pp. 43-44.

¹³⁴Binder, Weibliche Aerzte, pp. 7; 45.

¹³⁵Weber, Ärztinnen, p. 44, Binder, Weibliche Aerzte, p. 25.

¹³⁶Lange was the daughter of a well-off merchant. Her mother died when she was six. Until her father's death when she was sixteen she went to a higher girls' school in Oldenburg. Lange never married. She worked as a governess from 1867 to 1871. After a modest inheritance she moved to Berlin, to prepare and sit the examination for certification as a teacher. In 1876 she started teaching at a private girls' school. Lange lived in Berlin for forty-six years, where she met Gertrud Bäumer in 1898 with whom she was to share her life until her death. In Berlin, Lange got to know various women who were involved in the women's organizations. In 1890 she

the sake of employment, but also for the sake of *Bildung*, which constituted the central point of Lange's search for reform: "If we are still renouncing all other rights", she said in a speech at a general meeting of the *Allgemeiner Deutscher Frauenverein*, "we may not do so for the right to free *Bildung*."¹³⁷

Lange was an example *par excellence* of an exponent of "spiritual motherhood".¹³⁸ Motherhood within this ideological tradition did not only refer to physical motherhood, but was seen to legitimate a specifically female cultural mission.¹³⁹ Hence notions of feminine difference were central to Lange's views on women's role in society and their education which should enable them to fulfil these roles.

became a co-founder of the *Allgemeiner Deutscher Lehrerinnenverein* (General German Women Teachers Association). From 1893 to 1921 she was in the managing committee of the *Allgemeiner Deutscher Frauenverein*, and from 1894 to 1905 in that of the *Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine*, and from 1893 she edited the women's journal *Die Frau* (see Ute Gerhard, *Unerhört: Die Geschichte der deutschen Frauenbewegung* (Reinbeck: Rowohlt, 1990), pp. 145-146). For Lange's activities in the reform of female school education and teachers training see Mechthild Engel, "Helene Lange: Gegen Gemütsmastkur - für geistige Kost", in Brehmer (ed.), *Mütterlichkeit*, pp. 13-36; James C. Albisetti, "Could Separate Be Equal? Helene Lange and Women's Education in Imperial Germany", *History of Education Quarterly* (1982), pp. 301-317.

¹³⁷Helene Lange, *Die ethische Bedeutung der Frauenbewegung* (Berlin: L. Oehmigke, 1889), p. 18.

¹³⁸For a study of feminist ideas of public and private motherhood as an intellectual tradition see Taylor, *Feminism and Motherhood*.

¹³⁹Annette Kliever, *Geistesfrucht und Leibesfrucht* (Pfaffenweiler: Centaurus, 1993), p. 19.

In 1887 she published the "Yellow Brochure"¹⁴⁰, which accompanied petitions by a group of women to the Prussian Ministry of Education and the House of Deputies. In them it was requested that women teachers should play a greater role in the upper grades of girls' schools and that the state should establish institutions which would provide the necessary training for women teachers. In her pamphlet Lange favoured the opening of the universities for women to become physicians. Yet, female teachers, her main preoccupation, should not be educated at universities like male teachers. Rather, she requested special female institutions of higher education, because women were different from men and had different roles in society.¹⁴¹

However, two years later, in 1889, after a visit to England, Lange came to argue that women should receive the same education as men. She maintained that "the Woman Question is an international one".¹⁴² Lange's language of female educational reform was very much located in a German context of ideas about *Bildung*, but the developments in England, more specifically Emily Davies' insistence on providing women with the same Cambridge education as men, led Lange to argue in favour of female

¹⁴⁰Helene Lange, Die höhere Mädchenschule und ihre Bestimmung: Begleitschrift zu einer Petition an das preußische Unterrichtsministerium und das preußische Abgeordnetenhaus (Berlin: L.Oehmigke, 1887). See also chapter five.

¹⁴¹*ibid.*, p. 58.

¹⁴²Lange, Frauenbildung, p. 4.

university education. She continued to maintain that this approach was questionable, because there was no doubt that men and women had different tasks in the world: numerous physical and psychical difference seemed to point to that. Yet, women were not "innerly free enough" to find their own way, and moreover (here she was directly influenced by Emily Davies' views) men would only recognize an education as thorough and sufficient which was the same as theirs - this was a truth which "maybe we also have to recognize in Germany".¹⁴³

The underlying basis of Lange's arguments for reform throughout was the notion that woman was different from man, and that this difference was not given its due influence:

The strength of the women's movement lies solely in the notion that woman, as she is anatomically different from man down to the tip of her toe, this is also the case psychically, and that thus she can put different characteristics at the service of the development of cultured humanity (*Kulturmenscheit*), which until now have been scarcely or not at all represented.¹⁴⁴

What lay at the basis of female difference was that "[w]oman is meant for motherhood; this designation conditions her physical and psychical character."¹⁴⁵

For women to accomplish their mission *Bildung* was

¹⁴³*ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

¹⁴⁴Helene Lange, "Altes und Neues zur Frauenfrage", *Die Frau*, 2 (1894/95), p. 538; see also *idem*, "Intellektuelle Grenzlinien zwischen Mann und Frau", *Die Frau*, 4 (1896/9), pp. 322-323.

¹⁴⁵Lange, "Intellektuelle Grenzlinien", p. 326.

indispensable, according to Helene Lange. It was *Bildung* which would "elevate" physical motherhood to ethical motherhood. Through *Bildung* women would be enabled wholly to fulfil their designation. With it women could become "innerly free ... female personalities",¹⁴⁶ that is personalities, in whom the human, as well as the specifically feminine capacities had been developed.¹⁴⁷

Lange maintained that differences between the sexes grew with increasing culture, and that it was man who had gained what really constituted a human being: individual character. Woman, however, generally had remained a *Gattungswesen* (species-being). However, Lange did not attribute this to woman's reproductive function, but to man's physical superiority. This physical superiority which allowed men to gain privileges over women was soon accompanied by an acquired mental superiority.¹⁴⁸ Only a more thorough *Bildung* could make women catch up the lead man had gained, and bring the specifically female characteristics to full development.¹⁴⁹

According to Lange, contemporary women were undergoing "inner change". The initial reason for this had been the Social Question, which came along with industrialisation and caused the need for many women to face "the predicament of life" on their own. These

¹⁴⁶Lange, *ethische Bedeutung*, pp. 12-13.

¹⁴⁷Lange, *höhere Mädchenschule*, p. 20.

¹⁴⁸Lange, "Altes und Neues", p. 581.

¹⁴⁹*ibid.*, p. 581.

developments could only have temporary ruinous effects. In the long run, they would be beneficial. Through struggling for existence, women became aware of their strength. The conditions were there for women to develop from *Gattungswesen* to individual characters (*Individualitäten*). The women's movement was now aiming to bring about the corresponding external change. Of central importance in this process was to direct energies to make "freeing *Bildung*" accessible to women. If enough women received it, the duties and rights of women would increasingly grow - external conditions always adapted to inner ones.¹⁵⁰

This inner change which Lange saw inscribed women into the *bürgerliche* ideal of free personalities who through inner mental and moral maturity would be able to transform external society. Woman, according to Lange, was now becoming aware of her "full meaning as a human being; she demands human rights". Woman was transforming from a *Gattungswesen* into individual beings, that is "free human beings", who felt and demanded the right for self-determination. This constituted a great cultural progress. Women, for whom this had taken place in the past in exceptional cases, were now as a sex becoming "free personalities" with moral responsibilities who were capable of influencing their environment according to higher ethical principles. Women were moving from mental

¹⁵⁰Lange, *ethische Bedeutung*, pp. 4, 7, 17; *idem.*, "Altes und Neues", p. 537.

and moral immaturity to maturity.¹⁵¹ This was a transition which had already taken place with man. Now women had to cease to submit to the wills and views of men without reflection. Thus the *Volk* would really become a union of free personalities, rather than a will-less mass subjected to absolutism.¹⁵²

The inscription of women into the ideal of free personalities, however, did not suppose for Lange that gender became of no consequence. For Lange, gender difference was build upon a common human nature. Just as their bodies were made up of the same elements,

so does the mind feed on the same elements and operates according to the same laws...Work according to scientific methods is done in the same way in both sexes, it only has to be learned. Both are human beings...for both the highest ability, which has to reign over all others, is reason.¹⁵³

Yet, beyond this common human nature there existed fundamental mental differences between the sexes. Although when looking at the mental differences between men and woman it was not clear yet, what was natural and what was artificially created through environment and inheritance, there was no question that sex was reflected in the mind. The nature of woman was conditioned by motherhood, which was reflected in her tendency to the personal and concrete, capacity for empathy, which

¹⁵¹Lange, ethische Bedeutung, pp. 4-5; 8.

¹⁵²*ibid.*, p. 9.

¹⁵³*ibid.*, p. 325.

constituted the foundation of altruism, compassion and love. Man, on the contrary, had a greater tendency to the abstract, speculative, systematic and impersonal.¹⁵⁴ It was not sure yet where the "intellectual borderlines" were in terms of scholarly achievement, since women, particularly in other cultural countries, were shifting these boundaries more and more. But man was more productive and genius was more commonly represented in the male sex; the furthering of scholarship and art was thus more of a male domain. There was a lot of scope of variety and individual deviation. Among the female sex outstanding capacity for abstraction was not unknown, of which the mathematician Sofia Kowalewskaya was one example.¹⁵⁵

But in male-dominated culture, woman had been eliminated from the ranks of the creatures of reason (*Vernunftswesen*), through a socially imposed reduction of women's function to physical motherhood.¹⁵⁶ Man had conceived of himself as the "human being *par excellence*", as "the norm, against which woman is measured." From this point of view woman had been conceived of as an "undeveloped man." Thus, "she is eliminated from cultural work; developed man, of course, can execute it much better than the undeveloped one."¹⁵⁷ Yet, motherhood, in

¹⁵⁴Lange, "Intellektuelle Grenzlinien", p. 324, 327.

¹⁵⁵*ibid.*, pp. 325-326; Lange, Frauenbildung, p. 89.

¹⁵⁶Lange, "Intellektuelle Grenzlinien", pp. 326.

¹⁵⁷*ibid.*, p. 322.

Lange's construction was not a function which retained woman closer to nature and precluded her participation in cultural tasks.¹⁵⁸ Rather, female difference was a crucial complement which was needed outside of the home. A sexual division of labour was a vital element for progressing civilization and increasing difference between the sexes accompanied heightened culture, seen in the blurring of types among "uncivilized peoples". However, what she called a "mechanical" sexual division of labour, which allotted "to woman the home and to man the world" as a permanent institutions was neither just, nor practicable, nor had it proved to be advantageous for society. The right sexual division of labour would be an "organic" one. This division of labour would direct upon the same object the different influences of gender, which then would complement each other in all cultural spheres. Culture would incorporate and give full freedom of expression to female difference, it would replace the one-sidedness, determined by man, of present culture, and all its reflections in social life.¹⁵⁹

Motherhood was thus a irreplaceable "cultural factor" and bestowed woman with the function of not only being the mother of families, but the "mothers of humanity". To fulfil this function appropriately, women's emotions had to be controlled by reason and purified by

¹⁵⁸*ibid.*, p. 322.

¹⁵⁹*ibid.*, pp. 328-330.

mental culture.¹⁶⁰ Women had the same right to mental work. Nature itself would establish the boundaries of women's mental education and employment capacity. Gender difference would only be partly reflected in a division of employment. Difference would also come to an expression in the same occupations.¹⁶¹

Whereas the male disposition led man mainly to explore and reshape the external world, woman moulded the internal.¹⁶² *Bildung* for women was necessary for them to be able to fulfil this function. They were the educators of the coming generations, either within their own families, or, for those who did not get married, in the education of the young outside of the home.¹⁶³ Thus her demand in 1887: "Give us better women teachers, and we will have better mothers, and through them better human beings."¹⁶⁴ *Bildung* for women was necessary to consolidate the *bürgerliche* ideals. If women themselves were unfree, had no views of their own, and no specific *Weltanschauung*, how were they supposed to bring up free, independent *Persönlichkeiten*?¹⁶⁵

Over the years, Lange increased the emphasis on the

¹⁶⁰*ibid*, pp. 326, 333.

¹⁶¹Lange, Frauenbildung, pp. 91-92, 118; *idem*, ethische Bedeutung, pp. 10-11.

¹⁶²Lange, höhere Mädchenschule, p. 19; *idem*, ethische Bedeutung, p. 11.

¹⁶³Lange, höhere Mädchenschule, pp. 19, 21, 56.

¹⁶⁴*ibid.*, p. 43.

¹⁶⁵Lange, ethische Bedeutung, p. 6.

necessity of women's participation in the public world, not only as teachers. They could acquire the scholarly baggage for any occupation, she argued in 1897,¹⁶⁶ and for a better future of society, their participation in all kinds of spheres of social life was vital.

Female *Bildung* and the Regeneration of the Social Organism

During the last decade of the nineteenth century, feminists from different wings of the movement conceived of female *Bildung* as means to regenerate contemporary social conditions. Helene Lange thus believed that society was harmed by the denial of more *Bildung* to women. The problem lay with the absence of feminine difference in culture and public life, but influence of "woman can not be dispensed with in public life, without harm for the collectivity."¹⁶⁷ Human cultural development in its greatness and deficiencies, she argued, carried the stamp of male peculiarity.¹⁶⁸ Those, she said, who thought that "our culture and public affairs" were perfect, should keep away from opening institutions of *Bildung* for women.¹⁶⁹ Yet, Lange maintained, contemporary

¹⁶⁶Lange, "Intellektuelle Grenzlinien", p. 325.

¹⁶⁷Lange, "Altes und Neues", p. 585.

¹⁶⁸*ibid.*, pp. 537; 541.

¹⁶⁹*ibid.*, p. 581.

life was full of deficiencies.¹⁷⁰ She believed that feminine difference was necessary to redeem the "faulty developments" of modernity which had brought alcoholism, prostitution, and did not abolish war but made slaughter more efficient.¹⁷¹

Lange was not the only one to argue that it was in the hands of women to redeem the deficiencies of the present social conditions. According to Elsbeth von der Decken,¹⁷² these were "unhealthy" and this was expressed mainly in the "devaluation and selfishness of the upper, and the brutalization and embitterment of the lower orders." The roots of this state of affairs, she suggested, lay with the "mental and ethical defects that affect our women."¹⁷³ She thus placed the responsibility at women's feet. It was within the gradual retirement of middle-class women from "profitable activity" with the onset of industrialization that their "social guilt" resided. Once the industrializing process had set in, women had not taken care of the home any more through their diligence, but rather this role had been taken on

¹⁷⁰Helene Lange, "Professor Albert und das medicinische Studium der Frauen", Die Frau, 3 (1895/96), p. 146.

¹⁷¹*ibid.*, pp. 146-147.

¹⁷²No biographical data available, other than that she was connected to the moderate wing of the women's movement.

¹⁷³E. von der Decken, Die gebildete Frau und die neue Zeit: Eine Gabe an die deutschen Frauen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1897), p. 5.

by industry in return for money. Middle-class women's pursuit of leisure and the suspension of their engagement in any meaningful occupation which had followed, had led to their mental degeneration (*Verflachung*), and thus man had been deprived of his best moral hold - his esteem of woman.¹⁷⁴ With the decay of women, men had also decayed, and thus the entire *Volk*:

The family is the nutrient for the great and good of a *Volk*, and woman, as the guardian of family-life, is also the guardian of these treasures. - When woman sinks, the entire *Volk* sinks.¹⁷⁵

Middle-class man, with his disposition to focus on the impersonal, ignored the mental degeneration of women, as he ignored that of the working class. What was to be done, then, was that women of the higher orders, with their free time, had to start to engage themselves with useful occupations, most importantly to look after the working class. To heal the damage of the present time, women had to be raised. This was only possible by replacing the lost domestic care with other useful preoccupations and educating them to be capable to undertake this occupation.¹⁷⁶

So that the education of women would jerk the nation back from social decay, it was vital that they would concentrate on their natural field, that of education,

¹⁷⁴*ibid.*, pp. 10-12.

¹⁷⁵*ibid.*, p. 12.

¹⁷⁶*ibid.*, p. 13-14.

people's and patient care. There was no reason to oppose the academic education of women if it was to fulfil their female trade: "to lead the undeveloped and to aid those who need aid."¹⁷⁷ Nevertheless, academic education should not be pursued to achieve equal standing with men. It was a misconception that women had the same mental capacities as men and that they should engage in the same occupations.¹⁷⁸ Instead, women should work in ways which corresponded to female mental difference. Motherhood as a spiritual entity, rather than a physical one, was what made woman different from man.¹⁷⁹ To maintain the healthy part of society and to heal the diseased conditions the "sacred power of woman" could not be allowed to be destroyed by going beyond their maternal disposition.¹⁸⁰

Notions of the beneficial effects to the social organism of the provision of women with *Bildung* and the increase of their public roles were also present among radical feminists. The moderate/radical division in the women's movement has often been aligned with feminist theory based upon notions of gender difference, and equal rights feminism.¹⁸¹ Although this contrast is useful, in

¹⁷⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 43-44.

¹⁷⁸ *ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁷⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 6-8.

¹⁸⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 46-47.

¹⁸¹ See Evans, Feminist Movement, *idem*, "Liberalism and Society: the Feminist Movement and Social Change", in *idem*, Rethinking German History: Nineteenth-Century Germany and the Origins of the Third Reich (London: Unwin Hyman, 1987), pp. 221-247; Albisetti, Schooling, pp. 170-

such a categorical way this polarity, however, has to be qualified, since it ignores that the emphasis of equal rights did not necessarily mean the exclusion of notions of gender difference, nor of gender-specific roles.

The abolitionist Anna Pappritz (1861-1939), for example, who wanted "completely free competition" between men and women, based this argument on notions of gender difference. Women were of "same worth" (*gleichwertig*), yet of different disposition (*andersartig*). Through the complementary psyches of the sexes new horizons would open up for scholarship and art. Today the "developed, *gebildete*, and progressive woman", knew that for state and society she was of equal importance as man. She had become aware of her womanly and motherly dignity; "she is proud to be a woman, the differently disposed, but not inferior academic companion of man, and hopefully soon his work companion with the same rights."¹⁸²

For Hedwig Kettler (1851-1937),¹⁸³ notions of gender difference were of no such importance as they acquired, for instance, in Helene Lange's concept of spiritual

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¹⁸²A. Pappritz, "Frauenstudium", Die Frauenbewegung, 4 (1898), pp. 228-229.

¹⁸³Kettler (born Reder), whose father was a railway director, had been born in Lower Saxony. At the age of 29 she married Julius Kettler, a geographer and economist. They had two children. In 1884 they moved to Weimar, and Kettler started a career as a journalist and writer. She became involved in the women's movement. She edited the Frauenfrage and Bibliothek der Frauenfrage. In 1888 she founded the *Frauenverein Reform* (see Schmidbaur, "Hedwig Kettler", pp. 37-38).

motherhood. Whereas Lange saw the justification of women's *Bildung* in female difference, for Kettler the reforms in female education in terms of administering girls' with the same secondary education and opening all the universities faculties to the female sex,¹⁸⁴ was the demand for the "first and most important" human right - the right to the same *Bildung* as man. It was through the denial of this right that men had denied women all other rights.¹⁸⁵ And unlike Lange, Kettler did not appropriate notions of mental difference between the sexes to argue for the necessity of increased feminine influence in the public. Kettler rather exclusively focused on the notion of female mental inferiority, and argued that no such judgement could be made as long as the two sexes did not receive the same education.¹⁸⁶ Exposure to culture was a crucial element in the development of an individual, which superseded the natural human basis. Thus Kettler explained

If one wants to compare male and female intelligence, they have to be allowed to develop in the same direction, one has to submit the natural disposition of each to the same culture, the same education. If in this case they would still develop differently, than one would have the right to say: 'These intelligences have developed differently under the same cultural influences (*bei gleicher*

¹⁸⁴See Kettler, "Die Ziele des 'Deutschen Frauenvereins Reform" und seine Stellung zu anderen Vereinen", in Was ist, pp. 18-19.

¹⁸⁵Frau J. (Hedwig) Kettler, Gleiche Bildung für Mann und Frau! (Weimar: Weimarer Verlagsanstalt, 1892), p. 13.

¹⁸⁶Kettler, Was ist, pp. 9-10.

Kultur), thus - they are different by nature'.¹⁸⁷

It was unfitting for a *Kulturstaat* to deny rights, as well as to accept having them denied, by force.¹⁸⁸

Yet, like other radicals Kettler was careful not to reject notions of specific social roles of women. "We admit," she said, "that our *Volk* absolutely needs a host of wives and mothers, and for the time being only a small number of learned women."¹⁸⁹ This was one more reason why women should be *gebildet*. The family, as another radical, Anita Augspurg (1857-1943),¹⁹⁰ argued, was far removed from being "the cultural carrier of eminent importance", which it could be if women were more *gebildet*.¹⁹¹ *Bildung* would make women more efficient in carrying out their duties as mothers and educators.¹⁹² The welfare of the

¹⁸⁷Kettler, Gleiche Bildung, pp. 11-12.

¹⁸⁸*ibid.*, p. 18.

¹⁸⁹*ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁹⁰The daughter of a lawyer, Augspurg enrolled in the legal faculty of the University of Zurich in 1893, four years after which she graduated. In the early nineties she had also become involved in the *Frauenverein Reform*, supporting the petition to the *Reichstag* to admit women to the universities. Augspurg entered into a partnership with Lida Gustava Heymann, with whom she shared her life and work. Both of them were in the executive board of the *Verband Fortschrittlicher Frauenvereine*, and in 1902 Augspurg founded the *Deutscher Verein für Frauenstimmrecht*. After WWI she became active as a pacifist. She was travelling outside of Germany in 1933, and remained in exile in Switzerland until her death ten years later (Gerhard, Unerhört, pp. 227-228).

¹⁹¹Anita Augspurg, Die ethische Seite der Frauenfrage (Minden und Leipzig: Wilh. Köhler, 1893), p. 20

¹⁹²*ibid.*, p. 26.

nation depended upon the *Bildung* of middle-class women. It was necessary for conjugal harmony and satisfaction and thus to make families really viable, as well as for women's role of educating the next generation:¹⁹³

"Precisely because she has to look after her children, she should help to build at their future". It was right that the "support of the state is the family", yet how was a nation to remain in its prime when the mind of half of it was ruined? The state who wanted to strengthen itself had to strengthen the family, and it was not strengthened by education women into "weak, immature children".¹⁹⁴ The discrimination of part of the whole harmed the entire organism.¹⁹⁵

The harm to society through women's position in society and the beneficial effects of changing this, for Augspurg, constituted the ethical side of the woman question. Equal rights for both sexes, according to her, were a "historical necessity", the expression of a tendency of cultural development to abolish social

¹⁹³Kettler, Gleiche Bildung, p. 6.; see also Augspurg, ethische Seite, p. 26.

¹⁹⁴Kettler, Gleiche Bildung, pp. 15-16; for a similar argument by the radical suffragist Marie Stritt (1855-1928) see Die Frau gehört in's Haus (Dresden: Carl Tittmann, 1893). Stritt, who demanded equal rights for women, that is equal legal and political rights, as well as the right to all occupations and an engagement of women in public activity, argued that for women to properly fulfil their mission of being the educators and moulders (*Bildnerinnen*) of the future generations they had to have the same *Bildung* as men.

¹⁹⁵Kettler, Gleiche Bildung, p. 5.

injustices.¹⁹⁶ The argument that Nature prevented the participation of women in "full *Bildung*, specific to humanity, the participation in the cultural movement and the full understanding of it" was unjustified, according to her. There was not one mental characteristic which only man had and which was completely absent in woman. And just as the female body was made up of the same elements and needed the same substances to maintain itself, the female mind demanded the same culture as the male one.¹⁹⁷

But humanity consisted of two factors: man and woman. It was doomed to be ruined if it let one of the factors atrophy.¹⁹⁸ Both parts made different, but important contributions to the social organism. The truly *gebildete* woman who "recognises her purpose of existence, who perceives the right of her personality, who feels herself to be a responsible part of the whole, and who entirely masters the aids of culture", would be more capable to do justice to her tasks and fulfil her duties.¹⁹⁹ The female occupations which stood in the foreground was marriage.²⁰⁰ To let women participate in culture would turn the family into a "lever of

¹⁹⁶Augspurg, ethische Seite, p. 9.

¹⁹⁷*ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁹⁸*ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁹⁹*ibid.*, p. 16.

²⁰⁰*ibid.*, p. 16.

culture".²⁰¹ But the participation of the *gebildete* woman was also necessary in the public. Women's entry into this sphere would lead to its reformation. Once women's position and *Bildung* had changed they would ensure the introduction of a real morality.²⁰² Prostitution and moral degeneration (*Verkommenheit*) in general would be fought.²⁰³ The recognition of woman as a full human being (*Vollmensch*), through giving her equal rights and *Bildung*, and the same participation in the cultural tasks, would redeem the present condition of society, which was floating over a "swamp of moral corruption". The "true, serious, and real *Bildung*" of women and the change in their position in society would inaugurate their participation in the regeneration of society.²⁰⁴

Conclusion

During the late 1880s the old and newly established women's organizations engaged in a campaign to admit women to university. The question of whether women should have access to the universities was much discussed in public by academics. Some defended the notion that women had the right to do so and included women within the ideals of *Bildung*. Yet, frequently it was not easily

²⁰¹*ibid.*, p. 24.

²⁰²*ibid.*, p. 31.

²⁰³*ibid.*, p. 31.

²⁰⁴*ibid.*, pp. 34-35.

accepted that this was an issue of rights. Rather, it was a question of what was best for the social organism, for the family, and for the universities as institutions.

It was debated whether greater female *Bildung* would be of advantage for the middle-class family, or if higher education would rather lead to its destruction and the atomization of society. One of the most burning concerns of academics was how entry into universities would affect these institutions and what they stood for. Notions of the gendered production of culture were asserted. It was man who was the creator of culture. The admission of the mentally inferior sex to the universities, where culture was absorbed, transmitted and produced, many maintained, would have detrimental effects and lead to the demise of the pre-eminence of German culture.

Members of the women's movement, on the other hand, stressed the need of unmarried middle-class women for a greater range of paid employment. Increased *Bildung*, however, was not only sought for the spinster, but also for the married woman. Feminists explored the concept of *Bildung* to argue that greater female *Bildung* was of benefit to the social organism. Moderates and radicals alike argued that women had a right to *Bildung*. Moderates, such as Helene Lange, emphasised that women should be given this right by virtue of their difference. There was a need for increased female participation in the public sphere. To make this influence effective, women had to be *gebildet* and undergo an inner

transformation to mental and moral maturity. Radicals, however, rather argued that women had the right to education by virtue of their humanity (as well as by virtue of their right to existence). These claims, however, did not necessarily exclude notions of gender difference. Women's increased influence inside and outside of the home would regenerate society.

These were not the only issues surrounding the question of women's admission to higher education, however. As we shall see, concerns about the impact of educational reforms upon the female body and its reproductive capacity were also raised in Germany. Fears about the degeneration of the race were behind the emergence of the racial hygiene movement at the turn of the century. For racial hygienists, women's emancipation had to be considered in light of the effect it was having on the biological quality of the population.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE INTELLECTUAL WOMAN:

AGENT OF DEGENERATION OR REGENERATION? c. 1890 - c. 1914

The first decade of the twentieth century saw the admission of women to medical certification and gradually to the universities of all the *Länder*. In this period, racial hygienists, like the eugenicists in Britain, posed questions about the biological implications of women's higher education and their engagement in occupations outside the home. In the late nineteenth century, although not to the same extent as in Britain, issues concerning the effects of higher education on the female body had been raised. For women to engage in the same mental training and labour as men would lead to an interference with her bodily integrity.

The female nervous system was a focus of concern. In Central Europe concerns about hereditary nervousness and degeneration as an offshoot of modern industrial society became part of the medico-cultural spectrum, as they did in Britain.¹ Modern civilization was seen to put demands onto human capacities which could cause damage capable of being passed to generations to come. One of the

¹For a study of the concept of "nervousness" in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries see Andreas Steiner, 'Das Nervöse Zeitalter': Der Begriff der Nervosität bei Laien und Ärzten in Deutschland und Österreich um 1900 (Zürich: Juris Verlag, 1964).

institutions which received a lot of attention as furthering the deterioration of the health of the nation were the secondary schools, the *Gymnasien* as well as the *Realschulen*. Critics argued that they "overburdened" boys by an excess of mental work and lack of physical exercise.²

As in Britain, the increasing dominance of hereditary notions of pathology among psychiatrists,³ meant that concerns about ill-health were voiced in the language of the protection of the health of future generations. In the search for the causes of the increase of nervous disorders women's schooling also became a focus of attention. If boys' education invited criticism, girls' education was even more of a problem. It was here that mistakes took particular vengeance. For the future of the nation it was of utmost importance that the health of the future mothers was not harmed. Healthy and strong offspring were a necessity for the flourishing of the nation, and the first requirement for this was healthy

²See, for example, Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Über gesunde und kranke Nerven, 3d ed. (Tübingen: H. Laupp, 1885), pp. 58-64; Dr C. Pelman, Nervosität und Erziehung, 6st ed. (Bonn: Emil Strauss, 1888). For a discussion of the issue of the adverse effects of boys' secondary schools see James C. Albistti, Secondary School Reform in Imperial Germany (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), Chapter Four: "The Overburdening of German Youth", pp. 119-139.

³For a discussion of the shift from environmental aetiologies to hereditary ones, see Paul Weindling, Health, Race and German Politics Between National Unification and Nazism, 1870-1945 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 80ff.

mothers.⁴

From this point of view, a girl's education should be geared towards her domestic function as a wife and a mother.⁵ Women who would not or could not marry had missed their vocation, which as the psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1840-1902) argued, in itself led to a whole range of nervous disorders.⁶ But it was also the occupations of unmarried bourgeois women which were seen to favour ill-health. In the early 1860s the psychiatrist Wilhelm Griesinger (1817-1868) had argued that "neuroses" were prevalent among female teachers and governesses.⁷ The likelihood of nervous disorders among female teachers continued to be voiced throughout the late nineteenth century.

From the 1880s onwards it was also more generally the changes sought by the women's movement which were seen as causes of such disorders. Women's emancipation, Krafft-Ebing thus maintained, constituted a considerable source of nervousness.⁸ Secondary school education which would prepare girls for university, and university study itself would increase the problem of ill-health which already beset girls and put the curse of ill-health upon

⁴Pelman, Nervosität, p. 25.

⁵*ibid.*, p. 26.

⁶Krafft-Ebing, gesunde und kranke, p. 43.

⁷W. Griesinger, Pathologie and Therapie der Psychiatrischen Krankheiten (Stuttgart, 1861); cited in Weindling, Health, pp. 83-84.

⁸Krafft-Ebing, gesunde und kranke, p. 56.

the following generations.⁹ University education was already a source of harm to the nervous system of less-talented male students. Women, however, were not only particularly prone to nervous illnesses, they were also less endowed for mental production. This combination made it likely that the result of a degree course was the "nervous woman".¹⁰

In the German education debates some opponents contended that female biology required regular periods of rest during menstruation and abstinence from mental and

⁹Dr. Henius, "Ueber die Zulassung der Frauen zum Studium der Medicin", Deutsche Medicinische Wochenschrift, 21 (1895), p. 613; Wilhelm Erb, in Arthur Kirchhoff (ed.), Die Akademische Frau: Gutachten hervorragender Universitätsprofessoren, Frauenlehrer und Schriftsteller über die Befähigung der Frau zum wissenschaftlichen Studium und Berufe (Berlin: Hugo Steinitz, 1897), p. 128.

¹⁰Emanuel Mendel, in Kirchhoff (ed.), Akademische Frau, p. 133; see also Erb, in *ibid.*, p. 127. The conception of nervousness among female university students did not necessarily lead to the view that higher education should remain closed to women. The neurologist Albert Moll (b.1862) already in Kirchhoff's volume spoke out in favour of admitting to university (see Albert Moll, in Kirchhoff (ed.), Akademische Frau, pp. 134-142). In 1898, in a study of "The Nervous Woman", he argued that if nervousness were to be found among female students, in his opinion it was not due to their occupation. Many women who turned to academic study to be able to gain a living had already known sorrow and hardship prior to their entry to university. Moreover, mental differences between the sexes were differences of averages. This did not suppose that there did not exist individual women who were capable of male occupations. Yet, the demands of the female body in no case should be disregarded and particularly during puberty rest should be taken when needed, even if this meant that the taking of examinations was thus delayed (see Albert Moll, Das nervöse Weib (Berlin: F. Fontane, 1898), pp. 198-200).

physical effort, as they did in Britain.¹¹ Also in Germany, women's physiology and reproductive function was seen to rule women's mental characteristics and to constitute the crucial factors which determined that women, unlike men were not naturally disposed for the life of the mind and mental production.

In Germany, this theory was most forcefully defended by the nerve doctor Paul Julius Möbius (1853-1907).¹² In 1900 he published a pamphlet on the "physiological feeble-mindedness of woman."¹³ By 1905 it had appeared in

¹¹See, for example, Kehrer, in Kirchhoff (ed.), akademische Frau, p. 113; Max Runge, Das Weib in seiner Geschlechtsindividualität (Berlin: Julius Springer, 1896), p. 7.

¹²Möbius was born into a *Bildungsbürger*-family in Leipzig. His father was a classical secondary school teacher, and his paternal grandfather had been a professor at the University of Leipzig and the director of its observatory (he was the conceiver of the "Möbius strip"). His maternal grandfather had been a professor of law at the same university. Paul Julius Möbius, who married at the age of twenty-six and separated from his wife after ten years, was to follow his grandfathers' footsteps. He lectured for ten years at the University of Leipzig from 1883-1893. He had initially studied philosophy and theology, but later changed to medicine. From 1879 he had also been a practising neurologist and electrotherapist. After he left his university post, he dedicated himself entirely to his practical work and his many scientific publications, including the co-edition of the Schmidt's Jahrbücher der gesamten Medizin (see Ernst Jentsch, "Zur Erinnerung an Dr. P.J.Möbius", in P. J. Möbius, Beiträge zur Lehre von den Geschlechts-Unterschieden (Halle a.S: Carl Marhold, 1907), pp. 5-7). For a biography see Francis Schiller, A Möbius Strip: Fin-de-Siècle Neuropsychiatry and Paul Möbius (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

¹³P. J. Möbius, Ueber den physiologischen Schwachsinn des Weibes (Halle a.S.: Carl Marhold, 1900).

eight revised editions.¹⁴ In the waves it made it was equalled by no other publication at the turn of the century on women, except for maybe Otto Weininger's Sex and Character, which appeared three years later.¹⁵ Möbius was a theoretician recognized by his contemporaries. Sigmund Freud, who was to disagree with Möbius on his theory of "female physiological feeble-mindedness",¹⁶ in 1909 included Möbius in the initiators of "modern history of psychotherapy", and Emil Kraepelin placed him into his biographical collection of important German psychiatrists.¹⁷

In Möbius' conception of nervous disorder, inheritance played an important role. At least one third of all mental illness, according to him, was attributable

¹⁴P. J. Möbius, Über den physiologischen Schwachsinn des Weibes, rpt of the 8th rev. ed., 1905 (München: Matthes & Seitz, 1990). In its original edition the pamphlet consisted of 44 pages. By its eighth edition it had nearly quadrupled in size.

¹⁵For Weininger see chapter eight, pp. 414ff.

¹⁶In "Die 'kulturelle' Sexualmoral und die moderne Nervosität", Sexual-Probleme, 3 (1908), Freud argued that the "physiological feeble-mindedness" of women was not explained by an antithesis between intellectual work and the reproductive function, as Möbius had argued. Rather the "intellectual inferiority of so many women" was due to an inhibition of thought necessary for sexual repression. Women were educated to refrain from thinking about sexuality, which resulted in keeping away from thinking itself. Knowledge thus generally lost its value for them (see pp. 124-125). A discussion of Freud's theories on gender goes beyond this theory. For references see, for instance, Elisabeth Young-Bruehl (ed.), Freud on Women: A Reader (New York: Norton, 1990); Lisa Appignanesi and John Forrester. Freud's Women (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1992).

¹⁷Schiller, Möbius, p. 3.

to an inherited constitution, and simple nervousness was nearly always inherited.¹⁸ Möbius was part of a generation of nerve doctors who were marked by degeneration theories.¹⁹ These ideas had increasingly spread from the 1880s onwards, in which the insane, feeble-minded, criminals, alcoholics and homosexuals, were stigmatized as hereditarily tainted individuals. For Möbius these also included "emancipated" women. Modifying Morel's view of degeneration as a deviance from a *type primitif* which existed before the biblical fall, Möbius argued that *Entartung* (degeneration) was an "unfavourable hereditary deviation from the type", which usually involved damage to the nervous system.²⁰

Möbius rejected the darwinian concept of unlimited evolution. For him phylogeny reproduced ontogeny. The human species had reached a stage of "adulthood". Not only was the human species fixed, but also the differences between the sexes. All major deviations constituted a form of degeneration.²¹ There were two types of degeneration: inherited and acquired. Acquired degeneration was passed on to the following generations. Yet, according to Möbius, it would not always increase

¹⁸Sheila Faith Weiss, Race Hygiene and National Efficiency: The Eugenics of Wilhelm Schallmayer (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), p. 20.

¹⁹For a discussion of German degeneration psychiatry see Weindling, Health, pp. 80ff.

²⁰Weiss, Race Hygiene, pp. 22-23.

²¹Möbius, physiologischen Schwachsinn (1905), pp. 104-105.

from generation to generation as Morel had posited. For acquired degeneration there was "probably" a law in operation with which it could be "balanced out" by the "supply of new blood." As for inherited degeneration, he pointed out in 1900, little could be said about laws: "if we want to be honest, we have to say that we still know rather little about it."²²

Möbius carried his preoccupation with degeneration into his assessment of the Woman Question. "Modern nervousness" was responsible for making women open to the "suggestion of freedom". This nervousness was a form of degeneration, which weakened the natural instincts. The healthier a person, the more definitely he or she was a man or a woman. Nervous people, however, displayed a mixture of characteristics. Masculine women and feminine men appeared.²³ The idea of women's emancipation was the ultimate result of liberalism, which had exploded in the eighteenth century with the French Revolution, Möbius argued. A liberalism which aspired to the complete sovereignty of the male individual was already going too far on the right way. But a liberalism which aspired to the freedom of female individuals was against nature. The

²²J. P. Möbius, Ueber Entartung, Vol. 3 of L. Loewenfeld and H. Kurella (eds), Grenzfragen des Nerven und Seelenlebens: Einzel-Darstellungen für Gebildete aller Stände (Wiesbaden: J. F. Bergmann, 1900), pp. 96-97.

²³Möbius, physiologischen Schwachsinn (1905), pp. 76-77.

natural women did not want to be free.²⁴ Thus the natural woman, the *Gattungswesen* (species-being) constituted a natural barrier for liberalism.

Whereas modern male individualism did not necessarily presuppose a "pathological constitution ... female individualism is not possible without it." It was a symptom of degeneration, and found its adherents among deviations from the natural female type.²⁵ Emancipated women were part of those pathological elements which were so prevalent among the *Kulturvölker*.²⁶ Within them the sexual characteristics had become muted. The manly woman wanted to study, engage in politics and enter male occupations. Equality was the aim.²⁷

The main argument of Möbius' pamphlet on the "physiological feeble-mindedness of women", was, as the title suggests, that in comparison to man, woman was feeble-minded.²⁸ She was mentally inferior, and mentally sterile. Invention and creation was denied to her. This

²⁴*ibid.*

²⁵*ibid.*, pp. 75-77.

²⁶*ibid.*, p. 84.

²⁷P. J. Möbius, Geschlecht und Entartung (1903), in Beiträge zur Lehre von den Geschlechts-Unterschieden (Halle: Carl Marhold, 1907), pp. 31-33.

²⁸A Max Funke was to use Möbius' authority, as well as Darwin, Herbert Spencer, Kant and Schopenhauer, to underline his argument that the mentally inferior woman constituted the "missing link" between humans and apes (see Max Funke, Sind Weiber Menschen? Mulieres homines non sunt. Studien und Darlegungen auf Grund wissenschaftlicher Quellen, 2nd ed. (Baden-Baden: Fr. Spies, 1911).

female feeble-mindedness not only existed, it was also necessary. Women's function was to bear and to rear children, and to fulfil this function they could not have a male mind. If their mental capacities were developed like men's, their reproductive organs would be atrophied.²⁹ That is to say, if women denied their service to the species and wanted to express themselves as individuals, they would be stricken with invalidism.³⁰ But the degenerate produced degenerates.³¹ Hence, in the name of the health of the *Volk*, feminism had to be fought.³²

To develop a "male brain in a female head", to create masculine women, was "social suicide", or "treason", because these women could not and would not have a lot of children. The children they were going to have, would leave much to be desired in their "quality", "because the 'fruit' of brainy women do not distinguish themselves through force, and mother milk is lacking. In short, the population decreases in number and quality, the *Volk* enters the stage of old age." Since not all nations would go along with a reformation of women into man-women, a "feminist nation" would quickly succumb to its neighbours. It was a scenario which Möbius ultimately thought not very likely to happen, yet "feminists' plans"

²⁹Möbius, physiologischen Schwachsinn (1900), pp. 5, 6, 12, 15.

³⁰*ibid.*, p. 17.

³¹Möbius, Geschlecht, p. 37.

³²Möbius, physiologischen Schwachsinn (1900), p. 17.

were creating havoc, not in the least because they had most impact in those groups who were "culturally most advanced". If they did not want to die out, their females had to remain "healthy women", rather than "brainy ladies".³³

According to Möbius, the "original phenomenon" was an opposition between the "work of the mind and reproduction". Civilizations could become so civilized that they started to die off, and needed an influx of "barber-blood" to regenerate.³⁴ To prevent this from happening, women had to remain close to nature: "the cultural human being, alienated from nature, needs the natural woman as his counterpart; otherwise *Bildung* will kill its disciples without mercy, that is to say, their families die out."³⁵

Fit Women and the Politics of Reproduction

Fears of race degeneration were behind the emergence of the racial hygiene movement at the turn of the century.³⁶ Darwin's theory of evolution from the 1860s

³³*ibid.*, pp. 59-60.

³⁴*ibid.*, p. 17.

³⁵Möbius, physiologischen Schwachsinn (1905), p. 60.

³⁶For a discussion of Social Darwinism in Germany see, for example, Weindling, Health, and Richard Weikart, "The Origins of Social Darwinism in Germany, 1859-1895", Journal of the History of Ideas, 54 (1993), pp. 469-488. For German racial hygiene see, for example, Robert N. Proctor, Racial Hygiene: Medicine under the Nazis (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988);

onwards had found many adherents in Germany, turning the *Kampf ums Dasein* (struggle for existence) into a pervasive principle of explanation.³⁷ The most forceful and best known popularizer of Darwinism was Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919), a professor of biology at the University of Jena. In his Natürliche Schöpfungsgeschichte, which appeared before The Descent of Man in 1868, Haeckel did not hesitate to discuss human evolution. The book remained the most influential work published on Darwinian theory in Germany in the late nineteenth century.³⁸

Darwin's integration of Lamarckian elements into his theory of evolution was challenged in the 1880s by August Weismann (1834-1924) an embryologist at the University of Freiburg, who had been trained in medicine and zoology. Weismann developed a theory of inheritance which excluded the possibility of the transmission of acquired

Weindling, Health, Race; Weiss, Race Hygiene; Peter Weingart, Jürgen Kroll, Kurt Bayertz, Rasse, Blut und Gene: Geschichte der Eugenik und Rassenhygiene in Deutschland (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1988); Peter Emil Becker, Zur Geschichte der Rassenhygiene. Wege ins Dritte Reich (Stuttgart: Georg Thieme, 1988); *idem.*, Sozialdarwinismus, Rassismus und Völkischer Gedanke, Vol. 2, Wege ins Dritte Reich (Stuttgart: Georg Thieme, 1990); Cornelia Osborne, The Politics of the Body in Weimar Germany: Women's Reproductive Rights and Duties (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992); Gisela Bock, Zwangsterilisation im Nationalsozialismus: Studien zur Rassenpolitik und Frauenpolitik (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1986); Annette Herlitzius, Frauenbefreiung und Rassenideologie: Rassenhygiene und Eugenik im politischen Programm der "Radikalen Frauenbewegung" (Wiesbaden: Deutscher Universitätsverlag, 1995).

³⁷Weikart, "Origins", p. 471.

³⁸*ibid.*, p. 475.

characteristics.³⁹ Inheritance operated through germ-cells which, unlike somatic cells, remained unaffected by external influences on an organism during its life-time. Inheritance occurred through the random variation of germ-cells. In Weismann's theory selection became the only important factor of evolution, removing any significance from the environment and the use or disuse of parts of the body.⁴⁰

The optimism about human progress of the social darwinism of the 1860s and 1870s was superseded by the late 1880s and 1890s by denials of the inevitability of such progress. The implication of Weismann's, as well as Galton's theories that environmental changes would and could not lead to a progressive development of humanity, became increasingly important.⁴¹ Racial hygienists tended to base their arguments on the conception that it was nature, rather than nurture, which determined the fortune of an individual and the nation.⁴²

As in Britain, racial hygiene (*Rassenhygiene*)⁴³ at

³⁹See also chapter four.

⁴⁰Weiss, Race Hygiene, pp. 30-32; Proctor, Racial Hygiene, p. 32.

⁴¹Weiss, Race Hygiene, pp. 35-36.

⁴²Weiss, Race Hygiene, p. 36; Proctor, Racial Hygiene, p. 33.

⁴³*Rassenhygiene* and *Eugenik* were mostly used synonymously during the early twentieth century, *Rassenhygiene* being the more commonly used term. During the Weimar Republic the Left more commonly used the term *Eugenik* (and also *Fortpflanzungshygiene* - reproductive hygiene), to differentiate it from *Rassenhygiene*, whereas others often used the two terms interchangeably (see

the time of its emergence appealed to people from a broad political spectrum. It found adherents among conservatives, liberals, and socialists.⁴⁴ The first of the eugenics societies to be established was the Racial Hygiene Society (*Gesellschaft für Rassenhygiene*) of Berlin, founded in 1905. The Society was the brain-child of Alfred Ploetz (1860-1940),⁴⁵ who until the First World War remained a central character in its shaping. It was founded in co-operation with the psychiatrist Ernst Rüdin, the lawyer Anatasius Nordenholz and the anthropologist Richard Thurnwald. It came into being a year after Ploetz had established the Archiv für Rassen- und Gesellschaftsbiologie, the major scientific journal in the field of racial hygiene.⁴⁶ By 1907, membership had grown to over a hundred.⁴⁷ Over the following years other such societies were established in different parts of Germany, such as Munich, Freiburg, Dresden and Stuttgart. In 1910 a national German Society for Racial Hygiene (*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Rassenhygiene*) was

Usborne, Politics of the Body, p. 134; Herlitzius, Frauenbefreiung, pp. 60-61).

⁴⁴Weikart, "Origins", p. 488.

⁴⁵Ploetz was born in Pommern, as the son of a soap manufacturer. He started off studying economics, but later changed to medicine. For more biographical details see Becker, Geschichte, pp. 58-65; and Weindling, Health, pp. 64ff, 123ff.

⁴⁶Weindling, Health, pp. 141-142.

⁴⁷By 1930 it had over 1,300 members in its 16 branches (see Proctor, Racial Hygiene, pp. 17-18).

established.⁴⁸

The racial hygiene movement in the early twentieth century was thus established through the creation of a special vocabulary, the establishment of societies, a journal, as well as congresses and lectures. Other than technical aims, i.e., the monitoring of the health of the population and the analysis of genealogies, it had ideological aims, that is the infusion of a "racial consciousness".⁴⁹ Members of the *Gesellschaft für Rassenhygiene* were themselves asked to promise that they would not marry if they were "unfit", but otherwise to commit themselves to having large families.⁵⁰

Racial hygienists saw the rise and fall of nations as dependent upon the biological "quality" of the population.⁵¹ There existed an interrelationship between the cultural and organic development of societies, Wilhelm Schallmayer, a central figure in the foundation of racial hygiene, pointed out.⁵² As much as the mental

⁴⁸Weindling, Health, pp. 142ff.

⁴⁹*ibid.*, p. 125.

⁵⁰Proctor, Racial Hygiene, p. 17; Weindling, Health, pp. 141-142.

⁵¹Usborne, Politics of the Body, pp. 4-5.

⁵²Wilhelm Schallmayer, Vererbung und Auslese in ihrer soziologischen und politischen Bedeutung (Preisgekrönte Studie über Volkseutartung und Volkseugenik), 2nd rev. ed. (Jena: Gustav Fischer, 1910), p. viii. Schallmayer, in 1903, had won a competition set up by the industrialist Krupp in 1900 for the best essay on the subject of "What can we learn from the theory of evolution about internal political developments and state legislation?" (see Weiss, Race-Hygiene, pp. 68-69).

and physical "racial fitness", social and cultural developments influenced whether the general hereditary disposition present in the *Volkskörper* (body politic) increased or decreased in fitness. In contrast to Möbius' conviction, Schallmayer argued that biological consideration made clear that populations did not age. The decline of "high cultures" of the past was not an inevitable development. If the organic inheritance of a generation exceeded that of the previous generation, decline could be avoided and culture could be led to heights yet unknown. Hence, the future of nations was dependent upon the management of its organic inheritance.⁵³

Yet, such progress was not inevitable. In absence of some kind of a control over the reproduction of the fit and the unfit, it might well go the other way. Progress was in danger of being impeded by "counterselective"

⁵³Schallmayer, *Vererbung*, pp. x-xii. For a similar argument that the decline of the quantity and quality of the population was an important factor in the disappearance of the ancient *Kulturvölker*, but that such a development was not inevitable see Alfred Grotjahn, *Geburten-Rückgang und Geburtenregelung im Licht der individuellen und sozialen Hygiene*, first published 1914, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Oskar Coblentz, 1921), pp. 189-190. Grotjahn (1869-1931), one of the leading figures in the creation of an independent discipline of social hygiene, also supported the notion of racial hygiene, which classified as subdiscipline of social hygiene (see Weiss, *Race Hygiene*, pp. 120-121). For Ploetz, on the other hand, in *The Fitness of our Race*, the aim of racial hygiene was not so much to avoid the "death" of the *Volk*, but rather prolong its life as much as possible (see Alfred Ploetz, *Die Tüchtigkeit unserer Rasse and der Schutz der Schwachen: Ein Versuch über Rassenhygiene und ihre Verhältniss zu den humanen Idealen, besonders zum Socialismus* (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1895), pp. 1-2).

conditions of modern times and could eliminate the fit and protect the unfit. Advances in medicine and public hygiene raised alarm as interfering with the process of natural selection of "weeding out" the weak and sick, by giving them a possibility of survival and reproduction which they otherwise would not have had. There was a growing fear of the "proletarization" of the race. Strategies were needed to regulate the reproduction of the "worthless" hereditary lines of the sick, insane, feeble-minded, alcoholics, criminals, and the "asocial" subproletariat, who seemed to be multiplying more rapidly than the more "gifted" elements of society. For many racial hygienists, although not all, the gifted elements were found in the middle class, whose decline of the birth-rate was greatest. But it was not only the differential birth-rate which induced fears of the possibility of national decline, but also the general decline of the German birth-rate.⁵⁴ As we shall see, both perceptions were important for racial hygienist views about middle-class women's position and role in society.

German racial hygiene in its early years, as has been pointed out, was not synonymous with the ideology of Aryan supremacy.⁵⁵ Alfred Ploetz, for example, as Paul Weindling has shown, was privately an anti-semite and a

⁵⁴Usborne, Politics of the Body, p. 5; Proctor, Racial Hygiene, pp. 18-19.

⁵⁵See, for example, Weiss, Race Hygiene, pp. 2ff; Weindling, Health, p. 136; Proctor, Racial Hygiene, pp. 20ff.

sympathizer of pan-Germanic schemes to extend the German borders. At the time of the establishment of the Racial Hygiene Society, he was in contact with racial propagandists such as Ludwig Woltmann, but he criticised Aryan ideologists in public.⁵⁶ Wilhelm Schallmayer, who was not very active in the organizational development of the movement, but who was important for its early theoretical basis, was an opponent of notions of Aryan supremacy.⁵⁷ Yet, racial hygiene was a movement which aimed at the management of the reproductive capacities of various population groups to ensure hereditary fitness and boost national strength and efficiency (which, as Sheila Weiss has pointed out, also meant cultural productivity in Germany). The long-term survival of the German and other Western European nations and their "superior" cultural traditions was thus to be safeguarded. It separated the population into the fit and unfit, seeking to encourage the reproduction of the former and to limit that of the latter.⁵⁸

⁵⁶Weindling, Health, p. 136. In 1911, Ploetz, with Fritz Lenz and the physician Arthur Wollny established a secret "Nordic Ring" in the German Society for Racial Hygiene, to improve the Nordic race (see Weiss, Race Hygiene, p. 148).

⁵⁷For Schallmayer see Weiss, Race Hygiene.

⁵⁸Weiss, Race Hygiene, p. 4-5. Weiss has pointed out that this constituted a continuity in the "underlying logic and rationale" of pre- and post 1933 racial hygiene, which united those racial hygienists which promoted ideologies of Aryan supremacy and those who did not (see *ibid.*) Gisela Bock, in her study of the intersection of gender- and racial policies in the Third Reich, has pointed out that the establishment of hierarchies of (hereditary) "value" for human beings was

The term "racial hygiene" was coined in 1895 by Ploetz in a treatise on The Fitness of our Race and the Protection of the Weak, to denominate a hygiene which would consider the good of the race, in difference from "individual hygiene". The dominating principle, Ploetz argued, had to be racial hygiene. When individual hygiene endangered this principle, it had to be subordinated to racial hygiene.⁵⁹ Ploetz established that there existed a conflict between humanitarian ideals and the necessity of racial advancement (*Rassenvervollkommung*).⁶⁰

In discussing the possible solutions of this conflict, Ploetz rejected Galton's proposal of "artificial selection" in terms of state control of marriages. This would increase the number and raise the level ability of the most gifted, yet it would do little to raise the level of average ability.⁶¹ It was Alfred Russel Wallace, who had advanced the best solution.⁶²

Yet, Ploetz ultimately could not agree with Wallace's belief that to give women the power of sexual selection would be enough to counteract the diminished

an uncontested point of confluence between racial anthropology and racial hygiene. Through its construction of unaccepted difference, racial hygiene thus is inherently racist (see Bock, Zwangsterilisation, pp. 59ff).

⁵⁹Ploetz, Tüchtigkeit, p. 13.

⁶⁰*ibid.*, p. 195.

⁶¹*ibid.*, p. 215.

⁶²For a discussion of Wallace's proposal see chapter four, pp. 179-183.

"natural and economic selection" and solve the issue of the advancement of the race. This, Ploetz said, looked enticing and was one of the best solutions so far offered. He did not doubt that a better sexual selection would play an important role in a more refined culture. But Ploetz did not believe that this would be sufficient. Even if the number of those women who would make heavy demands in the choice of their husbands would increase, this did not deal with the danger of the "contra-selection" of other women, those who had a "coarser organisation", were more sensual, and would marry more frequently and earlier than the more refined women. Also, it could not be denied that men, although they admired "noble" women, preferred to marry inferior (*niedrigere*) and more sensual women. Moreover, unfit (*minderwertige*) individuals, if the economic basis was provided, would be able to marry other unfit persons. And, according to Ploetz, since the unfit were often attracted to the unfit, they would frequently do so.⁶³

Instead, Ploetz promoted selective breeding, which was based on an understanding of the laws of variation, by which married couples would be required to select the most superior of their germ cells for procreation. Although Ploetz admitted that the basis for his strategy of reproductive hygiene did not yet exist, he was confident that there would soon be a scientific breakthrough which would allow the control of the reproduction

⁶³Ploetz, Tüchtigkeit, pp. 220-222.

of inferior variants. The non-selective effects of improvements in hygiene, medical intervention and welfare, i.e. the diminution of the impact of natural selection, could be compensated for by selective breeding.⁶⁴

Some other racial hygienists, such as Ludwig Woltmann (1871-1907),⁶⁵ however, had fewer reservations about the importance of female economic independence for the "ennoblement" of the race. Thus in 1899, when he was still a member of the Social Democratic Party, Woltmann argued in favour of equal rights for women, including principally the same "conditions of development" as men, and economic independence. It was a "crude principle of classification" to divide human beings into two classes according to their reproductive function. In the future, the choice of spouses would not be dependent on social position and riches, but rather on physical and mental fitness. It was not state laws which would bring about this change, but education in the laws of evolution and

⁶⁴Weindling, Health, pp. 124-125; Weiss, Race Hygiene, pp. 105-106.

⁶⁵Woltmann, the son of a master joiner, had studied medicine, philosophy and theology. During his student years, he became a member of the Social Democratic Party. Intellectually he attempted to synthesise historical materialism, darwinism and kantianism. Soon after the turn of the century, Woltmann broke with the Social Democrats. Racial and Germanic considerations dominated his work more and more, championing a nation of racially pure members, in which an economic class-structure was replaced by a structure based upon inherited ability (see Becker, Sozialdarwinismus, pp. 328ff; George L. Mosse, The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich, first published 1964 (New York: Schocken Books, 1981), pp. 99-103).

inheritance which would create a "new conscience". In the "positive" way, this new conscience would be geared towards increasing, or at least maintaining the "organic strength" of human beings. In the "negative" way, it would prevent that the defects and ailments of the sick and degenerate would be passed onto a "hopeless offspring".⁶⁶

In terms of negative eugenics, contraception, for Woltmann, constituted a welcome tool.⁶⁷ Yet, contraception was a double-edged sword for many of those who were preoccupied with the hereditary quality of the population. Many racial hygienists objected to it because it would heighten the differential birth-rate.⁶⁸ Contraception was promoted by Neo-Malthusians. Accepting Malthus' view that poverty resulted from overpopulation, Neo-Malthusians did not advocate late marriages or abstinence, but family-planning through contraception. The *Bund für Mutterschutz* (League for the Protection of Mothers), founded in 1905, formed a central platform for Neo-Malthusianism.⁶⁹

The social-democratic social hygienist Julius Moses (1868-1942), who advocated contraception, argued in 1909

⁶⁶Ludwig Woltmann, Die Darwinische Theorie und der Sozialismus: Ein Beitrag zur Naturgeschichte der Menschlichen Gesellschaft (Düsseldorf: Hermann Michels, 1988), pp. 378-381.

⁶⁷*ibid.*, p. 381.

⁶⁸Weingart, *et.al.*, Rasse, p. 132.

⁶⁹Usborne, Politics of the Body, pp. 6-7; Weiss, Race Hygiene, pp. 130-131.

that the decline of fertility which accompanied the extension of female higher education and increased participation of women in professional occupations, was of no consequence because the offspring of the "lower orders" were moving up. Progress in the movement for women's *Bildung*, if their health was adequately protected during puberty, Moses argued, would serve the cultural development of human society.⁷⁰

To many racial hygienists, however, the advocacy of birth-control was disturbing, as was the prospect of middle-class women being educated for and establishing careers outside of the home. They feared that the decline of the birth-rate among the middle-class, in part induced by female attendance of university and engagement in careers, spelt national decline, because it kept the most valuable members of society from procreating sufficiently to keep the general birth-rate from declining and to avoid a "proletarization" of the population. Hunger for education (*Bildungsfieber*) and individualism had a great share of the blame for the fact that many individuals did not want to take the burdens of parenthood upon themselves.⁷¹ The women's movement, as an expression of individualism, with its demand for the free development

⁷⁰Julius Moses, Frauenstudium und Volkshygiene (München: Verlag der Aertzlichen Rundschau, 1909), pp. 22, 25.

⁷¹Max von Gruber und Ernst Rüdin (eds), Fortpflanzung, Vererbung, Rassenhygiene: Katalog der Gruppe Rassenhygiene der Internationalen Hygiene-Ausstellung 1911 in Dresden (München: J.F.Lehmanns, 1911), p. 163.

of the female personality and other freedoms, had led to the increase of numbers of women who sought their happiness outside of the home.⁷²

Reduced fertility, argued Max von Gruber (1853-1927), a bacteriologist who in 1910 became the chairman of the German Society for Racial Hygiene, was a calamity for the nation. The *Volk* was dependent upon a high number of births.⁷³ However, women, rather than changing conditions so that "all healthy women from good stock" could marry and become mothers, were trying to take away men's jobs and to deprive the nation more and more of the "fruit of the best women, who would precisely be the most valuable".⁷⁴

Thus, the "by far the most important task that a hereditarily fit woman could accomplish" was

⁷²Schallmayer, Vererbung, p. 226.

⁷³Max von Gruber, Mädchenerziehung und Rassenhygiene; first published 1910 (München: Ernst Reinhardt, 1916), p. 9.

⁷⁴*ibid.*, p. 21. Alfred Grotjahn also argued that the aim of the women's movement should be to "broaden the marriage market. The expansion of women's higher education was only a transitional phenomenon. He did not object to the idea that a few women, who felt drawn to traditionally male occupations should study, but to the fact that it was becoming more common among the middle class to educate their daughters towards this aim. The harm which the women's movement had caused in this direction could be rectified only through an understanding of eugenics (see Grotjahn, Geburten-Rückgang, pp. 323-324, and *idem.*, Soziale Pathologie: Versuch einer Lehre von den sozialen Beziehungen der menschlichen Krankheiten als Grundlage der sozialen Medizin und der sozialen Hygiene, 2nd rev. ed. (Berlin: August Hirschwald, 1915), p. 219).

reproduction, Wilhelm Schallmayer maintained.⁷⁵ Middle-class women's education should thus not be geared towards "alienating" them from motherhood. But as Schallmayer asserted, referring to the British eugenicist C.W. Saleeby⁷⁶ and the Dutch sociologist Sebald Steinmetz, following modern trends in women's *Bildung*, more and more of the more "talented ladies" withdrew from this "valuable national task".⁷⁷

If it would become the custom for women, who were talented enough, to choose an independent career, Steinmetz had argued in 1904, only "those who are too stupid and too weak, or those who have too little stamina, will devote themselves entirely to motherhood."⁷⁸ Those educated women, who no longer perceived marriage as the only occupation, were less likely to get married, because they became choosier. When they did marry they had fewer children, partly because they were less inclined to have many, and partly because they were compelled to reduce the number of their offspring to be able to continue with their careers. The result: fewer children of "better parents".⁷⁹

⁷⁵Wilhelm Schallmayer, "Eugenik, ihre Grundlagen und ihre Beziehungen zur kulturellen Hebung der Frau", Archiv für Frauenkunde und Konstitutionsforschung (1914), p. 288; cited in Weiss, Race Hygiene, p. 139.

⁷⁶See chapter four, pp. 173-175.

⁷⁷Schallmayer, Vererbung, p. 431.

⁷⁸S. R. Steinmetz, "Feminismus und Rasse", Zeitschrift für Sozialwissenschaft, 7 (1904), p. 758.

⁷⁹*ibid.*, pp. 756-757.

But, "humanity, our race, our cultural nations" needed as many descendants as possible from the fit and talented women. The reduction of the number of talented individuals would harm human mental life (*Geistesleben*) and culture, which could only exist as products of a certain level of endowment.⁸⁰ Culture could not continue to exist without its carriers - the talented race.⁸¹ Whether women had the capacity for mental production was beside the question. It was women who were able to bear children, not men, and this was women's occupation.⁸²

The Women's Movement: Motherhood and Mental Production

While racial hygienists formulated their theories in which women's role centred around the reproduction of a fit race, the women's movement continued to elaborate ideas about the relationship between motherhood and women's cultural function. Moderates mostly continued to see spiritual and biological motherhood as alternatives. Helene Lange's focus upon the role of unmarried women at the end of the nineteenth century had led her to emphasise that "public" motherhood was a possibly more valuable occupation than "private" motherhood. Her successor, colleague and friend, Gertrud Bäumer, stressed that both were equally important cultural functions. The

⁸⁰*ibid.*, p. 755.

⁸¹*ibid.*, p. 762.

⁸²*ibid.*, p. 763.

contribution of women to outer domestic work was still discussed in terms of the specific contribution of the female mind. In the context of a perception of a "crisis of culture" the emphasis was now put upon its resolution through women's cultural work.

Radicals, mostly those associated with the League for the Protection of Mothers, on the other hand, rejected the notion of a private life for married women and public life for unmarried ones, and sought solutions for the combination of both. These were often framed within an evolutionary language and engaged with contemporary concerns about the state of the race. The conflict between biological motherhood and intellectual aspirations became central topic of discussion among feminists.

Two years before Paul Julius Möbius' publication of The Physiological Feeble-mindedness of Woman (1900), the Swedish essayist and orator Ellen Key (b. 1849) published an essay in Germany, which she had given earlier as a lecture in Sweden on Misused Female Energy.⁸³ In this essay Key argued that presently, in the struggle to obtain equal rights and the right to individual development, women were misdirecting their energies. They

⁸³Ellen Key, Missbrauchte Frauenkraft, first published 1898, 4th ed. (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1911). For a discussion of the reception of Key's essay in the German women's movement see Kay Goodman, "Motherhood and Work: The Concept of the Misuse of Women's Energy, 1895-1905", in Ruth-Ellen B. Joeres and Mary Jo Maynes (eds), German Women in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries: A Social and Literary History (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), pp. 110-127.

were applying their forces to fields where they had to compete with men, but were neglecting to develop and put to use their feminine peculiarities.⁸⁴

Physically and psychically women were destined for motherhood; their physical and psychical energies were absorbed by it. Mental production had to remain secondary for women.⁸⁵ Women under all circumstances were dependent upon the designation of their sex.⁸⁶ Women could never achieve the intellectual heights of men, in the same way as men could never reach the emotional depth of women.⁸⁷ It was man who was the creator of mental and material culture.⁸⁸ The task of women was to refine her own emotional life and that of men,⁸⁹ and to purify and ennoble the home.⁹⁰ Thus motherhood, for Key, was not a purely biological function. Whereas it was man's cultural task to create new ideas, it was woman's task to convert these into emotions and through custom to make them durable.⁹¹

Key's concept of woman's identification with motherhood differed from, for example, Helene Lange's

⁸⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

⁸⁵ *ibid.*, p. 15.

⁸⁶ *ibid.*, p. 44.

⁸⁷ *ibid.*, p. 17.

⁸⁸ *ibid.*, p. 28.

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, p. 52.

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 81.

⁹¹ *ibid.*, p. 31.

concept of spiritual motherhood, discussed in chapter six, in that Lange perceived spiritual motherhood to be of great importance for the public sphere. Key, however, saw women's most important place to be the private sphere. She supported economic independence of women (as well as suffrage), yet her main justification for it was that it would give women the possibility to freely choose their husbands.⁹² Women's work should not be directed towards male occupations, but feminine difference was advantageous in education, social welfare and the peace-movement.⁹³ Yet, work would always remain secondary to the woman who retained her femininity.⁹⁴

Moreover, Key integrated evolutionary notions of the adverse effects of developing female minds along the lines of male minds. To believe that women could develop their minds in the same way without impairing their role of motherhood, was to neglect the natural law of energy economy and to discard that evolutionary development was also accompanied by processes of degeneration.⁹⁵ A "liberation" of women which set its sight at reaching the mental heights of men had put an enormous pressure on average women and led to over-exertion. Furthermore, higher education in the interest of equality, as well as the focus in work to be measured by male standards, had

⁹²*ibid.*, pp. 77-78.

⁹³*ibid.*, pp. 59ff.

⁹⁴*ibid.*, p. 47.

⁹⁵*ibid.*, p. 19.

thwarted the development of women into "real individuality" and mental health and strength. The female personality had been overlooked.⁹⁶

The theory of adverse affects upon women's health of too much mental exertion, endorsed by Key, did not go unchallenged. As in Britain, it was argued that it was not so much mental exertion which caused ill-health, but mental emptiness and boredom.⁹⁷ Menstruation, was, as could be seen among the working class, no hindrance for women to engage in paid employment.⁹⁸ Yet, in Germany, the question of women's health never became such a central issue in the question about women's education and employment. It was another issue which Key had mentioned which occupied more space. For intellectually talented women, Key argued, there was a psychological conflict between "emotion and work".⁹⁹

The theme of conflict between mental work and motherhood and the question of whether marriage and physical motherhood could and should be combined with employment was of increasing interest to feminists in the early twentieth century. Symptomatic of this

⁹⁶*ibid.*, pp. 113-116.

⁹⁷See, for example, Dr. med. Anna Kuhnov, Gedanken und Erfahrungen über Frauenbildung und Frauenberuf (Leipzig: Hermann Haacke, 1896), pp. 11-12; Anna E., "Das Weib in seiner Geschlechtsindividualität: Entgegnung auf die gleichnamige Bröchure von Prof. Max Runge", Deutsche Medizinische Wochenschrift, 23 (1897), p. 141.

⁹⁸Anna E., "Weib", p. 140.

⁹⁹Key, Frauenkraft, p. 48.

preoccupation was a widely read book, published in 1901 by Helene Simon and Adele Gerhard,¹⁰⁰ on Motherhood and Intellectual Work.¹⁰¹ The book was an assessment of the "important problem of the relationship of higher intellectual work with the physical nature of woman and the function and tasks of motherhood which arise from it", on the basis of the experiences of professional women.¹⁰² The authors concluded that fertility did not seem to suffer from female intellectual application, and that menstruation did not appear to be an obstacle to such an endeavour. Hence, the female constitution itself did not hinder intellectual or artistic creation.¹⁰³ It was psychical motherhood which created conflicts. The absorption required by the task of motherhood and that required by "higher intellectual work" made a harmonious combination of both impossible.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰Gerhard (b. 1867), a member of the SPD, combined her intellectual work with marriage and the bringing up of two children. Simon (1862-1947), born in Düsseldorf, moved in 1895 to London, where she became a member of the Fabian society and studied economics at the University of London. She went back to Germany in 1897 where she audited at the University of Berlin. She became a member of the SPD in 1914. In 1938 she emigrated to London where she died in 1947. Simon herself had remained unmarried.

¹⁰¹Adele Gerhard and Helene Simon, Mutterschaft und geistige Arbeit: Eine psychologische und soziologische Studie. Auf Grundlage einer Internationalen Erhebung mit Berücksichtigung der geschichtlichen Entwicklung (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1901).

¹⁰²*ibid.*, p. iii.

¹⁰³*ibid.*, pp. 311-312.

¹⁰⁴*ibid.*, p. 319.

A solution to the problem, it seemed to the authors, was impossible, since the repression of either motherhood or the creative drive, was harmful to the individual and to the community. The experience of motherhood, they claimed, was important for the full development of the personality. Yet at the same time the "intellectual work of the mother" was of irreplaceable cultural value.¹⁰⁵ Although the intellectual and artistic achievements of women might remain behind that of men, women, through their difference, could contribute things which were inaccessible to men.¹⁰⁶ Gerhard and Simon's conclusion was that only exceptionally talented women should forgo sacrificing their invaluable cultural contribution for the sake of motherhood. As for the others, it had to be realized that there existed no "higher mental occupation, than that of the mother". The recognition of the importance of this occupation, for Gerhard and Simon, supposed the necessity to provide women with an extensive education, as well as to give them suffrage.¹⁰⁷

Concepts of feminine difference remained pervasive among all the strands of the women's movement.¹⁰⁸ Hedwig

¹⁰⁵*ibid.*, pp. 321-322.

¹⁰⁶*ibid.*, p. 325.

¹⁰⁷*ibid.*, pp. 323-324.

¹⁰⁸This was not only true of the bourgeois women's movement. Lily Braun, who moved between the bourgeois and socialist women's movement, although rejecting the notion of female mental inferiority, believed that "female genius" would become apparent in fields which corresponded to the maternity of their being (see Lily Braun, Die Frauenfrage: Ihre geschichtliche Entwicklung

Dohm,¹⁰⁹ associated to the radical wing, constituted somewhat of an exception in questioning the importance of motherhood in the female psyche. She even doubted that mother love was a natural instinct.¹¹⁰ Dohm's approach, however, was unusual. More often, radicals in the early twentieth century highlighted the importance of motherhood and affirmed a female life which integrated the "feminine" and the "human" of woman through a combination of motherhood and career. Moderates, for their part, generally continued to endorse physical and spiritual motherhood as alternatives.

und wirtschaftliche Seite (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1901), p. 206). Clara Zetkin, the leader of the social democratic women's movement, argued that the aim of the women's movement was not the "masculine woman" (*Mannweib*). It was right of the movement in the "fight with its opponents" to highlight that women were human beings, but the movement had also to be carried by the knowledge that women were female human beings. The aim was to bring the human and the feminine into harmony. Women (of all classes) had to have the freedom to develop according to their feminine specificity. Mental difference between the sexes would suppose an enrichment of scholarly and artistic life. Motherhood could inspire the artistic genius of women onto the highest realm of achievement (see Clara Zetkin, Geistiges Proletariat, Frauenfrage und Sozialismus (Berlin: Expedition der Buchhandlung Vorwärts, 1902), pp. 8, 15, 16). The socialist Oda Olberg, who opposed Möbius' assertion of the physiological feeble-mindedness of woman, also argued that women, "real, complete, motherly women" had a social function outside of the home, "next to man, and complementing that of man" (see Oda Olberg, Das Weib und der Intellectualismus (Berlin: Akademischer Verlag für soziale Wissenschaften, 1902)).

¹⁰⁹For biographical details see chapter five, footnote 73.

¹¹⁰Hedwig Dohm, Die Mütter: Beitrag zur Erziehungsfrage (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1903), pp. 4-5.

Gertrud Bäumer: A Moderate's Views on the Women's Movement and Female Roles

During the early twentieth century, a central figure in the moderate wing was Gertrud Bäumer (1873-1954).¹¹¹ According to Bäumer, rights for women initially had been sought for women's own good. But now, they were and should only be sought as far as they helped to further women's contribution to the collective culture. It was not rights for the sake of equal rights that was the ultimate aim, but for the sake of making female influence

¹¹¹Bäumer was the daughter of a vicar who died during her childhood. She and her two sisters were brought up by her mother on a small pension. Bäumer was educated at a higher girls' school and a teachers' seminar. She worked as a teacher in 1896 when she got to know Helene Lange via the General German Teachers Association (*Allgemeiner Deutscher Lehrerinnenverein*). Two years later she moved to Berlin where she attended the Victoria Lyceum. After that she entered the University of Berlin. Prussia at that time had not yet passed the legislation to admit women students, but they could attend university if they received the permission of professors to do so. Bäumer studied theology, German literature and philosophy and graduated in 1904. Bäumer, who entered upon a partnership with Lange until her death, became active in the women's movement. From 1907 until 1910 she was the editor of the journal of the *Allgemeiner Deutscher Frauenverein*, Neue Bahnen, from 1910 to 1919 she was the president of the *Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine* (Federation of German Women's Associations), and from 1916 until 1944 she edited the journal Die Frau. In 1919, Bäumer became a delegate to the National Assembly, and in 1920 of the *Reichstag* for the *Deutsche Demokratische Partei*. The same year she took up a position in the Ministry of Culture. Within weeks of Hitler's nomination as chancellor, Bäumer lost her position in the Ministry, but she continued to publish Die Frau until the end of the war (see Mechthild Engel, "Gertrud Bäumer: Hindurch, hinauf, verloren", in Ilse Brehmer (ed.), Mütterlichkeit als Profession? (Pfaffenweiler: Centaurus, 1990), pp. 73-77; Ute Gerhard, Unerhört: Die Geschichte der deutschen Frauenbewegung (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1990), pp. 294-295).

upon culture. The aim of the women's movement was a full development of female culture.¹¹²

In terms of higher education, the importance of female scholarship was not to expand its quality. The purpose of university education was to form people who represented the highest form of personal culture in a *Volk*. They were supposed to acquire the capacity of mental leadership; to constitute a mental aristocracy. These people were ever more important the more democratic society grew. Higher education for women was of importance to develop the female element in the elite of the educated.¹¹³

Whereas in the late nineteenth century, the women's movement had been seen more often than not by feminists as an international movement, in the early twentieth century, its national content was increasingly stressed by some. In 1912 the *Bund zur Bekämpfung der Frauenemancipation* (League for the Prevention of the Emancipation of Women) was founded. The League saw the women's movement as international and unpatriotic; as an enemy from within who through internally dividing the

¹¹²Gertrud Bäumer, Die Frau und das geistige Leben (Leipzig: C.F. Amelang, 1911), pp. 97-98. Bäumer's theories were closely related to those of the liberal politician Friedrich Naumann, who "rejected individualism in favour of *völkisch* collectivism, rejected pacifism in favour of nationalism, rejected laissez-faire in favour of social interventionism." Naumann's "social-national" ideas, directed at "the conversion of the masses into a people", were highly influential for Bäumer (see Richard Evans, The Feminist Movement in Germany (London: Sage, 1976), p. 154).

¹¹³Bäumer, geistige Leben, pp. 189-190.

nation, was destroying its strength.¹¹⁴ When Bäumer addressed these allegations, she declared that although the women's movement was taking place on an international scale and had many common economic and political demands, it was bound to a specific national character. "The German woman's movement", Gertrud Bäumer asserted, "is German." It had been created by women who were imbued by "specifically German nature (*Wesen*) and German *Bildung*, who found the strength and value of their lives in connection with German mental culture."¹¹⁵

Not only was the women's movement rooted in German culture, it was also of importance for the well-being of the nation. The health of a nation, Bäumer explained, depended upon the healthy development of the forces of all its groups. The fight for the possibility of this development of one of its groups was thus a fight for the sake of the *Volk*. A healthy women's movement in itself had to be patriotic. It had to be part of the life of the nation, to carry its problems and difficulties, as well

¹¹⁴For the League see Evans, Feminist Movement, pp. 175ff. According to Evans, the League had never more than a handful of members, and remained ineffective as a body (see p. 178).

¹¹⁵Gertrud Bäumer, "Frauenbewegung und Nationalbewußtsein", Die Frau, 20 (1912/13), pp. 389-390. Helene Lange had already in 1900 pointed at the importance for the movement to stand on the "steady ground" of its proper national life (see Helene Lange, "National oder International? Ein Fragezeichen zur Frauenbewegung" (1900), in *idem*, Kampfzeiten: Aufsätze und Reden aus vier Jahrzehnten, Vol. 1 (Berlin: F.U.Herbig, 1928), p. 271.

as to hope for its ascent.¹¹⁶

The development of female forces was directed at a development of female culture. In women's cultural function their role in the home, according to Bäumer was very important. Woman, who was different from man, required a different sphere of action. Bäumer opposed the idea for women to enter into competition with men. To confine women to the home, was probably better than this.¹¹⁷ The home constituted a sphere where woman could be effective as woman, where she could bring to bear her femininity.¹¹⁸

But Bäumer maintained that women should have the freedom of choice of finding their appropriate sphere of action.¹¹⁹ Women were also needed outside of the home. Although the family was an important sphere of female influence, it should not be the only sphere of this influence.¹²⁰ Bäumer asserted that there existed a conflict between combining biological motherhood with a career. She rejected the denial of individual decisions of whether women wanted to be mothers and employed, such as was the case with teachers under the laws of celibacy.

¹¹⁶Bäumer, "Nationalbewußtsein", p. 393.

¹¹⁷Bäumer, geistige Leben, p. 98.

¹¹⁸Gertrud Bäumer, Die Frau in der Kulturbewegung der Gegenwart., Vol. 32 of L.Lowenfels and H.Kurella (eds), Grenzfragen des Nerven- und Seelenlebens, (Wiesbaden: J.F.Bergmann, 1904), p. 30.

¹¹⁹Bäumer, geistige Leben, p. 98.

¹²⁰Bäumer, Kulturbewegung, pp. 33-34.

However, she did not believe that the combination of career and motherhood would become the common decision. As she saw it, there would remain a basic division between married women who concentrated upon the tasks of bringing up children and unmarried women who would dedicate themselves to their work.¹²¹

The argument that in this way precisely the most capable (*Tüchtigsten*) women would be unavailable for procreation, she thought not valid. Capability in a job did not necessarily signal general capability, nor ability to bring up children. Experience, according to her, had shown that unmarried working women were no more capable than married mothers, and that thus the most valuable women had not been lost for motherhood.¹²² The race would not suffer from the fact that some women, who through their innate specific capability were bound to their work, did not enter marriage. Was it not known that intellectually very developed people had often physically weak offspring?¹²³ Thus "humanity is better off, if this one gives it her entire dedication, rather than seeking her task in producing relatively inferior children".¹²⁴

¹²¹Bäumer, geistige Leben, pp. 112-113.

¹²²*ibid.*

¹²³*ibid.*, p. 113.

¹²⁴*ibid.*, p. 114.

Crisis of Culture and Female Culture

As argued in chapter six, in the late nineteenth century, an important function of the *gebildete* woman was tied up with "solving" aspects of the Social Question. This conception did not disappear in the early twentieth century. But it was developed, particularly by moderates. The focus of the task of the educated woman was expressed in terms of the redemption of the "crisis of culture". This preoccupation was closely related to the earlier ones. Despite all the material advancement, Lange thus argued in 1909, there was no real culture: alcoholism, prostitution, moral and social misery were rife. Middle-class women had the task to bring "mental goods" (*geistige Güter*) to the "lower classes". Lange, however, also highlighted that there was a new language in expressing the role which feminists established for women. In the late nineteenth century it had been argued that middle-class women had the social obligation to become *gebildete* women, free (female) personalities and as such reform society. Now, in the context of a growing perception of cultural crisis, there was a shift in emphasis towards arguing that *gebildete* women had the role of ensuring that *Persönlichkeiten* continued to be formed. They had to alter a state of affairs in which external things were developed for their own good and had become more important than the inner formation of human

beings.¹²⁵ Women had the task of re-establishing a relationship between the external and the inner development of people which had become severed by the developments of modernity.

At the turn of the century among academics there emerged a sense of crisis of the current condition of German cultural life. Their intellectual traditions seemed to be losing their meaning and relevance.¹²⁶ The notion of a "crisis of culture" was making its appearance. The turn of the century was the period when the *Besitzbürgertum* (propertied middle class) was gaining in social importance in relation to the educated middle class.¹²⁷ A division between the educated and propertied middle class, in which the latter was advocating material and mechanical advancements, whereas the former rejected everything "modern" is now considered to be untenable. But there was ambivalence among the middle class about aspects of material developments.¹²⁸

¹²⁵Helene Lange, Die Frauen und das politische Leben (Berlin: W.Moeser, 1909), pp. 18-19.

¹²⁶Fritz K. Ringer, The Decline of the German Mandarins: The German Academic Community, 1890-1933 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), p. 253.

¹²⁷Hans-Ulrich Wehler, "Deutsches Bildungsbürgertum in vergleichender Perspektive - Elemente eines Sonderwegs?", in Jürgen Kocka (ed.), Bildungsbürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert, Vol. 4, Politischer Einfluß und gesellschaftliche Formation (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1989), pp. 216-217.

¹²⁸David Blackbourn, "The German Bourgeoisie: An Introduction", in David Blackbourn and Richard J. Evans (eds), The German Bourgeoisie: Essays on the Social history of the German Middle Class from the Late Eighteenth to the Early Twentieth Century (London:

Industrialization and modern technology set off concerns about the processes of mechanization, objectification, and the creation of a mass society. The relationship between individual cultivation and modern conditions became an area of anxiety. Higher education itself, it was sometimes argued, had become "an article of mass consumption".¹²⁹ It was not forming an elite corps of educated people any more. The *Gymnasien*, rather than laying the foundations for the *gebildete* person, had turned into drilling institutions (*Dressuranstalten*). University education had become ever more specialised; *Bildung* had given way to expert knowledge. Higher education had turned into a *Brotstudium* (education to gain a living). The relationship between contemporary higher education and the ideal of humanistic *Bildung* had become problematical. Critics argued that the new specialist made a caricature out of the cultivated man.¹³⁰

Some critics of contemporary Western culture, such as Friedrich Nietzsche, addressed the meaning of the women's movement within their framework. Nietzsche, then and now notorious for his views on woman, placed her outside of culture. In "The Greek Woman", he established that (from the Greeks to the present) woman was more

Routledge, 1991), pp. 8-9. Blackbourn finds such ambivalence in attitudes towards the growing cities and the fears about hygiene, crime and class conflict which they evoked.

¹²⁹Ringer, *Decline*, p. 256.

¹³⁰*ibid.*, p. 258.

closely related to nature than man, and that culture with her was always something external.¹³¹ For a woman to have scholarly inclinations, generally meant that something was wrong with her sexually. Infertility disposed towards "a certain masculinity of taste."¹³² The fight for equal rights was a symptom of disease.¹³³

Nietzsche's criticism of the women's movement intersected with his criticism of modern civilization. The attempt of woman to escape from her nature, to bring about a "defeminization" of women, was in line with the "industrial spirit" of the day, which had conquered the "aristocratic spirit". Instead of representing progress, it was a regression: "Woman degenerates". To favour the women's movement - to favour a defeminization - was to want women to imitate that which "'man' in Europe, the European 'manliness' is suffering from". It was attempted to cultivate women, to make the weak sex strong through culture. But cultivation always went hand in hand with weakening, fragmentation (*Zersplitterung*), and loss of willpower. To sever woman from her nature and make her imitate the stupidities of European man was to "debase" her and to make her less able of fulfilling her most

¹³¹quoted in Susan J. Hekman, Gender and Knowledge: Elements of a Postmodern Feminism (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), p. 111.

¹³²Friedrich Nietzsche, Jenseits von Gut und Böse: Vorspiel einer Philosophie der Zukunft, first published 1886 (München: dtv, 1988), p. 98.

¹³³Friedrich Nietzsche, Ecce Homo, first published 1888 (Frankfurt a. M.: Insel, 1977), p. 81.

important function: to bear strong children.¹³⁴

Nietzsche was not the only philosopher to discuss the women's movement and its relationship to culture. The philosopher and sociologist Georg Simmel (1858-1918), rather than placing woman outside of culture, put forward the notion that there existed a distinctive female culture. He considered that culture was a synthesis of "objective culture" (the general accumulation of knowledge and of artefacts) and "subjective culture" (the individual's internalization of objective culture).¹³⁵ Yet, presently it was objective culture which had taken on the appearance of culture at such, since it had outpaced subjective culture. The emphasis had shifted towards the "perfection and self-sufficient development of objects", away from their "consummation in subjects". The later had become a purely private concern, but was no longer the purpose of culture.¹³⁶

The aims of the women's movement, according to Simmel, had moved along the course of subjective culture: the proposal was to move into "forms of life and achievements of men". It concerned female participation in cultural goods which already existed. Yet, there was

¹³⁴Nietzsche, Gut und Böse, pp. 176-178. For a collection of essays which explore the ambiguities of the feminine in Nietzsche see Peter J. Burgard (ed.), Nietzsche and the Feminine (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1994).

¹³⁵Georg Simmel, "Female Culture" (1911), in Guy Oakes (ed.), Georg Simmel: On Women, Sexuality and Love (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 65.

¹³⁶*ibid.*, p. 69.

another issue which surrounded the women's movement: whether an extension of the contents of objective culture would arise from the movement.¹³⁷

Objective culture, Simmel argued, had been defined by man.¹³⁸ It was the product of male externalization. Women had a more integral, self-contained, nature. Unity constituted the root of their being.¹³⁹ They were beings for whom the distinction of objective and subjective did not exist.¹⁴⁰ Woman, thus, could contribute to objective culture where her nature could achieve something which was beyond man. This was the case, for example, with medicine, where the ability of empathy with the condition of the patient could help both in diagnosis and therapy; or historical science, where it could help to understand popular movements or the motivations of individuals.¹⁴¹

But the greatest female cultural achievement lay within the home. The home was not only an aspect of life. It also constituted a "special way of forming, reflecting, and interrelating the totality of life". It bore the stamp of the "special abilities and interests, and emotionality and intellectuality, of the woman, by the total rhythm of her being."¹⁴² In the home all the

¹³⁷*ibid.*, p. 66.

¹³⁸*ibid.*, pp. 67ff.

¹³⁹*ibid.*, p. 70.

¹⁴⁰*ibid.*, p. 86.

¹⁴¹*ibid.*, pp. 76-81.

¹⁴²*ibid.*, p. 92.

"lines of the cosmos of culture transpire in an inner unity". In this way, it "assumes that real and symbolic relationship to the nature of woman by means of which it could become her great cultural achievement."¹⁴³

The gendering of objectivity and subjectivity became a central aspect of some moderate feminists' conceptions of woman's role in culture. Marianne Weber (1870-1954) directly engaged with Simmel's arguments.¹⁴⁴ She acknowledged that Simmel had set out to consider woman not in comparison with man as the norm, but to consider a female value sphere of its own. But she rejected his approach to gender difference. In Simmel's approach woman stood as something absolute (rather than relative) next to man, but not by virtue of her humanity, but by virtue of her femininity. Thus it was still her difference from man which seemed to constitute her real sphere: self-

¹⁴³*ibid.*, p. 94.

¹⁴⁴"Female Culture" had been published in Max Weber's Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft. Weber, at one time involved with the Heidelberg branch of the Association *Frauenbildung-Frauenstudium*, was on the whole closer to the moderate position of the women's movement. In 1919 she replaced Gertrud Bäumer as the president of the Federation of German Women's Association (*Bund deutscher Frauenvereine*). More than through activism she had gained the post through her intellectual work. In 1893 she had married Max Weber (she was to write his biography). She had attended lectures of her husband's colleagues in Freiburg, but did not acquire a degree, until 1924 when she was given a honorary doctorate by the University of Heidelberg. Weber in the period prior to the First World War was closely allied to Bäumer in the women's movement, but during the Third Reich she distanced herself increasingly from Bäumer (see Guenther Roth, "Marianne Weber and her Circle", in Weber, Marianne, Max Weber: A Biography, trans. and ed. by Harry Zohn (New Brunswick & Oxford: Transaction Books, 1988), pp. xv-lxi).

contained completeness, as opposed to male duality which led him to separate idea from being, constituted the female meaning of life. With this, the creation of objective culture remained essentially a male sphere. Simmel thus again had constructed an ideal of femininity. Characteristics and capacities of "empirical women" which transgressed this ideal ultimately could only be understood as "masculine". Weber, however, starting from the assumption of female autonomy, rather wanted to consider the value and purpose of female cultural work outside of the personal sphere of the home.¹⁴⁵

Weber's considerations of female cultural performance were thoroughly located in concepts of gender difference. Man and woman were united through their humanness. But next to their common human character, they possessed gender specific characteristics.¹⁴⁶ The self-contained completeness of woman, of which Simmel had talked, was an illusion which was perhaps nourished by conditions of the past. Many contemporary women, however, had become part of cultural development, which had severed them from their natural being and turned them into conscious beings. Part of the female sex thus felt a double vocation: as women who sought their perfection in the personal, and as human beings who sought to

¹⁴⁵Marianne Weber, "Die Frau und die objective Kultur" (1913), in Frauenfragen und Frauengedanken: Gesammelte Aufsätze (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr: 1919), pp. 99, 101-105.

¹⁴⁶*ibid.*, p. 95.

contribute to the impersonal (*Überpersönliche*), or objective.¹⁴⁷

Weber believed that woman's relationship to objective work was more problematical than man's. Her physical and psychical organization was disposed to motherhood which demanded its tribute of "lifeforces", whether motherhood became physical or not. The remaining force which could be dedicated to the objective was always going to be less than that of man. Qualitatively and quantitatively women's achievements in this field remained far behind men's highest achievements.¹⁴⁸

Thus also according to Weber there existed a conflict between motherhood and mental work. They were two different forces pulling her into diametrically opposed directions.¹⁴⁹ Yet both parts, the drive to personal perfection, as well as the drive for super-personal creation, were crowns of humanity.¹⁵⁰ For Weber, the combination of personal female life with objective work had to be solved individually.¹⁵¹

Women did have an important place in cultural

¹⁴⁷*ibid.*, pp. 116-117.

¹⁴⁸*ibid.*, pp. 116-117.

¹⁴⁹*ibid.*, p. 117.

¹⁵⁰*ibid.*, p. 116.

¹⁵¹*ibid.*, p. 119. Although Weber favoured the possibility of female employment and the education of all women to be able to take up employment if necessary or desired, she rejected idea that it should become common for women to combine work and motherhood (see Marianne Weber, "Beruf und Ehe" (1905), in *idem*, Frauenfragen, part. pp. 32ff).

production. Weber had already argued in 1904 that the emphasis of women's mental work would not consist so much contributions to the "objective cosmos of knowledge".¹⁵² By looking at the cultural production of women in history, she concluded that it had not been much marked by independent creation, but by living out "that which had been recognized as true", and thus they had been important as developed *Persönlichkeiten* for the culture of their time.¹⁵³

Even if female creative power did not reach the "leading male minds", this did not mean that women did not have anything valuable to contribute to scholarship, once they left the "semi-conscious" state of the home for participation in the work of culture. Woman was more interested in the personal-human than in objects. This meant that women had a greater urge than men to make use of knowledge through action. And this was something which modern culture was more in need of than ever before. Knowledge in the present age had greatly increased. Scholarly production of the individual was ever more focused on small parts of the entirety of knowledge. This had caused the growth of mental culture of the individual to greatly fall behind the growth of objective knowledge. Knowledge was no longer at the service of the individual's strive for cognition. Rather, the

¹⁵²Marianne Weber, "Die Beteiligung der Frau an der Wissenschaft" (1904), in Frauenfragen und Frauengedanken: Gesammelte Aufsätze (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr: 1919), p. 7.

¹⁵³*ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

understanding of the individual was at the service of a body of knowledge with which no single human mind could cope any more. Culture had become alienated from life. But because woman was more indivisible (*Unteilbar*), she always aspired to bring objective creation in unison with her totality.¹⁵⁴

Man's power to dissociate himself from his objective creations explained why "many leading male minds, who perform the highest for objective culture, remain petty and valueless as personalities". Woman had the power to turn to account her knowledge for the construction of her mental and moral self. It was she who would bring into unison the dissonance between high intellectual and low ethical culture.¹⁵⁵

Thus notions were developed of a female function of a general revival of the relationship of external culture to inner personality. Participation of feminine difference continued to be represented as way to re-direct faulty developments of the capitalist age, which, it was said, bore the stamp of the masculine mind.¹⁵⁶ According to Gertrud Bäumer, women had a special cultural role due to their particular inclination to the personal.

¹⁵⁴*ibid.*, pp. 6-9.

¹⁵⁵*ibid.*, p. 9.

¹⁵⁶See also Ute Frevert, Frauen-Geschichte: Zwischen bürgerlicher Verbesserung und neuer Weiblichkeit (Frankfurt a.M: Suhrkamp, 1986), pp. 124-125; Barbara Greven-Aschoff, Die bürgerliche Frauenbewegung in Deutschland, 1894-1932 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981), pp. 41-42.

Incapacity for objectivity, rather than a defect, was an asset in women's special cultural task. It was this disposition to the personal, the incapacity to distinguish the object from the subject, which made it possible for women to perceive human creation and achievement, which had become severed from its originator, as the expression of individual emotion, cognition and intention. Thus they could bring external things back to influencing human beings, to form their inner life.¹⁵⁷

Bäumer operated with the distinction between "culture" and "civilization", to legitimize women's cultural role. Whereas in the early nineteenth century "culture" and "civilisation" were mostly used synonymously, from the 1880s a distinction started gradually to be made between the two concepts. In a climate of growing pessimism about progress, for those who adhered to this perception, "civilisation" took on negative connotations, covering "external" developments in economics, technology and social organization. "Culture", generally valued over the "civilisation" in this view, stood for the "inner" condition and achievements of cultivated individuals.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷Bäumer, geistige Leben, pp. 14-15.

¹⁵⁸Jörg Fisch, "Zivilisation, Kultur", in Otto Bruner, Werner Conze, Reinhardt Koselleck (eds), Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland, Vol. 7 (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1992), pp. 725, 746, 749; Ringer, Decline, p. 90.

This was a distinction Bäumer adhered to and which provided the basis for her argument that culture was in need of women's input. She responded to the assertion that culture was due to male achievement, by arguing that this was the case of *civilisation*. "Modern civilisation, as civilisation of all times", she said, "bears the imprint of the masculine mind."¹⁵⁹ Yet, as certain as this was, it was also true that man could not be the only creator of culture. Man's creations in science and art, as well as in social organization and technology, did not yet make him a creator of culture. Culture was only culture when it was the means for the inner formation of human beings. To make this happen, to transform the products of human thought and action into personal culture, Bäumer argued, women were needed.¹⁶⁰

The contemporary problem of culture was that culture and civilisation had come into conflict with each other. Civilisation, the developments in external conditions of living, was not accompanied by an increasing refinement of the personalities. On the contrary, Germans one hundred years ago, Bäumer contended, had a more developed mental character, a higher inner value.¹⁶¹ Hence, the task ahead was to bring civilisation and culture into a new synthesis, to "permeate the ways of life forced upon us

¹⁵⁹Gertrud Bäumer, Die Frauenbewegung und die Zukunft unserer Kultur (Berlin: W. Moser, 1909), p. 13.

¹⁶⁰*ibid.*, pp. 13-14. See also Bäumer, geistige Leben, pp. 269-270.

¹⁶¹Bäumer, Zukunft unserer Kultur, p. 2.

by civilisation with culture".¹⁶²

Radicals' Approaches to Motherhood and Career

Whereas moderates mainly continued to perceive the combination of biological motherhood and a career as problematic, often conceiving the two as alternatives, radicals often defended the combination of heterosexual love and motherhood with a professional role.¹⁶³ The *Bund für Mutterschutz* (League for the Protection of Mothers) became a central platform for the formulation of new approaches to motherhood in its biological, social and legal implications. The League was founded in 1904 by the teacher and poet Ruth Bré. It embraced feminists, sexologists, and racial hygienists.¹⁶⁴ After prolonged controversies about the aims of the League, Helene

¹⁶²*ibid.*, p. 10.

¹⁶³For a discussion of radicals approach to motherhood and career see also Ann Taylor Allen, Feminism and Motherhood in Germany, 1800-1914 (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991), pp. 106ff; and *idem*, "German Radical Feminism and Eugenics, 1900-1908", German Studies Review, 11 (1988), pp. 36ff.

¹⁶⁴Among them were Hedwig Dohm, Lily Braun, Henriette Fürth, Ellen Key, Adele Schreiber, Havelock Ellis, Magnus Hirschfeld, Iwan Bloch, Albert Moll, Auguste Forel, and Ludwig Woltmann. Forel and Bloch resigned from the League after the BDF and the *Bund* had split over the latter's support for abortion. Stöcker was initially on cordial terms with Alfred Ploetz until 1908, but they disagreed over her advocacy of contraception (see Herlitizius, Frauenbefreiung, pp. 149-150; Weindling, Health, pp. 253-255).

Stöcker (1869-1943) was to emerge as its leader.¹⁶⁵

The intention of the League, which was refused membership of the *Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine* in 1909, was to work towards a reformed "sexual ethics". It campaigned for state-subsidized maternity insurance, to be paid to all mothers, whether they were workers or housewives, married or unmarried; improved welfare for single mothers; legal equality of illegitimate and legitimate children vis-à-vis their fathers; and sex education in schools. Stöcker supported contraception and opposed the abortion laws.¹⁶⁶

These concerns with maternal welfare, sexual reform and reproductive policies were discussed in terms of

¹⁶⁵For the constitution of the League see Weindling, Health, pp. 252ff; Herlitzius, Frauenbefreiung, pp. 149ff. Stöcker was the daughter of a textile manufacturer. She was educated at a higher girls' school. In 1892 she went to Berlin to sit the teachers' examination. She became one of the early auditors at the Friedrich-Wilhelms University in Berlin. Stöcker studied German literature, economics and philosophy. In 1901 she graduated from the University of Bern. She was involved in the establishment of the *Wissenschaftlich-Humanitäres Komitee* (Scientific Humanitarian Committee), and a co-founder of the *Verband Fortschrittlicher Frauenvereine* (Union of Progressive Women's Associations). From 1908 until 1933 she edited the journal of the *Bund für Mutterschutz*, Die Neue Generation. After the First World War she became involved in pacifist organization. In 1933 she went into exile to Switzerland. She died in 1943 in New York, where she had arrived two years earlier (For a biography see Christl Wickert, Helene Stöcker, 1869-1943: Frauenrechtlerin, Sexualreformerin und Pazifistin (Bonn: J.H.W. Dietz Nachf., 1991)).

¹⁶⁶Weindling, Health, pp. 254-255. For a more extensive discussion of these campaigns see Allen, "Radical Feminism", pp. 41ff, Herlitzius, Frauenbefreiung. For a study of the politics of reproduction during the Weimar Republic see Usborne, Politics of the Body.

women's emancipation, sexual liberation and racial hygiene.¹⁶⁷ Unlike most of the "mainstream" eugenicists discussed earlier, feminists argued that women's emancipation would not harm, but advance the race.¹⁶⁸ The issue I will here focus upon are the ideas behind the promotion of the possibility of combining motherhood with a career.

The "new ethics" advanced by Helene Stöcker were based upon an integration of romantic ideas about the refinement of the personality through love, Friedrich Nietzsche's beliefs, and Darwin's theories. Within this ethics, sexuality was a creative and regenerative aspect of human nature. It was a fundamental drive, which was the pre-requisite for human harmony.¹⁶⁹ Men and women were to develop their personalities through love and *Bildung*. Love was a crucial ingredient for the development of free and internally independent individuals.¹⁷⁰

For women to become fully developed personalities, Stöcker thought, an integration of heterosexual love, motherhood and professional life was required. Unlike many of the moderates, she did not see the two as alternatives; the aim was not to replace a one-sided

¹⁶⁷Herlitzius, Frauenbefreiung, 123.

¹⁶⁸Allen, Feminism, p. 198.

¹⁶⁹*ibid.*, p. 159; Herlitzius, Frauenbefreiung, pp. 135-137.

¹⁷⁰Herlitzius, Frauenbefreiung, p. 127

emotional life with a one-sided working life.¹⁷¹ Mental and economic independence, as well as marriage and motherhood, were both indispensable.¹⁷² Higher education would not deprive women of the urge to become wives and mothers, nor would it turn them into men. Quite on the contrary, women now wanted to really become women. In the same way that man surely had not yet reached the last stage of his possible development, it was no less sure that woman had not yet reached the stage of her highest development.¹⁷³

Stöcker adapted Nietzsche's ideas about the development of ever higher human beings and the liberation from dogma and conventions to formulate her views of female emancipation in terms of a transvaluation of male-dominated social organization.¹⁷⁴ The problem, she said, had been to find out how a combination could be possible of being a free personality and a loving woman at the same time. The answer came through Nietzsche. Thus she proclaimed: "Our conscience now says: 'Become as you are' (*Werde, wie du bist*). " To develop all talents; to learn to give their own laws and to establish values of their own, that was the liberation from "ascetic morals"

¹⁷¹Helene Stöcker, "Unsere Umwertung der Werte" (1897), in *idem*, Die Liebe und die Frauen (Minden: J.C.C. Bruns, 1906), p. 9.

¹⁷²Helene Stöcker, "Die Hauswirtschaft als Beruf" (1902), in *ibid.*, p. 60.

¹⁷³Stöcker, "Umwertung", pp. 9-12.

¹⁷⁴Herlitizius, Frauenbefreiung, p. 140.

and "male *Weltanschauung*".¹⁷⁵

With the demise of "absolute truth", the notion of the absolute superiority of man had fallen. Women were different from men.¹⁷⁶ But this difference was not a question of superiority and inferiority. Man might be stronger in physical strength, yet physical strength was not the "value of all values". And even if man, with the same *Bildung*, still intellectually achieved more than woman (although, she pointed out, that was not sure at all yet), even this was not yet the value of all values. Women, given the development of all their mental faculties, superseded men in emotions. Emotional faculty was as important for the well-being of humanity as clarity of thought was. Moreover, the notion of male superiority did not make sense:

As much as the mother is as important for the begetting of children as the father is; as much woman is important for the maintenance and improvement (*Hebung*) of the human race. How are we supposed to arrive at the *Übermensch*, if women, who are supposed to yearn to bear the *Übermensch*, are all inferior creatures, who out of instinct of self-preservation have to reach for the 'slave morality?'¹⁷⁷

Stöcker's ideas about female fulfilment through her "new ethics" incorporated theories of racial improvement. Through the united strife for high ideals, marriage was to become a means for the elevation of the race. Its aim

¹⁷⁵Stöcker, "Umwertung", p. 14.

¹⁷⁶*ibid.*, p. 16.

¹⁷⁷*ibid.*, p. 15.

had to be the improvement of the following generation, and in cases where this could not be achieved, procreation should not take place.¹⁷⁸

The notion that women could and should combine motherhood and higher education, followed by a professional career, was one of the issues over which radical advocates contradicted the line of most "mainline" racial hygienists that women should be educated for motherhood and concentrate exclusively on this task for the sake of the quality of the race. In practical terms, reproduction without sacrifice of career was enabled through the advocacy of contraception. Some, like Henriette Fürth and Lily Braun, also advocated child-care centres, communal kitchens, and shorter hours for female workers.¹⁷⁹

Theories of racial improvement were important in arguments for the combination of motherhood and career. Lily Braun (1865-1916)¹⁸⁰ believed that the introduction

¹⁷⁸Herlitizius, Frauenbefreiung, p. 143.

¹⁷⁹Allen, "Radical Feminism", p. 40.

¹⁸⁰Braun was the daughter of Prussian aristocrats. At the age of twenty-five, when her parents ran into financial difficulties, Braun started her career as a writer and became increasingly active in the women's movement. In the early 1890s she became a member of the *Verein Frauenwohl*, and from 1895 she edited with Minna Cauer Die Frauenbewegung. In the same year she joined the Social Democratic Party. Braun's standing within the party, however, always remained ambivalent. Her background and her continued collaboration with the bourgeois women's movement were frowned upon, and a lasting conflict with Clara Zetkin over approaches to the woman question, led to her marginalization. At the end of her life, Braun put most of her energies into writing (see "Braun, Lily", in Gisela Brinker-Gabler, *et al.*,

of a communal form for households and changed working conditions were necessary because under present conditions, "some of the best women of our times, who understood to develop in themselves the woman at the same time as individual mental personality", although imbued with the "natural yearning of their sex for husband and child", did not enter marriage because it was opposed to their need for freedom. Thus traditional family life had to change, because "it lies in the interest of humanity, to secure the best mothers for the coming generation".¹⁸¹

Although not all in agreement with Braun's proposals, the possibility of combining biological motherhood with a fulfilment of the common human side was a central concern. At the congress for racial hygiene in 1911 in Dresden, it was argued by feminists that the rejection of motherhood by professional women was counterselective. Yet, the demand of racial hygienists to "reconcile" women with motherhood was impossible as long as it had to be "human being or mother". When it would finally become "human being and mother", the best women

Lexikon deutschsprachiger Schriftstellerinnen, 1800-1945 (München: dtv, 1986), pp. 42-44; Elke Frederiksen (ed.), Die Frauenfrage in Deutschland, 1865-1915: Texte und Dokumente (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1981), pp. 459-463). For a biography see Alfred G. Meyer, The Feminism and Socialism of Lily Braun (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985).

¹⁸¹Lily Braun, Die Frauenfrage: Ihre geschichtliche Entwicklung und wirtschaftliche Seite (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1901), p. 199.

would turn to motherhood again.¹⁸²

The social democrat Henriette Fürth (1861-1936 or 38), who was a member of the *Bund für Mutterschutz*, argued that contraception among women, particularly working class women, was essential to ensure that they would only have the number of children they could nourish and bring up. The decline of the birth-rate had nothing to do with the women's movement. It was caused by the high mortality rate due to unhealthy living and working conditions. Women had to fight for the right to reduce the number of their children in the name of "our children and in the interest of the well-being of the *Volk* and the health of the *Volk*." Moreover, marriages should be accompanied by a health certificate, so that "degenerate" elements could be eliminated (*ausschalten*). In a cultural development, which was marked by the development of personalities, women who had matured into personalities refused more and more to put children thoughtlessly into the world. They even used this as a weapon, but this was different from those women who refused to have children out of "self-indulgence". These women, Fürth said, could not be found amongst those who were fighting for women's rights and the well-being of the nation. All that these women were seeking was that through keeping their "duties to the species" within reasonable boundaries, they were freed for the task which could add invaluable,

¹⁸²Regine Deutsch, "Die Frauenfrage auf dem Kongreß der Rassenhygieniker", Centralblatt des Bundes deutscher Frauenvereine, 13 (1911), p. 74.

specifically female, cultural values and goods to male culture.¹⁸³

For some feminists, it was among the middle- and upper class that the women with the best hereditary quality were found. Yet, it was mostly the women who were in "character and mind above average", who remained without children, as Lily Braun pointed out.¹⁸⁴ To make professional women, such as civil servants and teachers, to choose between motherhood and career through the laws of celibacy, she maintained "is very harmful to the human race".¹⁸⁵ These laws, Grete Meisel-Heß (b. 1879), another member of the *Bund für Mutterschutz* similarly argued, were "anti-selective". It came down to an elimination of the "mentally highly developed women" from the reproductive process. Yet, as far as they were also physically healthy, it was in the interest of the advancement of the mental level of a *Volk* that it was precisely these women who would procreate.¹⁸⁶

Not only should these laws be abolished, but all middle-class women should also be educated to make it

¹⁸³Henriette Fürth, "Der Geburtenrückgang und die Frauen", Die Frauenbewegung, 19 (1913), pp. 42-43.

¹⁸⁴Lily Braun, "Die Mutterschaftsversicherung", Mutterschutz (1906), p. 118; quoted in Herlitizius, Frauenbefreiung, p. 189.

¹⁸⁵Lily Braun, Die Mutterschaftsversicherung: ein Beitrag zur Frage der Fürsorge für Schwangere und Wöchnerinnen (Berlin: Buchhandlung des Vorwärts, 1906); quoted in Allen, "Radical Feminism", p. 41.

¹⁸⁶Grete Meisel-Heß, Die sexuelle Krise: Eine sozialpsychologische Untersuchung (Jena: Eugen Diederichs, 1909), p. 231.

possible to attain economic independence. Rather than endangering the quality of the race, this would counteract its degeneration. Female economic independence would give women the freedom of choice in marriage, rather than having to accept the best available through being dependent upon marriage for subsistence. This was a process which interfered with selection and had detrimental consequences for the race.¹⁸⁷

Conclusion

At the turn of the century and the early twentieth century racial hygienists put forward theories in which women's role was perceived as purely biological. Hereditarily fit women for many were mostly found in the middle class. It was precisely those who were capable to enter university, who should concentrate on their reproductive task, rather than on individual development and the search for freedom outside of the home. The function of fit women was to bear the following generations of talented individuals, rather than to put their talent to use in the creation of culture.

It was radical feminists who most extensively engaged with theories of racial hygiene. They developed arguments that women's emancipation was not harmful for the race, but rather meant its advancement. In this, the

¹⁸⁷Grete Meisel-Heß, Betrachtungen zur Frauenfrage (Berlin: Prometheus Verlagsgesellschaft, 1914), pp. 6-7.

claim to education and employment was based upon concepts that for their fulfilment women had to develop and live out the feminine and human sides of their nature.

Arguments for the necessity of fit women to procreate drove claims that it had to be possible for these women to combine motherhood with a career.

Moderates continued to endorse maternity and employment as alternatives. In the maintenance of this division, biological motherhood received less attention than spiritual motherhood in the period prior to the First World War. In the early twentieth century, women's specific cultural mission was often seen to be to reinforce the relationship between inner development and external culture, loosened by the developments of modernity. They were to counteract the crisis of culture, or as Gertrud Bäumer put it, to create a synthesis between culture and civilization.

At the same time that the implications of motherhood - spiritual and biological - for women's roles were thus discussed, ideas were formulated that certain "abnormal" women had a biologically masculine disposition and hence did not fit their gender role. As we shall see, the acceptance of this idea opened a whole debate about how to place these manly women in the social order.

CHAPTER EIGHT

A MASCULINE MIND IN A FEMALE BODY:

THE ACADEMIC WOMAN AS SEXUAL INVERT, c. 1869 - c. 1914

"...it is no coincidence that in the 'women's movement', that is the movement directed at the appropriation of all achievements of male mental culture (*männliche Geisteskultur*), homosexual women have played an important role".¹ This assertion, made in 1907 by the sexologist Iwan Bloch, epitomized the convergence at the turn-of-the-century of sexological theories about homosexuality with the woman question. In this chapter I will examine how sexological theories led to the emergence of new ways of thinking about gender and its relationship to the male and female body, based upon a severing of gender from sex as defined by genitalia, and how these views were applied in assessing the woman question.

The late nineteenth century has been identified by Michel Foucault as a period in which homosexuality came to be understood as a scientifically classifiable condition which affected the entire personality of an individual. Same-sex desire came to be understood as an inversion of the masculine and feminine within an

¹Iwan Bloch, Das Sexualleben unserer Zeit in seinen Beziehungen zur modernen Kultur (Berlin: Louis Marcus, 1907), pp. 580-581.

individual.² Foucault referred only to the male homosexual, but, certainly in Germany, the period also saw the sexological construction of a distinct lesbian persona.³ The conceptualization of the homosexual as an individual with a singular personality took place at the time of the emergence of the organized women's movement. Ideas about the middle-class lesbian became inextricably bound up with the woman question.

²Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, trans. Robert Hurley, (London: Penguin, 1990), p. 43. For discussions on sexology and homosexuality see Jeffrey Weeks, Coming Out: Homosexual Politics in Britain, from the Nineteenth Century to the Present (London: Quartet Books, 1977); John C. Fout, "Sexual Politics in Wilhelmine Germany: The Male Gender Crisis, Moral Purity and Homophobia", Journal of the History of Sexuality, 2 (1992), pp. 388-421; Gert Hekma, "'A Female Soul in a Male Body': Sexual Inversion as Gender Inversion in Nineteenth-Century Sexology", in Third Sex, Third Gender: Beyond Sexual Dimorphism in Culture and History, ed. Gilbert Herdt (New York, 1994), pp. 213-239; Chandak Sengoopta, "Science, Sexuality, and Gender in the *Fin de Siècle*: Otto Weininger as Baedeker", History of Science, 30 (1992), pp. 249-279.

³For discussions of sexological ideas on lesbianism see Lillian Faderman, Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love between Women from the Renaissance to the Present (London: Women's Press, 1981); Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The New Woman as Androgyne: Social Disorder and Gender Crisis, 1870-1936", in Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), pp. 245-296; Sheila Jeffreys, The Spinster and her Enemies: Feminism and Sexuality, 1880-1930 (London: Pandora Press, 1985); George Chauncey Jr., "From Sexual Inversion to Homosexuality: Medicine and the Changing Conceptualization of Female Deviance", Salmagundi 58/59 (1983/83), pp. 114-146; Gudrun Schwarz, "'Mannweiber' in Männertheorien", in Frauen suchen ihre Geschichte: Historische Studien zum 19. und 20. Jahrhundert, ed. Karin Hausen (München: C.H. Beck, 1983), pp. 62-80; Liz Stanley, "Romantic Friendship? Some Issues in Researching Lesbian History and Biography", Women's History Review, 1 (1992), pp. 193-216; Lucy Bland, Banishing the Beast: English Feminism & Sexual Morality, 1885-1914 (London: Penguin, 1995).

In Britain, comparable theories to those that will be examined were formulated by Havelock Ellis⁴ (who had many connections with German sexologists) and Edward Carpenter.⁵ However, Ellis's book was confiscated after its first appearance and subsequently only published in the United States,⁶ and Carpenter did not include his chapter on the "intermediate sex" in his volume of Love's Coming of Age until 1906.⁷ Whereas in Britain ideas about homosexuality in terms of sexual inversion remained disperse, in Germany they acquired much greater dimensions.⁸

⁴Havelock Ellis, Studies in the Psychology of Sex, Vol. 1, Sexual Inversion (London: University Press, 1897).

⁵Edward Carpenter, Love's Coming-of-Age: A Series of Papers on the Relations of the Sexes, first published 1896 (London: George Allen & Company, 1913); *idem*, The Intermediate Sex: A Study of Some Transitional Types of Men and Women (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1908).

⁶Preface in Havelock Ellis, Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Sexual Inversion (Philadelphia: F.A.Davis Company, 1908).

⁷Roy Porter and Lesley Hall, The Facts of Life: The Creation of Sexual Knowledge in Britain, 1650-1950 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 159.

⁸There are scholars who have addressed the sexological construction of lesbianism in Britain (see footnote 3). For the period prior to the First World War, they generally pay attention to Ellis and Carpenter, but other than those their arguments are based on the writings of Central European male sexologists, most of all Richard von Krafft-Ebing. (Foucault, incidentally, also used a German text - Carl von Westphal's - as the basis to his argument of the medicalization of homosexuality). Thus I feel justified to argue that the debates I will discuss in this chapter had no comparable counterpart in Britain. Homosexuality in Germany, unlike in Britain, became a field of extensive scientific inquiry of the newly emerging discipline of sexology. Numerous men and women engaged in the negotiation of

The intersection between ideas about homosexuality with the woman question hinged on the particular contemporary understanding of the former. Homosexuality, or contrary sexual sensation (*konträre Sexualempfindung*),⁹ did not refer solely to sexual object choice. Rather, it denoted the inversion of a whole range of gender attributes within an individual.¹⁰ The male homosexual was conceptualized as being partly a woman and the female homosexual as being partly a man.

This was a concept of same-sex desire which essentially retained the heterosexuality of desire. Through the concept of the presence of the opposite gender in the sexed body homosexual desire was ultimately an expression of desire between a male self and a female self, although manifested in the body of the opposite sex.¹¹ George Chauncey Jr. has pointed out that there occurred a shift within the conceptualization of male homosexuality after 1900. Homosexual object choice became relatively more important than notions of gender inversion. This shift was reflected in the increasing use of the term "homosexuality" instead of "contrary sexual

these theories and their relationship with the woman question.

⁹The term was translated into English as "sexual inversion".

¹⁰See Chauncey, "Sexual Inversion", pp. 116-125; Foucault, History, p. 43; Smith-Rosenberg, "New Woman", p. 286.

¹¹See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Epistemology of the Closet", in Henry Abelove et al. (eds), The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 57.

sensation". With female homosexuality this was different, however. The idea of gender inversion remained central to conceptions of female homosexuality.¹²

Sexology and Congenital Homosexuality

In 1869 the professor of psychiatry Carl Westphal (1833-1890) published a landmark article in the medicalization of homosexuality in which he coined the term "contrary sexual sensation". He explained that the term did not always concern the sexual instinct as such, but that it could also merely denote a sensation of being alienated from one's own sex according to one's entire personality.¹³ Through his case studies of a woman and a man, Westphal established contrary sexual sensation as a congenital symptom of a pathological condition, and he declared that "... we can consider it to be without doubt, that as well as in man ..., in woman, as our case shows in an irrefutable manner, maybe for the first time, contrary sexual sensation occurs congenitally, so that the man feels himself to be a woman, and the woman feels

¹²Chauncey, "Sexual Inversion", part. pp. 122-125. The term "lesbianism", or "lesbian love", was hardly ever used before the First World War.

¹³ Carl Westphal, "Die conträre Sexualempfindung: Symptom eines neuropathischen (psychopathischen) Zustandes", Archiv für Psychiatrie und Nervenkrankheiten, 2 (1870), p. 107. One of Westphal's case studies, accordingly, was a male cross-dresser who had no "sexual inclinations towards men" and did not "shun sexual relations with women" (see p. 98).

herself to be a man."¹⁴

The forensic psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1840-1902), who became one of the foremost authorities on sexual pathology, defined in 1886 congenital contrary sexual sensation as a symptom of degeneration and a "part of a neuro-psychopathic, generally hereditarily determined, condition".¹⁵ The contrary sexual, the gender inverted individual, in whom "sentiment, thought, aspiration, and the character on the whole corresponds ... usually to the peculiar sexual sensation, but not to the sex which the individual represents anatomically and physiologically",¹⁶ was the result of a pathological heredity passed from one generation to another.

In the later editions of his monumental work, Psychopathia Sexualis, Krafft-Ebing drew up a classification system of different grades of contrary sexual sensation. According to him, the simple inversion of sexual instinct was a relatively low stage of deviancy. He argued that there existed four successive categories of contrary sexuals. With specific reference to female contrary sexual sensation, he declared that the first two categories consisted of psycho-sexual hermaphrodites (individuals with homosexual and heterosexual inclinations) and homosexuals who did not

¹⁴*ibid.*, p. 94.

¹⁵Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Psychopathia Sexualis (Stuttgart: Ferdinand Enke, 1886), p. 59.

¹⁶*ibid.*, p. 57.

betray their anomaly by external appearance or by masculine mental characteristics. The third classification included women who had a preference for male clothes and haircuts, who had an inclination for the sciences and who stood out through their intellect and their enterprise. The fourth stage, according to Krafft-Ebing, were "women, who have only the genitals of a woman, but in sentiment, thought, action, and in their external appearance they seem entirely masculine." It was in the public sphere that these manly women (*Mannweiber*) were frequently found.¹⁷ Thus the presence of "contrary" or inverted physical, psychical and behavioural gender characteristics were an integral part of the concept of contrary sexual sensation. It was the figure of the lesbian with masculine mental attributes which came to dominate ideas about female homosexuality.

Krafft-Ebing's understanding of homosexuality as a symptom of degeneration, however, was increasingly challenged at the end of the nineteenth century by the view that it was rather the result of a non-pathological developmental anomaly.¹⁸ This idea was closely linked to

¹⁷Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Psychopathia Sexualis, rpt. of the 14th ed., 1912 (München: Matthes & Seitz, 1993), pp. 301-302.

¹⁸Krafft-Ebing himself in 1901, influenced by Magnus Hirschfeld's theories (see below), revised his earlier ideas by asserting that a categorical connection between homosexuality and degeneration was not possible. He saw the former by this time as a developmental anomaly. He continued to argue, however, that contrary sexual sensation was frequently, although not necessarily, part of a complex of neuro- and psychopathic symptoms (see Krafft-Ebing, "Neue Studien auf dem Gebiete der

contemporary theories of embryonic development in which human embryos in the earliest period of intra-uterine life were seen to be sexually indifferent. From this period of initial sexual indifference, male or female genitalia gradually developed.¹⁹ After this primary anatomical differentiation human beings developed into men and women with masculine and feminine secondary sexual characters, i.e. mental and physical differences between the sexes which were not directly linked to the act of reproduction. Thus in individual human development an ontogenetic process of sexual differentiation took place which repeated phylogenetic evolution from an original bisexuality to human monosexuality. This notion of humankind's underlying original bisexuality provided the framework of explanation for the occurrence of a possible abnormal bisexuality in the fully developed human individual which resulted in homosexuality.

Early on, the idea had been developed by the lawyer and self-defined Uranian, Karl Heinrich Ulrichs (1826-1895), who during the 1860s started to publish a series of pamphlets in which he argued that same-sex preference, or Uranianism, as he termed it, was the result of an anomalous development in the sexually undifferentiated human embryo. The Uranian, according to Ulrichs, was an individual in whom a female soul was enclosed in a male

Homosexualität", Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen, 3 (1901), p. 5).

¹⁹Sengoopta, "Science", p. 257.

body. According to Ulrichs, Uranians thus constituted a third sex.²⁰ By the 1890s the theory of the original human bisexuality had become one of the most important premises in the sexological theories on congenital homosexuality.

Havelock Ellis (1859-1939) in 1896 thus argued in a German psychiatric journal that the foetus was originally bisexual and that traces of this were retained throughout life. This was exemplified in male nipples and the clitoris (a "rudimentary penis"). However, in the normal development of an individual the original bisexual disposition was turned into a monosexuality where only a few abortive signs of the other sex remained. But in the process of sexual differentiation there could occur all kinds of anomalies, resulting in individuals who resembled the other sex more than usual, either in their physical or mental appearance or both.²¹ The model of gender difference thus formulated was one of a continuum constituted by the masculine man on one pole, the feminine woman at the other, and a middle ground populated with individuals in whom feminine and masculine physical and psychical attributes were mixed in all kinds

²⁰*ibid.*, p. 262; Weeks, Coming Out, pp. 26-27; Hekma, "Female Soul", pp. 218-222; Hubert C. Kennedy, "The 'Third Sex' Theory of Karl Heinrich Ulrichs", Journal of Homosexuality, 6 (1980/81), pp. 105-107. Ulrichs primarily focused on the male Uranian, but in his later writings he paid some attention to the female counterpart, the *Urninde* (see Hekma, "Female Soul", p. 219).

²¹Havelock Ellis, "Die Theorie der conträren Sexualempfindung", Centralblatt für Nervenheilkunde und Psychatrie, 19 (1896), p. 59.

of different ways.

Magnus Hirschfeld and the Intellectual Urninde

The spread of the view that homosexuality was a non-pathological developmental anomaly owed much to the section of the homosexual movement which operated within a scientific framework of the understanding of homosexuality.²² The leading figure of this movement was the physician Magnus Hirschfeld (1868-1935).²³ In 1897 he founded the Scientific-Humanitarian Committee (*Wissenschaftlich-humanitäres Komitee*), whose main aim was the abolition of § 175 of the German penal code, which criminalized "unnatural vice" between persons of the male sex.²⁴ The Committee in their demand for the abolition of § 175 was supported by such prominent sexologists as Ellis and Krafft-Ebing. In 1899 it started to publish a journal, the Yearbook for Intermediate

²²For a history of the movement see James D. Steakley, The Homosexual Emancipation Movement in Germany (New York: Arno Press, 1975).

²³For biographies see Charlotte Wolff, Magnus Hirschfeld: A Portrait of a Pioneer in Sexology (London: Quartet, 1986); Manfred Herzer, Magnus Hirschfeld: Leben und Werk eines jüdischen, schwulen und sozialistischen Soziologen (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 1992).

²⁴§ 175: "Unnatural vice that is committed between persons of the male sex or by persons with animals is to be punished by prison; loss of civil rights may also be imposed.". The paragraph was modeled on the old Prussian § 143 and had been extended to the whole Reich with unification. The Prussian code had been restricted to men only in 1851. In 1909 a new draft penal code was drawn up in which § 175 was revised to include women (§ 250). The proposal was ultimately dismissed.

Sexual Stages with Particular Consideration of Homosexuality (*Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Homosexualität*). In the view of the Scientific-Humanitarian Committee, modern scientific knowledge about the congenital nature of homosexuality made § 175 a "black spot on the German Justitia": what was natural could not be immoral, nor a crime.²⁵

The demand of the Scientific-Humanitarian Committee for a change in legislation was grounded in the understanding of congenital homosexuality in which it was the result of an abnormal process of sexual differentiation. According to Hirschfeld, sexual intermediate types were not pathological, degenerate individuals, but rather a natural variety of the human species.²⁶ Homosexuals constituted sexual intermediate

²⁵Th. Ramien [Magnus Hirschfeld], Sappho und Socrates oder Wie erklärt sich die Liebe der Männer und Frauen zu Personen des eigenen Geschlechts? (Leipzig: Max Spohr, 1896), pp. 30-34.

²⁶In 1899 Hirschfeld still argued that homosexuality was a "retardation of evolution". According to him, an evolutionary development had taken place from a original undifferentiated sexual drive towards the heterosexual drive which had atrophied the homosexual one, due to the formers procreative usefulness (see Magnus Hirschfeld, "Die objective Diagnose der Homosexualität", Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Homosexualität, 1 (1899), p. 15; *idem*, Sappho, p. 15). By 1903, however, he argued that sexual intermediate stages were not regressions to the sexually undifferentiated evolutionary past. He conceded that the two sexes were a higher stage of evolutionary development with regards to sexual indifferentiation. But he now argued that increasing sexual differentiation between two sexes was by no means an indicator of evolutionary progress. Rather, sexual intermediate stages indicated a progress towards a stage where there existed even more

stages. These intermediate stages, as it was explained in the preface of the first edition of the Yearbook for Sexual Intermediate Stages, were "peculiarly disposed individualities, who display partly physical and psychical features of the other sex".²⁷

Hirschfeld's theory of sexual intermediacy was based on the principle that there existed no absolute, qualitative distinctions between the sexes. Rudiments of the other sex were to be found in the mind and body of every individual in a higher or lesser degree. In all, sexual differences were quantitative. In light of this, according to Hirschfeld, it was no surprise that the blurring of boundaries was so frequent.²⁸ Nevertheless, he pointed out that the premise for the investigation of sexual intermediacy was an exact explanation of the masculine and the feminine.²⁹ He established five elements of differences between the sexes so as to locate sexual intermediate types in their relation to the average type of man and woman. These were firstly the difference in sex glands and secondly the external and internal genitalia. The third group were physical peculiarities

sexes (see Hirschfeld, "Ursachen und Wesen des Uranismus", Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen, 5 (1903), p. 137).

²⁷Die Herausgeber, "Vorwort", Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen, 1 (1899), p. 1.

²⁸Hirschfeld, "Objective Diagnose", p. 4; *idem*, "Ursachen", pp. 136-137.

²⁹Magnus Hirschfeld, Die Homosexualität des Mannes und des Weibes, first published 1914, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Louis Marcus, 1920), p. 354.

that emerged at puberty. Fourthly, there were mental differences. Woman was, for example, more mentally reproductive, more faithful, more emotional, and more passive. Correspondingly, man was more active, more productive, more ambitious, and more abstract. The fifth factor was the sexual drive. Woman was attracted to man and man to woman. For Hirschfeld, any blurring of these five factors, although it was not a symptom of degeneration, was still a digression from the normal.³⁰

Homosexuality was a disturbance of the fifth factor, which usually went hand in hand with disturbances in the other points of differentiation that emerged at the same time in an individual's development, that is to say physical and mental differences that emerged at puberty.³¹ Hence, the *Urning*, or homosexual man, in Hirschfeld's view, was generally psychically more passive than the heterosexual man, more ruled by emotions, and more receptive. The *Urninde*, or homosexual woman, was more active, more assertive, and her mental life was more developed than in the heterosexual woman. She possessed no maternal instincts. More independent of the sexual sphere, she had more space for the development of the mental sphere.³²

³⁰Hirschfeld, "Objective Diagnose", p. 8ff. See Sengoopta, "Science", pp. 264-265, for a useful exploration of this point.

³¹Hirschfeld, "Objective Diagnose", pp. 23-26.

³²Hirschfeld, "Ursachen", pp. 71-78, 87; *idem*, Homosexualität, pp. 355, 647.

For Hirschfeld, the fact that masculine and feminine components could mix to varying degrees within an individual did not presuppose the existence of a homogeneity between the sexes. According to him "the sexes might be equivalent and entitled to equal rights, homogeneous they are not".³³ Ultimately the theory of sexual intermediacy was located within an oppositional conception of femininity and masculinity, since it retained the "average" or "normal" man and woman as starting points from which to construct the spectrum of sexual anomalous development. As much as Krafft-Ebing's degenerate contrary sexuals, Hirschfeld's *Urninge* and *Urninden* were understood through an adherence to notions about the existence of two different genders. In both views, the woman with the highly developed intellect was an abnormality, different from the feminine woman dominated by emotions and her maternal instinct.

The *Gemeinschaft der Eigenen* and the Revival of Male Culture

The correlation between homosexuality and gender inversion was not unanimously accepted in the homosexual movement. In 1903 the movement split with the establishment of the *Gemeinschaft der Eigenen* (Community of the Special), a society which explicitly excluded women. The Community strongly opposed the scientific

³³Hirschfeld, Homosexualität, p. 354.

intermediate-sex theory of the Scientific-Humanitarian Committee and its connotations of effeminacy of male homosexuals.³⁴ The theories of homosexuality which informed the *Gemeinschaft der Eigenen* began to be formulated during the last years of the nineteenth century with the publication of the journal Der Eigene. The journal originally started out in 1896 as an anarchist journal, but by 1899 it had turned into a literary and artistic homosexual journal.³⁵

In this journal, the writer and painter Elisar von Kupffer (1872-1942), who became one of the main theorists of the *Gemeinschaft der Eigenen*, in 1899 formulated what was to become the basic difference in the understanding of homosexuality between the *Gemeinschaft* and the Scientific-Humanitarian Committee:

I must take a stand against the quite new direction and oppose the harmfully sick principles of our scientific age. It has now become fashion ... to speak of a "third" sex, whose spirit and body are said not to agree with one another. The Hannoverian jurist K.H.Ulrichs ... even found a designation for this third sex, to which he counted himself;

³⁴The *Gemeinschaft* always remained a numerically very small association (Sengoopta, "Science", p. 264; Manfred Baumgardt, "Die Homosexuellen Bewegung bis zum Ende des Ersten Weltkrieges", in Eldorado: Homosexuelle Frauen und Männer in Berlin, 1850-1950: Geschichte, Alltag und Kultur (Berlin, 1984), pp. 26-27).

³⁵Harry Oosterhuis, "Homosexual Emancipation in Germany before 1933: Two Traditions", Journal of Homosexuality, 22 (1991), p. 3. The founder of the journal and co-founder of the *Gemeinschaft*, the journalist and writer Adolf Brandt, throughout his involvement with the *Gemeinschaft* displayed a peculiar mixture of anarchist and *deutsch-völkische* convictions which left its mark on the community (see Baumgardt, "Homosexuellen Bewegung", p. 27).

this word *Urning*, along with the adjective *urnisch*, has spread like a generalized epidemic... The matter has been researched, criticized, classified, hypno-medicalized, popularized, and God knows what ... in short, we have a confused mass of sick and absurd stories that have been of no use to our culture. And the most unpleasant part of all this is that the peaks of our whole human history have been distorted thereby, so that one can hardly recognize those rich spirits and heroes in their uranian underskirts.³⁶

The theory of homosexuality propounded by the *Gemeinschaft der Eigenen* was not based on gender inversion, but on a conception of gender separatism.³⁷ Same-sex love, in the conceptualization of the *Gemeinschaft*, was the natural consequence of gender similarity among members of the same sex. Influenced by hellenic models of homosexuality, homosexual feelings were seen to be present not just in a few abnormally constituted individuals, but rather existed alongside heterosexual feelings in almost every person.³⁸ Homosexuality was the natural extension of "physiological friendship" that existed between members of the same sex.³⁹ A crucial aspect of physiological friendship was

³⁶Elisarion von Kupffer, "The Ethical-Political Significance of *Lieblingsminne*" (1899), Journal of Homosexuality, 22 (1991), pp. 36-37.

³⁷See Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Epistemology", p. 58.

³⁸Edwin Bab, "Same-Sex Love, or *Lieblingsminne*: A Word on its Essence and its Significance" (1903), Journal of Homosexuality, 22 (1991), p. 55; Benedict Friedländer, "Memoir of the Friends and Contributors of the Scientific Humanitarian Committee in the Name of the Secession of the Scientific Humanitarian Committee" (1907), Journal of Homosexuality, 22 (1991), p. 80.

³⁹Friedländer, "Memoir", p. 79.

mental affinity. Hence Benedict Friedländer (1866-1908), one of the co-founders and main theorists of the community, explained the superior nature of love between an older man and a youth:

he has a human being whom he loves, about whose well-being he is concerned... A being that is, as opposed to woman, equal to him, to whom he communicates the best which he has experienced and acquired in his long life. The man, however, experiences through the youth a stimulation of the intellect, which on the whole is inferior to his in terms of fulfilment through what is learnable, but, as opposed to the female intellect, has the same power, and supersedes his in terms of the specific gifts of youth, openness, capacity of absorption, elasticity and originality.⁴⁰

The *Gemeinschaft der Eigenen* called for a revival of male culture, which, it said, in light of the advances of the women's movement, was ever more under threat by an increase in female influence.⁴¹ This, Friedländer declared, had been made possible by the fanaticism for equality which characterized contemporary culture. For him, however, "[j]ustice does not consist in wanting to make equal those who are unequal by nature. On the contrary, this attempt is an unjust injury to the one who stands higher by nature."⁴²

⁴⁰Benedict Friedländer, "Die Renaissance des Eros Urania" (1904), in Ilse Kokula (ed.), Weibliche Homosexualität um 1900 (München: Frauenoffensive, 1981), p. 175.

⁴¹Kupffer, "Ethical-Political Significance", p. 35; Benedict Friedländer, "Male and Female Culture: A Causal-Historical View" (1906), Journal of Homosexuality, 22 (1991), p. 207.

⁴²Friedländer, "Male and Female", p. 210.

One of the central aspects of this inequality was male creative power. All cultural goods had been created by man. Male homosexuality was a culture-promoting factor, as reflected in the greatness of ancient Greece, because it promoted male-male intellectual intercourse. In Friedländer's view, woman's intellectual inferiority was a natural phenomenon which educational freedom could not change.⁴³

Male-female intellectual communication hence necessarily had to encounter insurmountable barriers. Women, despite all emancipation, had nothing to offer intellectually to men. For Friedländer, the danger in the women's movement lay in that emancipated women, by intruding into the male sphere of the intellect, would not just demand of men sacrifices in terms of time and mental energy, but they would, "much more than the naturally undemanding woman" negatively affect the male intellect. Friedländer pointed out that there had been women who had transcended the intellectual inferiority of their sex, but asserted that "[g]eneral cultural question and general judgements have to be decided on the basis of

⁴³There was a dissenting voice from this view in the *Gemeinschaft der Eigenen*. Edwin Bab believed that custom, not nature, was responsible for the mental differences between the sexes (see Bab, "Same-Sex Love", p. 54). Bab saw the "women's movement and male culture" as necessary complements in the establishment of a "truly human culture" in which "[n]o longer will woman alone control the taste of man and require his love; she will also no longer be his slave, but rather his companion with equal rights, his equal" (see Bab, "The Women's Movement and Male Culture" (1903), Journal of Homosexuality, 22 (1991) p. 144).

the average and cannot be debilitated by individual exceptions."⁴⁴

Sexology and the Woman Question

In theories of homosexuality which located the homosexual at the borders between genders, the way in which the homosexual question and the woman question intersected was through the concept of the lesbian with masculine mental attributes. Here, contrary to the view of the *Gemeinschaft der Eigenen*, the women's movement was not seen to be made up of intellectually inferior women who were threatening male intellectual achievements. Rather, it was understood to be dominated by women who were not really of their gender, that is by women with masculine minds.

One of the questions that was debated by the sexologists was whether women who participated in the movement did so because they were homosexual, or whether they were homosexual because they participated in the movement. In other words, ideas about the congenital versus acquired nature of homosexuality became a point of discussion. By the end of the nineteenth century environmental etiologies of homosexuality emerged, in which homosexuality was seen not to originate in an inborn constitution, but to be caused by external factors, such as seduction, the disturbance of a normal

⁴⁴Friedländer, "Renaissance", pp. 162-166; 170-174.

sexual instinct through masturbation, and the confinement to one-sex environment like, for example, prisons and boarding-schools. Ideas about congenital and acquired homosexuality started to co-exist within the theories of many sexologists, the difference consisting in whether the one was seen to predominate over the other, or vice versa.⁴⁵

The understanding that homosexuality could be acquired led to the assumption that the women's movement was creating an environment which fostered female homosexuality. The women's movement, it was argued, made women independent and thus created women with masculine characters. Their appropriation of a "male way of life" demanded a mental application which exceeded the feminine norm and masculinized them.⁴⁶ Members of the movement, it was argued, were convinced that women did not need men and that they could fulfil all the cultural functions without them. This conviction was combined with a dislike of the male sex which could be extended to the search of sexual gratification from women. The danger of the women's movement thus was that young women, whose sexual drive was not yet differentiated yet, could be seduced

⁴⁵Magnus Hirschfeld constituted an exception in maintaining that homosexuality was always congenital and never acquired.

⁴⁶Dr Philos, Die lesbische Liebe: Ein Beitrag zur Sittengeschichte unserer Zeit (Berlin: J.Singer & Co., 1907), pp. 9-10.

into homosexuality.⁴⁷

From the perspective of those who believed in the acquired nature of homosexuality, homosexuality among women was seen to be caused by the women's movement itself. In the congenital theory of sexual intermediate stages, however, involvement in the women's movement was viewed as the result, rather than the cause, of homosexuality. Homosexual women had by birth precisely those characteristics which suited them to be active in the movement, such as independence, a pronounced life of the mind, and an interest in public issues.⁴⁸

The homosexual woman had such a pronounced life of the mind because she was not a complete-woman (*Vollweib*). Normal, feminine women were much more bound to the sexual sphere, since they were sexual beings to a much higher degree than men. These, on the contrary, who were much more independent from the sexual sphere, were naturally given more space for the development of the mind. However, there existed women who, rather than *Vollweiber*, were sexual intermediate types.⁴⁹

The notion that there existed natural varieties of

⁴⁷Hans Kurella, "Zum biologischen Verständniss der somatischen und psychischen Bisexualität", Centralblatt für Nervenheilkunde und Psychatrie, 7 (1896), p. 240; Iwan Bloch, Beiträge zur Aetiologie der Psychopathia Sexualis, Vol. 1 (Dresden: H.R. Dohrn, 1902), p. 248.

⁴⁸Dr phil Arduin, "Die Frauenfrage und die sexuellen Zwischenstufen", Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen, 2 (1900), pp. 215-216; Hirschfeld, "Ursachen", p. 124; *idem*, Homosexualität, p. 647.

⁴⁹Arduin, "Frauenfrage", pp. 214-215; Hirschfeld, Homosexualität, pp. 356-358.

the human species whose character did not correspond to their sex as defined by genitalia questioned on some levels the organization of society around the two-sexed body, but ultimately it did not disrupt its basis. Thus, for example, one contributor to the Yearbook for Sexual Intermediate Stages argued that it should be possible for women to participate in male *Bildung* and to have access to occupations that were open to men, so that those women, in whom the masculine element was so strongly developed that it needed fulfilment, had the possibility to do so. Like man and unlike the normal heterosexual woman, the virile homosexual woman, only wearing the mask of the female sex, wanted to be productive. The woman question, hence, was the question of the virile homosexual woman. The female sex as such should not participate in male *Bildung*, since in real women this would lead to the breeding of unnatural malformations.⁵⁰

Hirschfeld, himself, however, did not agree with the notion that the woman question was really the question of the virile homosexual woman. Hirschfeld, a member of the SPD since his student days and since 1905 a member of the *Bund für Mutterschutz*, strongly advocated an opening of the social structure in which every individual would have space to develop according to his or her individual traits. He believed that homosexual women played an important role in the women's movement, but did not think that it was exclusively the movement of homosexual women.

⁵⁰Arduin, "Frauenfrage", pp. 220-223.

Sympathetic to the movement and its demand for education and suffrage, he saw it as part of a trend which was producing a freer society, a freedom which would benefit all women, as well as homosexuals. According to Hirschfeld, the feminine heterosexual woman's productive capacity was sufficient to enter all the male occupations, and thus for higher education. However, Hirschfeld also ultimately adhered to the notion that there existed an antagonism between female involvement in reproduction and mental production. Because of man's greater independence from the sexual sphere, according to him, female creative power could not reach the male level.⁵¹ Woman, Hirschfeld declared, "has not the same gift of abstract thought, nor for real creative activity. Her capacity to produce is focused on relatively simple mental functions".⁵²

The retention of an alignment of masculinity with creative power within the concept of sexual intermediacy was perhaps most forcefully expressed in Otto Weininger's (1880- 1903) Sex and Character, published in 1903.⁵³ Weininger, who took a degree in philosophy at Vienna (which included various natural scientific subjects), did not participate in any in the social reform movements and

⁵¹Hirschfeld, Homosexualität, pp. 355-356, 647, 1008.

⁵²Hirschfeld, Die Transvestiten: Eine Untersuchung über den erotischen Verkleidungstrieb (Berlin, 1910), p. 277; quoted in Wolff, Magnus Hirschfeld, p. 87.

⁵³Otto Weininger, Geschlecht und Charakter, first published 1903 (München: Mattes & Seitz, 1980).

his book was conceived as a philosophical, not sexological, tract. However, Weininger's metaphysical engagement with the woman question was located within contemporary biological theories about sexual intermediacy.

Weininger's suicide in the house in which Beethoven had died at the early age of twenty-three, shortly after the publication of Sex and Character, increased the impact the book made. Weininger gained the posthumous reputation of a genius and the book turned into a best-seller.⁵⁴ Responses varied from August Strindberg's "awe" for his solution of "the most difficult of all problems"⁵⁵, to Paul Julius Möbius' claim that Weininger had stolen his ideas on female mental inferiority from his own best-seller, On the Physiological Feeble-mindedness of Woman (1900),⁵⁶ to a reviewer's declaration in Die Frau that it was a "philosophically

⁵⁴Sengoopta, "Science", p. 252.

⁵⁵Quoted in Christine Battersby, Gender and Genius: Towards a Feminist Aesthetics (London: Women's Press, 1989), p. 113.

⁵⁶*ibid.*, p. 114. Weininger in his book had disassociated himself from Möbius, stating he neither thought women to be "physiologically feeble-minded", as Möbius contended, nor that women who made outstanding achievements were degenerates. Möbius responded that Weininger was "vilifying his precursor, so as not to appear as a plagiarist". According to him, all of Weininger's main ideas were to be found in his own writings (see Francis Schiller, A Möbius Strip: Fin-de-Siècle Neuropsychiatry and Paul Julius Möbius (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), pp. 103-104).

wrapped insult to women".⁵⁷ As for the sexologists, Sex and Character was appreciated for its adherence to the theory of sexual intermediacy by those who operated within this framework,⁵⁸ but was condemned by Hirschfeld for its anti-feminism.⁵⁹

In the introduction to Sex and Character Weininger declared that his aim was to refer all contrasts between man and woman to a single principle. All psychical differences between the sexes would be brought into a system. He was to deal not with women but with woman.⁶⁰ The principle Weininger reduced man and woman to was that of the duality of an abstract ideal of man (M) and abstract ideal of woman (W) representing dualism itself. The meaning and function of woman was to be the opposite of man.⁶¹ M, in Weininger's scheme, represented, for example, consciousness, individuality, personality, and the possibility of genius. W represented the Other. As such it stood for unconsciousness, the impossibility of individuality, personality and genius. In short: "Women have no existence and no essence, they are not, they are nothing".⁶²

⁵⁷Herta Widmann, "Der Fall Otto Weininger", Die Frau, 12 (1904/05), p. 80.

⁵⁸See the review in the Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen, 6 (1904), p. 526.

⁵⁹Hirschfeld, Homosexualität, p. 356.

⁶⁰Weininger, Sex, p. v.

⁶¹*ibid.*, p. 398.

⁶²*ibid.*, p. 383.

M and W were established by Weininger as ideal principles which did not exist in reality. In tune with the sexual-intermediate-stages theory, Weininger maintained that sexual differentiation was never complete. Instead of two fundamentally different sexes, there existed only sexual intermediate stages. Like Hirschfeld, Weininger located homosexuality at the border between genders. But unlike Hirschfeld, for Weininger the sexual intermediate type was not ultimately an anomaly. To him, no individual could be called single- or specifically sexed, "[r]ather, the reality shows an oscillation between two points, on which no empirical individual is to be found any more." Hence for Weininger, all individuals were made up of varying degrees of M and W.⁶³

The search for emancipation by women, according to Weininger, was the search for inner equality with men, that is for man's "mental and moral freedom, ... his interests and his creativity". Hence, the urge and capacity for emancipation in women could only be explained by their high amount of M, because all the attributes of M were alien to W: W "has no want and correspondingly no capacity for emancipation".⁶⁴ Those women who had gone down in history as exceptions to their sex in intellectual achievement had all been either "homo- or at least bisexual"; they belonged to the sexual

⁶³*ibid.*, pp. 9, 12.

⁶⁴*ibid.*, p. 80.

intermediary stages which could only just be counted as belonging to the female sex.⁶⁵

The levelling of mental gender difference was impossible in Weininger's theory. Complete equality between the sexes was a senseless notion, since even the most manly woman would have scarcely more than 50% M and it was only to the male part of her that she owed her special capacity.⁶⁶ Although Weininger set M and W up as abstract principles, he ultimately linked them to the sexed body. Individuals had by birth varying mixtures of M and W, but since a woman could scarcely have more than 50% M, she could leave the sphere of complete femininity, but never enter the sphere of masculinity to the same extent as a man, and vice versa.

Like Hirschfeld, Weininger opened up spaces for the transgression of gender roles. Hence he called for a more individualized education which would take account of the intermediacy of sexual difference. He also argued that women with a masculine disposition whose psychical needs drove them to devote themselves to masculine pursuits should be able to do so.⁶⁷ Unlike Hirschfeld, however, Weininger saw this as the ultimate solution of the woman question, which he understood to be the real concern of his book. He had shown that "[t]he greatest, the only

⁶⁵*ibid.*, pp. 81-87.

⁶⁶*ibid.*, p. 88.

⁶⁷*ibid.*, pp. 69, 87.

enemy of the emancipation of woman is woman".⁶⁸ It was not real women who were demanding emancipation, but it was masculine women who were misinterpreting their own natures when they were speaking in the name of women. Hence, it should be possible for these masculine women to be able to fulfil the needs of their masculine minds, so that they would cease to agitate and the women's movement would desist from being a movement. In this way feminine women would not be seduced into striving for *Bildung* and women's higher education would not become fashionable.⁶⁹

"Are These Women?": Women Theorizing the Lesbian

In addressing the interrelationship between the sexological categorization of lesbianism and the women's movement in Britain, Sheila Jeffreys has argued that the former was a direct response to the women's movement with the intention of subverting its attempts to achieve women's emancipation.⁷⁰ This view has been revised more recently by Lucy Bland and Liz Stanley. Bland has pointed out that many of the sexologists were favourable towards the women's movement. Moreover, she and Stanley have argued that sexological theories on homosexuality were not simply invented by heterosexual men and imposed on passive homosexual men and women. Rather, there existed a

⁶⁸*ibid*, pp. 79, 93.

⁶⁹*ibid.*, pp. 87, 89.

⁷⁰Jeffreys, Spinster, p. 106.

high degree of homosexual theoretical and practical influence in the development of these theories.⁷¹

For Germany, where the scientific construction of homosexuality took place to a much higher degree, the same arguments can be made. As I have pointed out, it was particularly Hirschfeld, a homosexual and a supporter of the women's movement, who became a crucial figure in the formulation and dissemination of ideas about the congenital nature of male and female homosexuality. But Germany also offers a particularly interesting case for the examination of women's role and agency in the construction and negotiation of ideas about homosexuality and its relationship to the women's movement. Although the mainstream women's movement, with the exception of Johanna Elberskirchen (b. 1864), remained comparatively silent in terms of a theoretical engagement with ideas about female homosexuality and its relationship to the woman question,⁷² there did emerge a considerable amount

⁷¹Stanley, "Romantic Friendship?", part. pp. 208-209; Bland, Banishing the Beast p. 257.

⁷²There was an engagement with the question of lesbianism, however, when in 1909 a new draft penal law was introduced in which the wording "unnatural vice between persons of the male sex" of § 175 was to be replaced simply by "persons", that is to say it was to include women (§ 250). The draft never became law, but it provoked a number of discussions by members of all kinds of sections of the movement. The women who engaged in the issue were familiar with sexological ideas. Views expressed on female sexual relationships differed considerably. Anna Pappritz considered it to be a "reprehensible, odious, and repulsive" vice which, if undertaken by "pathologically disposed individuals" was a matter for the medical profession. Helene Stöcker saw "normal love, the love between man and woman, as well as parenthood, the highest and the most to be aspired to",

of literature by women on the issue, much of which, but not all, derived from an involvement with the Scientific-Humanitarian Committee.

The suffragist Johanna Elberskirchen (b. 1864), who had been a student of the natural sciences in Bern and of law in Zurich, hence wanted to know "[i]n what respect can there be a causal correlation between the homosexuality of woman and the emancipation of woman - a causal correlation with the tendency towards 'specifically masculine' mannerisms and occupations?" For her, the answer was clear: "Obviously none."⁷³

Elberskirchen agreed that as a consequence of the original bisexuality of the human organism human nature

but argued that if the "sexual taste" of some people would lead them to actions which were not shared by the majority of people, it was a private matter, not a public one. Käthe Schirmacher, on the other argued that non-congenital homosexuality in women had to be judged differently from sexual intercourse between men, since women, unlike men, had no possibility of engaging in "natural sexual intercourse" outside of marriage. However, all the contributors opposed § 250 on the grounds that it would lay female partnerships open to a flood of accusations and blackmail, undermining a common form of female life (see Käthe Schirmacher, "§ 175 des deutschen Strafgesetzes, Der Abolitionist, 10 (1911), pp. 3-5; Anna Pappritz, "Zum § 175", Der Abolitionist, 10 (1911), pp. 9-11; Anna Pappritz, "Der § 175 im Vorentwurf zum neuen Strafgesetzbuch", Die Frauenbewegung, 17 (1911), pp. 33-34; Elsbeth Krukenberg, "§ 175", Monatsschrift für Kriminalpsychologie und Strafrechtsreform, 7 (1910/11), p. 612; Helene Stöcker, "Die beabsichtigte Ausdehnung des § 175 auf die Frau", Neue Generation, 7 (1911), pp. 110-122; Helene Lange quoted in Ilse Kokula (ed), Weibliche Homosexualität, p. 31).

⁷³Johanna Elberskirchen, Was hat der Mann aus Weib, Kind und sich gemacht? Revolution und Erlösung des Weibes: Eine Abrechnung mit dem Mann - ein Wegweiser für die Zukunft!, 2nd ed. (Magzin Verlag, 1904), p. 3.

was constituted of bisexual varieties.⁷⁴ However, unlike others who operated with the concept of sexual intermediacy, she did not associate homosexuality with gender inversion. The love of a woman for another woman was not the expression of a masculine trait. Rather, it constituted the exclusion of the male sex. Female-female love was the manifestation of a tendency towards the feminine. For Elberskirchen the association of homosexuality with gender inversion did not make sense, since it failed to explain the partner of the virile homosexual woman (or the effeminate homosexual man). In the concept of gender inversion it was the masculinity of the homosexual woman which directed her desire towards women. This, however, could not explain why the desired (feminine) woman should turn towards the homosexual woman and not towards a man. This conceptual problem formed the basis of Elberskirchen's argument that there did not exist a nexus between homosexuality, masculine women and the women's movement.⁷⁵

Underlying human bisexuality for Elberskirchen was rather an indication that no essential difference between the sexes existed related to the primary sexual differentiation and dictating different social roles.⁷⁶ The women's movement, according to Elberskirchen, was the protest of women - regardless of their sexual orientation

⁷⁴*ibid.*, p. 7.

⁷⁵*ibid.*, p. 3.

⁷⁶*ibid.*, p. 10.

- against woman's mental and physical inferiority which in her view was the evolutionary product of male domination.⁷⁷

More frequently, however, theories about sexual intermediate stages and the third sex became a framework within which to conceptualize and legitimize women who transgressed contemporary notions of the female mind through constructing them as innately different from heterosexual women. Anna Rüling (who declared herself to be homosexual), hence, explained in a speech she gave at a conference of the Scientific-Humanitarian Committee in 1905:

One has to distinguish two aspects with regards to the homosexual woman, her general personality and her sexual disposition. The important thing is of course her personality, only on a second plane comes the direction of her sexual drive ... The homosexual woman possesses many qualities, inclinations and capacities which we normally consider to be the property of man. She particularly deviates from the average feminine norm in terms of her emotional life. Whereas in the clearly heterosexual woman emotion is nearly always - exceptions also here prove the rule - the dominating and deciding trait, in the *Urinde* clear reason (*klar blickender Verstand*) generally dominates. She is, like the average normal man, more objective, more energetic and goal oriented than the feminine woman. Her thoughts and emotions are those of a man; she does not imitate man, she is inherently disposed like he is...⁷⁸

⁷⁷*ibid.*, p. 115.

⁷⁸Anna Rüling, "Welches Interesse hat die Frauenbewegung an der Lösung des homosexuellen Problems?", Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen, 7 (1905), p. 133. For Rüling on her own homosexuality see p. 139. Otherwise, there are no biographical details available about her.

Scientific knowledge about the difference of the homosexual woman constituted the basis to the claim of social acceptance of women who did not correspond to contemporary norms of sexual and gender identity. Nature was stronger than human will and culture and had to be given justice.⁷⁹

In a novel which the journalist and writer Minna Wettstein-Adelt (b. 1869) published under the pseudonym Aimée Duc in 1900, significantly entitled Are These Women? A Novel About the Third Sex⁸⁰, the understanding that sexological knowledge about the third sex was of crucial importance for the integration of homosexual women into a society organized around heterosexual difference was made explicit. In the novel, which centred on a group of women students in Switzerland who defined themselves as "perverse women", "Krafft-Ebingers", and members of the third sex, Duc had one of her characters complain that men of science were not doing enough to unveil the truth about the existence of the third sex. In the view of the speaker, they were failing their duty to redirect the woman question through scientific facts. In reality it was not a woman question, but the question of the third sex. It was the question of the unacknowledged existence of homosexual women in a heterosexual society

⁷⁹Anne von den Eken, Mannweiber - Weibmänner und der § 175: Eine Schrift für denkende Frauen (Leipzig: Max Spohr, 1906), p. 8.

⁸⁰Aimée Duc, Sind es Frauen? Roman über das dritte Geschlecht, first published 1901, rpt. (Berlin: Gabriele Meixner, 1976).

which formed the basis to the woman question.⁸¹

Although Duc depicted the woman question to be the question of third sex and women of the third sex to be different from heterosexual women, at the same time she maintained on some levels a unity of interest of the entire female sex. Both types of women lived in a society which did not provide them with educational and occupational facilities and drove a great many of them into unhappy marriages. However, she did argue that women who were not a member of the third sex found their most completed expression in the domestic sphere.⁸²

The woman question was not always seen as the question of the third sex. For Anna Rüling and Anne von den Eken (who implied that she was heterosexual), there existed a relationship of mutual interest between the women's movement and the lesbian question. The women's movement aimed at social changes which were vital for homosexual women so that they would have the possibility of living lives which suited their natures and could have ways to support themselves outside of marriage. Homosexual women, it was pointed out, felt with double strength the unjust restrictions that society imposed upon the female sex. But the women's movement would also benefit from the masculine disposition of homosexual women. As Anne von den Eken asserted, this movement had given homosexual women a space where they could make use

⁸¹*ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

⁸²*ibid.*, pp. 23-25, 51, 53.

of their masculine minds for the benefit of their feminine-thinking sisters, who did not approach homosexual women in terms of energy, enterprise and systematic intention. Both heterosexual and homosexual women were living in a society which did little justice to the needs of either type.⁸³

Masculine homosexual women and feminine heterosexual women, however, were conceptualized as being essentially different. The man-woman was not a cultural, but a natural phenomenon. For Rüling, the distinction between the masculine and the feminine woman was grounded in an essential difference between man and woman. This difference, she asserted, lay at the root of the different social roles of men and women. The feminine woman was by nature organically predestined to become first of all a wife and mother and the normal manly man was physically predestined for the harsh struggle of existence.⁸⁴ Although she argued that there existed a middle ground of occupations which both men and women could engage in equally well, Rüling pointed out that the ultimate natural heterogeneity of the sexes, "leads to the natural and clear conclusion that man, woman and uranian are not equally adopted for all occupations,

⁸³Eken, "Mannweiber", pp. 13-14; Rüling, "Interesse", pp. 132-133, 144-145, 150. For Eken on implying her heterosexuality see p. 13. Otherwise there are no biographical details available.

⁸⁴Rüling, "Interesse", pp. 137, 141.

which the women's movement cannot change."⁸⁵ Homosexual women, like men, were particularly suited for academic occupations, "precisely because they have the characteristics which are generally lacking in feminine women, such as greater objectivity, enterprise and endurance".⁸⁶

Greater educational and occupational possibilities were a necessity for the entire female sex. This would ensure that all women had the possibility to live a life which accorded with their individual natures. But it was primarily homosexual women who had the constitutional prerequisites for entering the sphere of the academic occupations. Heterosexual women, understood to constitute the majority of women, were also in need of a better education. They could become professionals, but their natural constitution implied that, given the possibility, education would primarily be a means to fulfil their female vocation better. *Bildung* would make them more equal companions to their husbands and constitute the basis for happier marriages.⁸⁷

The association of homosexuality with gender inversion hence constituted a framework for the conceptualization of masculine gender traits in a female body. But the concept of the third sex could also lend itself to the construction of homosexual difference which

⁸⁵*ibid.*, pp. 140-141.

⁸⁶*ibid.*, p. 143.

⁸⁷*ibid.*, pp. 137, 140-143.

superseded the male mental average and entered the sphere of excellence. Hence the protagonists in Aimée Duc's novel referred to themselves as exceptionally intelligent. At one point one of the speakers explicitly used the language of the third sex to argue for the social acceptance of a homosexual presence. According to her, the majority of the population did not know of the existence of a third sex. This, however, she said was mainly their own fault:

We do not stand up enough for ourselves, we do not defend our theses, we do not freely disclose our identity as human beings that are neither men, nor women. We have to at all times stand up for ourselves, we have to assert ourselves over and over again, and not let ourselves be restrained as diseased, nor to be put on an artificial pose, as mercifully recognized, particularly talented women, but we have to show that we are the representatives of a composite, of a human species that has a right to consideration since it appears without exception as an intelligence-elite.⁸⁸

Homosexual women were associated with being particularly talented women. But the third sex was also associated with an intelligence-elite. The non-procreative nature of homosexuality sometimes led to a realignment of the female/male opposition between reproduction and mental production onto a homosexual/heterosexual dichotomy. Thus the homosexual person was often seen as an outstanding creator of

⁸⁸*ibid.*, p. 20.

intellectual and cultural goods.⁸⁹ The conception of homosexual creativeness, as well as the issue of non-procreativity, also incorporated the romantic idea which linked genius to a combination of masculine and feminine psychical traits in a male body.⁹⁰ In the theory of the third sex the combination of feminine and masculine mental attributes came to explain creativeness in a female body as well. Thus it was pointed out in the Yearbook of Sexual Intermediate Stages in 1903:

the female Uranian usually combines specifically feminine traits, such as sensitivity and depth of feeling, with masculine energy, drive and goal-oriented striving ... the combination of masculine and feminine qualities - formed under favourable conditions - quite often makes for beings whose talents far surpass those of mother-women, and who contribute to the arts and sciences just as valuable services as do women who are dedicated to the propagation of the species.⁹¹

It was the constitutional difference of the homosexual woman from the fully feminine heterosexual woman which lay at the root of the occurrence of creativeness in a

⁸⁹See, for example, Johanna Elberskirchen, Die Liebe des dritten Geschlechts: Homosexualität, eine bisexuelle Varietät, keine Entartung - keine Schuld (Leipzig: Max Spohr, 1904), p. 32; Eken, "Mannweiber", p. 40. The theme of the homosexual genius for others was a confirmation of Cesare Lombroso's association of genius with degeneration (see, for example, Wilhelm Hammer, Die Tribadie Berlins: Zehn Fälle weibweiblicher Geschlechtsliebe aktenmäßig dargestellt nebst zehn Abhandlungen über die gleichgeschlechtliche Frauenliebe (Berlin: Hermann Seeman Nachfolger, n.d.), p. 102).

⁹⁰Battersby, Gender and Genius, p. 103.

⁹¹Rosa von Braunschweig, "Felicita von Vestvali" (1903), in Lillian Faderman and Brigitte Eriksson (eds), Lesbians in Germany: 1890's-1920's (Wheatherby Lake, Mo: Naiad Press, 1990), p. 74.

woman.

Conclusion

The intersection of ideas about homosexuality and the woman question turned around the conceptualization of homosexuality not purely in terms of sexual object choice, but in terms of an inversion of gender attributes. This concept was challenged from within the male homosexual movement by the *Gemeinschaft der Eigenen*, who mostly asserted a conception of gender difference in which the two sexes did not meet. In this concept the intellectually outstanding woman was an exception which proved the rule. However, within the theories which located homosexuality at the border between genders, the woman with mental attributes associated with masculinity was biologically located in the middle ground of a continuum where the male and the female converged.

Ideas were developed, most prominently by Richard von Krafft-Ebing, in which masculinity in a woman was a symptom of degeneration. However, notions of congenital homosexuality were explored and developed by the scientifically oriented homosexual movement to establish the legitimacy of the differently constituted homosexual men and women and to demand the possibility for them to live their lives according to their natural disposition. Women participated in the formulation of the notion that there existed women who were in their gender, as well as

sexual identity, essentially different from the rest of women.

A social organization which only recognised two sexes was challenged through the figure of the gender-inverted individual. Yet the sexual invert was ultimately given meaning through an adherence to the notion that the norm was that of essential differences between men and women. Many theorists who adhered to the concept of sexual intermediary stages argued that there existed a need for reform in the position of all women. However, except in the case of Elberskirchen, they largely advocated reforms which maintained the sexual division of labour of the middle-class. The masculine woman was integrated into a structure of gender difference in which only biologically abnormal women did not have their sphere defined by the sexed body.

Moreover, mental creation was maintained within these approaches as a naturally masculine domain. Notions of sexual intermediacy maintained concepts of gendered mental difference in which mental creation was aligned with masculinity. In the construction of the homosexual woman with the masculine mind, mentally creative women were conceptualized through de-feminising them. A barrier was established between biologically masculine women and feminine women which retained an opposition between femininity and mental creativity.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has explored debates about female nature evolving around the admission of women to higher education in two distinct national contexts. These debates became a site for the negotiation of gender difference. The comparative approach has highlighted the contextual nature of the constructions of difference between the sexes. It has also helped to elucidate the cultural idiosyncrasies of each country. The thesis has located the views that were formulated on female higher education within the specific national cultures. Although the education debates in the two countries displayed similarities, they also differed significantly.

Some historians have established a distinction between the British and German women's movements in terms of a liberal equal-rights feminism versus an ideology of feminine difference. A detailed comparison of ideas underlying the education campaigns of the two movements provided here, however, makes it clear that such an opposition should not be oversimplified and that the two approaches were not necessarily mutually exclusive. Moreover, it should not be overlooked that in British feminist theory there occurred a shift around the turn of the century, in which women's role as race-reproducers, rather than their rights as individuals, became increasingly important. In both countries concepts of

gender differences were, and remained, central to the social organization and feminists took their terms from the cultural systems they sought to reform.

If then I have maintained that to posit such a polarity between the two women's movements is to overlook their complexities, I have also stressed that nineteenth-century feminism has to be understood within its specific national contexts. Education and access for middle-class women to a greater range of paid occupations were the dominant concerns of the Germany bourgeois women's movement from the time of its emergence. In Britain, things were different. Education was always only one of many foci of feminist campaigns. After the Reform Act of 1832 had inserted for the first time the word "male" in front of "persons" admitted to the franchise,¹ female suffrage became one of the demands of the organized women's movement, which emerged during the 1850s and 1860s. The revelation in the Census of 1851 of the existence of a great number of "surplus" women fuelled campaigns for better education (the proposition of female higher education was raised in public for the first time by Frances Power Cobbe in 1862) and the expansion of employment opportunities for middle-class women. Changes in the laws regulating marriage constituted another focus, and with the campaigns to repeal the Contagious Diseases Acts feminists inserted themselves into public

¹See Sally Alexander, Becoming a Woman and Other Essays in 19th and 20th Century Feminist History (London: Virago, 1994, p. 133.

discussions about sexual morality during the late 1860s.

British feminism adopted the language of liberalism, endeavouring to establish women's rightful position as free and equal individuals. However, the concept of "equality" did not exclude notions of "difference". Educational freedom was one of the freedoms which would make it possible for a "real" femininity to develop. Feminist theories were developed in a context of co-existing notions of human equality and natural differences between the sexes which allotted them distinctive positions in society. Arguments for the extension of rights to women also often drew on concepts of women's moralising domesticity and were formulated in terms of enhancing women's unique qualities in the private and extending them to the public sphere.

In Germany, an important ideological basis for the organized women's movement was the concept of spiritual motherhood developed in the early nineteenth century. This notion of a public (as well as private) nurturing and educative role of women due to their specifically feminine qualities was initially translated into practice by the Kindergarten movement, as Ann Taylor Allen has shown.² The adherence to notions of gender difference hence was important in feminist thought in both countries. In Germany, however, a language of women's rights as individuals was less readily available and was

²See Ann Taylor Allen, Feminism and Motherhood in Germany, 1800-1914 (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991).

emphasised to a lesser extent. Rather, certain rights, most specifically access to better education, were claimed so that women could fulfil gender-specific duties to the social organism.

Historians such as Richard Evans have interpreted the emphasis on gender difference in German feminism as a lack of attempts to carve out new roles for women outside of their traditional spheres.³ Like Ann Taylor Allen,⁴ however, I have maintained that in prewar feminism concepts of gender difference were used to inscribe women into the public sphere. Ideas of women's difference underlay the assertion that the participation of the educated woman was needed in the public sphere.

The beginnings of the organized women's movement in Germany can be seen during the revolution of 1848. Educational reforms stood high on the agenda of the women's associations which emerged. Political rights were also claimed by people like Louise Otto. However, the women's associations were closely connected to the liberal-democratic movement and fell victim to the ensuing political repression. The Law of Association of 1851, which remained in place in Prussia and many other parts of Germany until 1908, forbade women from getting involved in politics. The women's associations which

³Richard Evans, "Liberalism and Society: the Feminist Movement and Social Change", in *idem*, Rethinking German History: Nineteenth-Century Germany and the Origins of the Third Reich (London: Unwin Hyman, 1987), p. 226.

⁴Allen, Feminism, part. pp. 231-232.

emerged in the 1860s avoided claims to political rights. Although universal male suffrage had been implemented in the unified Empire in 1871, it was not until 1902 that a women's suffrage society was established.

There were also differences in the organization of the movements in the two countries. British feminists focused on a variety of different issues, and there were different societies and centres of activity. But although there existed tensions between individual approaches, there were no organizational splits in the movement. In Germany, this was different. The bourgeois women's movement divided into different wings during the late 1880s. More importantly, in Germany there were separate bourgeois and working-class women's movements, with different agendas. The co-founder of the SPD, August Bebel, was one of the foremost supporters of women's access to higher education in the *Reichstag*, but the Social-Democratic women's movement on the whole considered such a demand to be secondary. Although the working-women's journal, Die Gleichheit, regularly reported on issues relating to female admission to the universities and medical certification, these were considered to be "ladies' questions", which for the majority of women were of no practical relevance.⁵

Education and access to professional employment were the central preoccupations of the bourgeois women's

⁵See, for instance, "Zur 'Frauenfrage'", Die Gleichheit (7 March 1892), p. 41; "Frauenrecht im Reichstag", Die Gleichheit (12 February 1902), p. 25.

movement. However, with the emergence of "radical" associations towards the end of the century, feminists also engaged in campaigns against state regulation of prostitution, and the *Bund für Mutterschutz* in the early twentieth century demanded rights for unmarried mothers and their children, as well as reproductive rights. Moreover, at the end of the nineteenth century organized women attempted to influence the section dealing with women and family matters in the new Civil Code, which had been discussed since unification and was finally adopted in 1896. Once the code was passed, feminists engaged in protest campaigns. The new code had improved the legal status of single women, but in terms of regulating marriage it was in some respects stricter than the regional codes it had replaced.

Although educational reform had been on the feminist agenda since the emergence of the organized women's movement it was not until the late 1880s that there emerged a concerted campaign for women's access to the universities in Germany (Hedwig Dohm had already raised the question in 1874). Hence, it was an aim which was adopted much later than in Britain. It was also achieved much later and in a considerably different way. In Britain, higher education became first accessible to women in 1869 with the establishment of Girton College. Other women's colleges were founded in Cambridge and Oxford soon afterwards. The London Medical School for Women followed. Degrees were first granted to women in

1878 by the University of London, which was essentially only an examining body. The admission of the female sex to the other universities happened in a piecemeal fashion throughout the late nineteenth century. It took, however, until the early 1920s for women to be admitted to degrees in Cambridge and Oxford (Cambridge admitted women to full membership only in 1947).

In Germany, where higher education was state controlled, admission to university matriculation depended on the possession of the *Abitur*, and medical certification on study at a German university. Hence private endeavours which had led to the establishment of women's colleges and medical schools in Britain were not feasible. There was a trickle of female auditors, mainly foreign, at the universities from the late 1860s onwards. But it was not until the first decade of the twentieth century, more than two decades after the University of London admitted women to degrees, that women could officially matriculate at German universities.

Once the last state, Prussia, admitted women in 1908, however, they had access to all the universities in the *Reich*, at a time when the two most prestigious universities in Britain were still refusing women degrees. All the same, before 1914 the ratio of female university students remained higher in Britain than in Germany. By 1900 women constituted 16 per cent of the British student population, rising to 24 per cent in

1920.⁶ In Germany, women constituted only 7 per cent of the student population in 1914.⁷ But if Britain took the lead in university students, this was not so with regard to secondary schools. By 1911 around 220,000 girls were enrolled in recognized secondary schools in Germany. In England and Wales, whose population was about 60 per cent that of Germany, 96,578 girls were enrolled in such schools.⁸

In both countries, the introduction of women into spheres of education hitherto open only to men challenged conceptions of differences between the sexes and constituted a major incentive to debates about women's nature and place in society. With regard to the nineteenth-century construction of gender, Cynthia Eagle Russett has asserted that "[s]cience does not observe national boundaries."⁹ I have shown, however, that national contexts were important in scientific engagement in questions about female nature and its implications for women's social roles. In the issues raised and arguments put forward, there were, of course, cultural links and

⁶Carol Dyhouse, No Distinction of Sex? Women in British Universities, 1870-1939 (London: UCL Press, 1995), p. 17.

⁷James C. Albisetti, Schooling German Girls and Women: Secondary and Higher Education in the Nineteenth Century (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 288.

⁸Albisetti, Schooling, pp. 293-294.

⁹Cynthia Eagle Russett, Sexual Science: The Victorian Construction of Womanhood (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 11.

exchanges between different nations. Henry Maudsley, for instance, perhaps the most conspicuous contributor to debates about women's education in Britain, after all, based his arguments heavily on a book published in the United States by a Professor of Materia Medica at Harvard, Edward H. Clarke.¹⁰ Equally, the basic argument of the neurologist Paul Julius Möbius, which he put forward in On the Physiological Feeble-mindedness of Woman in 1900,¹¹ was very similar to Herbert Spencer's theory, formulated in the 1860s, that woman's reproductive function hindered her mental development in comparison to man. More specifically in Germany, the relative tardiness of the debates, as discussed in chapter six, led to that developments in other Western nations were frequently invoked by opponents and feminists alike. However, a close comparison of these two countries has revealed differences in the constructions of gender.

In Britain, contradictory beliefs in universal equality and freedom and in natural differences between the sexes informed approaches to questions about women's rights. The key point of contest became the female body and its relationship to the mind. When the "Woman Question" acquired an increasingly high profile during the 1870s, scientists and physicians claimed a central

¹⁰Edward H. Clarke, Sex in Education; Or, A Fair Chance for Girls, first published 1873 (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1874).

¹¹P.J. Möbius, Über den physiologischen Schwachsinn des Weibes (Halle: Carl Marhold, 1900).

position in the assessment of social reforms regarding middle-class women. They approached the issue of women's rights as a question about natural female aptitudes and capabilities.

Central to this scientific approach were perceptions of the existence of natural differences between the sexes. What underlay these constructions, however, was not a static concept of sexual difference. Within Victorian science human nature was seen to be interdependent with culture. Scientists' engagement with the question of women's position in society foregrounded the perception that female nature was mutable within a life-time and over generations through change of external circumstances. Rather than constituting a nature versus nurture controversy, questions about gender were approached in terms of how nurture could generate biological change and thus become nature. Reforms in women's education were discussed in terms of the effects new external influences would have on the female mind and body.

The relationship between female nature and the environment meant that a lack of female mental occupation was detrimental to female health. In an evolutionary framework it also suggested that better education of the female sex would increase the mental powers of the coming generations. However, evolutionary preoccupations and beliefs that lifestyle could affect physiology also underlay ideas in which traditional male education would

lead to the unsexing of the female body, weaken its constitution, and harm the health of future generations. Towards the end of the century, questions about women's rights were increasingly relocated into considerations of the potential of the female body to degenerate and the biological implications of that for society.

In Germany, similar conceptions to those in Britain of natural differences between men and women underlay the sexual division of labour. However, in the German context it was more notions of the "eternal feminine", rather than preoccupations with the mutability of female nature, which informed arguments about women's place in society. There was not the same degree of tension between the inscription of the female sex into the ideals of human equality and notions of natural difference between the sexes. Individual rights were more linked to concepts of duties to society as a whole. The question of the denial of equal rights to women as individuals was thus not as important as in Britain. There the claim of access to higher education as a right of women was contested through arguing that such a right would have adverse consequences for the female individual, and by extension for society. In Germany, it was less important to establish whether the granting of rights was good or bad for the individual: What was best for the individual was not necessarily best for society as a whole. The question of whether women had the right to study was much discussed. But for many commentators the answer depended

on whether there was a need for the state, the social organism, the universities, (single) women, the middle-class and the different professions to have female students and graduates.

Approaches to women's education acquired much of its dynamic from the cultural importance of the concept of *Bildung* and of intellectual creation. *Bildung*, scholarship, and culture, as well as being factors of national identity, were central aspects in the self-understanding of the *Bildungsbürgertum*. Academics constituted an important group of participants in public controversies about female admission to the universities. The question of middle-class women's education was informed by the conception of *Bildung* as a class-constituting factor. This opened spaces for the discussion of how much or how little *Bildung* was appropriate for the women of the *Bildungsbürgertum*.

But one of the most burning concerns of academics was how entry into universities would affect these institutions and what they stood for. During the late nineteenth century, in the face of becoming increasingly politically ineffective, the bourgeoisie continued to defend its values and to protect its status. A central source of status for the educated middle class was its role as the standard-bearers and creators of culture. Universities were seen to be centres of cultural absorption and production. Notions of differential mental powers between the sexes raised questions about the

impact of the admission of women upon cultural and scholarly production. The entry of women into universities was approached by academics in terms of the implications it would have for the pre-eminence of German culture and scholarship.

Differences in the issues at stake in the question about women's education in the two countries were reflected in the formulation of feminist theories. British feminists participated in centralizing questions about female aptitudes and capabilities in their demands for educational reform. In their analyses they reworked notions of the relationship between gender difference and social organization in ways which showed how female nature was capable of going beyond domestic roles. In claims for educational reforms, notions of the changeability of female nature were conceptually important. To free women from social constraints was to allow the female sex to develop along natural, rather than artificial lines and to insert the influences of natural female difference into the public sphere.

When evolutionary theory became of central importance in constructions of gender difference, feminists stressed that female nature had been moulded by the history of women's subjection. Whereas during the 1860s campaigners had claimed that education was a way of drawing out contemporary women's potential to enhance their feminine influence, during the 1870s these ideas were increasingly displaced by notions which put the

emphasis on a long process of transforming the biological characteristics of the female mind. Feminists often accepted that women's mental powers were inferior to men's, but did not see this as a consequence of the female constitution, but rather as the outcome of the history of the female sex. Increasingly, this view was supplemented by perceptions that the female body had also been moulded by male domination. But women's emancipation would shape the bodies and minds of future women. It would increase their mental powers and abolish physical weaknesses.

Among feminists in Germany who campaigned for educational reforms there was less stress on biological change. They maintained that the development of the female mind was hampered by contemporary conditions, but before the turn of the century the emphasis of "moderates" and "radicals" alike was on education as a means of character-formation within a life-time. The notion of the acquisition of *Bildung* as a process of inner maturation was appropriated to argue that better education was necessary if women were to harmonize the intellect and emotions, and to enter the public sphere as "free personalities". Feminist theories too emphasised female nature as a fixed entity. Feminists appropriated conceptions of differences between the sexes to argue that contemporary deficiencies of social conditions were due to a lack of a specifically female involvement in the public sphere. Women's increased influence would

regenerate society. To make this influence effective, women had to be *gebildet* and undergo an inner transformation to mental and moral maturity.

Approaches to women's education in Britain and in Germany converged, however, at the turn of the century when questions of women's roles in society became part of the discourse of eugenics. At a time when racial hygiene in Germany was not yet synonymous with the ideology of Aryan supremacy, there existed broad similarities between the two countries when considering the "Woman Question" and German racial hygienists frequently referred to the theories of their British counterparts when discussing the issue. For eugenicists, or racial hygienists, women's all important role was to produce "fit" offspring. Many of them argued that the fittest individuals were found in the middle class. Among women it was especially those who were involved in the women's movements whose reproductive services were needed, because, it was said, this involvement was a reflection of a high level of ability. These women had to be reconciled with their reproductive task. For women to go to university and engage in professional employment was a diversion from their duty to the race.

Eugenic beliefs, however, did not inevitably lead to opposition to the women's movement. Sometimes, as was the case most strongly with Alfred Russel Wallace, female emancipation was seen to be an important factor in racial improvement. Eugenics also proved an appealing discourse

for women in Britain and in Germany. Feminists in both countries developed ideas in which women's emancipation was not detrimental, but advantageous for evolutionary developments. In these theories, some feminists perpetuated and promoted views of differential human hereditary "quality". Notions of race and women's role within racial advancement permeated the beliefs of a new generation of feminists in the two countries.

In Britain, there was a generalized shift in feminist theory away from the stress on women's rights as individuals towards conceptions of women's importance for the race. In Germany, Ann Taylor Allen, focusing on radical feminists, has interpreted the turn of the century as a period when there occurred a shift in feminist theory towards the conceptualization of motherhood primarily in "biological and medical, rather than moral and spiritual terms".¹² This, however, was only true for a section of the women's movement, most particularly the radical *Bund für Mutterschutz*. Moderates, however, at this time continued to foreground women's "spiritual" contribution to society. In continuation of the late nineteenth-century perception that women, by virtue of their difference from men, had the task and power to "solve" the "Social Question", in the early twentieth century moderates engaged with notion of the existence of a cultural crisis. Female mental difference - the supposed lesser capacity for objectivity

¹²Allen, Feminism, pp. 2; 135ff.

- was cast as the solution to a situation where objective culture had become ever more separated from personal development. Femininity was to counteract the wrongful directions which the capitalist age, bearing the stamp of the male mind, had taken.

Motherhood, spiritual and later also biological, has always been highlighted as a crucial aspect of German feminism. But at the same time that these concepts were foregrounded by the mainstream women's movement, there were also women and men, whose claims for women's emancipation were rather based on the notion that there existed gender-inverted women in whose life and psyche motherhood played no role. These ideas were informed by new ways of thinking about the relationship between the body and the mind which were established by sexologists. The individual with a gender-inverted disposition entered the repertoire of thinking about sexual difference.

From the late nineteenth century onwards a variety of Central European physicians, among them neurologists, psychiatrists, medical forensic experts and venereologists, developed scientific theories of sexual inversion, or homosexuality. At the end of the century there emerged an organized homosexual rights movement, which contributed to biological conceptions of homosexuality in Germany. Similar ideas as those formulated by Central European sexologists were developed by a few writers in Britain. However, in the wake of the trial of Oscar Wilde, homosexuality was publicly

discussed to a much lesser extent and did not become the subject of the same scientific interest as it did in Germany.

The few works that were published on sexual intermediacy in Britain before the First World War were written by men. In Germany this was different. Gudrun Schwarz has termed concepts about biologically masculine women put forward by Central European sexologists as "male theories".¹³ This, however, is a point of view which ignores the fact that these ideas were taken up and developed by women who were involved in the homosexual rights movement as well. Sexological notions of sexual inversion were appropriated by members of the homosexual movement, including women. They engaged in the construction of the woman who was biologically not entirely female and inscribed her into the male mental sphere. Thus they defined new roles for some women, but did so by separating the abnormal from the normal woman.

Women hence did not only constitute the subject of scientific investigation in the period under examination. They played a role in the construction of gender difference, appropriating aspects of scientific theory on sexual differences and imbuing them with altered meanings. Women were not "innocent" historical actors. Notions of natural differences between the sexes underlay

¹³Gudrun Schwarz, "'Mannweiber' in Männer Theorien", in Karin Hausen (ed.), Frauen suchen ihre Geschichte: Historische Studien zum 19. und 20. Jahrhundert (München: C.H. Beck, 1983), pp. 62-80)

a gendered organization of society in both countries. The meanings of these differences were subject to continuous negotiation and contingent upon the national contexts. Feminists established their languages from within the cultural systems when they set out to reform. The formulations of feminism hence were dependent on national cultures.

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6. 502:0/0.00		\$aThesis: (PhD) University of London 1997	
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