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Achieving Gender Equality: A Heavenly Parent-Centered Approach to the Feminist Ideal

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The year of 1995 was groundbreaking for the global feminist and women's movement. It was in September 1995 that the United Nations convened the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China. Roughly 40,000 participants of the UN conference and accompanying NGO Forum from all 189 UN member states gathered over a 10-day period to discuss the issue of gender equality and the empowerment of women. Bolstered by years of conferences and meetings on this topic, the Beijing conference produced the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA), which both mainstreamed the significance of achieving gender equality and provided a roadmap through which this would be achieved. Furthermore, these outcome documents were signed onto by all 189 member states, showing global agreement on the statements and action plans laid out in its pages. [\[1\]](#) [\[2\]](#)

Fast forward to 2020, the 25th anniversary of the BPfA. Feminist and women's organizations alike agree that what was set out in 1995 has yet to be achieved in any of the 189 countries that endorsed the plan. Due to the slow progress, UN Women, the UN entity that focuses on the achievement of global gender equality, launched a campaign called "Generation Equality: Realizing Women's Rights for an Equal Future." Their hope is to mobilize a new generation of gender equality activists and feminists to stand up and come together through this campaign to pressure governments and the underlying systems that have "silenced, stigmatized and shamed" both men and women through gender inequality and human rights violations. [\[3\]](#)

Will this approach work? Will the modern-day feminists achieve their goal of a gender equal society by revitalizing the decades' long fight to pressure a system seen as oppressive into changing its ways? Why would they believe this is the case?

This paper explores how the contemporary issue of gender equality is rooted in a feminist and humanist understanding of the world and the relationship between men and women. From this, the author will identify points of contention in this worldview which may actually be obstacles to gender equality being realized. It concludes with a counterproposal, showing how the Unification worldview, specifically "head wing ideology" or "Heavenly Parentism," may be better suited to achieving the feminist goals of gender equality and human rights for all.

The Feminist Worldview

Feminists are not uniform by any means. Over the years, the identity and positions of a feminist has changed, resulting in many different types of feminists and women activists who do not consider themselves to be feminist at all. However, despite the great diversity among them, there are a few key works that, if not universally accepted by feminists and women's rights activists, are widely known and have significantly influenced how the gender equality agenda is understood today. Furthermore, they underpin how women, whether believers or non-believers, have moved away from a sense of partnership with men in their quest for liberation, individual autonomy and equality in society.

Mary Wollstonecraft and the First Wave

Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, written in 1792 and thus before the first recognized wave of Western feminism, significantly impacted that wave, especially the women's suffrage movement of the UK and the US. [\[4\]](#)

Wollstonecraft was an English writer and philosopher who was deeply concerned with the way women were perceived in society and how it hindered them from contributing in a meaningful manner. Along those lines, *Vindication* was written in response to a report given to the French National Assembly in 1791 in which it was declared that women need only to receive a domestic education. Her response touched on several themes that have continued to impact the perspective of feminists in the struggle for gender equality.

Wollstonecraft challenged the idea of only giving women a "domestic education." [\[5\]](#) Her argument was that women as members of society should be equipped through receiving a "rational education" to become contributors to their society. What she saw as holding them back was men, for their erroneous view of women

as childlike, particularly in encouraging excessive "sensibility" in women, as well as women themselves by playing into this perception. This oppressed women because it both justified to men the discouragement of rational education of women and thus uselessness in the world, and encouraged women to stay this way by valuing them for the very characteristics that rendered them rather helpless in society. Wollstonecraft scolded women for playing into the views that men had of them, especially for letting themselves be used merely for men's desire, and encouraged them to be more rational. [6]

While the above outlined the issues that she saw and the source being men's domination, she also looked to men to change the situation. According to her, because this system devalued women, women were ill equipped to bring about their own betterment. Therefore, it was the responsibility of the men in society to change the system and encourage women to move toward the sensible through their "rational education." [7] In some ways, calling to men to support women in becoming co-equal partners with men by enabling them to develop themselves and their individual identities as women and as individuals.

This notion was strongly influenced by Wollstonecraft's faith, as she spoke to the moral equality of men and women. [8] While she was not explicit about the equality of men and women outside of moral law, something that make many feminist scholars see her as not feminist, it is clear that her works impacted the first wave of feminists, including Sojourner Truth and Susan B. Anthony. These suffragettes viewed the world as being dominated by a system controlled by the male perspective, that men needed to change the system, and women would push them to do this or else would seek to attain the goal of equality on their terms. [9] However, many of these women were wives and mothers themselves, and experienced a certain level of support from their fathers or husbands. This perhaps influenced their perspective as well, which embraced the difference of women and men and based their impressions of the world on a center rooted in a sense of God-given value and equality paired with partnership. Despite the critique of Wollstonecraft regarding equality, elements of the first wave's worldview was shared by another influential woman who in many ways served as one of the major philosophical backbone of the historical Women's Liberation Movement of the 1960s and 1970s.

Simone de Beauvoir and Feminist Existentialism

Simone de Beauvoir was a French philosopher and Marxist feminist. She is best known for her book *The Second Sex*, published in 1949. As a Marxist, Beauvoir's understanding of gender equality and gender roles was through a materialist, rather than the moral or religious lens that characterized Wollstonecraft's writings and the suffragette movement. In fact, given that early on Beauvoir was a believer and even wanted to become a nun yet transitioned into Marxism, one may suggest that her stand was not just of religious indifference but opposition, given that Marx himself called religion the "opiate of the masses." [10]

The Second Sex, originally intended to be autobiographical, emerged into a highly influential feminist text focusing on the essentialist or fundamental nature of gender inequality. [11] This resonated with many women as it put words to the feelings of resentment and injustice they felt in reaction to the surrounding society that was founded upon a fundamentally oppressive view of women. The book is split into two volumes: "Facts and Myths" and "Lived Experience."

In part one of "Facts and Myths," Beauvoir explained the emergence of male domination over female from the biological, psychoanalytical and historical materialism viewpoints. In the first, the basic idea was that the roles of male and female were defined with "the advent of patriarchy" and defied biological facts about gender roles in the animal and plant world. [12] In the second, she outlined how psychoanalysis had been shaped by a male viewpoint and is thus biased toward the male lived experience, ultimately making conclusions about the female based upon that bias. In the third, she looked to Engels and materialist history as outlined by Marx, and argued that while it was true that "woman's fate is intimately bound to the fate of socialism," historical materialism was not detailed enough as it lacked the female perspective. In part two she gave a detailed historical account of how men came to dominate women and also pointed out that while this happened, "none of the reasons given for this have ever seemed sufficient," and so did not reflect what *had* to happen but what *did* happen, given people's unjust behavior and attitudes. In part three she debunked myths about women as Other, specifically that of the "eternal feminine," which was reinforced through the "patriarchal family," of woman as a bringer of life and harbinger of death. [13]

While "Facts and Myths" looked backward to identify how women and men were in the position they were at the time of writing the book, Beauvoir went into detail about the state of the contemporary woman in "Lived Experience." In part one, "Formative Years," Beauvoir focused on the formative years of women: in childhood, girlhood, their sexual initiation and lesbianism. Through these stages, she famously claimed that "one is not born, but rather becomes, woman." By this she meant girls were conditioned be "feminine," which was characterized by passivity, inward focus and dependence, and thus discouraged them to be assertive, making them one-dimensional "Objects." [14]

In part two, "Situation," Beauvoir explored the roles the adult woman could play in society: the married woman, the mother, socialite, prostitute and the ageing years. For the "bourgeois woman," the three roles they had available to them were that of the wife, mother and socialite, all of which eventually would become unfulfilling and lead to frustration. For prostitutes, while they did not have access to the roles of the former, their positions were "parallel" to that of the married woman, because for both the sexual act was a form of service given to men. [15] Finally, because a woman's worth was determined by her reproductive ability, once she reached menopause, she lost her value and identity. Beauvoir's conclusion about the situations women were in was that women were not naturally lazy or argumentative, as they were accused of being, but were

made to be so based upon the restrictive situations in which they were placed, which were determined by men. [16]

In part three, "Justifications," Beauvoir looked at three ways in which women "justif[ied]" their own oppression. The three she identified were "the narcissist" who became obsessed with her appearance, the "woman in love" who justified her objectivity by the fact that she loved her husband, and "the mystic" who turned to scripture to justify her own subordination.

In part four, Beauvoir discussed the path toward the liberation of women. She identified the difficulty women had in leaving "femininity" and the security and safety it brought them, in order to fight for their liberation and independence. Ultimately, she argued, the source of women's liberation and the achievement of gender equality would only happen when the laws were changed to reflect their equality and women were given the opportunity to attain financial independence. Therefore, the beginning of gender equality for Beauvoir was the liberation of women from their dependent state through the attainment of legal rights to their own income and economic freedom. [17]

The Second Sex was a foundational work upon which Betty Friedan, an American radical feminist, drew inspiration for her book. *The Feminine Mystique*, written in 1963, which is credited with sparking the second wave, or "radical feminism" in the United States.

Betty Friedan and the Emergence of Radical Feminism

In *The Feminine Mystique*, Friedan drew upon the familiar notion found in both *Vindication* and *The Second Sex* that women experience oppression due to a limitation in what their roles were in a male-dominated society. However, a former student of psychology and women's rights activist in the 1940s and 1950s, the lens through which she perceived this oppression was more akin to the latter than the former. In her introduction, Friedan discussed "the problem that has no name," referring to the sense of unhappiness and dissatisfaction experienced by the housewives she interviewed, despite their living a comfortable family life. This seemed to contradict the American narrative of the time of the happy housewife, what she called "the feminine mystique." Once Friedan diagnosed the problem, she explored what the nature of this problem was and why what was being sold to women as the ideal did not lead to the fulfillment they were promised.

The following was what she argued. The feminine mystique was a myth. It was propagated in advertising and women's magazines, such as in encouraging pieces written for the perspective of "just housewives" which perpetuated the narrative that family life equaled a happy life, masking the dark psychological reality Friedan identified through extensive statistical research. [18] Furthermore, because of this, while men were encouraged to go and find their identities, the identity of women were biologically predetermined and thus many lacked an identity outside of the home. Furthermore, because of this mystique, many women, including herself, were pressured to make the painful decision between having a home life and a career. [19] Friedan wrote on how this narrative was different from that of the 1940s when women were being depicted as workers and powerful, and explained how it was the post-WWII era and the collective desire of many to return to the comfortable life of families that created this new image of the woman [20] that had become reinforced and defended by both Freud, who she claimed saw women as "childlike dolls, who existed in terms only of man's love, to love man and serve his needs" [21] and an education system that pushed women to less challenging and family focused courses of study. [22] In addition, she identified the advances that women's rights activists had made as successes, and criticized advertising companies for creating a narrative of the housewife as a profession, quoting one executive who said "we'll liberate them to have careers at home," and in that way discouraged women from becoming a professional outside of the home. [23] In her interviews with housewives, they would speak to how busy they were and yet seemed to remain unhappy, and how this turned into them identifying housework with their value as well as seeking sexual fulfillment to fill the void. [24]

In her concluding chapters, Friedan identified the effect this dissatisfaction had on society, spoke of Maslow's hierarchy of needs and identified ways in which some women had been fighting against this "feminine mystique." Friedan identified how this "mystique" did not just impact the women, but also their children and thus the whole future society. She argued that by seeing their mother's unhappiness in her role, children lost interest in their own quest for identity and emotional growth, and "find it more difficult than their mothers to move forward in the world." Furthermore, a dissatisfied housewife who lacked a sense of self would live vicariously through her children. In these ways, the experience of the mother stunted the emotional and essential development of the children. [25] Referring to Maslow, Friedan argued that because women's identity was stuck in her biological and sexual role, housewives were trapped psychologically, and in order to attain the highest level of the hierarchy, "self-actualization," women, just like men, needed to have fulfilling and meaningful work. [26] Friedan's call to action, therefore, was for women to pursue work beyond housewifery that would occupy them more fully and mentally. While she warned that they would face resistance, she ended on the sentiment that it was through education and work that the "feminine mystique" could best be challenged. [27]

Friedan and Beauvoir strongly influenced a generation of radical feminists. Combined with the sexual revolution of the 1960s and 70s, feminists of this age upheld an understanding that a fundamental issue at hand was that of a woman's right over her body and choices, and that patriarchy was responsible for this subjugation, largely expressed in the patriarchal structure of the family and the gender roles it reinforced. Therefore, there is a sense by some that this led to a distancing from a women's identities in relation to the family, and a reinforcement instead of their desire to be liberated from the control of men and equal to men in

all areas of society and culture. This created a strong women's liberation movement, which became seen by some, especially more conservative and family-oriented groups as combative toward men and anti-family. [28]

From Second to Third Wave

In the decades that followed, while it inspired the rise of radical feminism and the women's liberation movement, Friedan and her writings were also criticized for reflecting a rather moderate and whitewashed view of sexism, as they focused on the oppression of the disgruntled white middle-class housewife. One of the most scathing of these critiques can be found in the introduction of the book, *From Margin to Center*, by Bell Hooks, an African American radical feminist who moved from the second wave to the third wave for this very reason. Because of these critiques, Friedan's works have been considered more "liberal" than "radical."

However, in the late 1990s, Daniel Horowitz, professor of American studies and history at Smith College, Friedan's *alma mater*, challenged this. In his article, "Rethinking Betty Friedan and the Feminine Mystique: Labor Union Radicalism and Feminism in Cold War America," he exposed the radical past and humanist underpinnings of this middle-class housewife. In doing this he therefore identified how Friedan's works did in fact significantly influence the feminist worldview in how it "played a critical role in reshaping the ideology and social composition of the American left." Furthermore, the underlying assumptions made that women were oppressed, that the source of oppression was a system that was colored by the male and flawed perspective of women as not fully human or their equal, and that the solution was to be attained through a struggle of some sort against this system, were present in her works and continued in the worldview of feminists who followed, such as is seen in Rebecca Walker.

Walker is an African American feminist writer and activist who is known for having sparked the emergence of the third wave of feminism. In 1992, Walker wrote an article in *Ms.* magazine entitled "Becoming the Third Wave."

In 1991, women and men all over the United States watched as Anita Hill gave her testimony on how the first ever African American to be nominated for a seat on the U.S. Supreme Court, Clarence Thomas, had sexually harassed her when their careers had crossed paths years before. When Justice Thomas was acquitted of these charges and sworn in as Supreme Court justice, many women were outraged. However, it was Walker's intersectional perspective of outrage that launched and would in large part characterize the third wave feminists of the 1990s. Beneath this fresh perspective of the issue one can see a familiar narrative.

Rebecca Walker expressed the anger felt by many women, and women of color in particular, upon watching the Anita Hill hearings. Her article for *Ms.* was an incendiary piece that spoke to the rage felt by this woman and many more of the continued injustice and even the "backlash against U.S. women," [29] exemplified in the way the hearings played out in favor of Thomas. In doing this, she claimed, the court had said that women's concerns would be silenced if it impacted the fragile authority of the male dominated system. In response, Walker spoke of the "sisterhood" of women, calling for unity, centered on this rage, to fight back and to become the "Third Wave." [30]

What Walker's article shows is an anger felt by feminists toward not just the male dominated system, but toward men. Walker drew the line clearly: "Do not vote for them unless they work for us. Do not have sex with them, do not break bread with them, do not nurture them if they don't prioritize our freedom to control our bodies and our lives." [31] Walker spoke of women and their rights as being "under siege" and thus her response was to fight back and push for their rights not just politically, but emotionally and experientially. The personal was political but it was also cultural, and the solution they sought was through uniting the "sisterhood" against those who oppressed them. Walker's piece galvanized many women in the 1990s, and the global women's movement of the second and third waves proved a powerful force, as can be seen in the achievement of the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

Beijing and Gender Equality Today

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was groundbreaking because it effectively mainstreamed the central shared agenda of most feminists and women's rights activists: that of gender equality and women's rights. It did this because it was one of the only UN resolutions to ever achieve unanimous agreement of all 189 member states. Therefore, it is significant to identifying the worldviews present within the narrative and agenda laid out in these documents. [32]

The influence of shared elements of the feminist can be found in both the Declaration and in the Mission Statement of the BPfA. The Declaration is the statement made by the member states that both acknowledges the diversity in women's perspectives and that while progress has been made in women's empowerment, more needs to be done. States commit to this, and express the underlying reasons for what they are committing to is based upon their collective belief that women's equality is needed for the betterment of society, that "women's rights are human rights," that the wellbeing of all requires men and women's "equal rights, opportunities and access to resources, equal sharing of responsibilities for the family by men and women, and a harmonious partnership between them" and a right to a woman's bodily autonomy, among other points. [33] Furthermore, the Mission Statement of the BPfA asserts that it is "an agenda for women's empowerment." Its aim is to "remove obstacles" to equality in all "economic, social, cultural and political decision-making" areas, both public and private, and calls upon the "principle of shared power and responsibility" between men and women in all facets of life. This full equality is called a "prerequisite" for "equality, development and peace." [34] This

therefore reinforced a definition of gender equality and its primacy as the precondition for realization of many other forms of equality and resolutions to global problems.

However, why do we not see gender equality, not to mention other areas of inequality and injustice, resolved today? Currently feminists and women's rights activists speak of the backlash against advances made toward these ends. [35] What they seem to agree on is that it is the societies and those in control of it, as well as individuals who buy into sexist policies, that prevent the achievement of gender equality, not the agenda itself. If anything, feminists today criticize the BPfA as being not radical enough as it does not address a multitude of gender identities or advocate more for the LGBTQI+ agenda, among other areas, and is not entirely relevant to the technologically advanced and climate affected state of the world today. However, if one explores the worldview that can be pieced together from the above works that helped to shape it, one can find that there is room to critique the worldview upon which the gender equality agenda is built.

A Critique

In the BPfA, the first paragraph of the Mission Statement clearly states the definition and agenda of women's empowerment and gender equality:

The Platform for Action is an agenda for women's empowerment. It aims at... removing all the obstacles to women's active participation in all spheres of public and private life through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making... [T]he principle of shared power and responsibility should be established between women and men at home, in the workplace and in the wider national and international communities. Equality between women and men is a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and is also a necessary and fundamental prerequisite for equality, development and peace. A transformed partnership based on equality between women and men is a condition for people-centred sustainable development. [36]

The BPfA reflects the definition that the international community has come to largely accept ideologically, and progress toward these goals have indeed been made. However, most women's rights supporters would agree that the goals in achieving gender equality laid out in the BPfA have yet to be fully accomplished, and that in some areas there has even been pushback against the progress that has been made over the past twenty years since the BPfA was adopted. This author would suggest that the achievement of gender equality and equality in human rights may remain out of reach as they are based upon certain fundamental elements present in the worldview of its most staunch advocates. The following is an exploration and critique of these elements in order to identify how they may be hindering the realization of the ideals of gender equality and human rights for all.

1. One's source of value comes from work and personal autonomy.

In modern feminism, as well as much of modern western society in general, there is a materialist or humanist understanding of the source of human value. The fundamental source of value, in other words, is dependent upon work or roles, as well as total autonomy as individuals in society. This was seen in *Vindication*, in Wollstonecraft's argument that women needed to receive a "rational education" in order to contribute and thus be meaningful to their society. [37] However, this was paired with an understanding of a primacy of moral equality. [38] This latter point was excluded in later waves of feminism when Marxism and secular humanism began to influence their worldview. In *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir wrote about the economically independent woman as a prerequisite for attaining liberation. [39] In *The Feminine Mystique* the central source of dissatisfaction and lack of identity was attributed to lack of meaningful work and lack of choice over their lives outside of the family. [40] In the BPfA, the need for equality was based upon the contribution of women to resolving other issues in the world. [41]

While this author will not deny the significance work can have in fully experiencing life through the cultivation of one's interests, talents and creativity, this narrative reflects a materialist understanding of value, not unlike the one outlined in Marxist ideology, which has been reflected in 2nd, 3rd and 4th waves of feminism. Furthermore, modern western society also functions largely upon a secular humanist perspective on the source of individual value.

As detailed above, feminism has been influenced by Marxist ideology and materialism, and so has modern society in general. This author would like to acknowledge that while belief in God or a higher being has been declining over the years, especially among the younger generations, [42] not all modern feminists or women's rights supporters are atheists. However, religion has become seen by most feminists as another patriarchal institution, in which men have held the power and narrative, and thus the identity of the monotheistic God is masculinized. This at the very least complicates women's ability to relate to God in the traditional sense, and thus a difficulty in sourcing their value as women based upon being made in the image of a masculine God. [43] Furthermore, even though people may believe in God, secularization of society in general has led to a tendency not to turn to God as a source of value, but one's role or status in society, and therefore it could be argued that regardless of one's level of faith, many women (as well as men) base their value on more materialist ideals.

CAUSA addressed the issue of having a secularized understanding of value based upon work, and thus their critique can be applied here as well. Marxism, based upon atheistic materialism, determined people's value based upon their output. According to CAUSA, this approach is fundamentally flawed because it does not acknowledge a God-centered source of value. The implication of this is that if one's relationship with God is not the source of one's value, one has trouble seeing the inherent value in others. [44] This leads to mistreatment of others and thus inequality can emerge. In the case of women, this means that "neither men nor women have known the true value of womanhood." [45] Therefore, by parting ways from this fundamental understanding, the chances of realizing gender equality, and any other equality, would arguably become more remote.

2. The source of gender inequality is men and the male dominated society

The basic assumption of feminists is that gender inequality is fundamentally perpetrated by a societal structure that was developed for and by men over the course of history. Therefore, it is the responsibility of men to change so that women, who have been historically marginalized and limited to their domestic roles, can have equal space in the public sphere.

In *Vindication*, Wollstonecraft spoke to the state of women's oppression as being the result of men's false and unequal perception of them, which was reinforced through the policies and pressures the society put on women, discouraging them from being rational rather than "sensible" and invalidating the need for women to receive a "rational education." In *The Second Sex*, the entire first volume spoke of how society came to be dominated by men, who objectified women and socialized them to be a certain way, oppressing them. Friedan spoke of the "feminine mystique" as a false narrative of what women needed for happiness. This narrative was created by men in a post-WWII world, who wished for the familiar comfort of gender roles in the home. Walker wrote of a system in which the "sisterhood" was "under siege" by a society that continued to side with the man rather than the woman when it came to a decision about justice.

This is also similar to the Marxist thinking that the source of people's alienation is economic, because both the points of issue are based upon materialist sources of worth. The CAUSA response points to the source of alienation as being alienation from God, rather than the alienation from the means of wealth. [46] Similarly, the source of inequality and oppression of women is not the man alone, but that both men and women are not in touch with their own source of God-centered value.

Furthermore, because people lack this awareness of their source of value, it is not just women who are adversely affected. Men are too. This author does not deny the reality that through history men have largely been the drivers and that this has led to systems that largely reflect masculine perspective, and that the majority of gender based violence has been directed toward women and girls. However, there is still evidence of the physical, emotional and mental mistreatment of men and boys as well, due to a sense of alienation and resentment, which at the very least weakens the universality of the above statement and thus leaves room to suggest that the source of gender inequality is not so clear cut.

3. Women's liberation will be achieved through combatting and toppling or transforming social, cultural, economic and political structures

While this was not very present in *Vindication*, many feminists do not consider *Vindication* to be a feminist work. In *The Second Sex* and *The Feminine Mystique*, the call to action spoke of pushing against the social order as it is, defying it. While Beauvoir clearly wrote that the source of conflict seemed to be a situation where "each freedom wants to dominate the other," rather than "mutually recognizing each other," the brunt of the blame was put on the male's refusal to see the female as his equal. [47] In doing this she called upon the unity of the sexes, but on the woman's terms, which would thus perpetuate the struggle and exposed the underlying assumption that before there can be unity and harmony, the existing structure needs to be deconstructed. The militancy of this struggle was further seen in the resulting political actions these works helped to fuel, such as the Women's Liberation Front of the second wave, and was also strongly present in Walker's article, where she clearly drew a line between "the sisterhood" and the those who put them "under siege." [48] While this assumption was not explicitly stated in the BPfA, which rather calls for "solidarity" toward this cause, [49] emerging campaigns have used this document to refer to what has not been achieved and even what has regressed to justify actions that reject the order as is and defiantly act outside and against the structure. This is currently seen in the plans being drawn for the Generation Equality campaign, [50] organized by UN Women, a UN entity.

The underlying assumption made in this thinking is that progress happens through struggle, a phenomenon coined by Engel as the materialist dialectic. CAUSA critiques this by asserting that relationship is not naturally in a state of constant struggle, where, as quantity builds, a sudden and violent transformation takes place and progress occurs. Instead, what is found in nature is that relationships are a practice of giving and receiving between and subject and an object, and gradual change or progress happens through the communication and harmony between the two. [51] Because this understanding is also lacking in the feminist worldview, the conflict between feminists and the patriarchy, or women and men, continues.

In summary, because the approach of gender equality activists is one that accepts that conflict is necessary for progress, it has fostered a continued sense of ill will, mistrust or hesitancy between feminists and men and patriarchal institutions. This inhibits their ability to move together as equals to co-create a gender equal society.

4. Achieving gender equality in institutions is necessary for resolving other problems in the world

In *Vindication*, Wollstonecraft reasoned that by allowing women a rational education they could contribute to and thus create a better society. In *The Feminine Mystique* Friedan discussed the detrimental impact this myth had on society's young people. [52] However, it was really in the BPfA where this concept was crystalized, stating that "women's rights are human rights." [53] This concept is continued in women's rights advocacy at the UN today, where gender equality is called a "cross-cutting issue."

While once again, this author does not wish to call into question the legitimacy of these points (women should have equal rights under the law, and women's rights are indeed human rights and should be respected as such) there are several issues to be addressed. First, practically speaking, the assertion that gender equality in all areas of society as a prerequisite for the resolution of all other issues is not universally compelling. By framing gender equality in this way, it competes with other interest groups, such as climate activists, who claim that their issue is cross-cutting. Along that same line, it can be self-serving, as it demands for decision makers to focus on gender equality first over any other issue. Furthermore, the moral relativism that colors the gender equality agenda today prevents it from being something that can be accepted by all as a universal truth. For instance, many gender equality activists demand that an essential part of gender equality is giving women the total right to make decisions about her body, which becomes problematic for certain conservative countries, especially when choice relates to the issue of contraception or abortion. Yet for many activists, this has become a major factor of gender equality, without which to them equality will not have been achieved. And so a stalemate occurs. Also, among its activists, there can become a sense of tunnel vision in which gender equality is focused on more in terms of rights than for its benefit to society. While both reasons for gender equality are given in the BPfA, more energy seems to go to the former rather than the latter.

Finally, the way in which gender equality is being addressed reveals an underlying assumption that gender equality is something that can be enforced. What many activists do not focus on is that fundamentally, the equality of men and women is in the way they *choose* to see one another as equal in value and respect. This is something that cannot only be enforced through laws as it has to do with transformative change on the personal level as well.

5. Emphasis on individual autonomy over partnership in the expression of gender equality.

This notion is expressed in *The Second Sex*, *The Feminine Mystique*, "Becoming the Second Wave," and in the BPfA. In each, equality is perceived as being equal in all rights and encounters with men, or sharing equally in all areas of society, both public and private. [54] Feminism has reacted to the oppression of women as actors only within the family by seeking liberation from those roles and identities and demanding equality in treatment and roles within and outside of the home. However, because both men and women struggle to see their value as God-centered but rather materialistic centered, there is a sense of fragility in value since their value can be affected by the actions of another person. This leads to a power struggle in which there is an unwillingness on either side to compromise, which leads to disunity and friction as men and women compete for the upper hand in decisions. As stated above, in nature, relationships exist through the give and receive action between a subject and an object. Through this, harmony can be achieved and the relationship flows naturally, where the two complement one another. When individual autonomy rather than unity is of primary importance in the understanding of equality, as in the above sense, this flowing relationship would not work. It is counter to nature and would result in conflict. [55]

Achieving Gender Equality through Heavenly Parentism

Despite the critiques made above, this author believes there is truth to the fundamental desire to achieve a world of peace and equality for all. The following will outline a worldview based upon counterproposals in the five above areas of the feminist worldview that can achieve the ends that women's rights activists and all people desire.

1. One's source of value comes from being a child and in the image of the Heavenly Parent.

A belief in God was something that was highly mobilizing in the pre-WWII era of women's equality activism. This was reflected in Wollstonecraft's writings, how she based all people's worth on God, and thus it was clear to her and others in her time that the God of Genesis saw men and women as equal. This reasoning was carried on in the abolitionist movement, from which emerged the women's suffrage movement. However, the post-WWII feminists intersected with Marxist and secular humanist worldviews, and just like much of the culture, moved away from a God-centered explanation for equality and towards a functional or egoism-infused justification for their liberation and empowerment. Additionally, as was mentioned in the critique, the issue of patriarchal influence on God as masculine has further complicated the connection even among women who believe in a supreme Being.

This patriarchal assumption of God as a Heavenly Father, therefore, must first be addressed, as this is one area in which CAUSA as well has not challenged. CAUSA was developed based upon a theological understanding illustrated in the Exposition of the Divine Principle, a central teaching developed by Rev. Sun Myung Moon based upon a new interpretation of the Christian Bible. However, in within the prologue of that work, Rev.

Moon acknowledges both that the primary audience was Christians in the 1960s, and that new truths would be revealed in due course. This is similar to the perspective taken by famous twentieth century theologian Paul Tillich that there is both an eternal truth and an external, temporal truth, and that the temporal truth is needed in order for the eternal truth to be received, and thus can change as the environment changes. [56] Therefore, in 2013, when Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, the widow of Rev. Moon and current leader of the faith movement they co-founded, began to speak of God as the Heavenly Parent, [57] consisting both of the Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother who are joined as one, this can be seen as a new expression on the eternal truth of God's identity, which better fits the environment of today. It is from this understanding of God that the following counterproposal of "Heavenly Parentism" is based. [58]

The reason that the source of equal value is central achieving to harmony and peace is drawn from the CAUSA manual's critique on this point in relation to Marxism. [59] When there is a belief in Heavenly Parent, humans can understand that their value comes from their relationship with that Heavenly Parent, as a daughter or son. Furthermore, when they feel their source of value coming from the Heavenly Parent, and feel the unconditional love being given to them through that parent-child relationship, their source of value is not impacted by another individual, as it transcends work, ability or intellect. When they see and feel their own unlimited value, they can begin to recognize the unlimited and equal value of others as beloved daughters and sons of Heavenly Parent as well. From this viewpoint, an individual could not wish ill will upon another person when they know that that human is loved by the same Heavenly Parent that loves them. Furthermore, discovering unlimited value based upon one's relationship to the Heavenly Parent frees people from the risk of losing their source of value and love based upon another person's actions or abilities, which means that no one's actions pose a threat to their fundamental significance as a human being. This is important as it provides a sense of security upon which people at odds with one another, such as women and men, can begin to relate more freely to overcome issues of temporal inequality.

2. The source of women's oppression is a lack of understanding in both men and women of their value and where it comes from, and stems from the original foundation for evil in the world

In the *Divine Principle*, it is explained that what happened in the Garden of Eden was the fall. This fall was committed by a man and a woman together, with the woman influencing the man to fall. Because of this, humanity and the proper order of relationship between the two parts of Heavenly Parent, men and women, was skewed, and history has had to work to return itself to the correct order of things. [60] Furthermore, this was the beginning of gender inequality, as because of Eve's "double sin," God has had to initiate relationships with male central figures as women were further removed from God. That, combined with the shortcomings of those central figures to recognize that they were to help connect their female counterparts to the Heavenly Parent and increasingly patriarchal environments, has contributed to the long history of the perspective of women as inferior to men. [61] This Biblical sense of the source of women's oppression was similarly expressed by Sojourner Truth, a former slave and woman's suffrage activist, who stated in a speech she gave in 1851 that one of the reasons for women's rights to be given was that "If the first women alone could turn the world upside down... these few women could turn it right side up. And men should let them." [62] This sentiment expresses an awareness that the source of women's oppression is tied to the original sin committed by a man *and* a woman, and thus both have a responsibility and a role to play in overcoming this conflict between the two.

3. Women's liberation and empowerment comes naturally when women and men work together to overcome struggles centered upon Heavenly Parent's perspective of one another

Something the first wave feminists held was that equality was necessary because God made men and women to be equal partners to care for the wellbeing of the world. Going further, the *Divine Principle* understanding of the world is based upon harmony and cooperation, or partnership, centered upon the Heavenly Parent. Therefore, drawing from the first point made, when all see their equal God-given value in themselves, then they can see equal value in others. From there, they interact with that equal value in mind, for the sake of realizing the goodness that dwells within God, as God is the source. This means that in the liberation of women, women are liberated and become the equals to men as both realize their own value and interact with one another, seeking to overcome conflict in ways that uphold one another's value, for the sake of solving the multitude of other problems in the world and bringing joy and satisfaction to Heavenly Parent. [63]

4. Uniting to resolve the global injustices in the world is what brings about true gender equality in practice.

In drawing from the preceding point made, the place where the points of contention between men and women's interaction is worked out is in trying to cooperate to resolve or achieve something fulfills their Heavenly Parent-given purpose of returning unconditional love with joy. Gender equality cannot be realized through policy on its own, but through practice and relationship to overcome the mistaken concepts about women and men. Therefore, while Marxism and secular humanism, among other worldviews that are present today, view the traditional family with suspicion for what they see as the oppressive reinforcement of gender roles, when centered on Heavenly Parent's perspective, the family is one of the most fundamental arenas in which the historical issue of gender inequality and injustice gets worked out. [64] And when this Heavenly Parent centered process of conflict resolution happens at home, it naturally spreads outward, to the workplace, to the churches, to the policy-making tables and beyond.

5. Gender equality is not an end in itself, and is expressed as harmony.

As CAUSA states, the natural interaction between all things is more a relationship of a subject and an object having give-and-receive action that leads to an outcome. [65] Such an interaction is characterized by harmony, not conflict. When there is conflict, the result is delayed or warped. Those who wish primarily for personal autonomy from gender equality rather than focus on harmonious interaction based upon Heavenly Parentism, therefore focus on a self-centered approach to relationship, preoccupied with protecting their freedom and power, rather than Heavenly Parent centered approach of living for the sake of the whole. As was previously stated, this creates conflict and is unnatural in the world. [66]

However, when one's source of value comes from the Heavenly Parent and is therefore untouchable and never decreasing, people are better able to honor and engage in partnerships in which "each gives their divine and unique gifts to the other, and each receives the other's divine and unique gifts with true awareness and love." [67] In this way, one's differences can truly be celebrate and enjoyed without worry about one's value being decreased. Furthermore, from this perspective of equal value, women and men can come to see themselves as on another's co-equal protectors and partners, rather than opponents. When one holds this viewpoint, a man can feel like a true man, without a woman feeling her value diminished, and a woman can feel empowered as a woman, without the man feeling his value threatened.

Conclusion

This exploration began with the state the world is in today in regard to the gender equality agenda. This time has become the era of the "fourth wave" of feminism. It is a turning point. The seeds for both worldviews have been sown, and it is up to this new generation to decide in which direction they will go. On the one hand, the resentments of the second and third waves can clearly be felt among the world's women, and justifiably so. An example is the Generation Equality campaign aimed at "pushing against the pushback" rather than evaluating why there is a pushback at all. On the other hand, there are promising concepts emerging, such as through the "He for She" movement, aimed at transformative actions and projects carried out by both women and men to change concepts about the injustice of male domination of women in some areas of the world. However, while there are promising arenas in which this alternative worldview could be embraced, there is a fundamental point that will need to be addressed: that of the existence, centrality and identity of the Heavenly Parent, consisting of the co-equal Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother. Only with this as the basis will the aims of gender equality activists be successfully and sustainably realized for the mutual benefit of all.

Notes

[1] Gail Hershatter et al. "Reflections on the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing and Huairou, 1995," *Social Justice* 23, no. 1-2 (Spring, 1996): 368. search.proquest.com/docview/231941987?accountid=41235.

[2] "The Beijing Platform for Action Turns 20," UN Women, accessed February 2020, beijing20.unwomen.org/en/about.

[3] UN Women, "Generation Equality: Realizing Women's Rights for an Equal Future," UN Women, May 2019. www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2019/generation-equality-realizing-womens-rights-for-an-equal-future-en.pdf?la=en&vs=3007.

[4] Between 1881 and 1922, four major leaders of the women's suffrage movement, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Matilda Joselyn Gage and Ida Husted Harper, produced six volumes that was collectively entitled *History of Women Suffrage*. The entire first volume of this history was dedicated to the works of Mary Wollstonecraft. Furthermore, in the introduction to the centenary edition of *Vindication*, written by the English suffragette Millicent Garrett Fawcett, she confirms Wollstonecraft as the predecessor for the women's suffrage movement.

[5] Mary Wollstonecraft, "Dedication" in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (United Kingdom: Walter Scott, 1891), xxv-xxx. www.google.com/books/edition/A_Vindication_of_the_Rights_of_Woman.

[6] Mary Wollstonecraft, "Introduction" in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (United Kingdom: Walter Scott, 1891), xxxi-xxxvi.

[7] Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, 211-212.

[8] Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, 87.

[9] Susan B. Anthony, "Is it a Crime for a Citizen of the United States to Vote?" law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/anthony/anthonyaddress.html. Accessed February 2020. Elizabeth Cady Stanton et al. *History of Woman Suffrage*, 1 (Rochester, NY: Charles Mann, 1887-1902), 115-117. archive.org/details/historyofwomansu01stanuoft/page/n12/mode/2up; Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, 211-212.

- [10] Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. *The Communist Manifesto*. Project Gutenberg, 2005. www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/61/pg61-images.html.
- [11] Judith Thurman, Introduction to *The Second Sex*, (New York: Vintage Books, 2011), e-book.
- [12] Simone de Beauvoir, "Biological Data" in *The Second Sex*, (New York: Vintage Books, 2011), e-book.
- [13] Beauvoir, "Myths" in *The Second Sex*.
- [14] Beauvoir, "Formative Years" in *The Second Sex*.
- [15] Beauvoir, "Prostitutes and Hetaeras" in *The Second Sex*.
- [16] Beauvoir, "Woman's Situation and Character" in *The Second Sex*.
- [17] Beauvoir, "The Liberated Woman" in *The Second Sex*.
- [18] Betty Friedan, "The Happy Housewife Heroine" in *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001). www.bookscool.com/en/The-Feminine-Mystique-125571/9. Accessed February 2020.
- [19] Friedan, "The Crisis in Woman's Identity" in *Mystique*.
- [20] Friedan, "The Mistaken Choice" in *Mystique*.
- [21] Friedan, "The Sexual Solipsism of Sigmund Freud" in *Mystique*.
- [22] Friedan, "The Sex-Directed Educators" in *Mystique*.
- [23] Friedan, "The Sexual Sell" in *Mystique*.
- [24] Friedan, "The Sex-Seekers" in *Mystique*.
- [25] Friedan, "Progressive Dehumanization: The Comfortable Concentration Camp" in *Mystique*.
- [26] Friedan, "The Forfeited Self" in *Mystique*.
- [27] Friedan, "A New Life Plan for Women" in *Mystique*.
- [28] It is important to note that whether feminism is anti-family and anti-men is a hotly debated topic, and a position that many feminists today would oppose. For the purpose of this paper, the fact that they are perceived as anti-family and anti-men, especially by more conservative parties, is more important than the reality, because how they are perceived affects the outcomes of the feminist agenda more than how they may see themselves. For a discussion of feminist versus antifeminist perspectives on the relationship between women's empowerment, family and men, see Susan Harding, "Family Reform Movements: Recent Feminism and Its Opposition" *Feminist Studies* 7, no. 1 (1981): 57-75, doi:10.2307/3177670.
- [29] Rebecca Walker, "Becoming the Third Wave," *Ms.* 01, (1992), 39. web.archive.org/web/20170115202333/www.ms magazine.com/spring2002/BecomingThirdWaveRebeccaWalker.pdf.
- [30] Walker, "Third Wave."
- [31] Walker, "Third Wave."
- [32] Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Introduction to *The Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action: Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, China, 4-15 September 1995* (New York: UN Women, United Nations, 2014), 3-4. www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/pfa_e_final_web.pdf?la=en&ndvs=800. Accessed February 2020.
- [33] Declaration, 8-10.
- [34] "Mission Statement" in *BPfA*, 16.
- [35] Mlambo-Ngcuka, Introduction to *Declaration* and *BPfA*, 3-4; UN Women, "Generation Equality."
- [36] "Mission Statement" in *BPfA*, 16.
- [37] Wollstonecraft, "Introduction" in *Vindication*, xxxi-xxxvi.
- [38] Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, 87.
- [39] Beauvoir, "The Liberated Woman" in *The Second Sex*.
- [40] Friedan, "The Forfeited Self" in *Mystique*.
- [41] *Declaration*, 8-10; "Mission Statement" in *BPfA*, 16.
- [42] "Members of Younger Generational Cohorts Far Less Observant Than Older Americans," Pew Research Center, Washington, D.C. (October 29, 2015) www.pewforum.org/2015/11/03/u-s-public-becoming-less-religious/pf-2015-11-03_rls_ii-13/.

- [43] While an in-depth discussion of masculinization in religion is beyond the scope of this paper, there is a large body of work on feminist theology on this topic. Some works include Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985); Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983). For a Unificationist exploration of this topic, see Ye-Jin Moon, "The Need to Recover Gender Balance, to Understand God as both Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother," *Journal of Unification Studies* 16 (2015): 65-128, www.journals.uts.edu/volume-xvi-2015/274-the-need-to-recover-gender-balance-to-understand-god-as-both-heavenly-father-and-heavenly-mother.
- [44] *CAUSA Lecture Manual* (New York: CAUSA Institute, 1985), 58-59.
- [45] Hak Ja Han Moon, *Mother of Peace: And God Shall Wipe Away All Tears from Their Eyes* (Washington, DC: The Washington Times Global Media Group, 2020), 254.
- [46] *CAUSA*, 63-67.
- [47] Beauvoir, "Conclusion" in *The Second Sex*; Friedan, "A New Life Plan for Women" in *Mystique*.
- [48] Walker, "Third Wave."
- [49] Declaration, 8-10.
- [50] UN Women, "Generation Equality."
- [51] *CAUSA*, 67-71.
- [52] Friedan, "Progressive Dehumanization: The Comfortable Concentration Camp" in *Mystique*.
- [53] Declaration, 8.
- [54] "Mission Statement" in *BPfA*, 16.
- [55] *CAUSA*, 67-68.
- [56] Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951-63), 3.
- [57] "True Mother Announces New Directions at Leaders Conference in Korea," Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) News (January 8, 2013), www.familyfed.org/members/index.php?option=com_contentandview=articleandid=4021:true-mother-calls-church-to-pray-in-name-of-heavenly-parentsandcatid=87:true-parentsandItemid=298.
- [58] For a comprehensive and heartrending exploration of God as the Heavenly Parent and why it has taken so long to come to this understanding, see Moon, "The Need to Recover Gender Balance."
- [59] *CAUSA*, 63-67.
- [60] Sun Myung Moon, "The Human Fall" in *Exposition of the Divine Principle* (New York: HSA-UWC, 2006). tparents.org/Library/Unification/Books/DP06/DP06-12.pdf.
- [61] Ye Jin Moon, "The Need to Recover Gender Balance," gives a detailed exploration of the history of gender inequality in relation to God.
- [62] Stanton, *History*, 115-117.
- [63] The purpose of creation is also central to the CAUSA counterproposal to Communism. See *CAUSA*, 199-201.
- [64] *CAUSA*, 211.
- [65] *CAUSA*, 210.
- [66] *CAUSA*, 67-68.
- [67] Hak Ja Han Moon, *Mother of Peace*, 250.