Feminism is a movement that has lost its way. Although it is energetically promoted by women's studies programs, by the right, few people can articulate the ideology which has brought sexual freedom and economic equality to women. This ambiguity has failed to engage the majority of women and address the problems created by liberation and a greater understanding of the modern woman's position in society.

Analysis

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I am a feminist. But what does this mean? As a movement, feminism has failed to provide women with a coherent system of beliefs. What real ideas lie behind the political activism and guerrilla tactics? Schisms within the movement are not so much due to a lack of commitment, but rather differences in approach. The conflict in the recent campus date rape poster incident should have raised provocative feminist issues. Instead, the debate centered around legal questions of guilt and character analysis. The question of whether the poster was justified became the major focus.

The debate failed to produce any real discourse. Those truly dissatisfied with the system and its inability to cope with women's problems supported the poster, but usually only by half-hearted withholding of condemnation. Opposition to the poster often reduced their arguments to defending the character of the accused. A short period of muddled letter writing ensued until the issue gradually died. The implications and consequences for feminism were left undiscussed.

There have been few successful attempts to intellectually clarify the aims of feminism. This lack of definition will eventually dilute the impact of the feminist movement. Feminist discourse lacks definition. No one can agree about what it means to be a feminist, even though dangerous and misleading popular conceptions exist. As an overgeneralization, the movements for women's rights can be divided into those who see women as caring and nurturing, and those who see them as aggressive and competitive. The nurture feminists advocate such policies as equal pay for equal work, while the rationalist view is that women must come to terms with the reality of their sexuality. The rationalist view is that women must come to terms with the reality of their sexuality. The rationalist view is that women must come to terms with the reality of their sexuality. The rationalist view is that women must come to terms with the reality of their sexuality.

DIFFERENCES

Everyone would agree that women differ from men biologically, however, bitter argument arises over the social ramifications of these differences. The traditional view of women as caring and nurturing has been denied by some feminists and embraced by others. Exalting the emotional, some feminists believe that the world must begin to value nurturing as a social virtue. This transition to a culture which embodies more "feminine" values will help women gain a more equal position in society. In efforts to legitimize traditionally feminine characteristics, these "nurture" feminists advocate such policies as equal pay for predominantly female fields such as teaching and nursing. They strive to change what is commonly viewed as a "man's world" into the prototype for what may be a woman's world.

The other side of the argument refuses to attach specific values to the sexes. Only the individual is important, and differences exist beyond the feminine and masculine. While the first feminist group values emotions and differences, these "rationalist" feminists to develop an artificial, alternative world in which women are free from sexual danger and "no always means no". The battle against date rape is a reaction to the problems of a society without traditional protections for women. Changing the behavior of men, rather than educating women is the focus of much of this movement. The language of "date rape" is something constructed by white middle class academic feminists in prestigious northeastern universities, who fail to consider the extensive sexual ambiguity involved with relationships. The "date rape" culture has almost no influence in poorer minority communities or in other equally advanced countries in Europe.

In the not so distant past women attended single-sex colleges, or at the very least lived in an all-women's dorm, in which they were locked away at night, making it difficult to practice sexual intercourse. The excitement and thrill of sexual relations was more freely practiced by women as well as men.

DATE RAPE

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Ironically, in many ways the dismantling of genteel relations has proven more tragic for women than for men. Liberation has been a double-edged sword.

The traditionalist critique of feminism has failed to develop a coherent definition and agenda in the minds of women and men, and therefore remains very difficult to attack. Second, the traditionalists have largely misunderstood the problem, since they choose to argue from antipated dichotomies and which fail to account for present reality.

The traditionalist critique of feminism attacks its crass aspirations for power and focus on materialism. Respect and power often accompany wealth in our society, and therefore with modern innovations women have chosen to leave the home in order to partake more fully of the world. Testing boundaries for actualization, and not accumulation of power per se, have been the goal of more moderate feminists. Our society often confounds power and wealth with happiness or self-realization. So while the quest for happiness or self-realization. So while the quest for wealth and independence often confounds power with happiness or self-realization. Second, the traditionalists have largely misunderstood the problem, since they choose to argue from antipated dichotomies and which fail to account for present reality.

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Female Misogyny

Women often serve as their own worst critics. Disenfranchised with their body, women are told that the continual rise of eating disorders in which women starve themselves to some internalized view of perfection. In this tyranny perpetuated by society, women themselves buy the highly successful diet books, and support the lucrative fashion industry. Society is not marketing to a void—obviously many women continue to accept the "beauty myth".

Perhaps the preoccupation with appearance does divert a woman's energies from other more fruitful pursuits, but feminists should try to understand why women continue to follow and perpetuate ostensibly damaging industries. Is there something empowering in feminization of society? This shallow brand of feminism cannot serve the interests of minorities. This sort of group thinking usually allows for recognition of the legitimacy of other groups and sympathy for their causes. Understandably most feminist thinking will be opposed to the traditionalist elements of the right which focus on the family, and usually advocates women staying at home and raising children to the exclusion of other pursuits. But denial of these ideals should not necessarily push feminists toward the left. Empowerment comes primarily from being able to accept responsibility and define oneself as an individual.

The more rationalistic feminists should, at least in theory, align themselves with libertarianism, a political movement associated with the right in modern understanding. These feminists focus on the definition of an individual beyond masculine and feminine. This accords well with libertarian egalitarians, in which people come into being on their own terms without society's assistance.

A truly effective women's movement, if one should ever exist, cannot thrive on pure leftist ideas. The preference for pampering and protest among feminist seeks to strengthen the focus of the nurturing faction—the advocates of the feminization of society. This shallow brand of feminism cannot serve the interests of minorities. This sort of group thinking usually allows for recognition of the legitimacy of other groups and sympathy for their causes. Understandably most feminist thinking will be opposed to the traditionalist elements of the right which focus on the family, and usually advocates women staying at home and raising children to the exclusion of other pursuits. But denial of these ideals should not necessarily push feminists toward the left. Empowerment comes primarily from being able to accept responsibility and define oneself as an individual.

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