

# **Black Pink: Towards A Synthesis Between Traditionalism and Feminism**

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## **Preface**

When reflecting upon or discussing feminism I have often come to identify both strengths and weaknesses of this, far from monolithic phenomenon. On one hand, there are things that many find rather obvious and take for granted these days, such as that women and men should have equal citizen rights, that men and women are roughly equal in cognitive and non-cognitive skills, and that domestic violence, rape and assault that affect girls and women should be completely wiped out from society.

On the other hand, I have noticed that many, while agreeing with the dictionary definition of feminism, find contemporary and “radical” forms of feminism troublesome. Perhaps they also think that the notion of the “patriarchy”, that emerged during the second wave of feminism and still is rather widely used in public discourse, is problematic. They will also stress that identity politics and intersectionality, which have become increasingly linked to feminism since the 1990s, lead to further social polarization and is not perhaps actually serving the feminist cause – to the extent that it has any relevance in a society which has become increasingly equal, not just in opportunity, but outcome. Women outperform men in many educational and vocational fields.

The same dual face manifests itself in regard to “traditionalism”, that is, the antithesis of feminism, the branches of phenomena which feminists and modernists fight to overthrow. Not just Aristotle’s archaic sexism but also more current forms like Christianity, Islam, conservatism, macho culture and many others. While several elements of traditionalism, in this broader sense, are indeed problematic and should be left to its own destiny of the graveyard of ancient ideas, there are certain virtues and ideals that I and many others continuously find relevant and constructive: beauty, strength, diligence, prudence,

courage and many more. Whether one finds these in a novel of Yukio Mishima, in the South Korean music industry, or some of the dialogues of Plato. It is like the modern world is empty without them, despite all the material and humanitarian benefits that it has accomplished over the stretch of centuries.

Another aspect that tends to undermine feminist scholarship or their popularized versions, is the neglect of biological and psychological insights that move beyond the most basic natural components of the sexes that all can agree on. Without evolutionary psychology and differential psychology, however, it is difficult to understand society, the sexes, and even women and men's struggle for improvement and balance in relationship to each other.

From these rather basic assumptions I have decided to, in a rather straightforward way, disentangle that which is valuable and detrimental in feminism as well as traditionalism. While my academic background is mainly in education, the history and behavioral sciences of religion, and Korean studies, one can still benefit from research in several areas and summarize significant findings.

Chapter 1-2 shed light on the historical and current development of feminism. Chapter 3 describes instances of masculinities in the western past and present. Chapter 4 analyzes sex differences, overlaps and similarities in preferences, personality and physiology. Chapter 5 examines the South Korean pop cultural industry and what one may learn from it in regard to beauty and gender relations. Chapter 6 describes the so-called sexual market theory and its consequences for society and gender relations. Chapter 7 investigates the current economy in the West and its relationship to sex differences and preferences. Chapter 8 provides an examination of virtues that are valuable for both sexes, and partially has a

more prescriptive and “self-help” character than the rest of the book. Chapter 9 explores some instances of contemporary feminism and its countercurrents within right-leaning and conservative milieus. Chapter 10 concludes the findings from the entire examination.

## 1. Introduction: feminism in a world of traditionalism

Within multifarious religious, cultural and philosophical traditions, an idea of men and women being polar opposites (or close to, at least) has persisted. Such conceptions have not only been concerned about the biological and physiological differences but looked upon in regard to the internal dimensions of the two sexes: their psyche and even cosmological constitution.

In the Vedanta philosophy from India, the male is linked to *purusha* whereas the female counterpart is related to the physical forces called *prakriti*. Similarly, in Taoist thinking, the male sex (Yang) is associated with the active and bright forces whereas the female counterpart (Yin) is connected to the passive yet black elements of the world. Chaos is related to the archetypal female role while males are linked to the ordered state within the Garden of Eden, before the Fall. Women are, in part, associated with the serpent since Eve is deceived by the creature which encroached upon the first two people's safe existence in the godly paradise. Whether or not females are "evil" as such, and symbolically snakes themselves, is a phenomenon which has taken several shapes and meanings over the course of history, both in the West and elsewhere. However, late-medieval accounts like that of the two monks Heinrich Kramer and Jakob Sprenger, "The Witch Chamber" (1488-1520), portray the female sex as truly sinister.

Further, the Greek myths of chaos vs. order (or Cosmos) are to a large degree related to male Olympian deities like Zeus, Poseidon, Hephaistos, Hermes and Apollo, but also goddesses of similar status, such as Hera, Demeter, Athena and Artemis. But Zeus was the highest of god, the divine patriarch of heaven (which is superior to earth). Within the Greek philosophical tradition, especially the writings of Plato and Aristotle, the two sexes attribute

a plethora of different characteristics, often evident of the dichotomous thinking in relationship to the sexes. Plato is more nuanced and emphasizes the gender overlaps – some females are indeed more virtuous than males, and are even allowed to be watchers in his city-state utopia which is outlined in *The Republic* – while Aristotle is unhesitatingly more pessimistic in regard to the opposite sex. The female soul is considered lower and of a vegetative essence, which is a stark contrast to proto-feminist writers like Christine de Pizan.

In the *Book of the City of Ladies* (1405), de Pizan argues – in a way largely influenced by the nomenclature of Aristotle – for that women ought to be virtuous, and that men who try to hold women back and denigrate even intelligent females are being ill-disposed and feeble-minded.<sup>1</sup> Such a positive and more gender-equal position is taken even further by Mary Wollstonecraft. Her discourse includes less of the virtuous ideals and more emphasis of the importance of individual rights and structural and political reforms<sup>2</sup>, thus continuing the Enlightenment thought of democracy and equality of opportunity.

Wollstonecraft's writing was by and large a response and critique of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's treatise *Émile, or On Education* in which he underscored the significance of male activity and female passivity, while simultaneously stressing that men should not be blamed for merely suggesting that they may be distracted by female beauty (one of few valuable functions of the female sex, according to his way of thinking). Simone de Beauvoir took a more historical outlook in *The Second Sex* (1949), and exemplified how and to which degree women were excluded from society and politics in the European past. After that point, many feminist writers have produced vast material linked to women's sociocultural, political and economic interests but no one with the same impact.

Before the release of the French existentialist author's *chef d'oeuvre*, women's suffrage had been introduced in many western countries, and even somewhat earlier in Russia in 1917, in the 1910s and 1920s, and the first wave of feminism was born. The German feminist and socialist activist Clara Zetkin saw feminism and class struggle as two intertwined, almost mutual dimensions. The Russian communist Alexandra Kollontai had a similar "intersectional" interpretation of the historical circumstances of the Russian, and perhaps also European females' position in a male-dominated world. Clearly, the emphasis was on basic political and economic rights such as suffrage, membership in political organizations, and the conditions for industrial workers.<sup>3</sup> Despite the modernist and symbolist movement that penetrated Europe and Russia at that time, binary biological entities were taken for granted; perhaps because these issues were far more urgent than identity politics which has become typical in the twenty-first century.

The so-called second wave of feminism in the 1960s was influenced by socialism and Marxist-Leninism in some cases but also subdivided into several branches, some of which were liberal while others radical. The queer and social justice movements had not been transformed into its current forms, although social conquests such as no-fault divorce and rape were on the agenda. For example, homosexuality was regarded as a mental illness in the 1970s throughout much of the West, and marriage and traditional, Christian values of monogamy and complementary gender roles were still distinctive and predominantly present among western societies. Of course, the social justice movements of the 1960s, the sexual revolution, anti-war movement and so forth that occurred in the same decade and continued in the 1970s paved the way for the present expressions, but these processes often require a not too narrow time-frame in order to have a major impact. That especially makes

sense if one regards social and historical development as a dialectical process or hegemonic struggle between two or several oppositional forces.<sup>4</sup>

Social justice as we understand this phenomenon today emerged in the 1990s and continued as a more accelerated or gradual movement after the new millennium with partly new questions on its agenda. Light has been shed upon on sexual harassment (with #metoo as the culmen in 2017), “rape culture”, the “pay gap”, as well as intersectionality-related issues like “racism”, such as for instance supposed violence against black Americans in the police force and Donald Trump’s various statements (as well as his sexism). Other issues include the LGBTQ movement in America, Canada and other countries, which has indirectly made the psychologist Jordan Peterson famous. His outbursts against “neo-Marxism” and “postmodernism”, as well as micro issues such as preferred gender pronouns, appear to have been congenial with the tastes of the new right, classical liberals and conservatives.

Feminism, like in its early phases, has never been completely isolated from other ideological movements; it has rather been linked to and often dependent on the progress of other underpinnings. Wollstonecraft’s work came in the aftermath of the Enlightenment and liberalism, and both German, Russian and Scandinavian feminism were linked to socialism and communism. In the 1960s a new set of ideas, which I will hereafter majorly refer to as post-Marxism, emerged. These constituted a critique of classical Marxism, with its emphasis on class and economic conditions as that which in the last instance determine power and social outcomes, and focused on sociocultural and other elements of society. Economically, it has been connected to the Third Way of Anthony Giddens, and social democracy and similar mixed economic systems rather than pure socialism. The influences of this new and

indeed not unified movement within western academia were primarily the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, the Frankfurt School (Horkheimer, Adorno et al), and later Louis Althusser's post-Marxism which included psychological elements from Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault's poststructuralism and genealogical model, and Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's oft-cited work *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1985).

Although the left-Hegelian heritage from Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels remained intact in a slave/master dialectic model, post-Marxism emphasized several interrelated dimensions of power and oppression. Thus, the proto-intersectionality of the early twentieth century developed into a more distinctive model which has come to influence contemporary social justice and various sub-branches within the new left to a vast degree. Laclau and Mouffe discuss a so-called "chain of equivalence" between several oppressed groups<sup>5</sup>, like non-European immigrants, Muslims, women, the poor, and homosexuals, leading to a mutual struggle against racism, sexism, classism, Islamophobia and homophobia (and even transphobia). Racism and anti-Muslim sentiments have unhesitatingly been taken seriously in public discourse, but sexism has perhaps received the most attention in the recent years. The #metoo movement has become a near-globally disseminated phenomenon in October of 2017 onward, with a boost from social media and other digitized tools of information.

Yet, feminism and feminists have not necessarily fortified their positions in society, although Sweden is said to have the first feminist government, a collaboration between the Social Democratic Party, the Left party, and the Green party. For example, only about seven percent of Britons consider themselves feminists. Although this share is higher among younger women it is still a fairly low figure. Economic and political equality between the

sexes is perceived as positive by 86% of males and 47% of females<sup>6</sup>, which indicates that the first wave of feminism that focused on basic economic and political equality, and the second wave that continued this route to a larger extent, is what many perceive as an eligible position within its framework but perhaps less so if one considers the third and fourth wave, signified by intersectional identity politics and other phenomena.

Perhaps this also reflects a position that many people generally buy into, and perhaps for good reasons? Although there exist nuances and complex situations that will demand further analysis and sometimes delicate and intricate balance, this position will provide a relevant point of departure for explaining the *how* and *why* in this respect. How will we create the best possible society with regard to the dynamics of the sexes (or genders)? And why is it required to find such a balance between the traditions of the patriarchal past that the feminists always fight against on one hand, and the relevant and meaningful endeavors of the proto-feminists, the first- and second-wavers, and to some extent contemporary strivings for correction of present problems on the other?

These issues will be further addressed in the following chapters. It will be descriptive in the sense that it analyses the constitution of society from several aspects, but also prescriptive in so far that it discusses preferable positions and alternatives for individuals, groups, academics and policy makers to consider. I will have an *interdisciplinary* approach in so far that the social sciences, arts, and biology interplay and are not regarded as mutually exclusive but complementary components that will bear fruit in analyzing and prescribing the correct medicine for society. Further, I will have an *interdiscursive* approach in that sense that I combine ideas from sometimes seemingly incompatible ideological fields<sup>7</sup>, mostly traditionalism and feminism.

Traditionalism is here understood as an umbrella term for the male-dominated society which regards the sexes as more or less binary, mostly before but sometimes after the rise of feminism throughout various phases of the twentieth century. Whether it is Christianity, Buddhism, Confucianism, Islam, or neomascularity, these sets of beliefs are critical against feminism or consider the very emergence of that phenomenon to be unnatural, even unthinkable. Social conservatives and nationalists may find overlaps between traditionalism and feminism (at least the first wave), but as we will see later on, many on the right are striving for the same kind of delicate balance or ambivalence that signifies a synthesis between these two major components. Even certain segments of the left do, perhaps because they are compelled as a consequence of multicultural ideals and massive influx of non-European migrants. For instance, with a greater Muslim presence in Europe, patriarchal modes and discourses will be pushed by leading figures among its adherents. Traditionalism can also mean, simply, pre-modern ideas that are relevant in the modern area.

Feminism is primarily understood as the notion that women are substantially subordinated to men in society and that it should be changed or reversed<sup>8</sup>. Secondly, contemporary feminism includes many sub-branches, typically linked to either liberalism or post-Marxism, and some of those will be specifically investigated. My major concern, however, is which specific facets and facts that are legitimate within feminism and to combine them with that which is equally relevant and significant within traditionalism.

Although I will mainly limit the scope to the West – which according to Samuel Huntington consists of the United States, Canada, Western Europe, Australia and New Zealand<sup>9</sup> – there will be discussions concerning other cultures and nations too, especially in

South Korea. As Niall Ferguson and others have stressed, the West tends to influence the Rest<sup>10</sup>, why the former serves as a potential role model (or its opposite for some) for other players in the global network of nations, governments, corporations and individuals. The selection of literature and the empirical examples consist of slices from several countries but with the US as an epicenter. Nevertheless, an exploration of this magnetic field of ideas and practices is required, and I hope to shed light on some important aspects. While this is not, at least primarily, a “self-help” book, it may be valuable to some females and males alike who aim for to improve themselves in today’s realm.

## **2. The history of feminism and women's movements in the West**

While some well-known proto-feminists, first- and second-wave feminists and women's movement activists and their ideas were briefly examined in the introduction, we need to establish a more comprehensive historical background of these phenomena. This will be accomplished by looking at the broad historical development of second-wave feminism and women's movements in a number of western countries, mainly from the 1960s until the 1990s, some prominent feminist theorists, and a summary of the contours of third-wave and fourth-wave feminism. The reason for this historical gap is that the first wave of feminism was largely centered around core issues like women's suffrage and the most basic economic rights, while the second wave had the largest impact in regard to much further improved and expanded legislation on abortion and abuse, rights, equality, social norms, as well as theories. A common idea, conveyed by for example Joanna Williams, is that the first and second waves of feminism and women's rights movements accomplished the major goals that were truly important to women, while the third and fourth waves have mostly been concerned about narcissistic identity politics and less relevant micro issues.<sup>11</sup> While such a contention might be questioned, and I assert that there are indeed relevant ideas within present day feminism that will be emphasized throughout my examination, I agree with Sheila Rowbotham that after the introduction of female suffrage in the 1920s, it took another four decades for the second wave to establish itself in much of the West.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, the most emphasis should be put on the second wave. It will also provide us with a more comprehensive understanding of the benefits as well as the flaws of feminism in present times.

## **The United States**

The feminist scholar Johanna Brenner identifies two major tendencies for women in the modern United States: on one hand, women had advanced in many professions and won legislation issues regarding discrimination and abortion. Sociocultural norms have changed, too, and feminist scholarship are integrated in American academia. On the other hand, many of these improvements were under the attack of male domination, right-wing conservative groups, and insecurity in the US labor market by the mid-1990s, Brenner claims.

Second-wave feminism in the US developed in an expanding American economy, which demanded more women to work in health, education, social services and managerial jobs. The more individualist-leaning and career-centered new “superwoman” that emerged in the 1980s, strikingly different from the housewife ideal that dominated the 1920s, was linked to industries marketing downscale and a general higher long-term demand for women in the labor market. By the 1980s, feminism, women’s movements and feminist scholarship have all been integrated into modern American society. Even during periods of backlash, due to the advancement of conservative and anti-abortion groups, women made significant impact in the realms of electoral politics, reaching 48% of the delegates at the 1984 Republican party convention. In 2018, Democratic women have won 105 House primaries (close to 25% of the entire United States House of Representatives), compared to only 25 in the Republican counterpart. In one sense, the second wave became absorbed by the neoliberal current.

Feminism in the US does also consist of marginal groups like lesbians and persons of color, which have leaned towards social-welfare feminism. Typically, there are liberal and

welfare feminism and such groups within the US differ in regard to which leaning they represent. Shared achievements, however, include the Roe v. Wade abortion law in 1973, Family Support Act of 1988 and the 1990 Act for Better Childcare. However, many feminists regard these as only partial or minor victories. In the US, left-leaning feminists must battle against conservative and neo-liberal ideas, sometimes leading to compromises that make no side satisfied.<sup>13</sup>

## France

French second-wave feminism consisted of three major branches, of which all were linked to the radical revolts in the 1960s: revolutionary feminism, syndicalist feminism, and egalitarian feminism. The revolutionary feminism was influenced by Maoism and other socialist sub-branches and regarded class and gender as two overlapping dimensions. However, there was not always a consensus regarding which social category that was primary and secondary. Revolutionary feminism was, to some extent, influenced by psychoanalytical, structuralist and post-structuralist ideas. Another tenet was the presupposition, in accordance with Simone de Beauvoir's insight in the *Second Sex*, that females are becoming women, not being born as such.<sup>14</sup> Another key component was the second wave's notion that "everything is political" and the "personal is political". Joanna Williams regards this view as a takeoff for qualitative research and a narrow epistemology within present-day feminism.<sup>15</sup>

Syndicalist feminism in France, which predominantly emerged in the 1970s, focused on the rights and welfare of working-class women. Wider access to contraception and abortion were two key issues. Discrimination against women was a third such. Furthermore, child

care and parental leave were put on the agenda. Essentially, the goal was to liberate women as individuals in society.

Egalitarian feminism stems from the left but has partly been supported by right-leaning parties in the 1970s and 1980s and had a “bourgeois” or middle-class tendency (like many of the first-wave feminists). Yet, many issues, such as reproductive rights and labor rights have been on its agenda. Feminism in France managed to reach a point of a partially reformed abortion law in the 1970s and made further improvements in relation to sexual harassment, sexist commercials and contraception laws in the 1980s, under the rule of Francois Mitterand. Like in the United States, French women have increased their share in the labor market since the 1960s, reaching roughly the same level as men in the 1990s.<sup>16</sup>

## UK

The UK has strong historical ties to liberalism, women’s suffrage and other women’s-related issue like family planning. During the second half of the twentieth century, however, second-wave feminism came to a halt or was never accelerated during the Thatcherite conservative era in the 1980s when welfare expenditures, which affected many poor women’s lives, were cut. Some local protests against this development were rather successful, however. Strikers in the mining communities were other agents of socialist- and feminist-leaning ideas and interests. In the mid-1980s, issues like lesbianism, domestic violence, fundamentalism and eco-feminism in third-world countries were put on the agenda by certain groups.

Around the same time mainstream media, following similar patterns as in the US, declared that women and men were equal and that British society thus had transitioned into a post-feminist era. Females could indeed prosper as individuals in occupations like law,

medicine, media and politics. According to Sheila Rowbotham, these media depictions have made the organization of feminism and women's movements harder to establish.<sup>17</sup>

### **The influential thinkers of the second wave**

Second-wave feminism did not only constitute a period of far-reaching social, economic and technological changes, as well as various ideological responses to these changes, but many particular theoretical underpinnings about women in general, women of color, and sexual minorities.

As a precursor to the second wave, Simone de Beauvoir outlined many of the core notions on womanhood in relation to the opposite sex. On such key premise was that women are inferior while men have the privilege to be both positive and neutral:

The terms *masculine* and *feminine* are used symmetrically only as a matter of form, as on legal papers. In actuality the relation of the two sexes is not quite like that of electrical poles, for man represents both the positive and the negative, as I indicated by the common use of *man* to designate human beings in general; whereas woman represents only the negative, defined by limiting criteria, without reciprocity.<sup>18</sup>

The highly influential radical feminist Shulamith Firestone praised and built upon some of de Beauvoir's insights about women being a subordinate class but criticized the unnecessary abstract philosophical concepts, such as immanence and transcendence, and draw inspiration from Marxist dialectics and realism instead.<sup>19</sup>

Feminist theorists like Nancy Chodorow and Catharine MacKinnon offered psychoanalytical perspectives on the family structure and sexuality, but while they used statistics and explained real patterns of behavior<sup>20</sup> the problem with psychoanalytical theory, whether drawn from Sigmund Freud or Jacques Lacan, is that it cannot be neither affirmed nor refuted. At best it can offer a fruitful way of understanding some aspects of the human psyche and behavioral repertoire. Instead the benefits of the works of someone like Catharine MacKinnon, for example, is that they highlighted real issues like rape and battery rather than its theoretical assumptions.

The works of the American philosopher Judith Butler have focused on several topics related to women's rights, lesbianism and gender construction. Many of these insights were outlined in her major work *Gender Trouble* (1990). In her essay "Imitation and Gender Insubordination", Butler discusses lesbian identity in relation to heteronormativity. One of her key arguments is that gay identity is not, at least necessarily, an imitation of the heterosexual real but that heterosexuality is a performative act that requires constant performance to solidify and justify its own existence as a normative structure.<sup>21</sup> On the other hand it fails to address the biological basis for the predominance of heterosexuality.

### **The emergence of third-wave and fourth-wave feminism**

Third-wave feminism appeared in the late 1980s after Kimberlé Crenshaw's article "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex". Rebecca Walker's essay from 1992 became the specific birthtime for third-wave feminism.<sup>22</sup> However, it did also have a

palpable alternative culture and sub-cultural tendency. Many are perhaps associating modern feminism with punk, goth and emo genres of music, and that partly for good reasons. Groups and artists like Courtney Love and Anouk contain feminist tropes and less girlish image. Tori Amos, on the other hand, showcased a more feminine, emotional, sophisticated yet straight-forward approach with her piano-based music and lyrics that became widely popular in the early and mid-1990s. Some of them, like “Cornflake girl”, “Silent all these years” and “Me and a gun”, have centered around female mutilation, physical abuse and rape.

Many branches of feminism, even during the first wave, have had an intersectional approach. However, this leaning became more emphasized in connection to the third and the fourth waves of feminism, which are intimately linked to identity politics and social justice.<sup>23</sup> Clearly many third-wave feminists underscored important social and political issues like rape but a more nascent individualism, typical for much of popular culture in general, has unhesitatingly come to signify the last 25 years or so of contemporary feminism.<sup>24</sup> For example, typical themes within the fourth wave of feminism (which is an extension of third-wave feminism in a more fragmented digital and socio-political landscape)<sup>25</sup> are micro aggressions, trigger warnings, mansplaining and safe spaces. For example, a public speaker who expresses views that are deemed offensive is an instance of micro aggression and as such different from physical aggressions. Trigger warnings are cautions for such potentially offensive messages. Safe spaces are for those who do not feel safe or want to avoid offensive speech and have become an integral part of university and college campuses around the US (although the actual numbers are far from certain).<sup>26</sup>

Safes spaces started within the women's movements and among political minority groups to distance a certain group and its members from society, or from certain negative aspects of society (according to such particular views). However, nowadays these are much more narrow and subjective interpretations and strategies and likely stifle open debate and even freedom of expression. One of the major talking points of the provocative public speaker Milo Yiannopoulos, after holding speeches at several college and university campuses at several locations in the US, was that his presence and the reactions that it led to confirm the contention that the fourth wave of feminism and social justice are characterized by safe spaces and other signs of catering to subjective and emotional needs.<sup>27</sup>

Another problematic aspect, linked to the intersectional approach, is that today's feminists rarely criticize Islam and multiculturalism, and in many cases actively support racialized movements such as Black Lives Matter. At least the problematic elements within Islam and multiculturalism could have been criticized, such as patriarchal oppression and cultural relativism that often negatively affect women from minority groups living in the West, but likely as a consequence of the rise of right-wing populism and nationalism in Europe and the US, feminists have generally avoided such topics or criticized the right-wing groups instead. Moreover, many liberal feminists focus on the narrow interests of a small group of middle-class feminists, such as female underrepresentation as CEOs, rather than working-class women.<sup>28</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Second-wave feminism and women's movements broadly followed similar paths in the US, UK and France and took interest in parallel key issues like labor rights, reproductive rights,

sexism, domestic violence and sociocultural norms that affected women on a grand scale. There were also differences: France had palpable radical left-leaning tendencies in the 1960s until the 1980s, whereas the movements in the US were positioned around social welfare-feminism and liberal feminism and have experienced setbacks from anti-abortion groups. Feminism in the UK has experienced difficulties to further their interests under Thatcherite rule and other conservative leaders, who mainly focused on equal opportunity, but roughly equality of outcome was reached for about three decades ago.

Third-wave feminism emerged in the early 1990s and took a more individualistic and intersectional approach, focusing on the nexus between class, race, gender and sexual preferences. Critics of contemporary feminism, especially the fourth wave which emerged around 2012, point to the subjective narcissism which has characterized the continuation of the movement. While feminism as of today occasionally focuses on crucial legal issues like rape and marginalized women, it has become obvious that many of the issues are not as important as those that the earlier waves were concerned about. Furthermore, the intersectional dimension makes it problematic in regard to issues like large-scale Muslim immigration (Europe) and Black Lives Matters (US).

### **3. Multiple masculinities in the western past and present**

One of the major insights in Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* is that male history is neutral. Man's history is history in its entirety. When a person, for example, reads about Chinese or British history one will automatically dig deeper into epochs and cultures that were predominantly, if not entirely, shaped by men as sole agents of change and development. Therefore, any study that specifically focuses on masculinity may be regarded as irrelevant, at least until the 1980s when a number of influential studies stressing the importance of masculinity perspectives were published.<sup>29</sup>

In this chapter some of the processes of how masculinity has been reassessed and reinterpreted under various sociocultural conditions are examined. Pre-modern and modern history is constituted by multiple masculinities rather than an essential and singular form or expression. This outlook will enable a more nuanced understanding of masculinities of the past and provide a backdrop for current forms and manifest how one can learn from earlier mistakes, as well find potential sources of inspiration, to the extent that such exist over the course of western history.

#### **Masculinities shaped by the Enlightenment**

As Steven Dudink and Karen Hagemann assert, equality for men as a distinctive universal category consolidates sex differences as primary differences between men and women:

Universal male citizenship and general conscription – and the exclusion of women from them – were vital in making sexual difference a prime difference. These institutions attributed masculinity – and the rights and duties it conferred upon the individual – to all men. As such they helped to

make sexual difference *the* difference that surpassed class, regional, religious, and racial differences.<sup>30</sup>

Hence western men, as they gradually became equal under the aegis of liberalism, socialism and social democracy, became distinctively superior to women from a social standpoint. Except for some higher-class females, although many of them also subordinated to patriarchal structures, men in the West and elsewhere made up a higher caste than their female counterparts.

During the reign of Napoleon Bonaparte in France as well as Prussian rule in today's Germany, Poland and certain parts of the Baltic states, men formed a national brotherhood largely linked to patriotism and individual liberty, which co-existed in the form of social equality and a "ready to combat" attitude.<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, the traditional republicanism in Great Britain and the United States was under threat from the liberal gentleman ideal that emerged in the eighteenth century. Suddenly a large share of men embraced gentility and consumerism and tried to cater to the needs of women. Moreover, they seemed to have let go off the state-centered *zoon politicon* ideal that signified the early stages of American republicanism. Later, however, influential American men tried to shape a synthesis between the British gentleman and the republican statesman. Indeed, male Americans negotiated between a contradictory discourse of the capitalist, gentleman, and white racist.<sup>32</sup>

Although the politically conscious individual and the gentleness towards women may be regarded as rather positive manifestations of masculinity, while racism clearly is not, there were troubling tendencies that came about in nineteenth

century Prussia. There some of the most problematic aspects of traditional masculinity, such as a willingness to sacrifice oneself for one's nation, bravery, loyalty, valour and nationalism, manifested themselves.<sup>33</sup> Elements that were exacerbated during World War I and World War II, although under the direct influence of Fascism and Nazism in the case of the latter.

Warfare and its underlying reasons do not constitute monolithic phenomena. For example, there is a crucial component of self-defense and making proper decisions under harsh times. That might include for instance Finnish, British and American soldiers during World War II. In fact, in Britain men shaped a balanced discourse of masculinity that implied a middle position between the hyper-masculine and deadly serious Nazi soldier on one hand, and the effeminate pacifist on the other.<sup>34</sup> This does not imply that such a particular discourse should serve as inspiration for male gender roles in current times, but it was nevertheless a seemingly preferable option to both the belligerent as well the pacifist extremes. The psychologist Steven Pinker has labelled the modern era the long peace. While the future is uncertain it is likely that only a small share of men in the US and other parts of the West will be forced to the battlefield, and if so, likely under more favorable conditions.<sup>35</sup> Therefore masculinity discourses should mainly focus on living conditions in a peaceful and predominantly well-functioning society.

### **Macho culture in the US**

American ghetto culture, rap music and criminal gangs are primarily linked to three major racial groups in the United States: blacks, Hispanics and whites (although to a lesser extent

than some Euro-American national groups used too in the American past). As the psychologist Richard Nisbett's research indicates, however, American southerners – regardless of racial categorization – act more macho and prone to violence than their northern counterparts. Thus, violent behavior, even in present times, is not exclusive for any particular racial group. If anything, such research shows the plasticity and cultural influence of male behavior.<sup>36</sup> However, there are troublesome trends that continue to exist in the United States and other western societies and that showcase detrimental forms of masculinity.

Gang violence has a long history in the United States, initially linked to European migration flows of for example Italians, Poles, Irish and Jews, particularly from 1880-1920, who often were poor until they managed to catch up with for example British and German settlers. In the western region, Mexican migrants occasionally formed criminal gangs, while African-American counterparts emerged in the Midwest and Northeast. In later periods, Central American and Asian groups have also manifested themselves. For instance, by the 1960s, more than two thirds of all criminal gangs in New York City were black or Puerto Rican. Since the 1990s, so-called turf wars between criminal gangs have signified the broader northeast region of the US (New York City, Newark, New Jersey, Philadelphia, Baltimore and others), which have led to increased cycles of violence between gangs like Crips, Latin Kings, M.S.-13 and United Blood Nation. On the west coast, black-dominated Bloods, Mexican-oriented 18<sup>th</sup> Street Gang, and El Salvador-linked M.S.-13 dominate the region, although there are many more gangs in California and other southern and western states.

Although the underlying reasons for gang activity are often poverty, income inequality, lack of stable family units and even racial discrimination<sup>37</sup>, as well as cycles of

retaliation that increase the murder rates by manifold, an extreme macho culture is a common characteristic. The initiation rituals of gangs include assault or murder and membership often lasts for life.<sup>38</sup> While there might be appealing features within such subcultural milieus, such as a steady stream of income (although relatively low for most members), an adventurous lifestyle, potentially greater access to females<sup>39</sup>, and inter-male dominance, it is overall one of the most destructive forms of modern masculinity. Obviously, many members are being incarcerated or killed, and commit quite horrible crimes to others. American cities like St. Louis, Baltimore, New Orleans and Detroit are up to par with many of the worst Latin American and South African locations in regard to murder rates.<sup>40</sup>

### **Metrosexual and spornosexual ideals**

Much more benign and socially accepted forms of masculinity are the metrosexual and spornosexual ideals. Metrosexuality is linked to a type of urban male person who cares much more about his appearance than the average man, while spornosexual is a particular manifestation of this which draws inspiration from sport and porn imagery, such as the famous football player Cristiano Ronaldo. In a broader sense, metrosexuality is a late-modern extension of the gentleman ideal of early British and American liberalism, although with more focus on clothing, style and image than proper conduct. Research shows that vanity mediates narcissism and metrosexuality, since not all narcissistic men are vain. It is also linked to so-called “gender confusion” and increased levels femininity, even homosexuality.<sup>41</sup>

It is not obvious whether metrosexuality and its subbranches are completely positive manifestations of modern masculinity. For example, it might be a costly lifestyle and it

potentially collide with other forms of self-improvement (see chapter 8). Further, it might even be at odds with an appealing sexual image. At least when women are experiencing ovulation they prefer more masculine men<sup>42</sup> (see chapter 4), why a too metrosexual male may be deemed too feminine by many women. Moreover, such a lifestyle might be contradictory to physically demanding occupations, like blue-collar jobs or military service.

However, the spornosexual ideal has the benefits that it almost automatically increases testosterone levels and overall physical fitness. Likely, a sportsman, material artist or fitness enthusiast will likely not become too androgyne in his total constitution, since his main activities secure an element of masculine force and vigor, regardless of aesthetic preferences. Looked upon in this way, masculinity becomes a constant act of negotiation between different biosocial norms and individual proclivities. This topic is often linked to value judgments rather than sheer biological realities but there are positions that appear more optimal than others.

Be that as it may, some degree of metrosexuality is likely preferable under current conditions in the affluent West as well as East Asia (see chapter 6). Men in general are capable of shaping their own individual hybrid discourses, which may consist of various components, but it is unlikely that a man can escape the particular neo-liberal paradigm which he is encapsulated in. Within such confines there exists considerable agency, which enables men to make optimal decisions in regard to for instance education, work, health, and fitness.

## **Conclusion**

Over the course of pre-modern and modern western history, a plethora of different expressions of masculinity have manifested themselves. Some of the most extreme and

destructive forms were found within Prussia and German Nazi rule, while British soldiers and American republicans shaped more balanced discourses (although not without their apparent flaws). Today the most problematic aspect of masculinity is the violent macho culture that plague many western cities, especially in America, while metrosexuality appears more benign. However, men will likely benefit from a mixed discourse where traditionally masculine and metrosexual traits complement each other.

## **4. Similarities, overlaps and differences between the sexes**

### **Preferences and personality**

Almost any layman with some degree of life experience and general, average aptitude may come to the broad conclusion that there exist both similarities and differences between the two sexes. He or she may likely also assert that there exists a substantial variation among individuals within those two large population groups. People, at the individual level, differ in height, weight, body composition, personality, intelligence, taste and many other ways that are both striking and obvious. There is also an overlap in that sense that some males prefer pursuits that can be typically ascribed to women, or vice versa. Some women like baseball and some guys like Beyoncé or Ariana Grande and even attend to their concerts. Similarities are palpable as well, including human universals such as a penchant for certain pleasant smells and a disdain for others. The examples are many.

The consecutive questions are which these differences specifically are, if they are biologically essential, and how large and meaningful the variation within as well as between the sexes is. One of the most reliable and relevant starting points to take when aiming for to answer these are to be found within evolutionary psychology and evolutionary biology. David Buss and David Schmitt, while discussing the nexus between evolutionary psychology and feminism, have stressed the following key points about evo-psychology:

Evolutionary psychology provides a meta-theory for predicting when and where to expect gender differences and when and where to expect gender similarities (Buss 1995a). Women and men are expected to differ in domains

in which they have faced recurrently different adaptive problems over human evolutionary history. They are expected to be similar in all domains in which they have faced similar adaptive problems over human evolutionary history

Although the final scientific word is not yet in, we suspect that the similarities outnumber the differences. These include similarities in taste preferences (an exception occurs when women get pregnant and hence face a different suite of adaptive problems), and similarities in habitat preferences (e.g., for resource-rich environments containing places for refuge), similarities in kin investment as a function of genetic relatedness, and similarities in adaptations to avoid the “hostile forces of nature” such as predators, parasites, and other environmental hazards. This sentiment is echoed by Hannagan (2011), who suggests that “What is shared among the genders is a motivation for the elimination of economic or social competitors and the desire for control over events (i.e., ‘politics’)”.<sup>43</sup>

Thus, we can narrow down the answer to that differences are fewer than similarities but that differences exist as well. For instance, both sexes have evolved to avoid various environmental obstacles, such as predators, parasites, hazardous environments, and human foes. They are instinctively afraid of wolves, scorpions, snakes and potentially poisonous food.

The differences, on the other hand, are both psychological, physiological and behavioral. For instance, males are about 8% taller, on average, a pattern within populations which is more or less universal. Men do also have greater upper-body strength, about 60% more than that of women. Moreover, as David Buss has shown, women throughout the

world value “industrious and ambitious” rather high as positive traits among males, at least within a marital context.<sup>44</sup> This does not imply that women cannot be ambitious and industrious – studies in psychology show that the sexes are very similar with regard to overall levels of conscientiousness, although men are on average more competitive – but that men and women have different mate-selection markers. However, this tendency is less emphasized in Western Europe, perhaps due to greater economic equality between the sexes in the West compared to the Rest (at least in the late 1980s). On the other hand, a survey which was published at the website *Korea Boo* indicates that young Korean women value looks more than financial means, and personality more than resources, regarding dating preferences.<sup>45</sup>

Whereas the physiological differences have a distinctive biological component, although nutrition and exercise matter as well, the underlying reasons for the mental and cognitive differences are less obvious. Are for example personality traits culturally determined or genetic? Cross-cultural studies in psychology indicate that the most striking differences are not related to competitiveness, agreeableness, neuroticism, extraversion (men are somewhat more assertive but women are more gregarious) or some other major personality factor but concern different interests: basically, men are more interested in things and ideas, whereas women are more concerned about feelings and people.<sup>46</sup> As Jordan Peterson<sup>47</sup> and many others<sup>48</sup> have noted, these differences are more pronounced in egalitarian societies like Norway rather than in non-egalitarian countries where people are not necessarily able to pick their particular job niche that conforms to their innate inclinations and interests. The logical conclusion is that these differences are to a large part likely inherited. Women choose to be childcare workers, elementary school teachers, nurses,

wets and doctors because it is biologically hardwired to pick these types of occupations, whereas men prefer to be janitors, engineers, craftsmen, technicians, mechanics and construction workers. Women are said to be more linked to aesthetic jobs and hobbies, like make-up artists and fashion designers, but the aesthetical side is strongly linked to males as well. As Camille Paglia has noted, men have invented and built close to everything of value: from pyramids to modern bridges.<sup>49</sup> Michelangelo and Leonardo Da Vinci were both males, to name a few prominent artists of the past. In fact, architecture draws attention to both sexes. In today's Sweden, female vets and architects earn slightly more than their male counterparts.<sup>50</sup>

David Buss does also have much interesting findings to present in regard to so-called Sexual Selection Theory and how the sexes differ:

Men are more likely than women to engage in extradyadic sex

Men are more likely than women to be sexually unfaithful multiple times with different sexual partners

Men are more likely than women to seek short-term sex partners that are already married

Men are more likely than women to have sexual fantasies involving short-term sex and multiple opposite-sex partners

Men are more likely than women to pay for short-term sex with (male or female) prostitutes  
Men are more likely than women to enjoy sexual magazines and videos containing themes of short-term sex and sex with multiple partners

Men are more likely than women to desire, have, and reproductively benefit from multiple mates and spouses

Men desire larger numbers of sex partners than women do over brief periods of time

Men are more likely than women to seek one-night stands

Men are quicker than women to consent to having sex after a brief period of time

Men are more likely than women to consent to sex with a stranger

Men are more likely than women to want, initiate, and enjoy a variety of sex practices

Men have more positive attitudes than women toward casual sex and short-term mating

Men are less likely than women to regret short-term sex or “hook-ups”

Men have more unrestricted sociosexual attitudes and behaviors than women

Men generally relax mate preferences (whereas women increase selectivity for physical attractiveness) in short-term mating contexts

Men perceive more sexual interest from strangers than women<sup>51</sup>

Some of these aspects can be linked to the so-called Dark Triad, a phenomenon studied in psychology and which consists of narcissism, Machiavellianism and psychopathy, three moderately intercorrelated traits, that indicate obsessive self-centeredness, manipulation, lack of empathy, and a false charm, and according to Jonason et al have proven to be successful traits within a short-term mating context. Men, on average, possess these traits to a larger extent than women.<sup>52</sup> Interestingly, however, men and women have roughly equal scores in conscientiousness.<sup>53</sup> Machiavellianism, after Niccolò Machiavelli’s ultimate leader described in his work *The Prince*, appears to be somewhat less inherited than the two other facets.<sup>54</sup> It is rather a set of tactics that can be learned, although affected by an individual’s particular personality profile. Researchers have also started to add a fourth intercorrelated trait: sadism, the urge for to hurt other people and enjoy it, and thus leading to a Dark Tetrad.<sup>55</sup> This theme has been popularized in the novel *50 Shades of Grey*, which includes a sadomasochistic relationship between a man and a woman, although under controlled and consensual forms. The real human history is filled with real sadists, operating under uncontrolled and non-mutual conditions. Most of them have been ruling men, but both the mob and the rulers consisted of women too.<sup>56</sup> It is like they were guided by the same urge

for violence in many pre-modern societies. As Steven Pinker notes, sadism and public torture have decreased in modern times.<sup>57</sup>

There is a consensus within psychology and biology that human behavior is characterized by a large degree of plasticity.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, the sexual differences between men and women, listed above, may be changed under different sociocultural conditions. A study shows that Millennial females cheat to a slightly and perhaps not significantly larger extent than their male counterparts.<sup>59</sup> The question should perhaps be less about if that is the case, and more about if it is a positive development, and if not, how it can be changed. Research shows that at least a moderate degree of narcissism is positive for success and societal impact, and indirectly of helping others and contributing to society, whereas pathological narcissism may be hurtful.<sup>60</sup> While writers like Christopher Lasch and David Brooks accurately have shed light on growing narcissism in western societies<sup>61</sup>, one must still have a balanced understanding of this phenomenon and recognize the benefits, downsides and gradients that signify these sets of traits. Once one moves beyond the simplistic dichotomy of narcissism (bad) and non-narcissistic (good), it is worth looking at the broader spectrum of dark traits, how much they differ between the sexes, and how to properly balance them out to the largest possible degree.

As for psychopathy and sadism, people have an almost natural inclination for hurting others and being indifferent and/or amused by it. In the Roman empire people, both the plebs and the patricians, loved to watch cruel games where people's lives (mostly slaves) were ended in battle. During the middle ages, as well as later in European history, cruelty came in many forms. Public executions were one such aspect, and so also torture. Society and culture, however, change over time and space. The world in general and the West in

particular became much more civilized in the eighteenth century on, although World War II and the reign of the Nazi and Soviet regimes were a horrendous backlash, having abolished slavery, introduced individual rights across classes, sexes and ethnic groups, as well as welfare mechanisms wherever a country reached a certain level of material progress.<sup>62</sup> Even failed socialist states like North Korea, for a limited period of time, offered living conditions that the average Englishman or Swede, a century earlier, only could have dreamed of.<sup>63</sup>

All of these are positive things, changes that greatly matter, both at the macro and micro level. Extremely few want to travel back to premodern times, or move to a country where humanitarian rights and/or the level of economic and material development are not up to par with the first world. We can thank human plasticity and creativity for that – the bad and dark shades of the human psyche are not fixed, and the better angels of our nature, to refer to Steven Pinker’s concept, are largely leading the show in today’s world. There are of course a lot of evidence which points in the opposite direction, like Boko Haram and ISIS and the wars in Africa, Yemen and Syria, and the future is uncertain, but a general tendency of peace and prosperity is undisputable.

A contemporary feminist would stress that things indeed are better now, but that “men” are still making things worse for mankind in general and women in particular. Men are the head of states in most countries throughout the world, and men commit the most crimes.<sup>64</sup> While there is some degree of truth to all of this, it would be too simplistic and even erroneous to hold such views without making important reservations. First of all, as Charles Murray has shown in his work *Human Accomplishment* (2003), men have to a very large degree been responsible for the foundation of modern societies, both scientifically,

technologically and culturally. Most meaningful inventors and geniuses are males, and while women certainly contribute by working, giving birth to and raising children, they have played a less prominent role throughout the different stages of modern development. That does also include physically intense labor. As Camille Paglia notes in her work *Sexual Personae* (1991), feminists and intellectuals should be thankful for the achievements of men:

We could make an epic catalog of male achievements, from paved roads, indoor plumbing, and washing machines to eyeglasses, antibiotics, and disposable diapers. We enjoy fresh, safe milk and meat, and vegetables and tropical fruits heaped in snowbound cities. When I cross the George Washington Bridge or any of America's great bridges, I think: men have done this. Construction is sublime male poetry. When I see a giant crane passing on a flatbed truck, I pause in awe and reverence, as one would for a church procession. What power of conception, what grandiosity: these cranes tie us to ancient Egypt, where monumental architecture was first imagined and achieved. (...) It is hypocritical for feminists and intellectuals to enjoy the pleasures and conveniences of capitalism while sneering at it."<sup>65</sup>

Another misleading idea is that women, due to higher degree of empathy, would rule society (and the entire world) in a better way than men. Even though there exists evidence that indicates that women, on average, have greater empathy than men<sup>66</sup>, female rulers of the past have waged war to a larger extent than their male counterparts.<sup>67</sup> Of course, these powerful women, who dwelled in male-dominated and violent societies, were influenced by males to a large extent but still had the capacity to decrease the amount of wars, and

looking for truces and more peaceful agreements in an international context. Yet they often choose a belligerent path. Even if women do have, to some degree, greater empathy one could also make a case for that they are, on average, somewhat less rational than men. Indirect evidence, at least, within cross-cultural psychological studies, indicates that men are more interested in ideas and that women are more interested in feelings and people. Females are also more neurotic, in the sense that they are anxious and emotionally unstable<sup>68</sup>, while men on average are more psychopathic. While the latter might be regarded as a negative trait, it must be understood as a continuous rather than discrete variable: some degree of emotional unattachment may lead to more rational behavior and decision-making. The term pathological altruism is invented for a good reason.<sup>69</sup> Altruism and empathy must be balanced.

Today's prominent female rulers, like Angela Merkel of Germany, Theresa May of the UK and the former president of Brazil, Dilma Rouseff, possess a great degree of intelligence and formal competence. For instance, the German chancellor, Angela Merkel, has acquired a PhD in physics from the University of Leipzig in 1978. However, as the three psychologists Heiner Rindermann, James Thompson and Michal Sailer have shown, "smart fractions" within societies can significantly influence a country's level of development in many positive ways, but intelligence must be guided by ethics and rationality.<sup>70</sup> Although the worst rulers in modern times, whatever their level of intelligence may have been, were all men (Adolf Hitler, Josef Stalin, Mao Zedong, Ion Antonescu, Ferdinand Marcos and others), more subtle and less destructive forms of irrational behavior can indeed also be present. For instance, has it been a wise decision of Merkel to bring in millions of, mostly male migrants, who are more prone to crime, including rape, assault, and terrorist acts? Or by the Swedish

feminist government, which three major parties are largely run by females and all supporting large-scale migration, to push for continuous migrant flows?

That is the great paradox of contemporary feminism: wanting to stop rape but focusing more on the native population or “men” in general, as a universally essential category, rather than the hostile males and male groups, who they often protect or whose level of threat to society is downplayed. All Jihadist terrorists in France, UK, Belgium, and Sweden have been non-native men, and the grooming gangs that ravaged Rotherham in England consisted of Pakistani and other males from the same region of Asia<sup>71</sup>. Similar patterns have been identified in Sweden.<sup>72</sup> Hence, while nationalist and right-wing populist parties like Fidesz, the Swiss People’s Party and the Austrian People’s Party may seem less sympathetic and more xenophobic than the liberal and social-democratic parties, which push for further non-western immigration on a large scale, their policies would likely lead to less rapes and assaults being committed in western countries.<sup>73</sup>

As Michael Castleman has underscored, in many countries, even outside of the West, rape has been on a steady decline over the last decades.<sup>74</sup> There might be several reasons for this pattern, including changed attitudes among men and laws reflecting such new notions, but keeping perpetrators out of society is unhesitatingly one crucial factor. Not all rapists are sexual psychopaths, but many are and they, as well as other perpetrators, should be locked up for a long time.<sup>75</sup> Analogous to this idea, men that are more likely to rape, like those within the age span of 15–50 who originate from different parts of the Middle East, South Asia and Africa, should be distinguished from those men who are less likely to rape. This does not imply that men from these countries and regions are essentially and inherently prone to rape, but sociocultural preferences tend to change rather slowly and intersexual

dynamics matter as well. For example, as the Swedish economist Jan Tullberg has asserted, there is a surplus of men in the younger age cohorts in today's Sweden<sup>76</sup>, likely leading to more (migrant) males acting out and using force to gain access to females.<sup>77</sup>

How about murder, then? Murder has been on a decline, too, and statistics show that in most western and Northeast Asian states only about 1 person per every 100,000 people are murdered. As a UNOCD study from 2015 shows, 79 per cent of all murder victims were males. 95 per cent of all perpetrators were males.<sup>78</sup> Thus, both men and women are affected by murderous males, but males are to a greater extent. This is an important nuance and distinction. "Macho culture", without clear definition and differentiation, is often blamed for much of society's ills, including job hazards, assault, rape, sexual harassment and murder. As Steven Pinker and Richard Nisbett have shown, macho culture contributes to violence, both in the past and present. For instance, males living in the south of the U.S. are more prone to violence than their northern counterparts. Earlier in western history, gun duels were commonplace.<sup>79</sup> Overly brutal gangs like M.S.-13 in today's Latin America and the U.S. are indeed part of a very problematic macho culture, but that is one which is completely cut off from social norms and law-abiding behavior. Men who take risks to protect their friends and family, exercise and build muscle, travel the world, is confident in relationship to women and by showcasing many other typically masculine traits, are they "macho" too, in any negative sense? Without such simple yet crucial distinctions the criticism of masculinity becomes unserious. I am not attacking a mere straw man here, since contemporary feminism seldom discusses how and to which extent male excellence and self-improvement are valuable to society, including women.

## Intelligence

Even among left-leaning sociologists such as Ferdinand Tönnies, author of the rather influential work *Community and Society* (1887), a belief in innate sex differences persisted. Males were unhesitatingly regarded as the brighter and more rational of the two sexes according to his view:

It is an old truth – but just for that reason important as the outcome of a general experience – that women are usually led by feelings, men more by intellect. Men are more clever. They alone are capable of calculation, of calm (abstract) thinking, of consideration, combination, and logic. As a rule, women follow these pursuits ineffectively. They lack the necessary requirement of rational will.<sup>80</sup>

On the other hand, Tönnies regarded male geniuses as possessors of a “feminine nature”:

Thus the man of genius is of a feminine nature in many respects: naive and frank, soft, sensitive, lively, changeable in emotions and moods, gay or melancholy, dreamy and enthusiastic, as if living in constant intoxication with a trustful belief in and surrender to objects and persons, thus planless, often blind and foolish in important or unimportant things.<sup>81</sup>

While undisputable accounts like Charles Murray’s *Human Accomplishment* show the palpable dominance of intelligent and creative males throughout history, which constitute a proxy for IQ, Simone de Beauvoir’s response would likely have been that females were

shut out from intellectual domains and the general public and consequently could not contribute. If they would have competed on equal terms, women would have produced about the same amount of important contributions to art and society. Is that really the case, or are there important nuances to consider?

The controversial yet influential intelligence expert Arthur Jensen, in his last major work *The g Factor* (1998), analyzed sex differences in intelligence in depth. While he admitted that there are some aspects of intelligence in which the sexes differ – for instance, women have a somewhat stronger verbal component while males have a stronger visual-spatial component – overall the general average level of intelligence is almost exactly the same. This position has been challenged by three other controversial researchers: Richard Lynn, J. Philippe Rushton<sup>82</sup> and Helmuth Nyborg<sup>83</sup>, who all have found approximately a 4 point male advantage. Other researchers have found no differences or smaller differences.<sup>84</sup> However, Nyborg published another extensive study with American data in 2015 which showed that there is a 5-point male advantage in this regard.<sup>85</sup> With this large study taken into account, there might be a substantial but small sex difference in IQ. Essentially, however, the sexes are equally intelligent, on average.

Another sub-topic regarding intelligence and intelligence research is that females have less variance than males. They have, in other words, a narrower bell curve, meaning that the patterns of distribution are different. Although there exist or have existed many females who are cognitively impaired as well as great geniuses (Dorothy Hodgkin, Rosalin Franklin, Gertrude Elion, Judit Polgar to name a few), women are generally more clustered in the middle of the IQ scale. Men, on the other hand, have greater variance compared to women: those with the lowest levels of cognitive ability, and those with the highest.<sup>86</sup> Whether or

not this is a genetic and neurobiological phenomenon or affected by environmental factors (culture, upbringing, expectations etc.) are open for debate but given how similar the environments are in the modern West one should expect that most, if not all, differences that emerge are affected by genes or gene-environment interactions. For example, if more men than women, due to evolved biological reasons, have a tendency to seek out visuo-spatial or mathematic-logic educational fields and occupations then those may affect the level of intelligence to some extent. Although psychology researchers like Arthur Jensen and Robert Plomin have estimated the intelligence levels of people to be largely inherited (about 60–80 per cent)<sup>87</sup> there is a significant degree of human plasticity and malleability of cognitive ability.<sup>88</sup> The question has been which these specific sub-factors are, and which that do not affect the level of cognitive ability to a significant degree. Broadly speaking, those which do affect it can be summed up as elements of lifestyle and environmental input. If, for example, a person spends a lot of time doing exercise, eating and sleeping properly, and read extensive books about history and other more complex phenomena, he or she will likely have a more developed cognitive ability than someone who does detrimental things and lives in a negative micro environment which causes stress, negative dietary and sleeping patterns, abuse of alcohol, low physical and cognitive stimulation, to name some of them.

In any case, if the sex differences are somewhat substantial, men will likely dominate among Nobel laureates in physics and medicine also in the future. The differences of achievement will not be as striking as before, given that women have full access to STEM these days, but if we investigate this topic in 20 years we will have a more definitive answer. Such an answer would either refute the masculinist (men are intellectually superior, at least

in science) or sameness feminist position (women and men are essentially the same). Perhaps the answer is fuzzy and somewhere in between these two positions.

### **Physical strength**

Sex-related differences in physical strength are less of a controversial topic than cognitive ability and personality. This is because it appeals to common sense and palpable differences with regard to sport results. Males perform significantly better in track and field, basketball, football, handball, baseball, tennis, weight-lifting, boxing, wrestling and just about every sport that one can come to think of which involves some degree of physical strength (and often endurance). For example, Serena Williams and Venus Williams lost against the 203-ranked German player Karsten Braasch in 1998 with 6-1 and 6-2 in games.<sup>89</sup> Many of these outcomes are directly or indirectly attributable to vastly different testosterone levels. Still scientific data is required whenever one seeks a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding.

A comparative study by Chen et al (2012) shows that female and male college students significantly differ in this respect. For example, females have 37–68% of the level of strength as that of men, depending on exercise and upper versus lower body. The differences were the most emphasized in exercises where arms, chest and shoulders were primarily used, and the least in lower-body exercises such as leg curls.<sup>90</sup> These differences could potentially be magnified *or* decreased in different scenarios, depending on exercise, nutrition and height increases. For instance, females in some European states like the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Switzerland and Serbia are on average about 170 centimeters and do generally have a higher latent strength potential than women from for instance South America and Southeast Asia where the average height is about 155 centimeters in most

countries.<sup>91</sup> If women aim for to become bigger and stronger, for example because they prefer an occupation like police or firefighter, higher body weight, greater strength and bigger muscles may come because of partially changed gender roles. Although the evolved differences in physical strength may trump such female efforts, these differences are far from phenotypically fixed. However, given the relative importance of fitness and physical strength for males as indicators of health and evolutionary fitness, or to just perform better in dating for that matter, it might be the case that the efforts of females will be “masked” by similar endeavors by the opposite sex. Perhaps it is more important that both parties make progression, regardless of differences will persist or not.

## **Conclusion**

The two sexes have evolved to have both differences, similarities and overlaps in regard to physiology, preferences and personality. There exist relatively small differences in personality: women are more gregarious, agreeable and neurotic, whereas males are somewhat more competitive, psychopathic, narcissistic and Machiavellian. They are equal regarding conscientiousness. The most striking difference is related to different interests: men are more interested in things and ideas whereas women are more interested in feelings and people.

The average differences in general cognitive ability,  $g$ , are less obvious but males appear to have a slight advantage of, at most, 5 IQ points. Males do also have a greater variance within populations compared to females, both the lowest and the highest IQ scores.

Strength differences are less controversial and appeal to common sensical notions and “obvious” sports records. For instance, a study indicates that females perform about 37–68%

of the level of men, depending on exercise. Upper-body strength differences are larger than lower-body strength differences.

## 5. The sexual marketplace and its societal consequences

### The historical preconditions of the sexual marketplace

When someone hears the words sexual market or sexual marketplace one may associate them with a market of products, linked to demand and supply, and perhaps those countries where prostitution is completely legal (but largely under government control) or at least common and widespread, like Germany, the Netherlands, Thailand and Mexico. In fact, the sexual marketplace has less to do with products and more to do with demand and supply, among other dimensions. Let us look at its historical preconditions and what it more precisely means. The sexual market theory is not a purely scientific model, but both in evolutionary psychology, social psychology and economics it has been established as a relatively robust pattern of male and female behavior.<sup>92</sup>

In pre-modern times, sex and marriage were often related to a certain class category, village or city where people dwelled. People married at a rather young age to someone in their own strata, like a peasant couple in Sweden or Russia, and only a small share of high-value men (much power and resources at their disposal) could marry several women and have concubines. Prostitution was part of the equation too, but those who did not die from war or diseases married. Often, they only had one sex partner throughout their existence (at least publicly). The industrial revolutions and other signs of modernity changed the preconditions to some degree, since women worked in factories and could sometimes provide for themselves, but monogamous marriage was still the predominant model in the West and elsewhere.

After World War II, liberalism and socialism became the two hegemonic ideologies at a near-global scale, and with the gradual continuation of the integration of women in the workforce, combined with the endeavors of the second wave of feminism (women could more easily divorce their spouses and the birth control pill was introduced, for example), and a more liberal or libertine sexual culture that emerged in the 1970s onward, drastic sociocultural changes occurred. Marriage meant less – two persons could divorce and were thus not necessarily intertwined for life.<sup>93</sup> The real divorce rates could be somewhat difficult to discern but are probably around 45%, if one takes into account the entire life span and not just the first ten or twenty years.<sup>94</sup> People, on average, had many more sexual partners. The popular culture within the West became more feminized and sexualized. This was the next step after women's suffrage and sexual liberation. In an American and western context, women (and men) are rather free to please themselves with shopping, alcohol and no-strings-attached casual sex.

Globalization is part of the equation as well. This complex process has emerged gradually and cumulatively, with an intensification in the last three-four decades. It has become cheaper and easier than ever to take a flight to another country, and online dating – which has gone from somewhat embarrassing to perfectly normal, even preferable to other forms of hook-ups in a decade or so – has significantly changed the preconditions. Suddenly women can pick from a large pool of men, and average females can now have direct access to the most attractive share of males. As C. Rudder's study shows, 85% of women judge men on dating sites as being below average.<sup>95</sup> This has led a large share of men to become more obsessed about their looks, using filters, professional photographers, and fitness to appear more ripped and sexy which in turn may lead to more real dates. Perhaps some even

lie a bit about their own height (that could be masked by heels or insoles, however), age and other factors.

Men, good-looking ones in particular, can indeed use internet dating apps and websites to their benefit but many are left without any replies, and even more so, actual dates. Internet dating has made things easier in that sense that there is direct access to potential dates, but also harder since a large share does not benefit from this digitized sexual market. Demand and supply are largely about share and numbers, but also the Pareto principle that leads to that some men are more successful than others (although not necessarily applying to the typical 80/20 rule). This trend can also be magnified in countries with a strikingly unbalanced sex ratio. For example, according to the Swedish economist Jan Tullberg, in the younger age cohorts (16-17 years old) in Sweden there are 125 000 males for every 100 000 females.<sup>96</sup> That is a consequence of migration flows from Asia and Africa. For instance, when the Swedish tabloid *Expressen* investigated a group of 9000 migrants, so-called unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan, they found that 99.4 per cent were males.<sup>97</sup> China faces similar problems, although not as severe.<sup>98</sup> Historically and due to warfare in particular, many societies had a surplus of women which lead to the outcome that even less physically attractive and resourceful males could marry and reproduce.<sup>99</sup>

Perhaps this situation will lead to more men paying to have sex with escorts and other prostitutes, in parallel with frequent and widespread consumption of pornography, sex dolls and computer games. Several salient websites and forums, like the Red Pill section of Reddit, *A Voice For Men* and *Return of Kings*, offer different solutions to this problem, which magnitude is open for debate. MGTOW (Men Going Their Own Way) is one such solution. Men and women should, according to such a view, live separate lives, although perhaps

with some mutual sexual encounters. Game, and thus aiming for to become more successful with women because of self-improvement, hacks and determination, is another. Being an INCEL (involuntary celibacy) is the least preferable solution, and perhaps a harsh constitution of reality rather than an active choice. No one wants to be an INCEL, which is implied in the term itself. We will return to the real and potential macro and micro solutions to these problems later.

### **SMV and hypergamy**

Good looks are linked to a whole spectrum of characteristics such as facial structure and symmetry, hair structure and thickness, height, body composition, skin type, and clearly “artificial” components such as plastic surgery, fashion and make-up (mostly for females).<sup>100</sup> Thus, looks have both a genetic and an environmental (which includes cultural preferences) component. Since studies show that around 0.7 in waist-to-hip ratio for women, and symmetrical faces (for both sexes), an athletic physique (for men), are cross-culturally positive traits, these preferences have a distinctive biological component.<sup>101</sup>

Biological does not mean genetically essential and phenotypically fixed, however, since nutrition and hormone treatment can increase height, plastic surgery can improve facial features in accordance with biological beauty ideals (facial symmetry and composition), and nutrition and exercise can lead to a more fit and appealing body type. Modernity is unique in a twofold, almost contradictory sense: a sedentary lifestyle can lead to excessive levels of fat on one hand which is considered less attractive, but artificial (plastic surgery, hormone treatment and make-up) and real measures (diet and fitness) can counter eventual inherited flaws, at least to some extent, on the other.

As David Buss has noticed, there is no empirical consensus regarding which traits that are the most crucial when understood in a hierarchical sense: according to some studies, BMI is more important than hip-to-waist ratio, whereas others indicate that breasts and buttocks are the most crucial elements of female beauty standards.<sup>102</sup> A survey conducted by the English company Dr. Felix, which was based on a small US sample, indicates that men value a female's face the most, whereas women value a man's chest, arms and hair to about the same extent but only 2% answered that the face is the most important physical feature.<sup>103</sup>

Another aspect is to which degree and in which ways that the beauty ideals differ, and also how much weight men and women put into these two aspects. There has been a shift from greater resource value to aesthetic value among women in the West and in wealthy East Asian countries like South Korea. Ideally, women want a physically appealing man, with great facial features and thick hair (without an awkward haircut), who is taller than them (two-four inches, or even relatively taller), an athletic body type, and has impeccable style, teeth and hygiene. Likely he will be around the same age or slightly older, unless it is a poorer country where age means less and resources more.<sup>104</sup>

According to Cindy Meston and David Buss, men generally prefer a girl or woman who is younger than them (18-25 is an optimal age span, although it may differ at the individual level and at several age cohort levels), and who displays characteristics of beauty and fertility. Preferably she is the same height or shorter, thin but somewhat curvy, has a beautiful and symmetrical face, and long, lustrous hair. Although so-called *assortative mating* matters for both sexes, which implies that women and men alike will date and marry someone from their own socioeconomic (and look-wise) strata<sup>105</sup>, males care more about

looks than resources. A male person might accept the fact that some women earn more than he does, but he would often still marry a waitress if she is good-looking and has a pleasant personality. Most women, who are more or less educated, would not marry a waiter or even relatively well-paid mechanic. Several sources point to the same conclusion: women are genetically hardwired to pick a man who has plentiful resources at his disposal, if she could do it.<sup>106</sup>

Thus, a woman's so-called sexual market value (SMV) and marriage-market value are largely predicted by her beauty and fertility, whereas a male's SMV is determined by his aesthetics, resources and social status. The typical female evaluation is more holistically organized compared to a man, on average. For some women, height could be a deal breaker<sup>107</sup>, but if she is relatively pretty herself she could find plenty of men that conform to her taste. Next, she looks at his job, income, and social status. Although many females would prefer to date a high-value man, like an actor, Instagram celebrity or CEO at a large corporation, they compare themselves to other men and draw the line somewhere in the sand. Of course, personality matters as well<sup>108</sup>, but perhaps not as much as some would like us to believe: there might be a striking discrepancy between what many women say and what they do (and think), as the anonymous and consequently more honest study of *Korea Boo* shows.<sup>109</sup> In the first steps a woman evaluates a man as much as a man would do when he gazes at a woman's face and body and consequently makes a quick judgement. However, the consecutive steps of the entire evaluation process are not entirely the same.

*Hypergamy* is a sociocultural and partly sociobiological term which underscores that men or women, if given the opportunity, tend to date or marry up. That has been the case in India, where the caste system (based on the main caste, *Varna*, and the sub-caste, *Jati*)

implies that a man can marry up but not, preferably, the other way around. A woman who marries up would be to go against the traditional laws of Dharma. India is quite rapidly becoming modernized, however, and the laws and prescriptions for marriage are regarded as obsolete by many.<sup>110</sup>

Hypergamy in the West refers to a tendency that men and women tend to date up or marry up, if given the opportunity, but without the restrictions linked to a particular traditional culture. Often the hypergamy phenomenon, on the other hand, is being formed through the process of assortative mating. As Charles Murray and others have shown, IQ, level of education and type of occupation determine which type of people that will marry and procreate, even date (dating is the first step for many). Simply put, doctors marry other doctors, or at least someone equivalent to a doctor. Lawyers date other lawyers. Teachers marry teachers. Mechanics marry cashiers, and so on.<sup>111</sup> Assortative mating is also linked to beauty and looks, although one may identify many discrepancies and great variability at the individual level. For instance, a male 8 will date a female 8, or at least not someone too far away from his or her own level. Since socioeconomic status matters as well, this can compensate asymmetries in beauty, at least to some extent, and the other way around is also a possible scenario. The typical example is a rich but not good-looking guy who marries a younger girl with great looks. Although such arrangements certainly exist, even in the modern West, they have become less common whereas the assortative mating, based on education, income and preferences of interest, are more crucial factors for determining the shapes and outcomes in a modern, meritocratic society.<sup>112</sup>

While these clear tendencies are open for debate and may differ at the individual or micro level, it is overall natural and sound that people are free to choose a partner who

conforms the most to his or her innate taste. Hypergamy, on the other hand, can create some problems, especially understood in a larger dating and marriage context which often looks rather bleak in the long run. Many marriages will fail, at least after twenty years or more. People are being hurt. When someone cheats it appears even more important to find someone interesting or different than objectively better than his or her current partner, but hypergamy nonetheless lurks at the corners of dating and marriages.<sup>113</sup> Just like assortative mating is almost a natural phenomenon, hypergamy, to some extent, is inevitable too. But there are most certainly ways to reduce its impact. Much of that is up to the individual as one cannot expect society at large to step in and do the work for oneself. Self-improvement and specifically to maximize one's potential in regard to appearance, income, status and behavior are the main keys. Whether one will be inspired by West-oriented elements or absorb, for instance, South Korean and East Asian influences may be an individual choice. The latter will be discussed in the following chapter.

## **Conclusion**

The sexual marketplace in the West (and South Korea) has shifted from emphasis on resource value to aesthetic value. Not just men but also women prefer an attractive partner, who tends to more or less match her own sexual market value (SMV). Resources, status and personality matter too, but they are part of a holistic value logic rather than being the primary factors for the bulk of humans. Researchers like Cindy Meston and David Buss have shown that attraction and pleasure are the main reasons for why women have sex these days. Yet men, to some degree, are still more concerned about beauty and fertility than females.

The downsides of the sexual market (and partly overlapping marriage market) is hypergamy – cheating on or leaving someone for a better option. The divorce rates in the US and much of the West appear quite bleak. Furthermore, due to the unfavorable sex ratios and lack of relative attractiveness in a highly competitive sexual market, many males are doing less well than they should have done in a more traditional society. An outcome of this situation has been the emergence of different Internet-based masculinist movements like *MGTOW*, *A Voice For Men* and *Return of Kings*, which in multiple ways suggest counter-measures to these negative conditions.

## 6. Lessons from the Orient: the Korean wave and K-pop

Typically, Korea and Japan received and experienced most of the cultural flows from China (and in Japan's case, via Korea) until the middle of the nineteenth century. This trend shifted when Japan became a regional superpower and colonized Korea from 1910 until 1945. During that time, Korea indirectly received much cultural, technological and economic elements from the West via Japan.

After World War II, and the partition in 1948, South Korea has continued to be affected by its larger and more powerful neighbor but not to the same extent. Even its particular form of popular music, so-called K-pop, was influenced by Japanese pop (J-Pop) in the 1990s. The first K-pop act was Seo Taiji and the Boys which made its debut in 1992, followed by H.O.T. in 1996. Since then, an astonishing amount of female and male groups have debuted in the South Korean music industry: Wonder Girls, BoA, Super Junior, Shinee, TVXQ, SNSD (Girls' Generation), Kara, Tara, Big Bang, 2NE1, EXO, BTS and Blackpink to name just a few. Many of these debuted between 2002–2007 while several new acts were formed in the 2010s, when K-pop became globally recognized.

These days, South Korea does not have to bypass Japan but can go directly to western songwriters and producers whenever they aim for to export popular music to foreign markets.<sup>114</sup> The South Korean sociologist Ingyu Oh refers to the relative success of K-pop as a G-L-G business model (Globalization-Localization-Globalization). K-pop is global pop music in that sense that it largely builds on existing fashionable pop music and often, but far from always, uses western songwriters and producers in order to maximize the market potential. Many band members originate from outside Korea, whether those countries are China, Taiwan, Thailand, Canada, the United States or Australia (members must be of some

kind of East Asian origin, however, at least at this point). It is also local in so far that numbers, good looks and voice-dance interaction are the differential factors, or comparative advantages, which separate K-pop from other East Asian performers and local markets. South Korean companies like S.M. Entertainment, YG Entertainment, JYP Entertainment, Cube Entertainment, Big Hit Entertainment, Pledis Entertainment and a few others have more or less successfully trained, groomed and produced a “total package” of K-pop groups and songs: everything from the selection and training and grooming process of band members, song and video production, to interviews and commitments in overlapping industries such as film, tv series and commercials are in the hands of the agencies. Besides from the Korean language, which often is mixed with English phrases, the business model and the outcomes of such a structure, is uniquely South Korean.<sup>115</sup> As John Lie notes, it is not purely Korean from a historical perspective because it is influenced by Japanese and western structures (which stem from both how companies and the military are organized)<sup>116</sup> but even something hybridized may still be understood as a distinctively local trait. In a later consecutive step, K-pop is launched via global media tools such as YouTube, iTunes<sup>117</sup> and Spotify for the world’s consumers.

At this point, BTS (Bangtan Boys), Twice and Blackpink are the most successful K-pop groups. The BTS song and music video “DNA” has more than 500 million views, and three of Blackpink’s music videos have more than 400 million views. Twice “TT” has more than 400 million views. Many K-pop bands are mainly recognized in its homeland and have much less views and world-wide fame compared to the most successful acts being mentioned, but regardless it is conspicuous that at least some male and female K-pop groups have managed to become global stars.

K-pop is also part of the broader Korean wave (*Hallyu*): the rising popularity of South Korean cultural products the late 1990s onward. South Korean tv drama series are quite popular, too. In 2002 the melodrama *Winter Sonata* became a success in Japan and elsewhere, and since then a massive amount of South Korean tv drama content has been produced and disseminated. The global appeal of K-drama, as well as music, is linked to well-produced material in conjunction with mainly good-looking actors and characters.<sup>118</sup> When people watch shows like the *K2* or *Descendants of the Sun* they can expect to see attractive people like Im Yoona (also a member of Girls' Generation, or SNSD), Ji Chang Wook, Song Joong-Ki, Song Hye-kyo, Kim Ji-won and many others. South Korea and the *Hallyu* phenomenon have become associated with a certain type of high-quality products, much like Samsung Electronics is a worthy competitor to Apple. In a way, South Korea's pop cultural industry, especially K-pop, is the only market that can compete with those of the West and constitute an alternative to the latter's global hegemony. But is it really the case that a genre and market niche, which is largely influenced by and dependent on their western counterparts, can offer something substantial for individuals of both sexes? I believe that there is, and I will explain why that is the case.

### **Looks and manners**

Aside from the audiovisual material present in songs, music videos and live performances, K-pop, and to lesser extent K-dramas, are signified by two things: good looks and decent manners. Artists are picked because of their looks and ability to dance and sing. Very few applications from young prospects, maybe as low as 1/1000, will be picked by the major agencies. While one can expect that accepted trainees will have better genetic potential than the average Korean or East Asian individual, many will go through a vast transformation

process. As the artist is being trained and groomed within the confines of its respective company, he or she will maintain a very slender physique, use skin care (to have better skin quality and in some cases to have lighter skin), exercise (mostly dance practice but also gym exercise), and plastic surgery to maximize the individual's genetic potential. The latter does often include the so-called K-pop double: eyelid and nose surgery. Furthermore, it may include jawline surgery, and perhaps breast augmentation (although that has been much less common than the three afore-mentioned measures).<sup>119</sup> This will create a regionally, even universally, appealing appearance: big eyes and balanced and proportional facial features.<sup>120</sup>

In a later step, a certain educational process begins, which transcends both aesthetics, singing and dancing, and involves language skills and personality training. Further, it aims for to inculcate certain values. Some even attend to K-pop cram schools to increase the chances of be accepted as a real trainee. In a study from 2012, Korean culture scholar Sweelin Ho explains this pattern:

The agency also controls how trainees are grouped and groomed, and subjects all trainees to a comprehensive *inseong gyoyuk* that teaches trainees to inculcate and practice values such as humility, obedience, loyalty and gratitude. The focus of *inseong gyoyuk* is on family values, the purpose of which was explained to me by several corporate trainers as threefold: to assure parents that their young are being educated properly to develop "proper values," to teach trainees to display behaviors that are highly regarded as by the wider Korean society and, more importantly, to

subordinate trainees to the authority of their respective agencies as dependents are expected to do so to authoritative figures in the family.<sup>121</sup>

While this process appears to have a strong instrumental value, meaning to indoctrinate individuals to become more obedient to the company's superiors, it still offers something that much of the West largely has lost: a strong work ethic, gratitude toward others, and conscientiousness. South Korea has been criticized for its extremely status- and education-oriented system and beauty obsession<sup>122</sup>, which may lead to increased suicide rates and general stress. While such criticism should be taken seriously, the opposite is likely even more hurtful. Many of the countries which have the highest PISA scores are East Asian nations, like Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Hong Kong and Taiwan. A balance is required in this regard. Many of the wealthy western states that are performing less well, in mathematics and science in particular, like the United States, France, UK, Norway, Sweden and New Zealand<sup>123</sup>, appear to lack the strong work ethic that used to characterize them in earlier phases. It is not necessarily the quality of education which is better in East Asia but quantity and the emphasis of non-cognitive abilities (obedience, gratitude, punctuality, persistence, patience, industriousness). Some of these traits are linked to a Confucian or post-Confucian mindset.<sup>124</sup>

In songs like "No more dream" and "Silver Spoon", BTS has differentiated themselves from other acts by expressing criticism of the South Korean society for precisely its obsession about education, massive workload and authoritarianism, but they are still the product of the very same local meritocratic and work-oriented structures that have paved the way for the genre in general. That includes appearance. Some BTS members look almost like real anime figures, with perfect skin and style, chiseled and proportional faces, and have almost

certainly used artificial measures like make-up and plastic surgery to create that type of impeccable appearance.

It is easy to jump on the bandwagon and criticize K-pop for its lack of originality and individuality, inhumane artist contracts (although that issue has partly been settled), profit calculation, and obsession about aesthetic perfection. I agree that performers in general are too skinny, since the ideal average body weight to height ratio is 162 centimeters and 42 kilos.<sup>125</sup> This is not merely a subjective opinion but linked to the physiological consequences of having too low degrees of body fat.<sup>126</sup> However, if one thinks a bit further it would in fact be less sympathetic to limit these radical efforts of self-improvement to a few selected individuals in the music industry. If as many people as possible could benefit from appropriate diet and exercise, impeccable style, proper values and even artificial components such as make-up and plastic surgery, then society would become more equal of both opportunity and outcome. This could easily transcend the South Korean society and become an aim for westerners, too.

Furthermore, many K-pop artists and groups offer an appealing and nuanced discourse of the sexes. As Dorinda Outram has emphasized in her work *The Enlightenment*, many men and women in the modern age tend to construct their own unique combinations of “feminine” and “masculine” traits<sup>127</sup>, instead of limit themselves to the confines of Rousseau’s way of thinking. K-pop, with its mix between an almost androgyne attitude and more classical expressions of masculine and feminine appearances, may currently be one of the most appropriate sources of inspiration, partly because it is generally regarded as quite fashionable music. While some male groups appear too “feminine” or androgyne for the tastes of some men, one can easily find something which conforms to one’s particular

preferences. The same can be noted about many female groups. For example, SNSD (Girls' Generation), has performed childish songs such as "Beep Beep" but also those with more attitude like "You think" (and many that are somewhere in between). Thus, a more juvenile form of femininity is contrasted with a more mature yet modern such. Sometimes within the same song there are striking contrasts, such as for example in CLC's song and music video "I like it". Yeeun's rap segments and corresponding gestures, brimming with attitude, are integrated in a rather feminine song.

Perhaps the group which manifests the most optimal, yet ambiguous balance between feminine and androgyne attributes is Blackpink, especially in songs and music videos like "Bombayah", "Whistle" and "Ddu-du ddu-du". While pink is often looked upon as a feminine color (especially as the female baby color par excellence), black is not necessarily so. Yin, the female dimension of the dual Yin/Yang symbol, is signified by black. On the other hand, black suits and black in general are often associated with modern masculine men. After all, everyone in the film *Reservoir Dogs* want to be Mr. Black. Blackpink is thus the ambiguous symbol of the synthesis of feminine and androgyne traits. The music itself, often a mix between energetic electronic pop, love ballads and rap, is predominantly feminine. However, the rap parts by Jennie and Lisa offer a more androgyne attitude. The lyrics of the songs are often linked to typical K-pop themes such as love and romance, but like in SNSD's conceptual frame a certain feminist tendency manifests itself. In the Blackpink universe, the four members underscore that they do not fall for sloppy guys. They want males who are somewhat older ("Bombayah"), who speak from the heart ("Really"), and can live up to their own high standards. Perhaps, what most males can do is merely to "Whistle" at the four slim and attractive young women (if that is not categorized as sexual

harassment these days, at least in some western countries). Style-wise Blackpink is majorly feminine, although with some ambivalent and unisex attributes and clothing. In the song “Forever young” the background vocals assert that “Blackpink is the revolution” and this is perhaps precisely what females around the world need. Girls who are attractive and appealing, yet with sound confidence and attitude. Something positive to aspire to, although with realistic expectations of outcome.

Regarding males, groups like Super Junior, EXO, BTS and many others have showcased impeccable style, image and attitude, with a combination of street and flamboyant suits that exist in the intermediate space between what only a pop star and a normal human being can dress himself in. A metrosexual or androgyne image may be a sign of increasing narcissism, excessive individualism and consumerism, but as long as ethical, economic and other components are the primary concern, aestheticism is a secondary element that will increase an individual’s well-being, status and sexual market value and thus quite important.

Additionally, South Korean pop culture is signified by a more modest element compared to many of its western counterparts. Since at least the girl group Rainbow released its music video “A” in 2011, K-pop has occasionally manifested a more sexualized dimension, of female performers in particular. Sistar, After School, Hyuna and Fiestar are but some of the groups and artists which have revealed a lot of skin and sexual allusions in their music videos and lyrics. The American-born Jessi (Jessica Young) has taken this to a new level, with large breasts which she admits having after enlargement surgery<sup>128</sup>, displaying a look which is somewhere between the voluptuous rapper Nicki Minaj and the petite yet sexy Hyuna. Overall, however, K-pop is less sexualized and more modest

compared to much of western pop music, like Nicki Minaj, Rihanna, Beyoncé, Miley Cyrus and the bulk of mainstream rap music. Groups like GFriend and Twice are largely centered around a more innocent and modest imagery.

Lastly, the South Korean music industry is based on a yin/yang model in which both sexes work together with the aim of profit and production of music with a benign element. While many of the CEOs and founders of large K-pop companies are males, like J.Y. Park, Lee Soo-man and Yang Hyun-suk, as well the songwriters (Teddy Park, Pdogg, MRey, Andreas Öberg and others), females like BoA, Kenzie and Kim Eana have produced significant amount of material. Over the last few years, more artists or “idols” have written songs than they used to. Those include big names like G-Dragon (Big Bang) and IU.<sup>129</sup> While K-pop is certainly not the perfect example of creative individualism it nevertheless signifies how the sexes work together, towards shared goals, instead of fighting gender wars.

The TV dramas, to perhaps an even large degree, offer predominantly, if not exclusively, modest and non-sexual content. It took many episodes before the characters of *Winter Sonata*, *Descendants of the Sun* and the *K2* finally kissed each other, while sex is commonplace in most American and western counterparts. The gender relations do also appear to be quite nuanced, without traditional stereotypes, which indicates that it is possible to show modesty without neither simplistic nor overly stereotypical content.

## **Conclusion**

After a period of democratization and westernization during the twentieth century, South Korea’s export-oriented economy became a leading producer and distributor of popular culture, K-pop and TV dramas in particular, from the 1990s onward. Part of the comparative advantage of K-pop are synchronized dance choreographies and attractive performers.

While there are negative aspects to consider within the South Korean pop cultural industry, such as obsession about appearance and extreme competitiveness, a balance is required: the opposite, like obesity and lack of work ethic, is likely even more detrimental for many young westerners. Females and males alike can still be stimulated and encouraged by highly successful K-pop acts like Blackpink and BTS. In South Korea, the West and the East, and the traditional and the modern meet in fascinating ways that may inspire to a new synthesis between traditionalism and feminism in the West and elsewhere.

## 7. The new economics of gender

### Female Spaces, male Spaces and shared spaces

The tv show *Gossip Girl* (2007–2012), or at least its title, hinges on a gender stereotype: that females are more prone to gossip than males. As has been established in chapter 2, females are on average somewhat more gregarious than males. Thus, they often sit around, chat, and gossip in tandem with another female friend or in larger groups. While males do not.

End of discussion?

However, things are not that simple. For example, a study by David C. Watson (2012) shows that males in fact gossip to the same extent but as a means to build bonds within a given male friend group. The earlier reported overall differences between degree of gossip, both negative and positive such, are very small. The underlying reason for another kind of gossip, however, might be that males are more competitive and status-oriented and therefore tend to talk about other person's achievements or lack thereof to stimulate discussion, strengthen bonds and set up boundaries. The same study does also show that females gossip more about other persons looks.<sup>130</sup> The results are largely congruent with that of a later study, which has an evolutionary psychology perspective.<sup>131</sup>

More importantly, there is a tendency for men and women to separate themselves in their social and private lives. Of course, there are many females who have platonic male friends and vice versa, but for several reasons same-sex friendships are the pervasive pattern that dominate even the more egalitarian West. One reason is linked to sexual competition: many relationship partners do not allow their other half to have a friend of the same sex, or at least not to spend significant amount of time with such an individual.

Furthermore, many males want to sleep with their female friends, which makes things complicated and frustrating.<sup>132</sup> Moreover, the most striking sex-related difference is related to interests. Males are more interested in things and ideas<sup>133</sup>, including sports, cars, tv games and to discuss economics and politics. There might also be a class- and IQ-related difference in so far that males from lower strata tend to discuss sports and cars, while more well-educated males tend to talk about more sophisticated topics and with greater knowledge, details, complexity and nuances. Females are more inclined to talk about feelings and other people.<sup>134</sup>

With all these considerations taken into account, two consequences emerge: one is that the two sexes form same-sex friend groups; another is that they partially pick different career niches. A feminist-oriented political party, for instance, might see it as “problematic” that there are more male than female construction workers, firefighters, army officers, economists and engineers, but since females are, on average, less inclined to pick these occupations it is a difficult if not impossible obstacle to overcome in a democratic society. On the other hand, there are some occupations where both of the sexes are widely present: teachers, academics, doctors, real estate, venders, architects and white-collar workers at many companies of various sizes.<sup>135</sup> Therefore, female-dominated spaces, male-dominated spaces and shared spaces are all natural occurrences in the West. If these were, hypothetically, deteriorated because of extreme patriarchal traditionalism (no women in the workplace) or extreme egalitarian feminism (50/50 representation in all occupations) people and the economy would suffer.

### **The current economy and its requirements**

The education researcher Andy Hargreaves in his work *The Knowledge Society* (2003), economists like James Heckman<sup>136</sup>, McKinsey's annual reports<sup>137</sup> and many other sources underline that we live in a knowledge society in which technology and innovation are the two loadstars. While any person may be critical of the current consumerist society, and the constant gradual innovation among the major high-tech companies, these trends in western economies will not go away any time soon. Nor do men and women want to live in another kind of society, since they obviously prefer to live within the neo-liberal realm than seek other possible arrangements, whether agrarian, gender separatist, or socialist. When given the opportunity, people prefer factories over farms, capitalist over socialist societies, and to live among the supposed oppressors.<sup>138</sup>

There is thus a high demand for unique, often not so easily obtainable skills in for example computer engineering, mathematics, physics and entrepreneurship. While skills in arts and social science (teachers, nurses, social workers, lawyers, administrators), as well as more physically intense, unskilled or semi-skilled occupations (electricians, construction workers, plumbers, drivers, firefighters, police officers, service staff, cleaners, clerks, courier carriers, power workers, farmers, roofers, mechanics) are valued in the current labor markets in the West<sup>139</sup>, those types of jobs can more easily be filled with people with low to medium levels of intelligence and/or education. The main problem is not that men dominate some of the most cognitively advanced engineering jobs, for instance, but that companies struggle to find anyone with the type and level of competence which is required for optimal performance.<sup>140</sup>

Regarding the sexes, females (and in many ways, males too) have predominantly benefited from a development characterized by automation and more service-oriented

occupations. In 2015 women's labor force participation in the US was 56.7%. The efforts of second-wave feminists have also made the entire labor market open for women, which have equal opportunity to all occupations, although not equal representation or "outcome" in all of them. Some examples are lawyers (35% females), software developers (18%), web developers (34%), chief executives (28%), medical and health service managers (74%), human resources workers (73%), property and real estate (51%), education administrators (66%), medical scientists (55%), social workers (84%), preschool and kindergarten teachers (97%), medical assistants (91%), firefighters (6%), waiters and waitresses (70%), grounds maintenance workers (6%), logging workers (3%), security and fire alarm systems installers (4%), printing press operators (22%), bus drivers (47%), coal mining workers (5%), automobile dealers (21%), and clothing stores staff (74%). These patterns seem to be largely consistent with the findings about personality and preferences in psychology and upper-body strength differences discussed in chapter 4, although slightly traditional gender roles may magnify certain proclivities.

Working wives contribute to 36% of the family's income, which is a 9% increase since 1970. However, they have a large impact in many areas of the private economy such as decisions regarding the purchase of travel destinations (92%), cars (60%) and home furnishings (94%).<sup>141</sup> There might be underlying reasons for that. According to some sexual market theorists, men and women relate to each other in asymmetrical relationships as buyers (men) and sellers (women).<sup>142</sup> A consequence might be that in order to please their wives (or long-term partners in general), men often let their female partners decide in such matters. Moreover, furnishings are linked to a general female penchant for aesthetics.<sup>143</sup>

It does not exist a singular feminist economics. Only certain rights, legislation and values are the intrinsically feminist-oriented policies that unite socialist feminists, liberal feminists and radical feminists as lowest common denominators. However, increased welfare spending via the government is a typical measure that feminists and leftists in general propose as way to decrease poverty among unemployed women, poor working women, and single mothers. Although some feminist scholars certainly address the economic benefits of marriage to women, they might misguidedly downplay the specific benefits of women having significant control over the family's total earnings (which to a large degree are comprised of the salaries of working men) and financial decision-making. Currently, being married, from an economic viewpoint, seems to be a better deal for women than for men. The rather high divorce rates in the US and other parts of the West are rather linked to factors such as decrease of love, attraction and affection over time, infidelity<sup>144</sup>, and that women can benefit economically from a divorce, at least in the short term.

As for welfare spending, on the micro level it does not appear to be as detrimental as conservative and libertarian economists tend to underline. Andrew Cherlin has summarized two studies and finds that women and their children do not seem to suffer when women go from welfare to work (or a mix of both). Yet, welfare is an important means to tackle poverty and improve low-income households.<sup>145</sup> A more libertarian-leaning scholar like Charles Murray would point to that the welfare system in its overarching structure creates incentives for individuals of both sexes to not value marriage and therefore indirectly is detrimental to the well-being of children.<sup>146</sup> James Heckman and other education specialists have shown that early intervention can improve the achievements and abilities of people later in life. Family matters.<sup>147</sup> Thus, while it is better to have more or less

welfare-dependent single households than pure poverty, two parent households with larger income and positive parental influence is the preferred model. Further, a macroeconomic perspective implies that a large welfare state, with some reservations, has a negative impact of economic growth. That is because investment and consumption will decrease when taxes are raised.<sup>148</sup>

Although the empirical findings from the totality of studies do not indicate a completely consistent pattern, it is the case that two parent household is the generally preferred sociocultural model. Especially if one takes into account parental effects and levels of income. Thus, a large welfare state may be detrimental for both sexes, although it perhaps enables more females to be “liberated” from males. However, as a substitute for men they marry a new long-term partner: the welfare state. If a large share of individualistic women wants to be truly independent such individuals should focus on the most well-paid occupations, like for example advanced engineering. It is thus not education per se that is the proper amelioration for the pursuit of such women but the proper kind of education. As for increased participation within physically intense labor niches (firefighters, logging workers etc.), most women must significantly increase their upper-body strength to be able to handle these types of jobs.

### **The pay gap**

The pay gap (sometimes called the earnings gap or wage gap) is one of the most widely debated phenomena in feminist circles and by non-feminists, who are reluctant to accept its existence in current western societies. No one seems to fully agree.

A typical feminist point is that women earn less for the same job, and that they are paid less in general (roughly 78 cents for every dollar that men, on average, earn). The patriarchy

is holding women back under a “glass ceiling”, many say. Women can only climb so far on the socio-economic ladder. The response, from for example Joanna Williams, is that when considering several crucial factors such as the amount of hours men and women work and break the statistics down into narrow comparisons within the same occupational category, the pay gap disappears. For example, Ryan Air pays more to their pilots (who often tend to be men) than their stewardesses, but stewards and stewardesses earn the same. That is logical, since it is both illegal and against the companies own interests to pay men more than women for doing the same kind of work.<sup>149</sup> There is some anecdotal evidence which implies that many bosses are holding women back, since they might have children or perhaps could more easily put up with such conditions, but on the other hand there is a huge pressure on today’s companies to not discriminate against women (or minorities).

Although the last words have not been uttered in this regard, the evidence points to that the pay gap is extremely small or non-existent in the West. Perhaps today’s feminists should be thankful to the second-wave feminists, rather than angry with men.<sup>150</sup>

### **How to solve the gender paradox**

The gender paradox and the supposed problems of inequality of outcome for example, require a twofold solution. One is that people simply accept the similarities, differences and overlaps that naturally emerge when the sexes are slightly different (interests and physical capability) in some regards but basically the same in others (conscientiousness and cognitive ability). There are physically capable female firefighters and logging workers (but not that many compared to men), and there are a few male kindergarten teachers. There is a significant share of female engineers but males still dominate this field and its various sub-

branches. This is perfectly normal and not really a problem, although perhaps more women should aim for profitable engineering careers.

Another part of the solution is to accept the distinction between equality of opportunity and equality of outcome - the fairness paradigm. The proto-feminists like Mary Wollstonecraft and the first wave of feminists during the early twentieth century, who focused on equal rights and female suffrage, were never concerned about exact outcomes, and perhaps because they regarded the sexes as equally capable except for intense physical labor. The second wave, often under the aegis of socialism or syndicalism, was concerned about outcome to a larger extent. There are of course issues in regard to which contemporary feminism can be relevant, such as how to be able to continue to pursue a career after having children and sexual harassment in the workplace, but the overall pattern merely demands a strikingly simple approach. Yet, occasional debates about gender statistics are of course of some significance within every field.

Instead more emphasis should be on for each individual and family to optimize their private economy, find a proper balance between consumption and savings, and balance work and family life. That is something that each family unit and the individuals that comprise them are enough capable of (and even if they were not, the state should not intervene). At the macro level, certain family-oriented policies may be constructive, like those suggested by Russia<sup>151</sup> and Hungary.<sup>152</sup>

### **Sexual Harassment: what can be learned from #metoo**

Despite the different instances of people who were accused of sexual harassment, even rape in some cases, in connection to the #metoo movement during October 2017 onwards, most examples were related to the workplace (whether inside an office or with co-workers in

other locations). Whether the accused perpetrators of immoral or illegal behavior were Hollywood's Harvey Weinstein or a Swedish tv host (Martin Timell, later freed from the accusations of rape)<sup>153</sup>, most cases have some form of link to work environments and people with some degree of power and influence.

#Metoo stretches back to 2006 when Tarana Burke made an anti-sexual harassment campaign through MySpace that failed to take off to the same extent as when Alyssa Milano used Instagram to spread the #metoo hashtag in October 2017. This was used for women throughout the world who had experienced rape or sexual harassment in their lives and wanted to share these and show sympathy to other women. Within just a few days thousands, if not millions of women, had shared experiences of the distant or close past. While the #metoo campaign has to some degree been near-globally disseminated, it has been the most widely spread in western countries like the US, UK and Sweden.<sup>154</sup>

While many women have examined real cases of rape and harassment, rape statistics show that rape in the strict sense has decreased in the West. Many of the crimes or illegal behaviors of men in powerful positions stretch back several years, even decades, such as when the vocalist Maynard James Keenan was accused of rape for events that were supposed to have occurred in 2000.<sup>155</sup> It may be the law of karma which punishes the likes of Harvey Weinstein, Keenan and others, but since the early 2000s "gender equality" has likely improved a lot.

The #metoo campaign is a double-edged sword because it gashes wounds of the past, and risks to hurt intersexual relations to a far-reaching extent, but also highlights instances where women are being hurt, harassed or even raped in relation to work environments. The important lesson is to find a balance between believing men or women in case of media

outbursts and to investigate pieces of evidence in a courtroom, not on social media accounts. Further, it is important to differentiate between immoral (or socially awkward) and illegal behavior. If a male co-worker has done or said something socially awkward at a company event or at the office, he should get a chance to apologize and correct himself rather than being thrown to the wolves. Further, there is no logic or reason to police male jargon at the benefit of a typical female discourse (if such a discourse exists as a general pattern). An equal society does not automatically imply that female preferences should take the upper hand. Many women are also capable of handling males in situations where the general physical advantage of men plays no key role. If problematic sexism is truly being wiped out, one piece of the puzzle is to treat women like adults rather than children.<sup>156</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The current economy in the West is dependent on both sexes, whether it concerns female-dominated, male-dominated or close to equally represented occupations. Women have a high representation in many vocational fields, some of them very prestigious, and the question is rather to balance work and family life than to eradicate any differences of outcome that persist in some regards (especially in relation to occupations where physical strength matters). However, women who value a high-income job should focus on the proper type of education rather than education in general.

As for rape, sexual harassment and other aspects of sexism, laws and values make such behaviors harder to persist unpunished. In shared spaces, such as white-collar occupations, it is important that male and female preferences are balanced and accepted, although some socially awkward and immoral behaviors should be removed from virtually all work environments. Furthermore, it is important to not make women into victims in regards in

which they are not, while not neglecting real instances of illegal behavior that stem from males' general physical advantage.

## **8. The virtuous: higher femininity, masculinity and humanity**

Many feminist scholars and laypersons have been correct to assert that several traits and ideals are universal and non-exclusive for any sex (or sexuality, ethnic or national group too for that matter). According to Anna North on *Jezebel*, females should not limit themselves only to “femininity”<sup>157</sup>. Any female or male could develop the same constructive ideals and behaviors. While such a contention could be challenged in some regards, I will have intergender virtue ethics as a point of departure and discuss how the sexes can develop properly in the current society.

### **The ethics of virtue**

There are good reasons for any person, whether female or male, to obtain knowledge and information about the classical virtue ethics which predominantly stem from Plato, Aristotle, Cicero and other prominent ancient figures. As one may notice, many of the old virtues reminiscent of a western Greco-Roman heritage and Catholicism continue to exist, albeit in revised forms, as so-called non-cognitive skills. Furthermore, scholars such as Alasdair MacIntyre, Deidre McCloskey and Charles Murray continue to emphasize the importance of virtue ethics for the benefit of individuals and society. These sets of ideas are far from outdated.

However, one of the problems with virtue ethics is to determine which the most important virtues are and why they are more so than “lesser” virtues. Few proponents of virtue ethics believe that an individual can solely rely on virtues in real life, leading to a mixed ethical system where laws, norms, consequences (utilitarianism), specific situations and other factors also will influence a person’s decisions and behavior. Further, it might be

hard to distinguish virtues from traits, skills and ideals. However, already in Plato's *The Republic* courage, justice, prudence and temperance were underscored as the four major or cardinal virtues. Aristotle's list in *On Rhetoric* does significantly overlap that of Plato but included three more virtues: liberality, gentleness and magnanimity. The seven virtues in Catholicism are chastity, temperance, charity, diligence, patience, kindness and humility.

While a person does not need to limit her or himself to any specific number of virtues, and instead should aim for an all-encompassing skillset and nomenclature, it appears to exist a gradient in regard to which the most important virtues are. At least if one is congenial with Plato's analysis. Hence, a person should primarily focus on prudence, courage, justice and temperance.

Prudence, equivalent to wisdom, might be the most important virtue and a basis for all the rest. It is prudence that mentally separates a human being from an animal. It is, in part, prudence which differentiates excellent people from less brilliant individuals. Prudence can imply many different things and behaviors. To be well-informed, knowledgeable, and more importantly, to constantly translate that knowledge and information to constantly good decision-making are the major elements that underlie prudence. Prudence is a general or universal virtue but tends to be context-dependent. The particular situations that a person will face are unique and require a specific process of thought and appropriate behavior. In more practical terms, prudence overlaps certain lifestyle and conscientious behavior, linked to delayed self-gratification. To have a steady stream of income, savings, be responsible, and avoid unnecessary risks (although some calculated risks may be appropriate under some circumstances) are typical expressions of

prudence.<sup>158</sup> As Alasdair MacIntyre, when dealing with Aristotle's ethics, stresses, a person shows prudence whenever he or she performs prudent tasks.<sup>159</sup>

Correspondingly, that is also the case with courageous acts. One such act is not enough, just like a few sequences of happiness are not enough to deem someone happy. Courage itself is, according to Plato in the dialogue *Laches* and Aristotle in *The Nicomachean Ethics*, the middle way between recklessness and cowardice. Thus, a certain degree of rationality or prudence is required to disentangle situations where courage can and ought to be translated into a real action. MacIntyre notes, "Virtuous action cannot be specified without reference to the judgment of a prudent man – that is, of one who knows how take account of circumstances."<sup>160</sup> How can a person generally and specifically act courageous? That is perhaps harder to point out than the equivalent acts which may be connected to prudence. Standing up for oneself and one's values and those who are close to oneself, without being foolhardy, is a general principle, but those principles might – hypothetically – be vicious. Taking physical risks when there is no other option might be another concrete example. Hence, a person who is deeply involved in extreme sports is not necessarily courageous in the more precise sense, while a mother who risks her life to save her child from an intruder, when no help is nearby, might be. But situations akin to that are also very dependent on circumstances. Perhaps only certain occupations, where courage and prudence are combined – like firefighters and police officers on active duty – can showcase courageous acts as a general constitution, whereas laymen may have to rely on very particular circumstances.

Justice is also a troubling cardinal virtue to comprehend and put into practice, since it is dependent on a set of philosophical premises, or even ideological foundations. A vegan

or animal right's activist, with a biocentric rather than anthropocentric worldview, may draw quite different conclusions compared to the average humanist in the West who always puts the interests of people before that of animals (except for privately owned pets, perhaps). The same goes for a nationalist (particularism ethics) and a globalist (universalism ethics), who either focuses on a particular national group or humanity in its entirety. Or, more narrowly, liberal feminist ethics or intersectional ethics. However, having a sense of duty towards family, friends, society and other groups (according to the principle of concentric circles)<sup>161</sup>, and act in accordance with such a principle are appropriate modes of thought and behavior. To abide by the law, manifest concrete agreeable and unselfish conduct, and use common sense are often more than enough. Although lack of proper attitude and etiquette are certainly negative phenomena, the most striking societal problems are still criminal and other forms of anti-social behavior.

Temperance is understood as moderation that suppresses impulses such as excessive anger, food intake, alcohol, sex - or video games and social media for that matter. Many actions and behaviors are not negative in themselves, but excessive use tends to be detrimental for health, well-being and financial stability. Temperance is perhaps the virtue which has the largest scientific relationship: people seek to identify the golden mean in relation to sleep, nutrition, exercise, alcohol, and many other pursuits. A person who sleeps one hour per night will experience the negative consequences of sleep deprivation, whereas someone who sleeps approximately eight hours per night, on average, will experience the benefits of such a conduct. Ten-twelve hours per night are not as bad as sleep deprivation, of course, but still excessive. An individual who consumes too many calories each day will become obese over time. Less than 500 calories per day, on the other hand, will lead to

starvation and death. Heavy drinking may have a complete set of negative consequences, both in the shorter and longer term.

The important thing is not to disentangle the exact applicability of these virtues, but to have a general understanding of why they matter and some situations where they can be manifested through concrete actions. The best way to be prudent, courageous, righteous and moderate, is to often showcase such behaviors, and simultaneously avoid their diametrical opposites. Often these tend to go hand in hand with having an optimized lifestyle, where the ethical, financial, healthy and aesthetic are complementary elements within one's existence.

### **Christine de Pizan and the importance of universal virtues**

When reading feminist literature, one finds very few displays of virtue ethics, besides perhaps justice, humanity and compassion that could as well be linked to social democracy or the UN's Human Rights list. Traditional virtues are regarded as outdated, and many of them were indeed emphasized by one of the oldest misogynists: Aristotle.

The medieval and proto-feminist writer Christine de Pizan (1364-1421), however, identified a universal constitution of virtues such as reason, rectitude and justice and argued that women in general, if being allowed to, could be as reasonable, righteous and just as men. Intellectually, they were regarded as equal, too, "Not all men (and especially the wisest) share the opinion that it is bad for women to be educated. But it is very true that many foolish men have claimed this because it displeased them that women knew more than they did." Further, "The man or the woman in whom resides greater virtues is the higher; neither the loftiness nor the lowliness of a person lies in the body according to the sex, but in the perfection of conduct and virtue."<sup>162</sup> While being somewhat ambiguous, Mary

Wollstonecraft reached similar conclusions in her major work *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) several centuries later. Women should aspire for the same instrumental virtues as men, since they will serve their needs and aims.

In an age of social media, instant self-gratification and a negative attitude towards anything traditional, “old-fashioned” and “reactionary”, virtue ethics have – although exceptions exist – been significantly downplayed. That includes typical feminine virtues like caring, which some if not many feminist thinkers regard as constraining ideals. Even though modern feminists ironically are sometimes portrayed as virtue-signaling by their opponents (see chapter 8), the feminist movement’s anti-traditional inclination has led many to discard virtuous ethics<sup>163</sup> and behavior. But as one may notice, virtues, conscientiousness, agreeableness and non-cognitive skills are all relevant in today’s society, whether the workplace or in social relationships, as intergender qualities.

### **The significance of industriousness, honesty, marriage and religiosity**

Charles Murray emphasizes several important virtues and components, typical for American life and its people in the 1960s onward, with a palpable decline throughout the last decades. Those are industriousness, honesty, marriage and religiosity. While none of these constitute the classical or cardinal virtues, some of them are part of the lesser virtues and have functioned as cohesive factors in the social fabric of the West in the modern age.

The no-fault divorce phenomenon was introduced in the 1960s. This occurred simultaneously as the feminization of the labor force. In parallel with the gradually larger presence of women in the work force, male industriousness has decreased: fewer men work 45-hour weeks than they used to. The work is no longer a call, or an inevitable

component of marriage. Later, a drop in the marriage statistics became striking. Murray notes:

The percentage of whites ages 30–49 who had not married started going up in the early 1970s, doubling from 1977 to 1991. (...) The stereotypes of the 1970s and 1980s, of yuppies and feminists remaining single into their thirties or forties, had some basis in fact – the percentage of never-married whites in Belmont doubled from 1970 to 1984.”<sup>164</sup>

Another troubling trend is that class differences have increased, which are partly linked to hypergamy and assortative mating. Smart people marry other smart people – the differences in preferences and cognitive ability are more striking than in earlier periods of American history. The new upper-class members (or upper middle-class) tend to figure out how to optimize their income and lifestyle but, in a misguided attempt to try to be humble, they stay quiet and avoid being judgmental against the lower class-people, that could need some guidance, too. Murray stresses:

If you are of a conspiratorial cast of mind, nonjudgmentalism looks suspiciously like the new upper class keeping the good stuff to itself. The new upper class knows the secret to maximizing the chances of leading a happy life, but it refuses to let anyone else in on the secret. Conspiratorial explanations are unnecessary, however. Nonjudgmentalism ceases to be baffling if you think of it as a symptom of Toynbee’s loss of self-confidence among the dominant minority. The new upper class doesn’t want to push its way of living onto the less fortunate, for who are they to say that their

way of living is really better? It works for them, but who is to say that it will work for others? Who are they to say that their way of behaving is virtuous and other's ways of behaving are not?<sup>165</sup>

While these issues are hard to solve they are nonetheless linked to both the economic situation, at the macro and micro level, and the ideals and gender roles that the sexes aim for. The first step would be to re-evaluate the importance of marriage, as a long-term project rather than something based solely on love and passion, but also to make it an optimal arrangement for men and women. As Jordan Peterson has noted, a large share of women wants to marry well-educated or successful men but there are too few of them.<sup>166</sup> Besides from income and social status, the efforts include the self-improvement measures described in this book, especially aestheticism that can increase or sustain attraction, but also behavior. The well-being of children plays a key role as well. An honest and fact-based debate would be a first step in the right direction.

As for decreasing religiosity, linked to general patterns of secularization in the US and much of the West in general<sup>167</sup>, it transcends the scope of this book. However, work, family life and various types of self-improvement are often enough to keep someone motivated and experience meaning and self-actualization throughout life. Perhaps the need for religiosity will increase over time as a person becomes older. Feminism, with its anti-traditional leaning, is not much of help in this regard. But as one becomes accustomed with the traditional cultures of the past, for example through literature, the distance to religiosity and spirituality tends to diminish.

**The Apollonian and Dionysian: symbols and role models in the past and present**

Within the western arts, the Greek gods Apollo and Dionysus have served as metaphors for certain cultural traits since at least the late eighteenth century; already in the Renaissance, prominent writers showed a great deal of interest in these two deities. Perhaps Friedrich Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), which encompasses a cultural diagnosis with these two symbols as its backdrop, has received the largest degree of attention. In later works, such as *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), Nietzsche associated Dionysus with the will to power. As Umberto Eco<sup>168</sup> and others have pointed out, however, Nietzsche appeared to have misunderstood or at least oversimplified what these two gods represent. For example, the scholar Fritz Graf has made the following description of Apollo:

Apollo is generally associated by ancient writers and artists with one of two stringed instruments, the lyre or the bow; the first generates harmony, the other deals death. The god is linked also with phenomena as varied and diverse as plague, ritual purification, the herding of sheep, ecstatic prophecy, constitutional law, colonization, and healing. Perhaps in no other case is it so difficult to express in concrete terms the range of an Olympian god's concerns and activities.<sup>169</sup>

Obviously, Apollo may be categorized as a rather ambiguous figure, who gives and takes life, who is both destructive and benign, rather than a singular principle.

Camille Paglia has used Apollo and Dionysus to signify female and male characteristics. Apollo represents the ordered, civilized male state, while women represent the chthonic (earthly) and potentially destructive forces of nature that lurk at the corners of civilization. While this distinction appears to have some relevance – men have indeed been

central for the technological foundation of society – studies in psychology show that males are somewhat less orderly than women<sup>170</sup>, and they are the most destructive and murderous of the two sexes.<sup>171</sup> As Paglia notes about Dionysus, “He is god of theater, masked balls, and free love – but also of anarchy, gang rape, and muss murder.”<sup>172</sup>

My interpretation is rather than both men and women – humanity in its general constitution – bear a seed of destruction inside themselves, which is more congruent with Jordan Peterson’s analysis<sup>173</sup>, but are also dependent on each other to build and sustain civilization. It includes building society, giving birth to new people, working in many occupational fields, and abide by the laws that are required to maintain a relatively ordered state. On the other hand, in sex, parties and popular culture a Dionysian component of ecstasy, even madness, tends to be present. A functional modern society is thus comprised of both traits, leading to a synthesis between Apollo/Dionysus.

Perhaps even more importantly, a society should primarily be Apollonian, because otherwise decadence might have taken the upper hand at the expense of law, order and excellence. Beauty, in the Apollonian sense, has some links to modern society through fashion, neo-classical art and architecture, and certain traits of pop culture, but it does also encompass elements that are negative beyond any Apollonian and Dionysian characterization: obesity<sup>174</sup>, lack of motivation, digital addiction, dull modern architecture<sup>175</sup>, and even decreasing cognitive ability.<sup>176</sup> Perhaps people need the Apollo/Dionysus dyad to rectify these present obstacles. Western society does also need females and males to work together, as well as individually, towards shared goals.

## **Human aesthetics**

While the aesthetic side of a person tends to be regarded as shallow and superficial – it is the inside that matters, the oft-repeated cliché declares – it is far more important than that. Human aesthetics reflects the Apollonian forms, sometimes merged with the Dionysian dimensions, like in the case of a sexier or wilder appearance. Furthermore, how a person looks is often indicative of his or her inside, the character that constitutes the individual. Moreover, good-looking people tend to be treated better, in the workplace and in social relationships.<sup>177</sup> Needless to say, many do have superficial and instrumental goals for being good-looking: they want to conform to other people's tastes, take selfies, and in other ways magnify the latent narcissism so typical for the modern life in the West<sup>178</sup> (and growingly, elsewhere).

Despite these reservations, looks is nevertheless quite important for three crucial reasons: one is the aesthetic aspect – beauty matters, that of humans as much as gardens, paintings and buildings. As Rousseau stresses in *Emilé*, “Is it our fault if they please us when they are beautiful, if their airs and graces seduce us...?” However, beauty in the present is not only reserved for heterosexual males. Females want to gaze at and experience male aesthetics (males too, which the large popularity that male bodybuilders and fitness enthusiasts have among boys and men indicate). Camille Paglia asserts in *Sexual Personae*, “Beauty, an ecstasy of the eye, drugs us and allows us to act.”<sup>179</sup> Joanna Williams accurately points to the mutual aspect of attractiveness and arousal among both men and women, “Seduction is not just powerful men and passive women. The tension and excitement of chasing, persuading, making yourself attractive and desirable, making someone want you, is enjoyed by men and women alike.”<sup>180</sup> Males in particular are willing to put in tremendous amounts of effort, and monetary investment, to have direct access to the beauty of a

woman.<sup>181</sup> Secondly, it increases the sexual market value and marriage market value and thus it is in the interest of each person to maximize his or her beauty from an evolutionary standpoint. Thirdly, it is altruistic towards one's partner to look as good as possible, while to become obese and untidy are the opposite.<sup>182</sup>

Certain branches of modern day feminism have a problem with accepting aesthetics for the very same reason as their forerunners had: the objectification and commercialization of female bodies. However, there are ways to address such demurs. First, the sexes have become roughly equal in this regard. Secondly, people have their own agency and can decide whether or not they want to commercialize and objectify their own bodies as a part of an occupation or as a private initiative (for example linked to social media). Thirdly, a person can be good-looking without having to commercialize and objectify one's body. Furthermore, the fat acceptance movement, which is occasionally linked to contemporary feminism, especially in more obese countries like the US, Canada, UK and Australia, has essentially lost the health issue. The costs for obesity at the national level are in the billions of dollars. So are the costs for treating obesity-related health issues at the micro level, roughly 81% more than that of healthy individuals.<sup>183</sup> If being slightly overweight is detrimental for health is an intricate matter, and several studies point to different conclusions. Taking into account both potential health implications, physical fitness and attractiveness, however, it is still more appropriate to have a normal to moderately low BMI or height/weight ratio.

As has been established earlier, looks hinges on a genetic component. Some are born with great aesthetic potential, especially because of the facial features, while others are not.

Many are somewhere in between. However, there are at least nine significant ways that any person could improve his or her appearance, regardless of latent potential.<sup>184</sup>

**1. Diet and exercise:** A person can make sure to have an optimal level of body fat in order to have a more slim and defined body type and accentuated facial features. This does typically include around 10-15% for men, and 20-25% for women, with significant variation along a continuous variable. Since differences in muscle mass are omnipresent, these will consequently lead to many varieties of height/weight ratios among both sexes. Typically, height measured in centimeters minus 110 kilograms is an appropriate rough estimate (for females), for example 170 cm and 60 kilograms, or 160 centimeters and 50 kilograms. 180 centimeters and 80 kilograms make up an appropriate estimate for adult males. This is accomplished with a general fitness or wellness lifestyle, including regular exercise several times every week, in conjunction with a proper diet, both calorie- and nourishment-wise. Any person must consume a proper amount of macro-nutrients like protein, fat and carbohydrates, and micro-nutrients like fiber, vitamins and antioxidants.

There is also a dark side of fitness: use of anabolic steroids and other extreme measures like growth hormones, which are illegal and come with several negative financial, mental and physiological side-effects. While such engagements must be displayed as another option they should not be encouraged. Since consistent physical activity, combined with proper recovery and nutrition, increases the testosterone levels there are several benefits of fitness.<sup>185</sup>

2.           **Braces and whitening of teeth:** An individual can make sure that his or her teeth are fixed, preferably at an earlier age, that they are regularly treated, and use high-quality whitening at a local dentist's office once every three years or so.
3.           **Optimal hairstyle:** Many people have not figured out which the most optimal hairstyle for them is in order to maximize their potential. Further, general treatment of the hair quality and hair color may be additional options. For balding men, a bald head is often preferable to being semi-bald.
4.           **Heels or insoles:** While many men and women in the West are tall these days, there are those who are not, and in any case would look more appealing if they wore high heels (typically females) or insoles (typically males). High heels make the legs look longer and more slim, while two-inches insoles make a short man artificially taller, yet will improve his appearance and confidence to some extent.
5.           **Style:** A large share of people do not express or possess an optimized style. They do, at the very best, have a mediocre or average style. Alternately, they have a style which is, for example, too juvenile or old-fashioned. Whether one is inspired by K-pop or some other phenomenon, it should be obvious that there is much to be done, and any person with at least a medium income in the West should be able to buy some nice clothes and combine them with cheaper items.
6.           **Hygiene:** Most people have a decent level of hygiene, but some clearly do not. The latter are the first ones who should take care of their flaws, whether those are linked to body odors, bad breath or unwanted facial hair, but also people who are doing a decent job in this regard may find ways to improve, such as with the help of a proper eau-de-cologne and to constantly remove foodstuffs which have been stuck between one's

teeth after eating. To quit smoking is another fast track to better hygiene and appearance for some individuals.

7.           **Make-up:** Typically, females wear little to excessive amounts of make-up, while most men do not use it all. However, make-up in the broader sense includes a whole plethora of measures, such as covering acne with a stick and tired eyes with a concealer, things that would be legitimate to take care of even for the less metrosexual male. While make-up is clearly an artificial measure, one has to accept that most people are not as beautiful without make-up as they are after a transformation by means of foundation, mascara, lipstick and other tools and material.

8.           **Skin treatment:** Skin treatment comprises everything from simple lotion to continuous use of facial masks, night creams and anti-aging creams to more extreme measures like the use of Botox to drastically remove wrinkles (for at least a couple of months). Whether or not one prefers a natural approach or some degree of artificial measures, there is clearly room for agency. Natural health is not limited to one of the sexes, although females on average are much more inclined to make these measures.<sup>186</sup>

9.           **Plastic surgery:** Lastly, plastic surgery is a drastic means to improve facial features and make substantial breast augmentation. In South Korea, plastic surgery is so wide-spread these days that it appears much less controversial than in the West. Perhaps a large share of westerners do not consider to be in need of plastic surgery, but some do if they want to significantly change a certain body feature or several.

A typical criticism of plastic surgery, besides being a manifestation of the obsession of appearance in our times, is that it is unnatural. While that is clearly the case, it is not that black or white. For instance, breast implants are not really “fake” since the outer layers of

the breasts are still there. Moreover, people tend to gradually identify with this new type of body feature until it becomes a natural part of her or himself.

These nine types of beauty measures constitute both natural and artificial improvements, hacks and hard work. Essentially, it is important to understand that there are plenty of things to improve and that genes are only a part of it, although one of the most important factors. While, of course, not being against human beauty per se, Camille Paglia is critical against plastic surgery as a misguided wish for eternal youth.<sup>187</sup> However, that sort of criticism is beside the point. Plastic surgery and other measures are about to look as good for as long as possible within the life span, not forever. If these measures could increase attraction within a marriage for twenty years that is a more than decent return on investment. Further, plastic surgery, specifically, is not for everyone. These should be regarded as nine options at one's disposal, rather than a one-size-fits-all tool box that all individuals should use in the same way.

### **Role models of the past and present**

While it is certainly not difficult to find good-looking and successful males and females in the West and elsewhere today, one may have to look a bit beyond the mainstream to find people with interesting physical, intellectual *and* ethical faculties.

Before we do so, however, it is important to establish a certain ideal. The Italian radical traditionalist writer Julius Evola (1898-1974) – himself of some relevance in this respect, as a former mountaineer, extremely knowledgeable writer and painter – makes an important distinction in the collection of essays, *Meditations on the Peaks*:

On one hand, there are people who identify the “spirit” with the erudition acquired in libraries and university classrooms, or with the intellectual games played by philosophers, or with literary pseudomystical aestheticism. On the other hand, the new generations have turned athletic competition into a religion and appear to be unable to conceive anything beyond the excitement of training sessions, competitions, and physical achievements; they have truly turned accomplishments in sports into an end in itself and even into an obsession rather than as a means to a higher end.<sup>188</sup>

Without having to consider the entirety of Evola’s radical traditionalism one can acknowledge that it is important to move beyond this dichotomy and find a proper synthesis that will foster a greater character in modern people. This bears an echo of Plato.

The Japanese writer Yukio Mishima (1925-1970) was an exciting individual who embodied an ideal of intellectual, ethical and physical brilliance. While Mishima despised pure intellectualism and instead praised the sun and steel (hard work outside and lifting weights), he became much more famous as a writer than bodybuilder. Furthermore, his attempt to make a revolution as a sort of imperial reactionist was a failure: Mishima died as a consequence and publicly embarrassed himself. Be that as it may, Mishima was a very dazzling writer who incarnated much of his character and ideals. Even if he would have been less physically fit, his novel characters are still relevant in this regard. One example is the female character Kazu and her male counterpart in the politically oriented novel *The Banquet* (1960). The same can be noted about the male protagonist in the love novel *The Sound of Waves* (1954) who at the end of the story finds resonance among the aristocratic

family members of his girlfriend, “The only thing that really counts in a man is his get-up-and-go. If he’s got get-up-and-go he’s a real man, and those are the kind of men we need here on Uta-jima. Family and money are all secondary.”<sup>189</sup>

His book about bodybuilding, *Sun and Steel* (1968), offers additional quotes to pay attention to:

The nature of the steel is odd. I found that as I increased the weight little by little, it was like a pair of scales: the bulk of muscles placed, as it were, on the other pan increased proportionately, as though the steel had a duty to remain a strict balance between the two. Little by little, moreover, the properties of my muscles came increasingly to resemble those of the steel. The slow development, I found, was remarkably similar to the process of education, which remodels the brains intellectually by feeding it with progressively more difficult matter. And since there was always the vision of a classical ideal of the body to serve as a model and an ultimate goal, the process closely resembled the classical ideal of education.<sup>190</sup>

As Aristotle asserted in *Politics*, people are social animals and it is only logical and natural that they occasionally compare themselves and their lives to other individuals who exist in the same era. Still it is of chief significance to primarily compare yourself to who one was yesterday, not to who someone else is today, as Jordan Peterson has stated:

We might start by considering the all-too-black-and-white words themselves: “success” or “failure”. You are either a success, a comprehensive, singular, over-all good thing, or its opposite, a failure, a comprehensive, singular, irredeemably bad thing. The words imply no alternative and no middle ground. However, in a world as complex as ours, such generalizations (really, such failure to differentiate) are a sign of a naive, unsophisticated or even malevolent analysis. There are vital degrees and gradations of value obliterated by this binary system, and the consequences are not good.

To begin with, there is not just one game to succeed or fail. There are many games, and more specifically, many good games – games that match your talents, involve you productively with other people, and sustain and even improve themselves across time. Lawyer is a good game. So is plumber, physician, carpenter or schoolteacher. (...)

It’s also unlikely that you’re only playing one game. You have a career and friends and family members and personal projects and artistic endeavors and athletic pursuits. You might consider judging yourself across all the games you play. Imagine that you are very good at some, middling at others, and terrible the remainder. Perhaps that’s how it should be.<sup>191</sup>

In case a person was better-looking before, when he or she was younger, it is important to take notice that at least the ethical, financial and intellectual capabilities tend to grow over time. Multifaceted persons like Yukio Mishima, Plato (who was a wrestler, too) or the

highly gifted pianist, singer and feminist Tori Amos, to name a few, can serve as inspiration for people who aim for particular goals in for example physical, artistic or intellectual matters. They can also provide context and comparison for achievement. However, self-improvement is mainly about to make significant progress as an individual within a number of key areas that a person finds important.

### **A balanced personality profile**

Research in differential psychology and personality psychology assumes that there are five major personality dimensions – *agreeableness*, *conscientiousness*, *extraversion*, *openness to experience*, and *neuroticism*. Each major trait is comprised of two chief sub-traits. For example, extraversion is comprised of gregariousness and assertiveness. Females are somewhat more gregarious and males more assertive, on average. Women are also more anxious whereas men are angrier, the two sub-traits of neuroticism. Females are slightly more orderly, while men are somewhat more industrious in comparison (the extremely hyper-industrious individuals, in particular, tend to be men).<sup>192</sup> If the goal is to gain a more nuanced understanding of sex-related differences, it is important to analyze each sub-trait in more depth than just merely look at the raw average scores drawn from personality questionnaires. More importantly, it is crucial to distinguish which traits that are more important than others.

Furthermore, there is the *dark tetrad* which was briefly examined in the chapter 4, including narcissism, Machiavellianism, psychopathy and sadism. Males, on average, possess these four “dark” traits to a larger degree than females.<sup>193</sup> If one analyzes the consequences of these traits and has a balanced perspective, it seems that a moderate

degree of these are beneficial while too much are detrimental for individuals and society.<sup>194</sup> Many females do not prefer nice guys, although it is hard to see truly sinister men as preferable partners in the long term. Some degree of narcissism and psychopathy help to increase confidence, whereas Machiavellianism is important to thrive and survive in the workplace and other social contexts. Even some degree of sadism might be useful in the bedroom (under controlled and completely consensual forms).<sup>195</sup>

As Jordan Peterson has emphasized, women could need some of the typically “male” traits, too, like assertiveness<sup>196</sup>, whereas many misplaced men could learn to become more gregarious and agreeable. Conscientiousness is associated with success in the work life, health, and for general stability in life<sup>197</sup>, whereas neuroticism is negatively associated with work performance (beside from simple, repetitive tasks)<sup>198</sup>, as well as general well-being. Therefore, both sexes should aim for to have a high degree of the conscientiousness trait and low in neuroticism. The other ones are less obvious, although *some* degree of extraversion, agreeableness and openness to experience appear to be intuitively positive characteristics. A person who possesses very little of gregariousness and agreeableness may have a problem to socialize with other individuals, whereas openness to experience is required to take interest in novel ideas and experiences. Assertiveness is needed to balance agreeableness.<sup>199</sup>

Of course, it would be naïve to think that these traits could be significantly changed among a large share of people – after all, many like who they are and do not want change even if they were somehow rationally convinced that their decisions and behaviors are far from the most optimal in life. Nevertheless, human plasticity is a real phenomenon, too –

about 50% are affected by environmental factors<sup>200</sup> – and with willpower, learning and proper environmental influences a person can change to at least some substantial degree.

Essentially, a balanced personality profile is crucial. The first step is to become aware of the 14 main traits, to which extent they appear to be present within the individual, and make eventual changes in accordance with an optimal profile kept in mind.

### **Cognitive ability**

Cognitive ability as measured IQ is largely influenced by genes (60–80%)<sup>201</sup> but does still have a significant degree of plasticity.<sup>202</sup> IQ researchers like James Flynn has stressed that nutrition is not very important for increasing IQ. Instead people around the world have become more used to certain abstract ways of thinking and therefore increased their test scores.<sup>203</sup> In an interview he suggests that people should read more complex and extensive books about history in order to improve their cognitive ability to some degree.<sup>204</sup> Apart from that, a general healthy lifestyle with proper nutrition, sprint exercises and appropriate doses of sleep appear to be beneficial as well.<sup>205</sup>

### **Non-cognitive ability and skills**

Intelligence and conscientiousness are two major predictors for success in life in general and various occupations in particular. While intelligence is a cognitive skill, conscientiousness counts as a non-cognitive trait. Education experts like James Heckman has accentuated the importance of non-cognitive skills in regard to education and work.<sup>206</sup> Besides from personality factors there are additional non-cognitive skills or traits, whether these can be linked to ethics or behaviors. Many of these are associated with so-called

*human capital*. These are valuable within society and in the workplace, whether one works as a salesman, administrator, doctor, plumber, or waiter. Some of them are punctuality, perseverance (which is largely linked to conscientiousness), attentiveness, reliability and agreeableness (although it might be negatively associated with higher earnings it is important in many low- or semi-skilled occupations).

Non-cognitive skills have a genetic and neurological basis, but are less fixed and show greater plasticity than IQ. These skills (or preferences of companies and society at large) can be learned, through willpower, discipline, training and common sense.<sup>207</sup> As Joanna Williams has noted, females in the UK and US have performed better education-wise for several decades<sup>208</sup> and part of the reason are more developed non-cognitive faculties. Both sexes should aim for to improve their non-cognitive skills, since such characteristics are beneficial for one's work opportunities, social relationships and well-being.

### **A cosmopolitan or nationalist mindset?**

The education researcher Andy Hargreaves stresses in his work *Teaching in the Knowledge Society* that teachers and students – and essentially people in general – ought to foster a cosmopolitan identity.<sup>209</sup> While that seems to be intuitively positive it does not clarify what type of cosmopolitan identity which should be the aim of education (including self-learning). Is, for example, a simple consumerist lifestyle, with merely a “tourist” level of English and similar degree of cultural understanding, equal to a broad and deep cultural knowledge? And how about multiculturalism and mass migration: is a proponent of large-scale migration flows into western countries automatically a cosmopolitan-minded person, while a national conservative who speaks several languages, possesses profound

knowledge about other cultures and has travelled extensively throughout the world, is not?

While the political implications and interpretations of any cosmopolitan identity are secondary for this investigation, the individual approach is of primary concern. Should a person be focused on his local village, and at most birth nation, while ignoring the rest of the world? Or should he or she regard the world's plethora of cultures to be equally valuable and relevant to discover? Peter Singer's concentric circles<sup>210</sup> may be of some symbolic value in this respect. It is natural, and more convenient, to focus on one's home culture to a larger extent than foreign cultures, very different ones in particular. Of course, different scenarios may unfold themselves at the individual level. A person can exchange his or her citizenship for a new nation but that is not very common; dual citizenship and thus a more "ambivalent" or hybrid identity is more widespread in today's world. At the next level, similar cultures - often with linguistic ties - are relevant to discover. For example, a Swede may learn more about Norwegian, Danish and German culture, followed by English and French culture. Only at this point he can move on to more distant ones like Japanese, Korean, Latin American and Arab cultures. In reality, many people learn a little about other cultures through the native tongue and often English, when they read, travel and talk to other individuals. It is a matter of interest and motivation rather than linguistic ties and cultural affinity. Still, it is more likely that the understanding of other cultures may be shallow, given that a person does not master its language to a significant degree. On the other hand, without historical knowledge and general facts a linguistically integrated individual may be astray, too.

The most important answer to the question whether one should be leaning towards a more nationalist or cosmopolitan mindset is that a serious interest in cultures, including one's native culture, is generally positive. Nationalist chauvinism has, however, done nothing good for neither men nor women, who often had to fight in destructive wars in the case of men, or risked being raped and ravaged because of such warfare in the case of women.<sup>211</sup> Therefore, a cosmopolitan identity must complement any sort of nationalist inclination. More concretely that might imply to read literature, travel and build friendships with individuals from different ethnic or national backgrounds.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter a number of ethical, intellectual, aesthetic and non-cognitive factors that are beneficial for any person, regardless of sex, to develop in current western societies, have been outlined. Whether one values marriage or not, marriage appears to have been a cohesive factor in the past. If one does value marriage and long-term relationships, it is wise to develop the proper personality, cognitive, non-cognitive, ethical and aesthetic dimensions to such a degree that work, marriage, health and attractiveness encompass an optimized lifestyle for couples working in tandem towards shared goals. The more work-oriented individualist can likewise get much in return from doing the same, although neglecting long-term relationships and most likely also reproduction.

Virtue ethics is associated with traditional, maybe old-fashioned elements of society, but they are instead called personality traits or non-cognitive skills in current times. Feminists are wise to identify the significance of the value of ethics for any member of the female sex (and for males, too). One may call the result of self-improvement a higher

femininity and masculinity, but a higher humanity is even more appropriate because the aim is to move beyond the gender dichotomy in many regards. Perhaps Simone de Beauvoir would cynically assert that men and virtuous male behaviors constitute both positive and neutral ideals.<sup>212</sup> However, the point is that some positive traits are universal (or at least general) and thus independent of gender. Furthermore, a mix of “feminine” and “masculine” elements are preferred over a singular set of principles why a certain gender element – to the extent that it is truly existent – is not regarded as superior.

A feminist critique, in line with second-wave feminism, is that virtues, cognitive and non-cognitive, beauty enhancement, K-pop and other phenomena that have been looked upon do only serve a neoliberal or conservative logic.<sup>213</sup> That might be so, in part, but these efforts do still constitute the better option.

## **9. Contemporary feminism and its countercurrents**

Feminism, women's studies and gender studies are integral parts of modern academia. Already in 1984, close to the advent of third-wave feminism, 68% of all American universities offered women's studies courses<sup>214</sup>, a number which has increased drastically since then. While feminist scholars like Judith Butler continue to exist in the realms of course literature at many universities and college institutions around the world, it is more relevant to examine if these ideas are being disseminated and eventually implemented in current societies in the western and digital communities. In fact, it appears as if contemporary feminism has both its adherents and opponents in the age of globalization and digital media. While polarization is palpable, some of these outlets and figures might point out real problems that are worth to take into consideration, and eventually lead to a synthesis between that which is valuable within feminism and that which is valuable within traditionalism.

### **Everyday Feminism**

Everyday Feminism is an intersectional feminist online magazine, which was launched in 2012 by Sandra Kim. The site has a large readership with over 30 million readers, according to its own estimates.<sup>215</sup> Many of the social justice rhetoric and talking points are seemingly influenced by the likes of Everyday Feminism.

### **Jezebel**

Jezebel is a blog, launched in 2007, which directs its focus on several issues, including news, celebrities, sex and fashion, for a female audience. Although not explicitly left- or feminist-oriented, many ideas and arguments overlap those that are typical for modern day feminism, like sexual harassment and fat shaming. For example, Sydney Ember at the *New York Times* has labelled Jezebel a leading voice on feminist issues.<sup>216</sup>

## **Salon**

*Salon*, founded in 1995 by David Elbot, is a left-leaning news site which centers around topics such as politics and culture. Furthermore, it includes more personal essays on a variety of topics. One article on *Politico* emphasizes that *Salon*, partly due to financial reasons, has gradually lost its influence as a digital media platform.<sup>217</sup> However, it still offers analyses and insights regarding typical feminist issues such as abortion rights. Over the last decade *Salon* has published dozens of articles concerning explicitly feminist issues, with a reflective or positive character in relationship to feminism as an ideology. To some degree *Salon* is great resource for understanding fragments of third-wave and fourth-wave feminism.

## **Feministing**

As the name indicates, *Feministing* is an explicitly feminist-oriented blog, which writers often analyze social, political and cultural phenomena from a social justice and intersectional perspective. Thus, the nexus between sexism, racism, classism, homophobia and transphobia is often examined in many of the articles. For example, the writer Nian

Hu has a piece, “Scarlett Johansson embodies everything that’s wrong with a mainstream feminism”, which criticizes the fact that Scarlett Johansson, as a white cis-gendered person, has played a trans person and Japanese character in the film *Ghost and the Shell* (2017).<sup>218</sup>

A truly positive feature of Feministing is that the writers include women in poorer countries like India, whose everyday difficulties are often much more challenging than their western counterparts. For example, Ahila Devi has written about the requirement of safe urban centers for women.<sup>219</sup>

### **Steve Bannon and Breitbart**

Steve Bannon have achieved things that very few other individuals on the right have managed to accomplish. He has proved to be capable within academia, the naval, as an investment banker at Goldman Sachs, and as a leading figure of the conservative news site *Breitbart*. Further, he has worked for the Trump administration as a political strategist<sup>220</sup>, and after being fired from that position he has initiated the so-called Movement, a transnational network for the Europe’s populist right.<sup>221</sup> While not being anti-feminist per se, many right-leaning parties in Europe tend to advocate a more socially conservative approach to gender relations and reproductive rights.

### **Ben Shapiro**

The American Ben Shapiro, who also worked for *Breitbart*, is well-known as a very sharp writer and debater. While vindicating a moderately liberal-conservative political philosophy, he has taken on a variety of controversial topics – like transgenderism, racial

profiling, the wage gap and many more – and often showcased impressive knowledge and verbosity. Somewhat surprisingly, he has not been a Donald Trump supporter.

His work *Bullies* (2013) sheds light on a variety of groups that he refers to as “bullies” – race bullies, green bullies, class bullies, sex bullies, secular bullies and so forth. While Shapiro accentuates that many men are “sexist pigs”, he regards marriage as largely a solution for this. Married men behave better. Yet, the left – contemporary feminists in particular – is against traditional marriage and even encourages females to act akin to bad males: being promiscuous and in other ways immoral, Shapiro stresses.

Shapiro’s stance in regard to feminism is that it should be about choice: a woman can choose a career, stay at home, or do both (but obviously not at the same time). That position is largely congruent with first-wave and second-wave feminism. Thus, Shapiro is not an anti-feminist per se, but highly critical against contemporary feminism as it often presents itself today.

### **Paul Joseph Watson and Infowars**

The Englishman Paul Joseph Watson has made himself one of the leading figures of the New right or “Alt-lite”, which differentiate themselves from the Alt right’s explicit focus on white identity politics while still sharing many views. At his YouTube channel, which has more than 1,2 million subscribers and is linked to the alternative news platform *Infowars*, Watson has criticized virtue-signaling celebrities, western immigration policies, Islam, contemporary feminism, the obesity explosion and fat acceptance movement, cultural degeneracy and many other phenomena.

Among people with a large following, Watson is one who frequently attacks contemporary feminism. At least 30 videos are criticizing feminism or intimately related

subjects. Watson uses both scientific studies and un-scientific provocative attacks whenever he polemizes against his ideological opponents. Generally, he basically asserts that the followers of contemporary feminism consist of crazy, man-hating women who simultaneously defend Islam and fat acceptance, while stressing that masculinity is toxic.

Although Watson has no affiliations with Return of Kings, he embraced neomascularity in a video from 2015<sup>222</sup>, which indicates a slightly more radical and traditional approach to gender roles compared to for example Ben Shapiro. Like Roosh V and others in the so-called manosphere he often uses the term the “red pill” as a metaphor for a politically incorrect, right-leaning discourse of truth and enlightenment. Still, he seems to broadly support the efforts of the first and second waves of feminism.

### **Milo Yiannopoulos**

The journalist and public speaker Milo Yiannopoulos has Greek and Jewish roots, but as a British citizen he has mainly made himself a name in the UK, United States and through YouTube, partly as a writer for *Breitbart*. He was fired from *Breitbart* and got a rather lucrative book contract cancelled in 2017 after being accused of defense of pedophilia<sup>223</sup>, but his public speeches and YouTube videos have continued to draw attention to a mainly young, right-leaning audience. Currently, his YouTube channel has more than 800 000 subscribers.

As a writer, Yiannopoulos has produced several controversial pieces. In July 2016, one of his articles was published at *Breitbart* with the title “The Solution to Online ‘Harassment’ is Simple: Women Should Log Off”. His point is that women are more easily upset than men and therefore should use the internet less frequently, or at least stay away

from male-dominated online spaces.<sup>224</sup> In another potentially offensive article, Yiannopoulos attacks women who use birth control pills and then lists the negative consequences that supposedly stem from such use, including considerable loss of attractiveness.<sup>225</sup>

Even after Yiannopoulos, Bannon, Shapiro (and others) leaving the *Breitbart* ship, it continues to produce criticism of contemporary feminism, which is regarded as misguided, destructive and unnecessary. Despite of being highly polemical and provoking, Yiannopoulos has taken a similar stance as Shapiro: marriage is important, women should stay attractive, and first- and second-wave feminism are the only types of feminism that are valid. In that regard, some of the contours of a traditionalist/feminist discourse can be identified.

### **Roosh V, Return of Kings and neomascularity**

Daryush Valizadeh, formerly known as Roosh V, is an American writer and creator of the website *Return of Kings*, which was formed in 2012 and went on a hiatus in October 2018. Since the early 2000s, Roosh V has published pick-up advices at a personal blog and self-published books with the explicit aim to learn men to have greater access to sex with women by means of so-called game. He has also written about free speech in the aftermath of personal incidents in Canada.

While various type of game writing had been around for some time, Roosh V pioneered by writing about travel to meet foreign females, so-called love tourism. A continuous theme on Roosh V's blog and *Return of Kings* is that American and western women are worse than foreign women from for example Eastern Europe, South America

and Southeast Asia. The books are called *Bang*, *Day Bang*, *Bang Brazil*, *Bang Latvia*, *Bang Iceland*, *Don't Bang Denmark* and so forth. Roosh V's books have received mostly negative attention in the countries whose sexual market he anecdotally has examined, but after focusing on Ukraine the American pick-up artist was invited to a show in the same country that he tried to conquer by having sexual intercourse with the local women.<sup>226</sup> He has reportedly lived in Poland for many years.

The ideas promoted by Roosh V, which gradually have come to substantially overlap those of the Alt-right, have received a tremendous amount of criticism. In February 2016, Roosh V experienced a "coordinated attack" from the mainstream media who wrote about meet-ups that were being organized through the *Return of Kings* website and especially shed light on an article from 2015 which, although from a satirical angle, defended rape on private property. The point of the article was to emphasize women's responsibility to take safety measures to not be raped, such as avoid walking around in public, intoxicated with drugs or alcohol.<sup>227</sup> That point could have been made without stirring up controversy, but Roosh V is no stranger to enfant terrible behavior. After a "fat shaming week" on *Return of Kings* in 2013, he appeared on the *Dr. Oz* show.<sup>228</sup> After the rape article Roosh V defended himself in a speech in his home city Washington D.C. a couple of days after the media outbursts, a gathering which was covered by several media outlets<sup>229</sup>, but was later banned from entering the UK as a consequence of his sexist and misogynist views.<sup>230</sup> Perhaps another part of the underlying reason for this was his article "How to save western civilization", which advocated that the nineteenth amendment of the US constitution should be retracted due to women's supposed negative influence on society.<sup>231</sup>

Although many of the ideas of Roosh V, as well as others which have been published at *Return of Kings*, will forever cement them at a position at the fringes of society and public discourse, there are some writings that deserve to be taken more seriously. Not every article has a provocative, trollish angle. For example, in 2017 Roosh V finally reached the conclusion that the faults of women are often the same as those of men. These are human, not female flaws. He asserts, "There's no need to despair upon realizing the flawed nature of women, because it's really the flaw of humans. When presented with options of excitement, sex and sin, we almost always take the low road."<sup>232</sup> Moreover, his neomascularity program is comprehensive and well-written and contains tenets that potentially will be of real value to men (and women). For example, it rather appropriately describes the dynamics of the sexual market, the significance of testosterone (although exaggerating and simplifying its importance as the sole source of civilization), sexual moderation and male virtue and development.<sup>233</sup> The problem lies in the promotion of the patriarchy and binary sex roles, which over-simplify certain ideals and lacks the fundamental dimensions of female influence in society, including an economy which is largely dependent on both sexes and continually will be so.

### **A Voice for Men**

*A Voice for Men* is another masculinist website which focuses on the rights and interests of western males in general and American men in particular. While *Return of Kings* covers a plethora of topics, including philosophy, history and politics, *A Voice for Men* has a narrower men's rights activist approach while also neglecting mundane subjects like game, girls, fitness and travel. However, the overall rhetoric and choice of words, are very

similar. Contemporary society is regarded as “gynocentric”, which is the complete opposite of the “patriarchy” that many feminists tend to refer to.

For example, John Davis has written about the rise of male suicide in the US and other signs of that large shares of males are either suffering or are badly treated in the present society. Although the description lacks counterpoints, it sheds light on real issues like deeply troubling suicide rates among males and some of the ideas promoted by second-wave feminist and gay activist Sara Miller Gearhart, who stressed that the male ratio should be kept at 10%.<sup>234</sup>

The book *Spreading Misandry* (2006) is mentioned among the references. That is a piece that is worth to take into closer consideration. By numerous examples from western popular culture in the 1990s, the authors provide evidence for a society which gradually has become more gynocentric and misandric. Like they underline, the responses to examples of misandry in current society tend to be trivialized or even legitimized. It is by no means clear how big of an impact the anti-male impetus is, and if it may be associated with deeply troubling issues like male suicide rates. However, they are nevertheless part of a pervasive pattern of third-wave and fourth-wave feminism which is by no means particularly concerned about male interests.

## **MGTOW**

MGTOW means Men Going Their Own Way, in a society where the adherents of the MGTOW movement highlight that men have nothing to gain from marriage or other serious relationships with the opposite sex. It is simply about considering men’s interests in such a supposed anti-male environment. In some blog articles, the sociocultural, economic and ideological conditions for the emergence of the MGTOW movement have

been explained in more depth. The critique of society is largely linked to the suggested detrimental influence of modern feminism, but also on the underpinnings of the feminist movement's success, which are in the hands of a globalist elite.

Men "checking out from society" is called the Sexodus and has been explained by the MGTOW movement itself or more eloquently by Milo Yiannopoulos on *Breitbart*. Yiannopoulos points to various examples of how men are being mistreated and alienated in the modern West but also that women might lose in a society which predominantly panders to females.<sup>235</sup>

While understanding some of the legitimate reasons for MGTOW beliefs, Paul Joseph Watson has specifically criticized "Incels" (abbreviation for involuntary celibacy) for being self-pitying. Similarly, *Return of Kings* has ridiculed Incels<sup>236</sup> in favor of game and self-improvement. While not all advocates of MGTOW are Incels it is largely associated with sexual frustration.

### **Tomi Lahren and Lauren Southern**

There are several right-leaning female public figures who have gained attention, including the two Americans Tomi Lahren and Lauren Southern. None of these two famous female right-leaning and feminist-critical public speakers are traditional in the strict, patriarchal sense, since they endorse equality of opportunity and other liberal feminist tenets. They have chosen a media career, where they rely on their appearance as much as their intellect and ideas, instead of being housewives. Thus, these voices should be understood as right-leaning and conservative in relationship to leftist and contemporary feminist ideas, rather than representing a "pure" traditionalist discourse.

Their critique of contemporary feminism is essentially based on feminists and so-called social justice warriors being “snowflakes”<sup>237</sup>, a pejorative term for young privileged women who are too easily hurt and offended by different opinions than their own. Further, misandry, bad demeanor and feminist endorsement of mass migration, multiculturalism and Islam are other ideas that the likes of Lahren and Southern promote in various reports, debates and YouTube speeches. The combination of general knowledge, verbal ability, attractiveness and a right-leaning platform in an era which demands such ideas are the chief reasons why young women like them have become relatively renowned and paved the way for like-minded individuals.

### **Black public speakers and YouTubers**

Among black North Americans, there are several instances of people with a large following on social media and other media platforms who over the last years have criticized contemporary feminism and identity politics (often from a classical liberal viewpoint). Many of those individuals have appeared on the Rubin Report, such as Larry Elder, Candace Owens, Antonia Akafor, Derek Pilot (Some Black Guy on YouTube), Tommy Sotomayor, and Josephine Mathias.<sup>238</sup>

While these individuals do not necessarily share a common experience, nor are spokespersons for a larger black community in the US (if anything they exemplify pluralism of opinion in heterogenous western societies), these instances showcase a critique of contemporary feminism and identity politics which transcend the interests of white people.

### **Academics critical of contemporary feminism**

Already in the early 1990s, Camille Paglia expressed critique of modern day feminism in her work *Sexual Personae*. While such criticism has been put forward by many other academics throughout the last decades, it has turned into a more focused effort to enlighten the public about its supposed flaws.

While the Canadian professor of psychology, and former clinical psychologist Jordan Peterson has discussed numerous subjects over the last years, one topic has been contemporary feminism and its alleged myths like the pay gap. The interview with Peterson, with Channel 4 News' Cathy Newman as the interlocutor, has over 11 million views on YouTube and many of his supporters saw it as a victory.<sup>239</sup>

The philosopher and author Christina Hoff Sommers relatively recent book *The War against Boys* (2015) and Joanna Williams' *Women vs. Feminism* (2017) constitute rather powerful critiques of the same phenomenon. Williams analyzes educational differences, working women, the pay gap, sexual harassment and contemporary feminism in depth. Her broad conclusion is that women have never experienced a better time in history, yet today's feminists tend to focus on irrelevant micro issues like skinny models and male jargon. Williams points to the first- and second-wave feminists as those groups which have paved the way for modern day women's good living conditions.

These relatively famous academics, and others, have made criticism of contemporary feminism more acceptable, more mainstream, and "common sense". They have also benefitted from liberal platforms like the Joe Regan Experience (roughly 3 million subscribers on YouTube) and the Rubin Report (roughly 800 000 subscribers on YouTube). These platforms have also invited many of the non-academic right-leaning public speakers mentioned above, creating a digital nexus between academia and populist discourse.

## **Feminist influences in politics and the national conservative response**

According to the post-Marxist theory of chain of equivalence, or ideological intersectionality, contemporary feminists struggle for a number of interrelated key issues (against sexism, racism, classism and -phobia, and for equality among groups and individuals).<sup>240</sup> Consequently, feminists aim to form alliances, with more or less success, with other groups that can be regarded as oppressed: women of color, racial minorities, homosexuals, non-European immigrants and so forth. They might also be open for environmental issues, or complement feminism within the frames of an environmentalist ideology, which is the case with for example the Green Party in Sweden.<sup>241</sup>

Feminist parties have failed to make a substantial mark in the parliaments around Europe – currently not a single feminist party is a member of any parliament. Even in Sweden, Feminist Initiative (FI) did gather slightly over 3% in the 2014 elections but has since then decreased its support according to several public estimations. However, feminism has succeeded in putting feminist issues on the public agenda that go beyond the demands of the first-wave and second-wave feminism: equal opportunity and political rights, women's suffrage, and improved reproductive and labor conditions (often via legislation). Instead, the aim for equality of outcome and parental leave policies are accepted as legitimate concerns. There are slight variations among Europe's liberal and left-leaning parties, but equality of outcome is regarded as a legitimate idea, meaning for example that occupations where women are under-represented are looked upon as problematic. Furthermore, many parties have taken an active stance in the aftermath of #metoo, aiming for accelerated efforts against rape and sexual harassment.

While feminist-influenced politics and policies are regarded as integrated parts of the public and mainstream politics, right-leaning, nationalist and national conservative parties are on the rise. For example, in Sweden the Sweden Democrats (SD) has gained a 17,5% support of the voters. While SD occasionally endorses feminist policies, even the latest consensual law in the aftermath of the #metoo<sup>242</sup>, it has a social conservative element and anti-immigration agenda that feminist-oriented parties disapprove of. In other Western-European countries like Italy, Austria and Switzerland similar parties have attracted even higher shares of voters, gaining 31.4% in the case of Sebastian Kurz's Austria's Freedom Party. Only Poland and Hungary have managed to achieve better results. Fidesz in Hungary got 49.27% of the votes in 2018's elections, whereas Law and Justice in Poland got 37.6% in 2015's elections.

Much like their counterparts at the other side of the Atlantic sea, Europe's national conservative parties endorse first-wave feminism and to some extent new tenets that are associated with the second and third waves. The main difference concerns how the different parties tackle rape and assault of women in a migration and integration context. The right-leaning nationalist parties point to that male migrants, often with a Muslim background, are predominantly responsible for sexual assault and rape, whereas the left-leaning parties endorse continuous migrant flows into Europe with reference to international conventions, global inequality, and humanitarian needs. Lately, this infected issue has partially divided the European parliament and powerful states like Germany.<sup>243</sup>

If we move beyond the differences between right- and left-leaning parties regarding immigration and how to deal with rape issues, the former parties may offer ideas that can be of interest to people in general, regardless of ideological preferences. For example, the

Putin regime has tried to tackle shrinking birth rates with pro-natalist policies that have had some impact, although not proven to be as constructive as the Russian policy makers had hoped for.<sup>244</sup> The Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán and his Fidesz party have offered another solution. Women who give birth to their second child are obliged to pay back only half of their student loan debt, giving incentives for women to both raise a family and educate themselves.<sup>245</sup> This may have a positive impact in several ways: demographically, economically and for individuals and families. As a complement to such policies, reproductive-related economic issues could be integrated in the tax system. For example, women would pay lower taxes than males after returning from parental leave.

Another issue that national conservative parties should put on the agenda is sex-related demographics, and implemented into a policy likely leading to massively reduced male migration flows, while simultaneously accepting more females from other European nations and elsewhere until a more optimal balance is achieved. This is to correct the earlier male-dominated migration flows from particularly certain parts of Asia and Africa (and in America's case, Central America) into Germany, France, Sweden and others. An exception would be high-skilled males, who, if properly screened, ought to be accepted regardless of origin. Perhaps a 55% female and 45% male ratio is appropriate, although such gradients are often arbitrarily demarcated and open for scrutiny.

Needless to say, feminist-leaning parties should embrace similar ideas and policies, while concurrently pushing for tougher laws against convicted rape perpetrators and highlighting the downsides of male behavior, without being too concerned about micro issues. Further, they ought to focus on troublesome male issues like high suicide rates, which may be partly related to the unfavorable sexual market. Ultimately, political parties

in the West must move beyond their narrow ideological framework and have a more pragmatic and syncretic approach.

## **Conclusion**

Feminist websites, ideologists and political parties have a diametrically opposite view as those of masculinist outlets like *Return of Kings* and *A Voice For Men* – they are almost like mirror opposites. While *Jezebel* and *Salon* point to patriarchy, sexism and objectification, *Return of Kings* and *A Voice for Men* link modern day's societal ills to the gynocracy and misandry. However, while those masculinist ideas are placed at the fringes of public debate they have less radical proponents within the new right in the United States and Europe. Public speakers and social media celebrities like Ben Shapiro, Paul Joseph Watson and Lauren Southern have criticized contemporary feminism for their “myths” about the pay gap and for making women miserable rather than helping them. Even academics like Jordan Peterson, Christina Hoff Sommers, Camille Paglia and Joanna Williams have criticized contemporary feminism on similar grounds as the more provocative right-leaning figures.

If one looks upon history as a hegemonic and dialectical process of opposing forces, it remains to be seen which side that will be dominant in the years to come. However, there are positive and constructive signs of a more nuanced, balanced and synthesized approach that can put the gender war at halt. Such initiatives are likely proposed by moderate political parties, academics and public speakers. Even if the term “gender war” has always been a hyperbolic notion, sociocultural patterns and politics show signs of polarization that require appropriate responses.

## 10. Towards a synthesis between traditionalism and feminism

The examination throughout this book demonstrates that feminism has both benefits and weaknesses, why many in for Example the UK do support the dictionary definition of feminism but not label themselves as feminists. The same goes for traditionalism, in the broader sense, although not accurately measured.

On one hand the first and second waves of feminism, often via leftist and liberal politics, managed to make substantial improvements for women that few people protest as of today. The benefits of feminism include equal political and economic rights, reproductive rights (although there still an ongoing debate in that regard), anti-sex discrimination, revised marital laws, laws protecting women from rape and sexual harassment, and the rebuttal of scientifically and philosophically erroneous gender stereotypes and values. On the other hand, a significant share of third- and fourth-wave feminists hold partially misguided beliefs about rape statistics, the pay gap, and male privilege (including consumption and marriage, which often are to the benefit of women, or at least largely driven by females). Males are not necessarily privileged in many respects: they are, on average, performing less well in education in general, women dominate many occupations, while men have significantly higher suicide rates, performing the most hazardous jobs, and run the risk of being ostracized for rape or sexual harassment for actions that may not even have been illegal. Furthermore, a large share of men is not doing well on the so-called sexual market, leading many to reject modern society, at least in regard to long-term relationships and marriage.

Traditionalism was wrong to assume that women are intellectually and morally inferior and to take patriarchal norms and political systems too far in the past. However,

marriage, virtue ethics and the scientific emphasis on biological sex differences (and similarities) that often contribute to society, represent traditional-leaning benefits for both sexes. In fact, virtue ethics updated to current conditions like non-cognitive abilities are often to the benefit of women. Especially in a western educational environment that often caters to female preferences, which Joanna Williams' research shows.

Moreover, human aesthetics and rather objective beauty standards are not something to oppose but cherish. Both men and women can modify their appearances to a significant extent, potentially leading to increased sexual and marriage market value and sustained attraction within long-term relationships. Such inspiration can be absorbed directly from within the West or maybe the South Korean pop cultural fabric. Intellectual and ethical influences can be absorbed from the western present or past. Politically, the legitimate concern about large-scale male migrant flows into western nations that has characterized Europe's successful national conservative parties and president Donald Trump needs to be taken into serious consideration.

Thus, feminism and traditionalism need to complement rather than perpetually oppose each other in a never-ending "gender war". Of course, there will also be legitimate cultural and political struggles (of discourse, if not physically), but at this point much of the West needs to focus on the most urgent matters instead of fighting over petty issues or misguided concerns. Politically, a syncretic approach in which classical liberal, post-Marxist and conservative views intersect, is preferred over singular discourses. To the extent that contemporary feminism specifically has any relevance it should focus on very specific areas where western women really are struggling, or to aid women in countries where they truly are oppressed and mistreated.

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