

FEMININE, MASCULINE, FEMALE, AND MALE IN THE INTEGRAL SPACE

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ABSTRACT This article attempts to deepen the conversation about Integral Feminism by considering the use of the masculine/feminine typology within the integral community. The article will examine how the coupling of gender (the social construct that masculine/feminine typology references) and sex (the biological construct) evolves over the arc of development. The article will propose that types are, if not by definition, then at least by common connotation, essentialist, and can lead to an unexplored, deeply embedded and intractable bias that strongly associates gender and sex (i.e., feminine is often conflated with women and masculine with men). The article notes that with development, the hold of this particular typology—and the tight coupling of gender and sex characteristic of lower levels—seems to loosen. Looking at development may help us to unpack the ramifications of essentialism (e.g., immutability and ahistory) and to resist a typological pre/trans fallacy in which unconscious essentialism invites us to fallaciously apply first-tier gender ideals to second-tier consciousness. Finally, the article envisions a more nuanced, developmentally oriented understanding of the relationship between gendered typology and biological sex.

KEY WORDS: essentialism; feminine; gender; masculine; typologies

The promise of the contribution of the AQAL model to feminism and to the personal, political, social, and spiritual liberation of women is enormous. A few feminists have already begun to chart the boundaries of this territory, listing the “limited truths” of a breadth of “feminisms” and charting the relationship of these feminisms with integral theory. Three of the primary resources for this article (Miller, 2000; Nicholson, 2006; Nielsen, n.d.) have explored this subject well and at length. Each of the authors finds the various schools of feminism to be true but limited, most centrally by their overemphasis on a particular quadrant and worldview at the expense of the others.

Interestingly, the list of “feminisms” used by the three sources is very similar (Nicholson and Nielsen may have benefited from the earlier and well thought out list composed by Miller). But because feminism is so broad, and because it so consciously posits the personal as political, it is no wonder that a given feminist’s experience may be outside any list. As an ardent feminist from the 1970s forward, my position would be closest to the radical feminist position (as described by the sources), but the work that most influenced me was the examination of violence against women, particularly Andrea Dworkin’s *Woman Hating* (1974) and Mary Daly’s *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (1978).¹

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The sources noted above link radical feminism to essentialism, but I am not sure I agree.² Still, these surveys are a good place to begin an exploration. Subsequent writings, such as those of Willow Pearson (2006) on desire and Vanessa Fisher (2008) on beauty, are beginning to use the AQAL model to approach specific feminist issues. Much of the rich potential of the AQAL framework is revealed when we track how elements interact. First, we will look at typology and then the interaction of typology and level.

Masculine/Feminine Typology and Essence

One overriding modality of addressing Integral Feminism is through the masculine/feminine typology, which is being richly mined within the integral community. To begin with, it is important to be cognizant of the unique power of this typology; no other typology appears to approach gender in its social ramifications.

Typologies collect traits into categories. The implication of a type is that it somehow transcends history, place, and culture—that there is something inherent that binds the traits in the type together. Elizabeth Debold (2008), in an exquisite article titled, “The Divine Feminine Unveiled,” challenged the notion of gender ahistoricity and convincingly argues that our current conception of feminine and masculine do not further the cause of liberation.³ Debold peels back our gender concepts to unpack their social construction. She sees Jungian archetypes as the source of the current revival of interest in the “feminine,” and situates Jung’s concepts of masculine and feminine squarely in his Victorian cultural context:

His ideas are so central to today’s cutting-edge psychology that I nearly overlooked the particular time and set of cultural assumptions that he was operating within... This is profoundly important: The Victorian era, like no time before or since, asserted that one’s gender and sexuality were the core of who we are (p. 45).

Typology is, if not by definition, then by strong connotation, essentialist. Essence is, again, if not by definition, then by very strong and common connotation, immutable. Development will change the ways typology is expressed (and, it is hoped, help it evolve from more pathological to more healthy expressions), but the common understanding is that it will not change the type itself.⁴

In their article, “Gender Essentialism in Cognitive Development,” Susan Gelman and Marianne Taylor (2000) demonstrate that essentialism is a cognitive bias with powerful implications for understanding gender. They posit that essentialist models tend to see gender as “discovered, biological, inherent in individual, unalterable...universal...,” while non-essentialist models tend to view gender as “invented, social...easily changed, transient...individual” (p. 172). They further state that, “...As scientists, we need to overcome our own essentializing tendencies, even as we recognize and study essentialism as a powerful reasoning bias that persists throughout the life span” (p.189).

Integral theorist Ken Wilber sees essence as mutable (Ken Wilber, personal communication, January 6, 2009), which may stem from his partiality for developmentalism and his lifelong appreciation for nuance. However, Wilber often makes remarks in dialogues (both audio and print) that lend themselves to supporting a kind of gender-sex essentialism. Thus, Wilber’s nuanced understanding of essence may be, in part, reflected in communities of integral practitioners, but a cognitive bias toward essentialism may also be part of the integral community’s application of concepts of gender.⁵ This contradiction may be key to the way gender and type

are expressed within the integral community: on the one hand, a tight coupling of gender and sex (between masculine and male and feminine and female) is disclaimed within the community, and on the other hand, gender and sex are often conflated in casual, brief, or offhand statements.⁶ There may be more than one reason for this: by definition, brief and casual comments may not be able to encompass the complexity of how gender relates to development. It is also possible that a tight coupling of gender and sex may be an unconscious, shadow expression of a cognitive bias toward a simple and un-nuanced essentialism.

Conflating Type (Gender) and Sex

Despite the ostensible separation of type and sex, they are often conflated. Integral practitioners routinely add the disclaimer that *feminine* does not mean female nor does *masculine* mean male, but this conflation is so endemic and accepted as to have become somewhat invisible. In his *Kosmic Consciousness* dialog, Wilber (2003) introduces the types module this way: “A classic example [of types] are male and female types.” A couple of moments later, Wilber adds:

If you happen to be a male person or a female person you can have any of these aspects in yourself. Males don’t just have masculine; they can have masculine and feminine. Some males have more feminine than masculine and it’s the same for some females. So it’s not stereotyping. It’s just two types of energies or awarenesses (disc 5).

Wilber uses *male* and *female* for types (instead of *masculine* and *feminine*) and then disclaims the conflation only a couple of moments later. But few are more emphatically developmentalist than Wilber and, as noted above, these shorthand comments misrepresent his fully expressed position and do not address the important nuances of gender and sex.

In Wilber’s more recent book, *Integral Spirituality* (2006), he uses masculine and feminine as examples of types. He titles an introductory section, “What Type: Boy or Girl?” (p. 11) and titles the later discussion of pathology, “Sick Boy, Sick Girl” (p. 15). Even if we grant that these section titles are meant to be more catchy than academically rigorous, the text itself explains feminine and masculine with a rather lengthy summary of Carol Gilligan’s (1982) work on the different voices of men and women. But Gilligan’s work is about men and women—not masculine and feminine. Wilber makes a logical leap from research on males and females to conclusions about masculine and feminine types. Because of the cognitive bias toward essentialism, the masculine and feminine types may carry the implication of being acultural and ahistorical. Gilligan’s research on females and males does not support that type of ahistoricity, however, so Wilber’s use of her research to support types may be contrary to Gilligan’s intent. Gilligan writes this in her introduction to *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women’s Development* (1982):

No claims are made about the origins of the differences [between female and male ‘voices’ of moral development] described or their distribution in a wider population, across cultures, or through time. Clearly, these differences arise in a social context where factors of social status and power combine with reproductive biology to shape the experience of males and females and the relations between the sexes. (p. 2)

Gilligan is clearly unwilling to ascribe immutability to women's and men's voices—social, cultural, and historical factors are key.⁷ The critique of the concept of a “divine feminine” by Gilligan's colleague Elizabeth Debold (2008) lends credence to the possibility that Gilligan's observations were not meant to be used in service of a type/sex conflation.⁸ And, given Wilber's strong and emphatic developmentalism, his intent is certainly not to load “masculine and feminine” with immutability either.

These shorthand, casual confluences of gender and sex are nearly opposite of Wilber's more extensive and nuanced developmentalist position, but they remain oddly compelling. The shorthand version of Wilber's position may be more demonstrative of first-tier views, while an extensive and subtle rendition of his work may point to a second-tier, integral, and nuanced understanding.⁹ Another quote from *Integral Spirituality* (2006) points us in a direction that may be truly representative of Wilber's position. Wilber notes Gilligan's findings that women's and men's different voices (he calls them “masculine and feminine voices”) tend to become integrated at the highest stages of development:

At the 7th chakra...masculine and feminine meet and unite at the crown—they literally become one. And that is what Gilligan found with her stage-4 moral development: the two voices in each person become integrated, so that there is a paradoxical union of autonomy and relationship, rights and responsibilities, agency and communion, wisdom and compassion, justice and mercy, masculine and feminine. (p. 14)

Significantly, Wilber calls the expression of masculine and feminine a function of level. The relationship between development and the coupling of gender and sex is explored at length below.

Other integral practitioners have conflated gender and sex. One rich source of the application of feminine traits to females is “gold star” integral practitioner David Deida. From his book, *Dear Lover: A Woman's Guide to Enjoying Love's Deepest Bliss* (2002):¹⁰

You long to be claimed, taken open, surrendered blissfully, so that every moment of your life is ablaze as the light of love's passion, an offering of your heart's devotion, and adoration of love's radiant blessing. (www.deidacentral.com/books.html)

These feminine traits (for example, of wanting to be “claimed” and “taken open”) are applied specifically to women. This short and out-of-context quote cannot be construed to represent Deida's fully expressed position, as Deida has disclaimed the conflation of feminine with females and masculine with males. It is possible that practitioners more familiar with Deida's work and workshops could cite instances where he applies language such as “claimed,” “taken open,” and “surrendered” to men and could show how this short quote is misleading. Still, the application of this kind of language to women resonates in a way that it would not were it applied to men. This resonance reinforces and naturalizes our unexplored essentialist bias; the language seems to describe the way women “are.”

Another rich source of the conflation of type with sex is the *What Is Enlightenment?* issue on “Woman.”¹¹ Femininity is discussed repeatedly in this particular issue, whereas masculinity is mentioned rarely, if at all.¹² The following is a quote from Wilber in conversation with Andrew Cohen (2007):

Men tend to relate more easily to freedom, and women tend to relate to fullness...
Men are agentic and autonomous, and women are much more relational because of a
largely biological set of givens including the hormone oxytocin. (p. 63)

Wilber and Cohen cite several traits in this quote, traits that are generally ascribed to the masculine and feminine gender *types*. However, these traits are ascribed to men and women—to sex—instead; gender and sex are conflated. The quote is set in the context of development only a few sentences later, but because of its reference to biology, it carries a powerful resonance of immutability. Our own experience is easy to overlook; a male at second-tier level is likely to have a very different response to testosterone-driven impulses than one at red altitude.¹³

As more evidence of the conflation of type with sex, one might ask what holds together the traits that are grouped into the category feminine (receptivity, community, compassion, intuition, heart, care, yin, that which is obscured, the moon, night) and the traits that are grouped together into the category masculine (agency, autonomy, focus, assertion, yang, that which is seen, the sun, day), if not a primary association with males and females? The grouping belies the ostensible separation of type from sex; if not the association with females, what binds night and community (both traits considered feminine) into a category?

The very reason for defining a type often seems illusive. Agency is considered masculine and communion feminine. But why are agency and communion so routinely assigned to opposing types by integral practitioners? Although they are seen as complementary, are they really polar opposites? If one actively builds a community (and thus tries to achieve a kind of communion), are they communal or agentic? At times, too, the assignment of traits to feminine or masculine seems random. For example, it seems that “relational” might just as well be assigned to masculinity as femininity, given the early history of men hunting in packs. Even in the present day and cross-culturally, it is a clear strategy in training men for battle that they must perceive, even above self-preservation, a responsibility and loyalty to their military brothers. Thus there are male and female ways of relating.

Some connections between the traits, the feminine type and women, seem, on the surface, nearly intuitively obvious, given the nature of female physiology. For example, “inner space” or “negative space” or the desire for “fullness” or “receptivity” are often associated with femininity, presumably because females have breasts (fullness) and vaginas (receptivity) and males do not. But if this connection is questioned carefully, it reveals itself as more cultural than biological or essential. A much better biological candidate for “negative space,” “inner space,” or “receptivity” is the gastrointestinal tract. The mouth’s “receptivity” is fundamental to life; the gastrointestinal tract is defined as negative space at the earliest development of the fetus in the formation of the blastula in its extension from mouth to anus; and the vagina is decidedly finite, ending at the cervix, only a finger’s length from the opening of the body.¹⁴

The consistent conflation of femininity with females and masculinity with males makes feminine traits appear to be immutably coupled with women and masculine traits immutably coupled with men. The immutability of the coupling of sex and gender is subconsciously endorsed but consciously disowned, and flashes of developmental vision get lost in these intimations of immutability. In his dialog with Wilber, Cohen goes on to say:

But in relation to the whole notion of egos and agape, agency and communion, I do believe that as we reach integral and what you call super-integral or post-integral stages of development, these distinctions are going to become less distinct. (2007, pp. 63-64)

Indeed.

Biology, Typology, and Development

Given the common connotation of “ahistoricity” and immutability of types, it is no surprise that archetypal traits are attributed to biological causation and a developmental perspective is lost. Biology, associated with the Upper-Right quadrant, is often viewed as the most ahistorical and immutable quadrant of the four. The Upper-Left, the Lower-Left, and Lower-Right quadrants seem malleable in comparison, and concepts of development, evolution, and liberation seem less appropriate to the biological body than to individual interiors, cultures, or even social systems. Upon further examination, however, we can see that this coupling of biology and type, this coupling of sex and gender, may be a function of development. At early stages of development, the hold of biology (Upper Right) is great and is the primary determinant of the social construction of gender. Men have superior upper body strength and thus became hunters; a component of masculinity is constructed as the ability to fearlessly confront predators. Women bear children and thus became caretakers; a component of femininity is constructed as the ability to be effective in a relationship.

In the earlier levels of development where gender and sex are inextricably bound, both women and men have evolved particular skills—what I call “traditional expertises.” Women have historically been primarily responsible for child care; this may be why they seem to have developed a particular sensitivity to relationships and skills for taking the perspective of the other. This may account for the “different voice” of women, noticed by Carol Gilligan (1982). Men have historically been placed in leadership positions and seem to have developed a particular sensitivity to independence.

Again, to quote Wilber as he continues his dialog with Andrew Cohen (2007):

We’ve realized that there *are* biological universals that even some feminists acknowledge have an enormous impact on social, cultural, and personal development. One of them is the simple fact that men, on average, have greater upper body strength, and they also have more physical mobility, because women can get pregnant... So from an AQAL (all-quadrant, all-level) perspective, the fact that men are out killing a bear and women are home tending the children is, at an early stage of development, almost a biological necessity. But as we grow and develop, of course, we have more degrees of freedom... [emphasis in the original] (pp. 61-62)

When we conflate gender and sex, we engage in an unconscious, un-nuanced, and naïve essentialism and we lose these “degrees of freedom.” We treat traditional expertises as though they are more natural to the sex with which they are associated in the early stages of first-tier psychological development. While we may disclaim the notion consciously, we often treat women as though they are “better at” sensitivity and caring.¹⁵

Furthermore, we treat the coupling of gender and sex as though that coupling is not loosening as we evolve, when in fact, it is.

Later in the same conversation, Wilber commented:

...it's really important to have a map of the prison if you want to get out...But neither men nor women should get upset by these things because they're just suggestions on where to look. We're not laying down laws—we're saying have a look at this and see if it makes sense to you. If it does, then you've just gotten an enormous helping hand. (2007, p. 64)

What is crucial to remember is that we are mapping a trajectory (i.e., what we are mapping is not static). What we are achieving, in all arenas of consciousness, are greater degrees of freedom and fullness.

It is also important to understand the deep pleasures of the coupling of sex and gender. This coupling is one of the fundamental ways we organize our world and a fundamental way we identify both ourselves and others. The attachment to the coupling of sex and gender is likely one reason why those at lower levels of development are so adamantly opposed to gay marriage—it is not clear in a gay marriage exactly how sex and gender are related, as either sex can play either gender role. We are also learning (at our own peril) how deeply disturbing it is to devalue the traditional expertises associated with either women or men. In modernist-dominant environments, which highly value men's traditional expertises of leadership and autonomy, we can easily lose sight of the importance of teamwork, relationship, and taking the perspective of the other. In postmodernist-dominant environments, which highly value women's emphasis on group consensus, we can easily lose sight of the importance of decisiveness.

When traditional expertises are devalued, there is a huge impetus to reassert them. This reassertion often takes the form of essentialism; we revalue a traditional expertise by naturalizing it and by re-emphasizing the quadrant viewed as the most essential, ahistorical, and immutable—the Upper Right. In other words, there is a rush back to the coupling of gender and sex. In modern environments where female expertises are devalued, we revalue them by asserting their essence, their naturalness, and their immutability; we cite pregnancy, child rearing, and oxytocin to justify the value of the social constructs of relationships. In postmodern environments where male expertises are devalued, we revalue them by asserting their essence, their naturalness, and their immutability; we cite men's superior upper body strength and the risk-loving characteristics associated with testosterone to justify the value of protectiveness. This leads us to unconsciously accept that the equation of women with caring and men with protectiveness is somehow immutably privileged.

Biological realities do not always yield to growth, development, and evolving consciousness; we need to eat, sleep, and eliminate regardless of our level of awareness. What *changes* as we move up levels is how we *organize and interpret* our culture and social structures in response to biological imperatives. What *changes* is our “degrees of freedom.” Ironically, the misplaced emphasis on biology that comes as we revalue traditional expertises drags on the primary strength of the integral movement—its developmental agenda. This emphasis on biology leads to a feeling of being unchangeable, of being stuck and helpless.¹⁶ Cohen commented:

...if they [women] are asked to come together and just be, they often experience a profound sense of panic. I've thought a lot about where this seemingly irrational fear comes from. I've tried to imagine what it would be like...to become aware, at a very young age, of the fact that half of your species has the power to physically overwhelm you at any moment. What would it be like to feel that vulnerable? (2007, p. 57)

I certainly agree that females grow up with this feeling of physical vulnerability and that, historically, we have organized systems and cultures around this physical difference between males and females. But it is crucial to clearly identify that much of this vulnerability comes from the way that we have interpreted and organized around biology and is not determined by biology itself.

A huge personal “aha” moment occurred for me around this issue in the 1970s in relation to an appearance by Arnold Schwarzenegger on *The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson*. This was early in Schwarzenegger's career, when he was known only as a successful body builder. A small elderly gentleman appeared with him on the show, demonstrating the use of pressure points and knowledge of the human body to overcome strength and size. He used a technique (similar to those used in aikido) to disable every show of strength Schwarzenegger could muster in an attempt to attack or overcome him. Even leaving aside how modern weaponry also levels the physical playing field, I remember wondering why every woman could not be taught these sorts of defense techniques from an early age. Clearly, it is because women are socialized to believe that physical differences makes them immutably and permanently weaker, and largely physically helpless in relation to men.

I am not under the illusion that any woman could overcome any attack by any man. The “aha” was simply that the biological gap could be circumscribed and made finite by development. Development would allow a trained woman to resist an untrained male attacker. That, for me, was a liberating construct. Caucasians, on average, are larger and stronger than Asians, but historical encounters between the races have not always resulted in Caucasian dominance. In racial encounters, the emphasis is on social and cultural organization, which radically trumps biology in many cases. I wondered how a different social and cultural organization might redefine the biological gap between women and men.

An emphasis on development, culture, and socialization was precisely the agenda of postmodern feminism, which, given this analysis, seems more integral in some ways than the naïve essentialism that may be implicit in some integral practitioners' frequent conflation of gender and sex. The postmodern project was to build, over time, a culture that eschewed assumptions about what is immutable. Although feminists never expected a woman to beat a man in the 100-yard dash, they did think that Bobby Riggs (who in 1973 challenged female tennis champion Billie Jean King to a “battle of the sexes”) deserved his straight-set defeat. That match challenged Riggs' assumption that the biological gap between the sexes was greater than the biological gap between the opponents' ages. King's victory circumscribed and made finite one aspect of the biological gap between men and women.

The difference between women and men can be accounted for in many ways; the truth is multi-perspectival. But naïve essentialism, which couples gender and sex and reifies typology, limits the vision of development

and has political ramifications. Even an integral theory studies colleague, a veteran of Deida's workshops, reported discovering, with great relief, that he and his girlfriend were not "equal." The choice of words may have been his or may have been Deida's, and it is possible the intent may have been to use the word *same*. But the error is inordinately interesting because of the tremendous political connotations of the word *equal*.

As we strive toward liberation, we look at all quadrants, all levels, all lines, all states, all types, *and* all bodies. But the strength of the integral framework is in its developmental optimism and its developmental agenda. If we essentialize the coupling of gender and sex, we build in a sense of immutability and thus create a drag on development. Even more difficult and subtle may be that we disown this sense of immutability and it becomes shadow material. The coupling of gender and sex is true but partial (i.e., it is fundamental to organizing first-tier consciousness), but the idea that this coupling is immutable is—importantly, crucially, fundamentally, and, I believe, tragically—counter to liberation.

Gender, Sex, and the Pre/Trans Fallacy

The bias toward naïve essentialism and the tendency to revalue traditional expertises by an overemphasis on biology circumscribes the role of development. The result is that the coupling of gender and sex that is appropriate and cherished at lower levels of development as an organizing and identifying principle is applied to second-tier levels of development as well.

As we develop, particularly spiritually, the hold of assumptions about our identity loosens. We take more and more sophisticated perspectives and our identity becomes freer and more encompassing. The identification of lower levels is not abandoned; it becomes seen as true but partial as we evolve. As we develop our ego/self line, identification becomes more free and fluid. What was subject at a given level becomes the object of the subject of the next level; we are able to "see" who we were as object. We attain freedom and fluidity as we evolve. A second-tier practitioner can freely enact amber, orange, and green altitudes without mistaking it for who she or he *is*. A second-tier practitioner enacts ever more free and fluid forms of identification and achieves ever-widening disidentification. The challenge, then, for the integral community is to achieve that same second-tier sophistication in regard to the coupling of gender and sex. One might envision a consciousness in which the traditional expertises (both healthy and unhealthy) of women and men were treated with neither identification nor repression; neither attraction nor repulsion. One might envision, too, a consciousness in which masculine and feminine were somewhat irrelevant; even polarity should not be naturalized as a given. The description *bland* is sometimes associated with "androgyny." In the highest stages of development, androgyny would seem anything but bland, as it is characterized by an ability to inhabit and express any trait, energy, or characteristic associated with either gender.

This is more than integration and balance; balance still endorses the coupling of gender and sex and the naïve essentializing of gender types. In integration, one balances and integrates the gender traits and qualities that *rightly belong* to the opposite sex. This is a step in the right direction, but a step short of freedom. We might envision an individual at a level of evolution at which gender and sex can be coupled or decoupled, where biological realities are known and acknowledged as an object (not the subject) of awareness.¹⁷

There are pitfalls along the path. For example, it is easy to think that a subjective awareness is a highly evolved and objective one. I might think I am fully aware of my orange altitude competitiveness and understand it as

true but partial, when in fact I am fully subject to it and firmly attached. I would argue that this same pre/trans fallacy may be committed in regard to gender. I may think that I have evolved to a transcendent disidentification with masculine and feminine, when in fact, I am applying first-tier concepts that wholly rely on the coupling of gender and sex. I may think of myself as free of this coupling and free to enact any aspect of gender, regardless of my sex, when in fact I may be fully subject to cherishing the orienting identification that comes with first-tier awareness. In other words, it is easy to get stuck in “include” and lose sight of “transcend”.¹⁸ Again, it is important that we show these cherished masculine/feminine orientations no disrespect; we must, however, know that they are true, partial, *and temporal*.

A Privileged Typology

It is important to consider the ramifications of reifying the masculine/feminine typology and implicitly positing the coupling of gender and sex as stable and immutable. One of the projects of the postmodern era was to experiment with the dissociation of feminine with female and masculine with male. The excesses of that movement repressed the coupling of gender and sex, which is such an important organizing principle of first-tier consciousness. If, in trying to redress the excesses of that experiment, we reassert the coupling of gender and sex *without emphasizing its mutability* and *without emphasizing development*, then we run the risk of returning to a prescriptive consciousness in which we endorse that traits deemed feminine are applied disproportionately to females and traits deemed masculine are applied disproportionately to males.

Our responsibility to the highest spiritual evolution of youth is hard to overstate. The masculine/feminine typology is a privileged one; it is difficult to imagine parents worried that a child is not “Enneagram 4 enough.” Parents have been known to worry, however, about a girl not being feminine enough or a boy masculine enough (rarely, if ever, the reverse). Historically, the political impact of the disproportionate application of feminine to females and masculine to males has been obvious. This typology has been used to justify explicit and implicit social organizations that disenfranchise and/or confine women (and, not secondarily, to socialize men toward willingness to defend the state with their lives). It is astonishing to remember that women have had the right to vote in the United States for less than 100 years. Part of the justification for women’s disenfranchisement has been the association of “femininity” with feeble-mindedness and over-emotionalism.¹⁹ The masculine/feminine typology is the only one with such a powerful political resonance.

The risk of the integral community’s investment in an immutable masculine/feminine typology and an immutable coupling of gender and sex (despite its explicit commitment to the contrary) is that we will likely return to prescription; we will prescribe that women will only feel womanly if they are feminine and men will only feel manly if they are masculine. This risk is profound because these cultural prescriptions become deeply internalized. The impact would be most sorely felt in the Left-Hand quadrants, where we would once again try to force some degree of a universal match between sex and gender—all in the name of integral.

Let us, for example, consider the concept of radiance. The concept is imprecise, but radiance is a quality associated with beauty; the capacity for radiance is considered a trait of the eternal feminine. Feminine qualities are applied disproportionately to girls and women, so if a person’s beauty or radiance is commented on, that person is usually a female. What does it mean for women and girls to hear that their culture applies radiance disproportionately to them, that the culture considers radiance essentially feminine? Clearly, they will not feel womanly unless they are radiant. How is radiance measured? Radiance is measured by the reaction and

response of an audience (primarily male).²⁰ This is well said in the postmodernist art criticism classic, John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* (1972):

[Woman] has to survey everything she is and everything she does because how she appears to others, and ultimately how she appears to men, is of crucial importance for what is normally thought of as the success of her life. Her own sense of being in herself is supplanted by a sense of being appreciated as herself by another. (p. 46)

In a culture that considers radiance essentially feminine (and feminine disproportionately female), women and girls grow up eliciting the male gaze as an index of their womanliness and value. (Name five important or influential women who *are not* traditionally attractive.²¹) More practically, a woman's training in eliciting and manipulating men's sexual attention makes her willing to expose herself to situations in which the gaze she receives is unwanted or dominating.²² I believe that repeated exposure to a dominating and/or violent sexual gaze damages a woman's subtle and causal bodies in a way analogous to what rape does to the physical body, and I also believe that this may be a primary reason that more women do not attain enlightenment.²³ And, I would add, true embodiment. This risk is small compared to the risk suffered by women who internalize Deida's dictum that a woman, "long[s] to be claimed, taken open, surrendered blissfully" (Deida, 2002). It is the "taken open" language that is the most revealing and, to me, the most disturbing.

Here, too, it is imperative that we be wary of the pre/trans fallacy. Certainly a woman can be second tier and radiant (one might even argue that she is at her most radiant when second tier.) She can even long to be claimed, taken open, and surrendered blissfully—a transcendent consciousness can encompass all. But in order for her to have truly transcended, she must have achieved a rather intricate level of awareness that is difficult to describe in subject-object terms. For men, disidentification involves the subject of awareness of a given level becoming the object of awareness of the next. Women, however, tend to be more acculturated to see themselves as the objects of *others'* awareness; they are acculturated to disidentify with their subjectivity. A woman's disidentification then involves the subject of her awareness (in which she sees herself as a successful object of another's gaze) at a given level becoming the object of awareness of her next level. When she can achieve this level, she can freely please the other without *identifying* with pleasing the other.

Moving Forward

How should an integral feminist treat the masculine/feminine typology and the coupling of gender and sex? First, this coupling should be recognized, acknowledged, and owned. Second, this coupling should be seen as subject to the transformation of development. Third, the integral feminist should be aware that traits deemed feminine will be applied disproportionately to women and the traits deemed masculine will be applied disproportionately to men. An integral feminist should be aware of the political and social ramifications of their choices and should, as in all other arenas of life, press their developmental trajectory. And fourth, the integral feminist should be aware of the pre/trans fallacy in all its glory: that a coupling of gender and sex that is appropriate at first-tier levels is mistakenly applied to second-tier levels, and that a freedom from this coupling will be mistakenly claimed by aspirants who have not really achieved second-tier awareness in this particularly fraught arena.

I believe integral theory will have a deep and broad social impact. It will eventually filter into the mainstream,

and our approach to the masculine/feminine typology and to the coupling of gender and sex will affect what members of the next generations will see when they look in the mirror. A worthy shadow work project is to be carefully aware of what we, as individuals, find arousing in the opposite gender. Our tendency would be to deem that trait as an inherent and immutable archetype of the gender. For example, women who project strong sexual energy through their subtle bodies (which is often confused with radiance) may be arousing to heterosexual men and homosexual women, but this does not mean women are naturally, essentially, inherently, or ideally radiant. Men willing to use strength may be arousing to heterosexual women and homosexual men, but this does not mean men are naturally, essentially, inherently, or ideally strong. Desire can easily cloud the application of the masculine/feminine typology.

As humans reach higher levels of psychological and spiritual development, they express any and all attributes available to them; the efficacy of clustering the attributes that define the types dissolves. Are autonomy and relationship, rights and responsibilities, agency and communion, wisdom and compassion, justice and mercy so paradoxical at the highest levels of development? Are the attributes that compose the feminine cohesive at the highest levels of development? At the highest levels, do the clusters that comprise masculine and feminine make sense? The nondual state is our true essence and as we deepen into it, all traits, types, and personalities are obliterated in that truly radiant light. Our personalities are—always and forever and truly—not-other; let us continue to question our attachment to masculinity and femininity, whichever our sex. Let us touch masculinity and femininity gingerly and with self-deprecating humor.

As an integral community, we must take responsibility for building new narratives and for their implications in all quadrants, levels, lines, states, types, and bodies. We will build stories that will launch us all into the still eternity of the nondual and bring us deep into the sweetness of the manifest not-other, our true essence. Ultimately, the deemed-masculine *free* and deemed-feminine *full* are just words.

NOTES

¹ My UCLA master's thesis in film (Bailin, 1982) focused on what I would now label a cross-quadrant reading of Hitchcock's classic film "Marnie" (in which rape and prostitution are central themes). The piece analyzes how a woman who may have been the victim of sexual violence would view a film depicting sexual violence.

² I considered myself a radical feminist, but not an essentialist. To me, radicalism did not imply ahistoricity. On the contrary, the debates that took place over whether transsexual "women" could be part of women-only space were an interesting index of radical feminism's essentialism. Some women felt that only biological women should be admitted. However, even this position, I would argue, may not be an indication of biological essentialism in that some women wanted space free of people who had been acculturated as men on the theory that they benefited from "male privileged" socialization. Having later had a very significant relationship with a male-to-female transsexual, it is hard to imagine that "she" benefited from sex privilege. Being in the "middle" of a radically sexually binary society is a radical oppression all its own.

³ Debold received her doctorate in Human Development and Psychology from Harvard University, and was a founding member of the Harvard Project on Women's Psychology and Girls' Development, which was directed by Dr. Carol Gilligan. Her entire article is quite rich.

⁴ Elliot Ingersoll undertakes a survey of typologies in his book tentatively titled, *Integral Psychotherapy* (in press). He concludes that, "There is...little to support [types], in and of themselves, as valid or reliable constructs." He cautions

therapists to hold typologies lightly and use them as clinical metaphor.

⁵ “Integral community” is an imprecise term. What I mean by it is a loose collection of individuals who read and engage Ken Wilber’s writings and listen to his audio material, including *Kosmic Consciousness* (Wilber, 2003) and dialogs on www.integralnaked.com, as well as those who attend integral workshops, salons, or participate in educational courses based on integral theory.

⁶ Throughout this article I intentionally draw on less academic and more popular sources (e.g., Integral Naked dialogues, websites, and magazine articles) from Wilber, Deida, and Cohen. I do this to draw attention to the more vernacular and simplified ways of talking about these issues that pervade the integral community both in its academic and popular expressions. Although any of these authors might, and in some cases do, have a more nuanced and integral view when pushed on matters, the fact that they are often caught saying things that risk conflation is my point. It is not enough that these individuals use footnotes and more nuanced qualifications from time to time. The fact that they engage in public conversation with “sound bites” that lack sophistication around these matters has an impact on our academic and embodied efforts to avoid naïve essentialism. Sound bites are particularly compelling and memorable.

⁷ I do not believe that Gilligan is fairly labeled “essentialist.” Noticing that women have a “different voice” doesn’t mean that the voice is their immutable. An understanding of levels introduces the possibility that although women may have always spoken in a different voice, it is not a given that they always will or that their “different voice” does not develop and go through identifiable stages of growth.

⁸ Importantly, Wilber notes that at higher levels of development the masculine and feminine voices become integrated. The function of levels will be examined later in this article. Kaisa Puhakka (2001) makes a similar point in her article, “The Spiritual Liberation of Gender.”

⁹ The plethora of level schema are difficult to untangle and rationalize with each other. With apologies for the imprecision of this endeavor, I will use the Wilber altitude rainbow and call “first tier” the levels from magenta to green and “second tier” the levels from teal to clear light, as proposed in *Integral Spirituality* (Wilber, 2006).

¹⁰ Suffice it to say that a lengthy commentary could be written on this quote alone. This resource may become difficult to find, as Michael Jasz, the manager of Deida Central (www.deidacentral.com), has become disillusioned with David Deida for what he perceives to be his promotion of a sexually predatory attitude toward women. I do not know if Jasz believes Deida himself to be predatory, or that Deida’s presence in certain organizations that advocate questionable “pick-up” tactics endorses them. Jasz’ site is titled deidaexposed.com. Suffice it to say that there are always multiple perspectives on any such “expose.”

¹¹ Also, suffice it to say that this *What Is Enlightenment?* issue merits much more analysis and critique than is feasible within the scope of this article.

¹² A subsequent issue of the magazine *What is Enlightenment?* (#41), “Constructing the New Man: Perspectives on Masculinity in the 21st Century,” takes up the subject of men and masculinity.

¹³ This is a casual shorthand Wilber uses to describe the effect of testosterone on men. Again, it is not representative of his full, nuanced position. But it does highlight how his casual use of language at times lends itself to gender-sex conflation.

¹⁴ An early developmental stage of vertebrate embryos formed by cleavage of the fertilized egg, in which the embryo consists of a single layer of cells surrounding a cavity (the blastocoel) (online citation retrieved December 5, 2007, from <http://www.biochem.northwestern.edu/holmgren/Glossary/Definitions/Def-B/blastula.html>).

¹⁵ I find the experience of this confusing. When I am put in a category of people who are particularly caring, I at once feel complimented but also anxious—as though I will be found out to be selfish and unwomanly. It may be somewhat like the feeling described to me by a few African-American friends who are not good dancers; they feel embarrassed to not be what African-Americans supposedly are.

¹⁶ Even the genes within an individual organism are now recognized as changing throughout its life cycle as a result of environmental influences. Thus even our genetic code is not static, set in stone, and immutable. See Susan Oyama’s work in developmental systems theory (e.g., *Evolution’s Eye* [2000]).

¹⁷ Interestingly, in my admittedly limited experience with transsexuals, this is not the case. Transsexuals seem highly

attached to the coupling of gender and sex; they endure much in service of transforming their biology so that it matches their gender.

¹⁸ As well, it is often difficult to know which position is truly transcendent. For some, my position appears stuck in postmodernism and ignorant of the eternal, natural, and transcendental truth of the polarity of masculine and feminine. For me, positioning polarity or masculine and feminine as eternal, natural, or transcendental is a true but partial overreaction to postmodernism.

¹⁹ Lest we believe this connection has past, this issue arose again during U.S. Presidential candidate Hilary Clinton's 2008 campaign when some questioned whether Hilary was emotionally stable enough to have her "finger on the red button." Her rival's (Barack Obama) emotional stability was not questioned in the same way.

²⁰ This is not to imply that this is the immutable definition of radiance. I believe that as we evolve we will redefine radiance. It is important, however, to not fall into a pre/trans fallacy in regards to radiance. A transpersonal radiance is much different than a prepersonal radiance.

²¹ Years ago I heard National Public Radio's Terry Gross interview the first woman U.S. Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright. Ms. Albright made reference to a painful assessment of herself as unattractive. I burst into tears wondering what level of accomplishment a woman would need to achieve to be free of this self-assessment. Contrast Ms. Albright's comment to that of Henry Kissinger, who was known for squiring many statuesque blondes about Washington, that "power is the best aphrodisiac."

²² Vanessa Fisher (2008) attacks the non-trivial problem of how we define and appreciate beauty (particularly female beauty) in a second-tier context. The intricacies of this fascinating topic are beyond the scope of this article.

²³ I will leave aside Andrew Cohen's contention that the women he works with "shape shift," "changing their position and morphing to fit into the different situations..." (Cohen & Wilber, 2007, p. 57). He seems to have failed to factor in that the women he works with work with him. It is my highly experienced opinion, having been the disciple of a powerful and sexually active male guru for 17 years, that Cohen's perceptions are much more relevant to his relationship with his women students than to women per se.

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