Identity, Feminism, Race and Human Emancipation

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Michael Curtotti

Abstract

Re-imagined identity has heralded and accompanied social transformations advocated by feminists and human rights actors. Continuing that re-imagination is essential to the realisation of the values such movements foster.

Societal responses to equality and human rights have often included partial subordination within existing societal paradigms. Thus, in the human rights case although principles of equality, dignity, and solidarity have been advanced, they have been subordinated within a nationalist paradigms and identities which in important respects undermine human rights values. In the case of feminism, the project of transformation of a patriarchal order, has been partially subordinated through the co-option of women into largely untransformed patriarchal structures. The feminist aspiration towards peace has largely remained unrealized. A vision of women as transformative leaders in a movement towards peace has been implicitly subordinated into more readily accommodated forms. Feminist querying of the nature of power as empowerment rather than domination has had limited influence.

The instance of the civil rights movement, informed by the philosophy of Alain Locke and others, highlights a transformative potential in a deeper re-imagining of identity. In that case, participants in the civil rights movement imagined African Americans not as victims and not as bearers of the stigma of second class citizen, but rather as contributors to the realisation of the deeper aspirations of an entire community. In the 21st century, the further emancipation of women and the realisation of the visions of other human rights struggles depends on a similar re-imagination of identity among those engaged in those struggles. Can we attain the deeper goals of gender equality and human rights while continuing to carry identities predominantly framed within sectional and national paradigms? If these broader goals speak to deeper aspirations held by these various movements, how can we engage in a process of learning that reaches towards new identities adequate to the task of human emancipation.

Introduction

As Louise Dittmar put it in 1848: "*The freedom of women is the greatest revolution, not just of our own day, but of all time, since it breaks fetters which are as old as the world.*" (Sklar, 2007, p88) Its radical novelty is underlined by the fact that the "revolution" took place, almost universally, without guns and without bullets. The world has been transformed by the work and struggles of feminist women in a largely non-violent process.

The human rights movement is similarly significant. Over the course of centuries, it has transformed human relationships which, historically framed in hierarchy and oppression, have been reframed as relationships of equality, dignity and solidarity.

The pervasive success of these movements is illustrated by the city of Canberra where I live. The city is at the geographical, if not cultural, margins of modernity. It is a jurisdiction which possesses institutions and laws protecting

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human rights and women's rights. A Human Rights Act entrenches civil and political rights. A discrimination law penalises discrimination, including sex discrimination. A law provides victims of domestic violence with a system for obtaining personal protection orders. In my workplace, my employer's workplace policy, reflecting law in the jurisdiction, prohibit discrimination and sexual harassment. A human rights office and the courts are empowered to foster principles found in human rights and anti-discrimination treaties. The everyday of the 21st century represent far from imaginary victories. A century ago, the Parliament which now meets in Canberra, entrenched the White Australia policy among its first legislative actions.

Yet such rosy assessments are also profoundly incomplete. Both movements have yet to deliver on significant parts of their promise. For human rights, most glaringly, national citizenship, rather than membership of the human family, is in the early 21st century the true the guarantor of human rights – if any guarantee is to be had. Equality, dignity and solidarity are violated as often as they are upheld. For feminism, patriarchal patterns of human behaviour have barely shifted in many arenas that count for women as well as men. Most glaringly, in the continued absence of peace at all levels in a world continuously preparing for and engaged in warfare; and in which violence in the home remains a far too common reality. If relative English language usage (as measured by Google ngrams)[1] is taken as a measure, feminism itself and many concepts relevant to feminism reached a high water mark in 1996.(See Illustration 1) Also interestingly, the usage of the words "women" and "female" exceeded the usage of the word "men" and "male" for a brief 20 year period from 1985-2005. Even then the word "woman" has never exceeded the use of the word "man", although the distance was at a minimum around 1996. (See Illustration 2) Similarly, although as 'object' *her* has exceeded usage of *him,* since the 1970's. Usage of *she,* as subject, has never exceeded *he.* While such linguistic patterns are of interest, without careful investigation beyond the scope of this paper, it is prudent to resist easy conclusions. They perhaps point to societal changes that speak to the progress or otherwise of pursuit of goals associated with feminism.

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1   Diagrams generated from http://books.google.com/ngrams 7 and 8 May 2015. The graphs illustrate relative frequency of words as part of English language discourse in the digitised collection of written materials maintained by Google. Terms associated with feminism are selected from Mendes, 2011, p141. The terms 'femenismus' in German, 'femminismo' in Italian show similar declines in the late 1990's. 'féminisme' in French continues to increase throughout the 2000's. Human rights shows a sharply increasing occurrence from the early 1970's onwards.
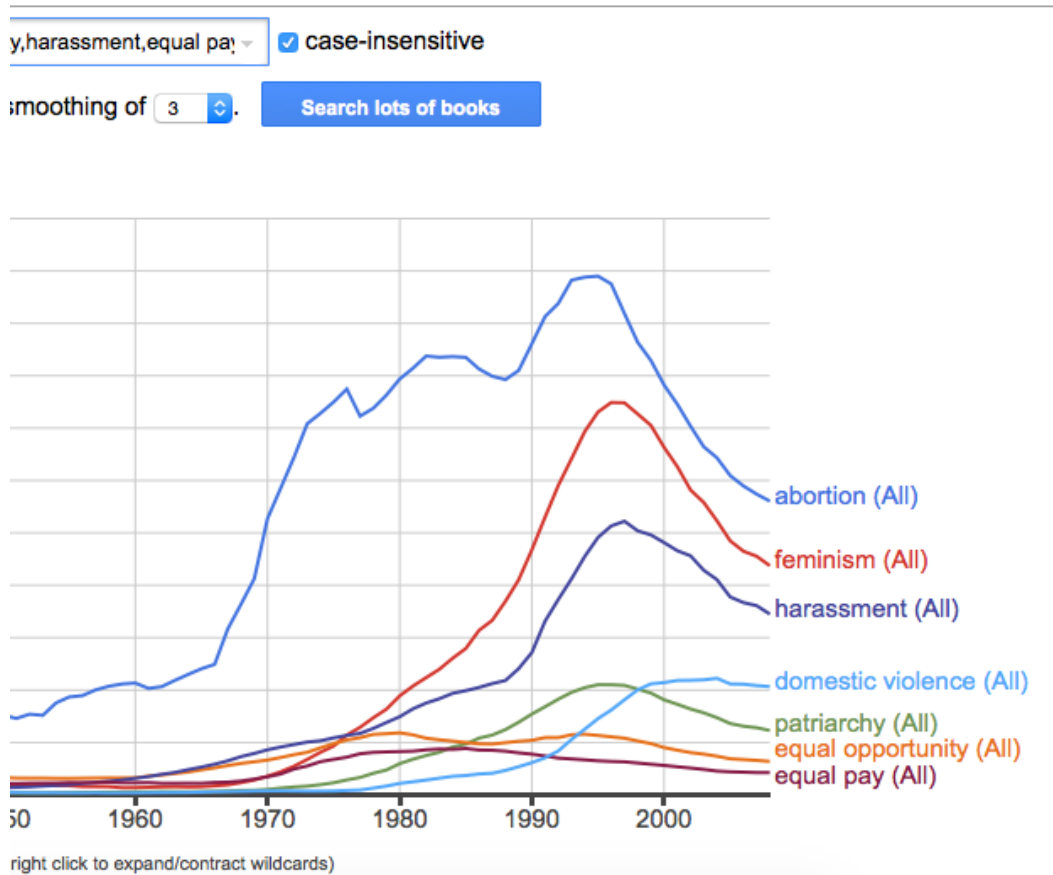
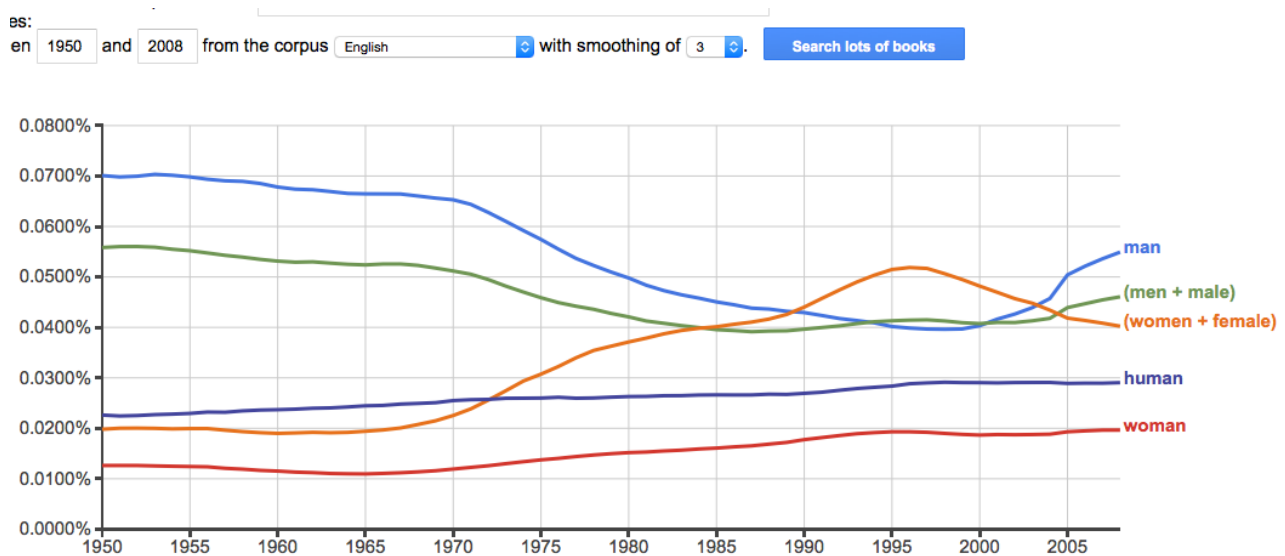Illustration 1: Relative Frequency in English of Some Terms Associated with Feminism. Google Ngrams

Illustration 2: Relative Frequency in English of the words 'men+male' and 'women+female'. Googe Ngrams

Rather than treating these movements as normative or anti-normative, here they are approached as case studies in emancipatory practice. They are not always or fully successful, but they are always informative. From this perspective, actions and approaches of historical actors are explored. It is an enquiry seeking learning from and about practice. Thus, Las Casas, likely the first modern human rights worker, who learnt human rights in the context of working with the indigenous peoples of the Americas, differs: *"from his contemporaries is his combination of speculation and experience, his engagement in practice with the struggle for justice. ... [he] formed his understanding ... in the crucible of action and in the face of lived necessity."* (Carozza, 2003)

These kind of figures are found in abundance in both the human rights and feminist movements. When first wave women's activists in the United States confronted their own oppression, they did so through practice as female abolitionists working for an end slavery (i.e. as human rights workers). Thus Abbey Kelley Foster was to write: *In striving to strike **his** irons off, **we** found, most surely, that we were manacled **ourselves**: not by **one** chain, but by many ..."* (Yellin & Van Horne, 1994, p 244). It was not just supporters of slavery that saw the proper role of women as subordinate, as the silenced women anti-slavery delegates from America were to find at the World Anti-Slavery Convention in 1840.(Yellin & Van Horne, 1994, p 301 et seq.).

This image of activist women constrained by the human rights causes they espoused and were then to transcend, repeats itself in the later civil rights movement and anti-Vietnam movements, with both African American women and white women, who, recognising their continued oppression become a driving force of the women's rights movement of the 1960s. They had found, as Juliet Mitchell stated '*the attitude of the oppressor within the minds of the oppressed*'. (Gamble, 2001, p 30) The intersection of questions of race and gender as feminism continued to unfold pointed to the existence of multiple *feminisms,* both in time and space, or to put it another way the inadequacy of models that fail to sufficiently account for the diversity of human experience.(Whelehan, 1995, p 106 et seq.), (Gamble, 2001, p 66 et seq.) It is also interesting to note the ways (sometimes in tension) that these two movements inform and catalyse each other.

Before continuing further, it is also well to acknowledge that feminism is not a peculiar cultural expression of "the West". And while acknowledging non-western feminisms, even then feminist histories are mainly silent on the early feminisms contemporaneous with or equivalent to western developments.(Gamble 2001, p 66) Rather than a spring welling from many sources, a linear ethnological account is constructed flowing from liberal, to marxist, to radical to post feminisms, in the latter stages of which non-white and developing country perspectives arrive late on the scene.[2] There is an understandable difficulty in accessing non-western sources, which may be unavailable in translation, and even then may be inaccessible without a sufficient understanding of the cultural context within which they are embedded. Nonetheless, nineteenth century figures such as the African American Sojourner Truth, (Sillen, 1955, p 35 et seq.) the Babi poetess Tahirih in Persia, [3] Wu Mengbang, Li Run and Huang Jinyu in China, (Ma,2010, p 41) Toshiko Kishida in Japan, Rosa Guerra in Latin America,(Lauren, 2003, pp 50-51) and Huda Sharaawi in Egypt in the early twentieth century,[4] are also part of the story. In dealing with familiar case studies, the unfamiliar also remains to be explored. It is also well to recollect that patriarchy is far from a stranger within the western cultural context.

Finally, when speaking of human rights, it should be observed that the term is used in a specific sense that is perhaps less common. Typically, when human rights are thought of what comes to the imagination is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, international human rights treaties and bodies. This vision of human rights is oriented to the institutional and legal. As used in this paper – the emphasis is on a broader historical movement which has manifested in a variety of ways over the course of centuries. The common thread in these historical movements that allow us to identify them as concerned with human rights – is their contribution to one or more of the values that ultimately found their way into the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: namely human equality, dignity, solidarity and freedom.

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2   See for example (Freedman, 2002), (Whelehan, 1995), (Barnett, 1998), (Gamble, 2001), (Humm, 1992). The story of human rights has a similar problem (see observations made by Gilroy below).

3   Iranian Attorney Shirin Ebadi: 2003 Nobel Peace Prize October 10, 2003. http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/middle_east-july-dec03-nobel_10-10/ downloaded 7 May 2015. Tahirih (or Qurratu'l-Ayn, "Solace of my Eyes"). http://www.womeninworldhistory.com/heroine13-2.html, downloaded 7 May 2015.

4   Huda Sharaawi http://www.wisemuslimwomen.org/muslimwomen/bio/huda_shaarawi/ downloaded 2 May 2015

Identity

A particular concern of this paper is to examine the use of identity in connection with the human rights and women's' movements. The question of identity emerges repeatedly in the history of both movements. Bartolome de Las Casas who we have already mentioned emphasised a shared human identity in advocating indigenous rights:

> *"All the races of the world are [human], and of all [humans] and of each individual there is but one definition, and this is that they are rational … Thus the entire human race is one."*(Carozza, 293)

Abolitionists in the Atlantic, two centuries later similarly employed identity in their advocacy: their slogans "Am I not a man, and a brother", "Am I not a woman, and a sister", challenged emerging racial categories and seeking to restore a shared human identity to the enslaved. (Lauren, 2003, p34) Such themes were used to counter racist, religious and other justifications which were deployed to 'justify' slavery: to treat non-white slaves as an 'other'.

Women played a significant role in the struggle in the abolitionist struggle: *The political birthplace of feminism in the United States was the anti-slavery movement.* (Freedman, p76)[5] Indeed, the anti-slavery movement reads like a who's who of the later U.S. Women's movement. Thus: Lucretia Mott, Lucy Stone, Elizabeth Stanton and Susan B Anthony; all of them leading figures in the women's movement, were first associated with the abolitionist movement.[6] (Sillen, 54, 60, 65 et seq.)

Lucretia Mott's contribution is less known than some. The esteem in which she was held was marked by her position of honour as the first signatory of a founding document of the US women's movement: the Declaration of Sentiments. She is a complex counter-culture figure. A Quaker, she considered herself a heretic. A Quaker religious minister herself, she saw clerical leadership as among the most potent causes of the oppression of women. A leader and teacher in her own community, she considered politics to be beneath the dignity of women. A passionate advocate of justice, unafraid to press unfashionable views, she found herself at odds with new generations of more adversarial advocates she herself had mentored, and with a country that has solved the problem of slavery by resort to obscene violence.(Greene, 1981) Most interesting is her early realisation of the importance of identity to the emancipation of women. She was a consistent advocate of gender equality. She considered questions of identity to be more important than institutional realities. Her concerns about identity encompassed the harmful effects of women's self-conception. *"So circumscribed have been her limits, that she does not realize the misery of her condition … even servitude, the worst of ills comes to be thought a good."* (Mott, cited in Greene, 1980).

> *For Mott, woman's degradation was attributable to the fact that she was defined not by herself but by society. What must be done, Mott argued, was that woman should disregard custom and religious tradition and attempt to define herself according to her God-given powers. Woman ". . . needs to be taught to judge her herself."* (Greene, 1981)

Mott's work was of course only an early precursor of the increasingly novel "judgement" that generations of women were to render. *"Challenging the dominant ideological representations of femininity was a cornerstone of **second wave** feminist theory."* (Gamble ed., 2001, p 118) Simone de Bouvoir in 1949 argued:

> *… we must face the question: what is a woman? …. A man would never set out to write a book on the peculiar situation of the human male …. just as for the ancients there was an absolute vertical … so there is an absolute human type, the masculine. ... Thus humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him … And she is simply what man decrees … He is the Subject, he is the Absolute – she the Other. ... no group ever sets itself up as the One without at once setting up the Other over against itself. ... One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.... civilization as a whole ... produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine.* (Humm, 1992, p 49)

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5   See also Sillon,1955; Yellin & Van Horne, 1994; Sklar & Brewer, 2007.
6   Sillen, pp 17 et seq, 54 et seq, 60 et seq, 65 et seq

Simone de Bouvoir's argument influenced second wave feminism. Betty Friedan in the Feminine Mystique in 1963 called for the 'drastic reshaping of femininity that will permit women to reach maturity, identity, completeness of self'. (Gamble ed., p 35) The radical feminist Millett also argues 'that women have internalised the ideology of femininity, and with it their inferior status' … *patriarchal ideology is a matter of false representations politically deployed against women, who are its victims.*' (Gamble ed., p 36, 37)

Feminist postmodernists rejected any 'essential' female or male characteristics. Again they are concerned with the question of identity, although in this case entirely deconstructing the category of "woman". Like other phases of feminism, there is ongoing discourse as to whether such a direction is fruitful.(Beckman & D'Amico, 1994, pp 81 et seq.)

What the foregoing illustrates, is that emancipatory transformation is intimately connected with identity – how society and we ourselves, construct ourselves. Their deployment of identity, an important factor in the successful transformations to which their work contributed.

Alain Locke, an American philosopher connected with the civil rights movement, is another less known figure who reflected on the question of identity from an African American perspective. He was a significant contributor to 'negro' emancipation, in a period that was marked by entrenched segregation and racism. Martin Luther King Jr. paid tribute to his contribution; equating him with Plato, Aristotle and W.E.B du Bois.[7] Yet his ashes were forgotten in a university drawer for 60 years until after being re-discovered they were interred in an official ceremony in the U.S. Congressional Cemetery.[8]

In 1907, Alain Locke was the first African American Rhodes scholar. He lived in one of the most racist periods in modern history, in which scientific theories of race were orthodoxy. He challenged these theories, arguing like Franz Boas, that race was culturally constructed. In 1925, he lost his job as professor at Howard University, in context of his long advocacy of higher pay and curriculum reform. While he later regained his academic role, the enforced break resulted in a move to Harlem and gave him time to make a seminal contribution as the 'Dean' of the Harlem Renaissance: a cultural movement using cultural expression to challenge racial stereotypes. (Harris & Molesworth, 2008, pp 178 et seq.) As Locke was to write in his introduction to the *New Negro*, an anthology of African American cultural expression, including music, drama, visual arts, poetry and fiction:

> *The Old Negro, we must remember, was a creature of moral debate and historical controversy. His has been a stock figure perpetuated as an historical fiction partly in innocent sentimentalism, partly in deliberate reactionism. ... So for generations in the mind of America, the Negro has been more of a formula than a human being − a something to be argued about, condemned or defended, to be "kept down," or "in his place," or "helped up," to be worried with or worried over, harassed or patronized, a social bogey or a social burden. The thinking Negro even has been induced to share this same general attitude, to focus his attention on controversial issues, to see himself in the distorted perspective of a social problem. His shadow, so to speak, has been more real to him than his personality. ... .*
> … (Locke, 1925)

The strategy of the Harlem Renaissance was to use 'high culture' to challenge racial stereotypes. In doing so it created cultural artefacts and activities expressing new identities, and dismantling old ones.(Harris, 1989, pp 6-7) Like the Harlem Renaissance in the case of African Americans, feminists recognised and sought to employ the arts in the discovery and liberation of female identity. Thus feminists early used literature to give expression to their movement. Ursula K. Le Guin, urged students to use and value 'the mother tongue' as opposed to the formalised rational discourse of the 'father tongue'. Feminists critiqued the virtual absence of women artists in art galleries. More radically, they queried the social valuation of art that placed some art (associated with males) on a pedestal while dismissing entirely women's crafts as 'low culture' unworthy of attention. (Freedman, 2002, 310 et seq.)

Before considering the question of identity further, including Locke's work, it is useful to consider a broader conceptual context in which questions of identity sit.

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7   Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., March 19, 1968, Clarksdale, Mississippi, "Address Delivered at Poor People's Campaign Rally."
8   The interment ceremony for Alain Locke, herald of the Harlem Renaissance http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/ style-blog/wp/2014/09/15/alain-locke-herald-of-the-harlem-renaissance-is-finally-laid-to-rest/

Power

Constraining the abuse of power has always been at the heart of human rights. Similarly, feminism emerges in the context of a struggle for empowerment of women. Questions of power are thus central to both movements. For feminists, patriarchy is associated with power. For Marilyn French patriarchy is 'inherently hierarchical and aggressive'. (Gamble ed., 1998, p 293) For Mary Daly 'the Patriarchy is the State of War'.(Gamble ed., 1998, p 290)

Unlike human rights which has largely and uncritically taken the nature of power as given, feminism has contributed to new bodies of thought on the nature of power. A strand of feminist thought thus draws a distinction between "power over" - associated with command, aggression, militarism, violence and patriarchy and "power to" - associated with "women's nurturing capacities as mothers". In this schema, power is capacity and potential to achieve a goal and becomes a process of sharing and enablement rather than military or economic power deployed against others.(Sisson Runyan, 1994, Tickner 1994, Reingold 1996) Other feminist authors emphasise concepts of 'power within' – psychological self-esteem and self-confidence, and 'power with' – the power of collective collaboration between people. (Blakely & Bryson ed., 2007, 146 et seq.)
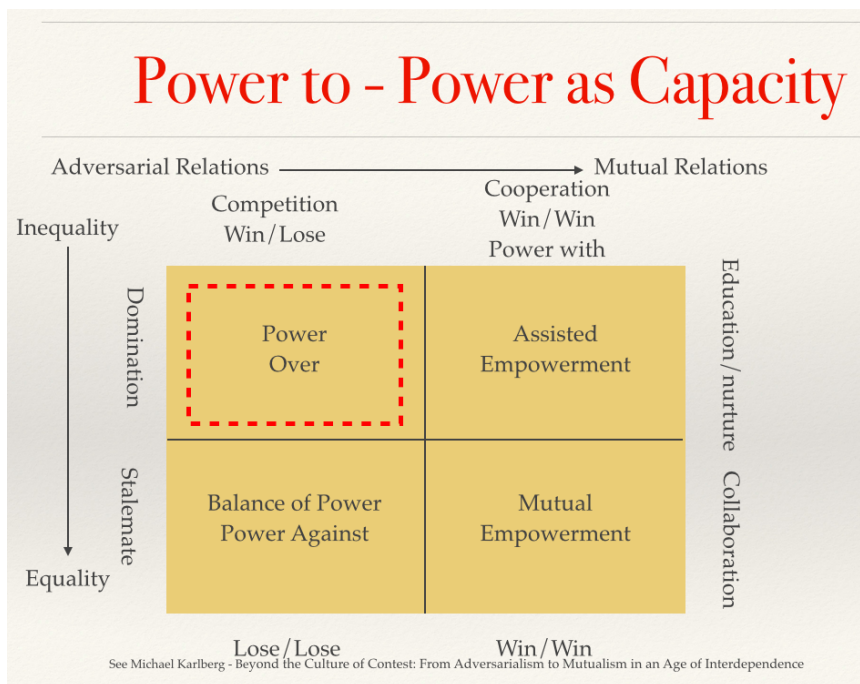

Illustration 3: Power as Capacity

Karlberg provides a helpful review of the scholarship on the nature of power. He analyses power in two dimensions: how power is distributed and how power is exercised. Power at the most general level is the capacity to transform. In this sense every human person possesses "power". However, power may be distributed equally or unequally. It may be used adversarially or cooperatively. Karlberg notes that some authors dismiss "power to" as obscuring the nature of power – a view which he regards as conditioned by cultural assumptions which make "power to" invisible. The two dimensional model he describes enables us to see "power over" in its proper context as a subset – rather than an opposite of "power to".(Karlberg, loc 762 et seq.)

Power is contextualised against a range of human behaviours which give it expression – not all of which involve oppression or necessitate conflict.(Karlberg, loc 625 et seq.) More broadly Karlberg contextualises power within a broader societal culture of contest, or what he describes as a deeply embedded *normative adversarialism: "the assumption that contests are normal and necessary models of social organization".*(Karlberg, loc 868). Society is structured around a tripartite system of contests – economic, political and legal which form the core of this system. However, this culture influences fields such as commercial media, intellectual discourse, and social advocacy. (Karlberg, loc 900 et seq.) Insights from game theory illustrate why 'win win' or non-zero sum games, despite popular

imagination, are as prevalent, if not more prevalent, that win-lose games. Because cooperation creates capacities or opportunities that are more than the sum of the parts, non-zero sum gains become available which are unrealisable in a win-lose framework.(Wright, 2000, pp 337 et seq.)

In Illustration 3, based closely on Karlberg's work, the red box is illustrative of the societal bounds mandated by normative adversialism. This top left quadrant is sometimes the bounding limits not only of the status quo, but also of social change movements. These disabling constraints, as far as they concern identity, go to what Karlberg calls *psycho-structural* elements of culture.(Karlberg, loc 310). We thus find it difficult to imagine or organise for social change without framing it within an adversarial framework. Worse, as agents of social change or victims of abuse of power, a resort to the 'power over' tools expose the 'powerless' to the comparative advantage held by those who have deployed *normative adversarialism* most successfully to acquire and hold power – indeed to create a culture in which multiple social relations are framed as *contests*. Even when successful, such strategies are seriously at risk of replacing one oppressive arrangement with another. They leave in place the cultural structures of oppression. (Karlberg, loc 1502) Although Karlberg perhaps fail to sufficiently acknowledge gains achieved by adversarial strategies, the accounting of the costs of such strategies is also essential in considering questions of practice for any emancipatory project.

Subordination

Movements such as human rights and feminism by their very nature challenge the established order of things; calling for transformation of society in many dimensions. More radical elements may be suppressed by appropriation of 'safer' elements, and subordination of potentially transformative threads. Gilroy captures this well in his description of how human rights is appropriated to support a dominant societal narrative.

> *The official genealogy ... [of human rights] ... is extremely narrow [and] is usually told ritualistically as a kind of ethno-history. In that form, it contributes to a larger account of the moral and legal ascent of Europe and its civilizational offshoots. The bloody histories of colonization and conquest are rarely allowed to disrupt that linear, triumphalist tale of cosmopolitan progress. Struggles against racial or ethnic hierarchy are not viewed as an important source or inspiration for human rights movements and ideologies.* (Gilroy, 2009)

Here the human rights story is appropriated as a structural support for current institutional and cultural arrangements, no matter how inconsistent with the goals and principles of human rights they may be. The concerns of this civilizational present and the vision of human rights are implicitly overlaid as if they are one and the same. The past and future of human rights only worth attention if confirming of the status quo.

The same can be seen in the institutionalisation of human rights. At once its greatest success (with many achievements that call for due acknowledgement), that success has shackled human rights to current institutional and cultural realities. Thus the Universal Declaration, with few limitations in its implications for human relations for human dignity, equality and solidarity, is given effect in treaties. These documents at once limit and *validate* the power of the national state to determine the fate of *its* citizens. The *Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination*, advances racial equality while excepting that form of racial discrimination which is practised against non-citizens at the border. Nation-states having defined themselves in racial terms, give themselves permission to continue that racial discriminator. The UN Charter while founded on the values of human rights, establishes within itself an altar to domestic sovereignty behind whose curtain hundreds of millions have suffered human rights abuses in the now many decades since the Charter was written. Frederick Douglass, an escaped slave and later abolitionist, captured the situation in his well known 4th of July speech. *"What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer; a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim.* (Douglass, 1852)

For Mott personally, peace was as central an aim as abolition and women's emancipation. Yet she was to live to see peaceful abolitionism followed by a brutal civil war. It was not what she or other leading abolitionists had sought. The abolitionist societies of which she was a part committed themselves to peace. Her own practice as an abolitionist, although confrontational in rhetoric, was grounded in non-resistance and non-violence. She continued her opposition to violence though the civil war period.(Bacon, 1993) Yet the victor's narrative easily elided and overwrote the peace oriented abolitionist opening act with the civil war's bloody denouement. Abolitionist opposition to war, becoming near invisible in the received narrative.(Richman, 1981) In the case of the civil rights movement, which is further discussed

below, non-violence aimed finally to overcome militarism and poverty. Little has changed. Moreover, non-violence was followed by assassination, then bloody race riots and entrenched racial problems, including continuing manifestations of racial oppression which endure to the present day. The victories of abolition and civil rights are hard-won, precious and bitter.

The two 'p's of patriarchy and peace, which are among prominent goals expressed by the feminist movements, stand out as two transformative directions which have failed to have more than marginal influence in broader society.

Everywhere we turn patriarchy remains enthroned. From popular entertainment, to politics, the courts, academia, public discourse, international relations and to the continuing incidence of violence from the family home to conflicts transcending international borders, although we might say much has changed, more has remained unchanged. Unfinished business of the women's movement includes peace, at all level. Also unfinished is the emergence of a society which is more balanced in its expression of human experience and more accommodating of models of life that are not directly or indirectly mandated by a patriarchal past. The words of Jeanette Rankin, the first woman elected to the United States Congress, point to these dilemmas. When she arrived, the Congress was debating the entry of the United States into World War 1. She later wrote:

> *"I believe that the first vote I had was the most significant ... because women are going to have to stop war, and I felt at the time that the first woman [lawmaker] should take the first stand – that the first time the first woman had a chance to say no to war she should say it."* (Shirley, p 100)

This action by a woman political pioneer, is reminiscent of the perspective pursued by radical feminism. In this perspective, feminine characteristics, whether biologically or culturally determined, have been excluded by masculine control and assumptions. Because *"women are more peace loving, more nurturing, and more concerned with life, it is they who may be our only hope of salvation in a nuclear age … if it is masculine values that have created wars, then it is feminist values that can end them."* One implication of this viewpoint is the necessity of bringing women into decision making in fields associated with "national security".(Beckman & D'Amico, 1994, pp 78-79) Not all feminists accept such views. Here, is to be noted, the contested point as to the origin, nature or existence of differences between genders. The discourse here is not directed to that complex question, rather it seeks to make the point that society has been determined by choices, priorities and perceptions that have traditionally been associated with or determined by men. Moreover, the models adopted do not even represent a complete account of observed male behaviours. A subset of the human population and human experience is taken as normative of reality as a whole. It is hopefully evident, but none the less worth restating here, that the view of this paper is that identity is largely a socially constructed reality. How identity is constructed deeply impacts our capacity to give expression to human rights values. Where authors are cited for 'feminine' characteristics, in this context, they form evidence for other models of human behaviour which have tended to be suppressed or ignored in our understanding of reality.

Mendes, after undertaking a study of feminism in the news, concludes that media no longer reports women's activism and that:

> *"... while it would be disingenuous to state that the news media ignores feminism, it placed a disproportionate emphasis on issues of 'lifestyle'. Rather than evaluating feminism's role in eradicating various forms of oppression, the discourse focused on which popular culture characters were feminists, or on ways to demonstrate one's empowerment through the appropriate 'look', choice or activity, rather than through collective social or political activism ... it is clear from the analysis that oppressive ideologies such as patriarchy, racism and capitalism have maintained their hegemonic position."* (Mendes, 2011, p 161)

In international relations ('IR'), feminist inspired reconstructions never left the margins, as is clear from the continued prevalence of 'power over' paradigms and resort to armed conflict to manage disputes and interests. Militarisation, borderisation and securitisation have become so pervasive as paradigms, a disease such as tuberculosis can be conceptualised in those terms - displacing its effective management as a health issue.(Horner, Wood & Kelly, 2013)

In the IR world, states are conditioned by a reality that casts them into an endless 'power over' contest. A wise state must engage in this contest for its own "national security". Gender is essentially irrelevant.(Beckman & D'Amato, 1994, pp 16 et seq.) It is perhaps far from insane to suspect that such a school of thought, which sustains and informs a paradigm in which state officials act, may perpetuate into the future, a subjective reality it claims to objectively describe. As Karlberg would put it – it is an example of a *psycho-structural* element of the culture of contest.

Tickner's feminist critique of realism, starts from a critique of the assumptions underpinning IR. Thus, *"Morgenthau claims that individuals are engaged in a struggle for power ... the tendency to dominate exists in all facets of human life."* Such thoughts lead to the "political man" - modelled on stereotypes of 'male' behaviours which are partial and inaccurate descriptions of male behaviour, let alone human behaviour as a whole. The IR state is thus simply a larger projection of masculine myths. A feminist view, cautious of employing countervailing feminine stereotypes, might start by challenging the paradigm of male protector and beneficial provision of 'national security'. 80-90% of the casualties of warfare since World War II are women and children. Militarisation exposes women to vulnerability to rape and domestic violence. Family and individual violence is typically more relevant to women than inter-state violence. A feminist viewpoint debunks 'realism', and replaces it with a view that cooperation as well as conflict are choices open to human beings. With it comes new concepts of power.(Beckman & D'Amato, 1994, pp 29 et seq.) Feminist viewpoints do not subscribe to an 'inaccessible and unchangeable' view of international relations. Rather they see transformation of world politics as "both personal and possible".(Beckman & D'Amato, 1994, p 86)

Such views, while fascinating, have yet to disturb existing bodies of practice, and the cultural and institutional frameworks that support them.

The New Human

Earlier in this paper the theme of identity was introduced. We saw how it played a role in both the women's and human rights movements. We have explored some related themes that bear on the broader cultural context in which questions of identity might be considered. The question of power, how it is understood and how it is used, is intimately linked to identity. Subordination explores processes by which values embedded in human rights and feminism are frustrated.

The "New Human" concept has been derived initially from reflection on Alain Locke's insights, who we have introduced above and who sought to pursue race equality by deploying the "New Negro" identity. Locke's insights in the race context are mirrored by the concern to critique and deploy identity in the context of the women's movement. Further, Locke contributed to challenging "race" as a culturally constructed concept lacking reality. Later in his career he was to point out the impossibility of defining "negro art", given the absence of a racial reality on which it could be based.(Harris, 1989, p 209 et seq.)

Knowing well from his own life and philosophical investigations that the racial category was problematic, he searched for deeper solutions. Thus in "Stretching our Social Mind", his 1944 commencement address to the Hampton Institute (now Hampton University), Virginia, he stated:

> *Part of the lot of any oppressed or persecuted minority is an acute and sometimes morbid social consciousness. To this the Negro is no exception. ... Neither reactionary, subservient inter-racialism of the traditional sort nor narrow chauvinistic racialism are a proper and adequate base for our present-day thinking or our present-day group planning and action. It is high time, therefore, to stretch our social minds and achieve thereby a new dynamic as well as new alliances in the common fight for human justice and freedom of which our minority cause is a vital but nonetheless only a fractional part.*
>
> *... just as world-mindedness must dominate and remould nation-mindedness, so we must transform eventually race-mindedness into human-mindedness. Today it is possible and necessary for Negroes to conceive their special disabilities as flaws in the general democratic structure. The intelligent and effective righting of our racial wrongs and handicaps involves pleading and righting the cause of any and all oppressed minorities. In making common cause with all such broader issues, we shall find that we strengthen, both morally and practically, our own.* (Buck & Fisher, 2008, p 30)[9]

Here Locke provides an insight that was powerfully expressed in the Civil Rights Movement. To think of that movement primarily or only as a movement for 'negro rights' is to miss one of its important characteristics, and a key vehicle it applied to effect social change. It spoke to all members of the American polity, using the language of American discourse, about the realization of the unfulfilled visions of that polity. It reshaped the *identities* of both oppressor and oppressed transform society – a goal, if far from entirely achieved, substantially advanced.

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr has of course come to symbolise the civil rights movement, and we can see some of

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9 Interestingly de Bouvoir also similarly saw the fulfilment of her vision of female identity in something similar: *To gain the supreme victory, it is necessary, for one thing, that by and through their natural differentiation men and women unequivocally affirm their brotherhood.* (Humm ed, 1992, p 50)

these themes in his writings and in his life trajectory, which began with advocacy of equal rights for African Americans, but ended with advocacy of an end to the Vietnam War. In his speech the American Dream, he presents a particular model of human relationships and human emancipation.

> *All I'm saying is simply this, that all life is interrelated. And we are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny — whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. For some strange reason I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be. This is the interrelated structure of reality.*[10]

He takes this to its logical conclusion in calling for global loyalties:

> *A genuine revolution of values means in the final analysis that our loyalties must become ecumenical rather than sectional. Every nation must now develop an overriding loyalty to mankind as a whole in order to preserve the best in their individual societies.*[11]

In an early speech Martin Luther King described his vision of how he wanted African Americans of his generation to be remembered.

> *"… when the history books are written …, the historians will … say: There lived a great people - a black people who injected new meaning and dignity into the veins of civilization."*[12]

Another perspective on the work of the Civil Rights Movement is found in a tribute by President Johnson on introducing the bill for the Voting Rights Act.

> *The real hero of this struggle is the American Negro. His actions and protests, his courage to risk safety, and even to risk his life, have awakened the conscience of this nation. … And who among us can say that we would have made the same progress were it not for his persistent bravery and his faith in American democracy?*[13]

Interestingly, no human is '*Other*' in the rhetoric of civil rights. Indeed, King regards the objectification of human beings as the root of segregation:

> *Segregation, to use the terminology of the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber, substitutes an "I-it" relationship for an "I-thou" relationship and ends up relegating persons to the status of things.*[14]

Rather segregation itself, is the *Other* which threatens all human beings. Polarity is indeed used in King's rhetoric, but the binaries are not human beings. Rather an oppressive present is made visible and contrasted with visions of unfulfilled democratic promises. It is in this contest that identity is re-imagined in King's "I have a dream" speech.

The case studies we have touched on provide sufficient basis for a conclusion that identity is an essential focus in movements seeking to overcome oppressive social conditions. In emancipatory practice, *identity* matters. Sometimes it might be noted, identity in such movements has been problematic. The prioritization of racial vs feminist identity for example became a point of conflict that African American feminists found it essential to address, as discussed above.

While perhaps not easy or always straight-forward, in emancipatory practice, identity is a social reality that we are empowered to reform. Ignoring identity may mean that it is simply impossible to achieve human rights progress in certain fields. For example, in the context of the widespread violation of the human rights of non-citizens, addressing the suffocating predominance of constructed national identities is essential. If I am 'human' it becomes difficult to violate the dignity of my fellow human beings, to breach my obligations of solidarity towards them. If I am only 'X'-ian, whatever that X may be, violating human dignity of non-'X'ians not only becomes conceivable, it becomes normative, just and right.

Projecting new potential identities into the future is necessarily contingent and to some degree speculative. Nonetheless, a potential direction, building on the experience of the civil rights movement and feminism, and drawing particularly on

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10 Martin Luther King Jr – Civil Rights Leader and Peace Advocate
   http://www.abolishforeignness.org/blog/archives/2130
11 Ibid.
12 Martin Luther King Jr. Award http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1964/press.html
13 Alain Locke on Identity and Human Rights
   http://www.abolishforeignness.org/blog/archives/2289
14 Martin Luther King Jr – Civil Rights Leader and Peace Advocate
   http://www.abolishforeignness.org/blog/archives/2130

insights from the Locke, is to explore an identity that might be understood as 'the New Human'.

What is meant by this?

It is that we become conscious that as human beings we possess a 'human identity' – an identity that is distorted and suppressed by culture, history and power. The intuition, drawn from the discourse above, is that without giving greater and conscious expression to our identities as "human" – we cannot move forward on the central human rights struggles of our time. Human beings are in our present culture paradigms constructed as a "problems". Self-interested, warlike, a burden at the border, foreigners, illegals, incapable of effective cooperation, separated by insuperable barriers of culture, language and history. We are constructed by culture as human pathology – except – to some degree – within the socially constructed space of the nation.

To echo and paraphrase the poetic language of Locke, Mott and others, the New Human, if freed from socially constructed characteristics, is no longer "*to be worried with or worried over, harassed or patronized, a social bogey or a social burden*". The New Human has the potential to be '*world-minded*' rather than '*nation-minded*', more '*human-minded*' than '*race-minded*'.   The New Human is full of cultural and social potential, so far not deployed to the task of human emancipation. This New Human identity, need not, and does not, deny the particular, the historical, the individual. Indeed, it is unlikely that a clear vision of the New Human can emerge without drawing on the rich diversity of human experience.

The concept of the New Human inevitably calls to mind the cosmopolitan project which has its own criticisms, not unrelated to the discourse which emerges from human rights or feminism.

One critique is in essence that no cosmopolitan human beings exists – we are all rooted in a particular history. A second critique is that in the absence of an "Other" against which to define itself such a 'human' identity can never arise.

Abizadeh convincingly resolves the second critique. The critique lacks logical coherence.(Abizadeh, 2005) Indeed the claim of a needed "Other" as a ground for collective identity, resolves itself, in the light of Karlberg's analysis as an example of *normative adversialism*. The "Other" is only needed if we consider the existence of a *contest* as essential to identity. The disappearance of the Other does not cause of course, a disappearance of oppression. Rather oppressor-oppressed are both found in the same human category.

The first critique is more serious. A cosmopolitan human being without roots is an imaginary being. While thought may be the most distinctive characteristic of human beings, we exist as embodied and historical beings. Our lives are anchored in physical time and place and in particular social realities.

The failure to recognise this, can, for example, be seen in the self-conceptualisation of the human rights movement in the second half of the twentieth century, which until the late 1990s had virtually no consciousness of its own history.

This void was filled with profoundly misleading and limited mythic symbols primarily associated with western liberal-democratic revolutions and 1948. Without real roots, myths serving present realities become easy substitutes.

It is only when placed within its *particular* histories, such as those of slavery and colonialism, that the universality of human rights become concrete and real.

When in the 1960's an African American Baptist minister and civil rights leader applied non-violent methods learnt from the Hindu inspired emancipatory practice of Gandhi and his followers as a tool to defeat segregation. - that was universality in practice. It was only in the shadow of such movements, that *international* human rights at last escapes the the ritual repetition of resolutions and the remote halls of Geneva and begins to enter the every-day of humanity: *"and who can say that we would have made the same progress were it not for his [and her] persistent bravery"*.

As Locke says:

> *All philosophies, it seems to me, are in ultimate derivation philosophies of life and not of abstract, disembodied "objective" reality; products of time, place and situation, and thus systems of timed history rather than timeless eternity.* (Harris, 1989, p 34)

Perhaps, for the first time in human experience, it is possible for all human beings to begin to see the human story as a single complex tapestry, and in doing so, to recognise it not as the story of "*others*", but rather as a shared common heritage, even though that heritage has innumerable particular threads. We are rooted not only in our own time and place, but in the time and place of all other human beings. The New Human lives not in ethereal cosmopolitanism but rooted in the historical realities and necessities of the 21st century.

Thus, the New Human has no Other, for she recognises that she herself *is* the Other. The New Human is neither of

male nor female "gender": yet both male and female – for the transcendence and synthesis of these culturally mandated categories creates radically new gender realities. Of all races and of none. Both rich and poor. Neither rich nor poor. Citizen of the polis which classifies no one as metic or slave. A son or daughter of a particular land. And yet a *human minded* and *world minded* member of the human family. However, inspired, he or she recognises and values the freedom of every individual to explore reality for themselves. Empowered rather than powerful – he recognises that nurture rather than domination is needed in the world today. Warfare, violence and conflict in all its forms are recognised as anachronistic and destructive behaviours having no useful function in the modern world. The New Human recognises and accepts responsibility for complicity in oppression and yet resists the imprisoning category of victim that steals away agency and identity. The New Human is conscious that <u>as human</u> "*she does not realize the misery of her condition [and that] the worst of ills comes to be thought a good*". Far from rejecting the relevance of existing identity movements whose work can hardly be considered to be complete, the New Human sees in the work of these movements a heritage to be celebrated, a source of learning to be drawn on and a fuller exploration of human personality essential to overcoming existing and avoiding new oppressions. Like other identity movements, the New Human requires a literature and art adequate to give cultural expression to this new reality.

From the discourse above, these are some of the characteristics that suggest themselves. They are however no more than suggested points of departure for potential exploration.

The confidence with which the foregoing is stated thus fails to admit, as it must be admitted, that the *New Human* is largely unknown. It can be imagined in its outline (perhaps), but its full reality can only truly be grasped in practical application and action. The New Human must be lived in practice in order to be understood.

In striving to strike off the chains that bind us *as humans* we will discover what it means to be human.

This is ironic. For unlike identities of race, nationality, religion, gender and class which are predominantly socially constructed and dominate our self-conception, membership of the category 'human' is a physical truth that exists without a need for mythic construction.

In reality, we are, and have always been, *human*. Yet we remain in the dark as to who we are *as humans*. While the work to better understand categories such as nation, race, gender and class as responses to oppression have yet to yield all their fruit, it is time that the exploration of *human* identity as a vehicle for emancipation is seriously advanced.

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