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**CLASSICS**  
OF DEMOCRACY

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# Looking Forward Together: Feminists and Edward Bellamy

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**S**ince the late nineteenth century a majority of American feminists have been drawn to the state to achieve greater equality. At the same time, however, by relying on the power of the state and especially on the power of the modern technocratic, welfare state, feminists have often found themselves supporting practices that threaten to subvert the democratic-egalitarian core of feminism. No episode in the history of feminism better illustrates or sheds greater light on this contradiction than the brief feminist involvement with Edward Bellamy's Nationalism movement, an indigenous socialist movement that projected so clearly and remarkably the essential features of the corporate, welfare state. American feminists were attracted to Nationalism, with its strong feminist orientation, because it promised to provide what no political movement had yet provided: the creation of a democratic society in which both sexes would enjoy the fruits of individual freedom.

The principal text of Nationalism was Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, written in 1887 in the wake of the Chicago Haymarket Square riot. This book had a far-reaching impact on middle-class thought in America and abroad, and con-

tinues to claim the attention of social critics, reformers, and historians.<sup>1</sup> By 1889 the book had reached sales of ten thousand weekly and by 1890 had ushered into existence hundreds of Nationalist Clubs from New York to California. The membership came largely from the swelling ranks of the professional middle class, people who longed for security and certainty as well as for social justice.

**A**merican Nationalists leveled a bold attack on laissez-faire capitalism and on competitive individualism, which they believed had hurled countless numbers of Americans into poverty and degradation and spread unstable conditions of life throughout the entire society. By making unfair use of interest, profit, and rent, by relying on the wage system, and by controlling established political parties, capitalists had both fleeced the people and produced huge concentrations of power unresponsive to the people's needs. Trusts and corporations had caused chronic overproduction and economic crisis, and had proletarianized farmers and workers. Nationalists were most alarmed by the presence of what they thought to be a foreign growth on the American body politic—class conflict and class dominance.

The Nationalist program had four basic features: it proposed a new society of solidarity and "brotherhood" based on the golden rule; it charted out an immense expansion of state power; it made heavy use of scientific organization and bureaucratic regimentation; and it conceived of a new economy of abundance and leisure, accenting material gratification rather than prudence and thrift. Bellamy expressed his convictions about social solidarity by means of an organic analogy that maintained that society resembled the human body with its interdependent complex of organs and functions. He thought that the old competitive order, dragging on under the weight of a chaotic "subdivision of capital," would inexorably and peacefully yield, like rivers to the sea, to the full ascendancy of organic, corporate capitalism. A single syndicate, assuming power without force or violence, would govern this system with the blessings of the capitalists who helped make it.

Fulfilling the logic of liberalism, Nationalists opposed everything that prevented the development of solidarity and order. Advocates of sanitary cleanliness, they argued that all disease, subversive to public health and order, had to

<sup>1</sup> For some recent discussions of Bellamy, see Franklin Rosemont, "Free Play and No Limit: An Introduction to Edward Bellamy's Utopia," *Cultural Correspondence* (fall 1979): 6-16; R. Jackson Wilson, "Experience and Utopia: The Making of Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*," *Journal of American Studies* (April 1977): 45-60; Dolores Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981), pp. 127-51.

be driven into the "sunlight." Politically, they excluded all parties and bosses, all linguistic and geographical frontiers, and, sweeping away sectarian religions, they installed a syncretic, all-purpose religion of humanity. They longed for the "unification of the world as one organic nation."

As part of their dream of "brotherhood," they imagined a private world purged of impulse and conflict, a world where love between the sexes "would wear a smile." Instructed in sexual truths and confessing all sins to each other, men and women would have no secrets between them. The "excesses" of male sexual behavior would pass away, since women, now economic equals with men, would have complete mastery over their bodies and over reproduction. Integrated into recreation and work and released from competitive necessity, the sexes would become cooperative and loving. Passion, obedient only to reason, would lose its power. "When our Elysium comes," wrote a female Nationalist, "there will be no such thing as la Passion." "Love will be without tragic overtones," wrote Bellamy, "a cheerful comradeship only of people who suit but do not adore each other. Men and women will be broader and less intense correspondingly in their relations with one another."<sup>2</sup>

Reflecting the general desire for rationalization that overwhelmed reformist thought in the late nineteenth century, Bellamy hoped that science would destroy the irrationalities that impeded the smooth, organic flow of personal life. Just as he imagined a public realm without "friction," so he fantasized a private life emptied of jealousy and guilt, a life without discontent of any kind. Although he was about to probe the past brilliantly to uncover the roots of social injustice, in most of his writings the enemy he sought to vanquish was time, above all past time and memory. For Bellamy, who believed that one day everybody would carry "portable memories" around with them to remind themselves of what they *should* remember, unhappy memories too often trapped people in a prison of anxiety and pain. Human memory, Bellamy thought, was, like everything human, troubled and flawed. "Memory," declares one of his most unattractive heroes—Doctor Heidenoff, a physician who has the skill to extirpate "inconvenient recollections"—"is the principle of moral degradation. Remembered sin is the most utterly diabolical influence in the universe. There is no such thing as moral responsibility."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *The Nationalist*, October 1889; and Bellamy, quoted in Arthur Morgan, *Edward Bellamy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944), p. 83.

<sup>3</sup> *Doctor's Heidenoff's Process* (New York: Appleton, 1880), p. 120. In this novel and in many of his short stories, Bellamy repudiates the past, while the *Duke of Stockbridge*, his first and best novel, examines, with great attention to historical truth, the class oppression leading to Shays's Rebellion.

This conception of solidarity and uniformity, with its attack on memory and past time, is closely connected to an immense inflation of state power. Building on the older Federalist notion of the state as the principal instrument for popular welfare, Nationalists proposed the full nationalization of production and distribution. An interdependent society demanded that the state both direct the growth of capitalism and insure the "harmonious development" of every person. Left alone and unfettered, male capitalists swindled and degraded everyone—other men, women, children, the sick and old. To eradicate this behavior, Bellamy's state employs all the people at an equal income level, thus ending the need for profits, wages, rents, interest, and money. It guarantees health benefits and education to all citizens. The state protects women from the rapacity of men and both sexes from the guild of capitalists; the sick and aged from the callousness of the young and healthy; children from the neglect and abuse of parents.

The power of the state and the dependence of the individual are both encouraged by the expanded role of mechanization and professionalization in the new order. Since "machines are truer than the hand," machines are everywhere, casting out the demon of human waste and stupidity. Similarly, professionals are truer than amateurs. No one makes music in the home, because "professional music is so much grander and more perfect." Awarded ribbons and accolades, privileges and immunities, professionals have a favored status, and none more favored than the physician, who seems to symbolize best for Nationalists the highest expression of "objective" expertise.

Industrial organization and bureaucratic regimentation structure work in this machinelike utopia. Arranged in armies commanded by generals, everyone between the ages of twenty-one and forty-five must work. The "strictest discipline" reigns over the workers, who learn "obedience, subordination, and devotion to duty," and have liberty of movement and choice only under special conditions. Everyone, moreover, must train for work according to ability and in the welfare of the sovereign public. In Nationalist thought we encounter, perhaps for the first time in American history, the unmistakable language of the organization man.

Moved out of the home and into the industrial streets, converted into cooperative industries in every household line, female work is socialized in the same fashion as male work. In conjunction with domestic technology, guaranteed incomes, and a bigger educational system to teach and care for children from kindergarten on, cooperative industries make women as independent as men. "There is nothing in the maternal function," Bellamy said, "which establishes such a relation between mother and child as need permanently interfere with her performance of social and public duties." Women belong in the armies, which Bellamy first segregated by sex in *Looking Backward* but integrated later in *Equality* (1897). Nationalists dismantled the sexual spheres and with them the conception

of women as the dependent and "religious sex."<sup>4</sup>

This commitment to full employment and strict organization leads us to the *raison d'être* of Nationalism. Nationalists, spreading the "gospel of good food, good clothes, good homes—good everything," envisioned a democratic economy of consumption, leisure, and abundance for all. In the future, they said, property will not be "invested," "only enjoyed, drunk, and consumed." This gospel determined their approach to work. Everyone is paid equally well for equally esteemed work, thus fostering an endless production of goods and "increasing the purchasing power of the people." At equal pay men and women can buy what they labored so hard to produce, doing away with panics, poverty, and overproduction.

Apart from these aspects, work has few charms, a duty merely on the path to freedom and leisure. As Bellamy put it:

It is not our labor, but the higher and larger activities which the performance of our task will leave us free to enter upon, that are considered the main business of existence. Whatever the differences between our individual tastes as to the use we shall put our leisure to, we all agree in looking forward to the date of our discharges as the time when we shall first enter upon our full enjoyment of our birthright, the period when we shall first really attain our majority and become enfranchised from discipline and control, with the fee of our lives vested in ourselves.<sup>5</sup>

Bellamy's vision of work was so bleak that he reduced work hours, cut short the period of industrial service, and extended vacation time. Distancing himself even further from the Marxist and romantic traditions with their critique of alienating industrial labor, an admirer of the great productive power of capitalism, he accepted alienation in factories and bureaucracies as an unfortunate *fait accompli*. With a kind of benighted innocence, he believed that people would work without bitterness because they could "look forward" to their "true birthright," never looking backward, never remembering the time of "discipline and control." For Bellamy private leisure and consumption, not work and production, are the locus of individual freedom and fulfillment. They are the rewards of labor, accommodating workers to the exigencies of the industrial system.

*Looking Backward* is a book about consumption. More words are lavished on "pleasure palaces," especially on department stores, than on any other institu-

4 Mari Jo Buhle, "Bellamy Nationalism and the Women's Movement: The Feminism of Economic Reconstruction" (Paper delivered at the Organization of American Historians, April 17, 1975), p. 16. Buhle builds upon this important assessment in her forthcoming book. On this relationship, see also Howard Quint, *The Forging of American Socialism* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1953).

5 *Looking Backward: 2000-1887* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1888), p. 196.

tions. Bellamy and other Nationalists felt extreme ambivalence toward the "mammoth department stores," symbols of markets newly flooded by commodities, overshadowing city life by the 1890s. They hated advertising. They loathed the lust for wealth that eviscerated small retailers. Yet Nationalists were also immensely attracted to the big stores; like other monopolistic businesses with efficient economies of scale and the capacity to bring "numerous employees together in an effective and harmonious manner," the stores, Nationalists argued, set the way for the rise of the Nationalist state. Indeed, many Nationalists believed that the department store, especially since it appeared to democratize consumption, offered the best model for the new state.

Bellamy wrote his book in 1887, the year Sears and Roebuck mailed their first catalogue. Montgomery Ward had pioneered the field three years earlier. In 1889 John Wanamaker took office as Postmaster General of the United States, launching his crusade for rural free delivery. Many Nationalists wanted Wanamaker to run for President. These facts illuminate the significance of Bellamy's book: they show how attuned he was to the main course of American economic and social development.

Consciously or unconsciously, Bellamy applied mail-order principles to consumption in *Looking Backward*. Every country town and big city has its own "sample" department store where commodities speak for themselves, freed from commercial hype, as they were in the early Sears catalogues. Since retail middlemen no longer exist, people don't buy in these stores, which function as catalogues. People simply read the labels on the goods, choose what they want, present their "credit cards," which everyone, including children, owns, and then order directly through wholesale entrepôts. Immediately, all kinds of goods are rushed to consumers through a system of tubes that join all places in a web of consumption, thus uniting the society in the consumption of identical products. By linking country and city, Bellamy realized the dreams of Wanamaker and Sears and Roebuck.

Nationalism shifted American values away from prudence and thrift and toward material gratification and consumption. We see this shift in Bellamy's ideas on memory, on technology and professionalization, and on the relationship between the sexes. Under Nationalism men and women will forget the restraints and deprivations of the past and make new identities geared to leisure and consumption. In no fundamental sense, therefore, did Bellamy critically challenge the direction American society was taking in the 1890s. However, he did conceive of his kingdom of Oz in the most rational, harmonious terms. Bellamy and his followers had no intention of pitching men and women into hedonism, which they thought distinguished behavior under the old regime. They wanted to channel and rationalize desire, to create symmetrical, independent human beings who desired only what they needed, abjuring all excess.

Women take to Nationalism," declared Frances Willard, powerful president of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and a Nationalist herself, "like a duck to water."<sup>6</sup> In the 1890s many American feminist leaders closed ranks with the early advocates of the welfare state, following a practice already marked out in the '70s and '80s. Feminists held positions of leadership in the Nationalist Clubs, founded clubs everywhere, wrote for Nationalist papers, and often outnumbered men in the local membership. They cajoled Bellamy into strengthening his feminist stance. Many feminists of the older generation of leadership, who dominated the recently formed National American Woman Suffrage Association, entered the Nationalist organization, among them Julia Ward Howe, Lucy Stone, Mary Livermore, and Lucinda Chandler.<sup>7</sup>

Younger feminists also adopted the Nationalist ethos. Alice Stone Blackwell, Lucy Stone's daughter, played a pivotal role in subtly broadcasting Nationalist ideas in the *Woman's Journal*. In 1889 she devoted a long article to refuting an attack on suffragists by an antifeminist who claimed, with some truth, that anarchism and socialism had infiltrated feminism. Blackwell denied the charge of anarchism; but socialism, she said, "in its best form is held by many excellent people," among whom she might have mentioned herself. Many months later she wrote that "competition" is a "wrong principle." "I hope to see it superseded by cooperation."<sup>8</sup>

Not all Nationalist recruits, however, were young or from older feminist ranks. Zerelda Wallace, for example, one of the most astonishing feminists of the late nineteenth century, burst into fleeting prominence as a Nationalist. The mother of twelve children, stepmother of Lew Wallace, author of *Ben-Hur* and a governor of New Mexico, who was also a Nationalist, Zerelda Wallace swept through the lecture circuit in the late 1880s with enviable vigor, speaking on temperance, suffrage, and Nationalism. In 1890 she delivered an exhortation on "A Whole Humanity" before a NAWSA convention, portraying for them the bless-

6 *Woman's Journal*, October 5, 1888.

7 A long-time feminist leader, Thomas Higginson, also joined the Nationalist movement, because "I have made up my mind that the tendency of events is now toward Nationalism or State Socialism, if you please" (*Nationalist*, September 1889). Other older feminist leaders such as Jane Croly (mother of Herbert Croly), Laura DeForce Gordon, Emily Collins, Augusta Cooper Bristol, Caroline Severance, and Frances Ellen Burr were Nationalists.

8 *Woman's Journal*, February 25 and March 3, 1888, and November 30, 1889. Clara Colby, editor of the *Woman's Tribune*, the second most important feminist journal of the time, opened her paper to Nationalism even more than Stone Blackwell did the *Woman's Journal*. She published innumerable articles by Nationalists, offered her readers a "social science" bibliography, listing the works of Bellamy and other socialists, and supported Theosophy, the spiritualist philosophy ideologically akin to Nationalism. Other, more recent, converts to Nationalism were Florence Kelley, Helen Campbell, and Imogene Fales.

ings of an "organized," "interdependent" society of "cooperation" and "harmony."<sup>9</sup>

Many important feminist leaders failed to join Nationalist Clubs, but their thinking did display the impact of socialist ideas. Elizabeth Cady Stanton had long dabbled with socialism. Like Bellamy, she learned much from Marie Howland's socialist novel, *Papa's Own Girl*, and even wrote Howland that she "would rather be the author of *Papa's Own Girl* than mother of half the children of America."<sup>10</sup> Fabian socialism, the English variant of American Nationalism, intensely appealed to Stanton and, when she went to England in 1891, she sought out the company of Fabian Annie Besant, the only woman, aside from the queen, whom she wanted passionately to meet. Upon her return home, Stanton's speeches steadily took on a more socialist cast, although she continued to articulate a staunchly individualist position. At one NAWSA gathering she declared that once women gained political power they would use their "maternal" gifts to establish "equal distribution among all." Women would "prevent extremes of poverty and wealth, secure clothes, food, shelter, and education for the whole people." "The socialistic and the woman's rights movement," she said, "are but equal throbs of one great impulse toward liberty for all."<sup>11</sup>

Stanton's daughter, Harriot Stanton Blatch, a Fabian socialist in the 1890s, digested and developed her mother's ideas. She condemned the competitive system, which, made to suite men, handicapped the power of "mother-love," the only power capable of preventing "race decadence." Like Bellamy, she argued that men had historically shown little respect for the "sacredness of life and the responsibility of its creation." They lorded and legislated over sex and reproduction, frustrating positive "race development." To reverse this trend, Stanton Blatch implored women to fashion a cooperative society where they would have financial independence, total sovereignty over "sex matters," and the freedom to wield their maternal power.<sup>12</sup>

Hundreds of American feminists, male and female, became Nationalists, including one of the most famous of all, Charlotte Perkins Gilman—while many

9 *Woman's Journal*, May 5, 1888, March 30 and February 9, 1889; and *Woman's Tribune*, April 1 and February 18, 1890.

10 *Woman's Tribune*, May 14, 1892.

11 *Woman's Tribune*, December 27 and March 7, 1891. For further evidence that Stanton turned to Fabianism, see Harriot Stanton Blatch's autobiography, *Challenging Years* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1940). "My mother," she writes, pleaded for "feminism, free thought, and Fabianism," p. 74.

12 *Woman's Tribune*, February 28, 1891. Stanton Blatch wrote in her autobiography that the "capitalistic system and feminism are at war." *Challenging Years*, p. 79.

others sympathized with the movement or pursued a similar socialist line. These feminists were among the leaders of NAWSA and of a multitude of other women's organizations from the National Council of Women to the Association for the Advancement of Women, the settlement-house movement, and the Woman's Educational and Industrial Unions.<sup>13</sup> Combining hopes for social and economic justice with the quest for order, harmony, balance, and certainty, these groups debated the virtues of orphan and juvenile asylums, schools for defective children, and special protective legislation for wage-earning women and children. They supported compulsory education as well as industrial schools and kindergartens to prepare everyone for "regular duties," "obedient" and "useful industry," and "special callings adapted to special qualifications." They backed the construction of cooperative industries and of kitchen gardens, schools for poor girls "in all branches of household industry." For a short time Nationalist philosophy gave ideological coherence to the programs of many of these groups.

**W**hy did so many feminist leaders, some of whom one would hardly expect to find in such company, choose to join the Nationalist movement? Feminists seized upon Nationalism because it upheld women's right to individual fulfillment and equality and treated seriously the political importance of women's domestic culture. Bellamy believed that industrialization had destroyed women's older functions, leaving them without enough work or the purpose or skills to live productive, enriching lives. For him, feminism redressed the balance broken by capitalism. He defended women's rights to social, political, and economic power. Rational love, self-ownership, unlimited access to all knowledge and all institutional life, suffrage, complete openness between the sexes, physical fitness and rational dress—Bellamy found places in his system for all these feminist demands. By proposing guaranteed incomes, an expanded educational system, general use of household technology, and cooperative industries (reforms feminists had wanted for years), he insured women economic autonomy. This individualist demand, above all the others, claimed feminists for Nationalism.

Bellamy's popularity with feminists, however, was manifoldly increased by his enthusiasm for the feminine values of domestic culture, inspiring Frances Willard to call him "Edwardina, a great-souled, big-brained woman."<sup>14</sup> These

13 These feminists included Rachel Foster Avery, Mary Putnam Jacobi, Anna Garlin Spencer, Jane Addams, Abby Morton Diaz, Augusta Chapin, and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps.

14 Quoted in Buhle, "Bellamy Nationalism," p. 12. In this discussion of domestic culture I have been influenced by Nancy Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976); Bonnie Smith, *Ladies of the Leisure Class* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1981); Barbara Leslie Epstein, *The Politics of Domesticity* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1981); and Nancy Shrom Dye, *As Equals and As Sisters* (University of Missouri Press, 1980).

feminine values, forged in part from the experience of segregation, profoundly etched in the lives of most women, gave women a feeling of unity, vividly demonstrated in such organizations as the WCTU and the Association for the Advancement of Women, which middle-class men exhibited less surely in their bonded fraternities. It generated holistic values—cooperation, intimacy, altruism, the capacity for nurture, respect for human life, and loyalty—which feminists thought would save society from destruction.

Bellamy agreed with many feminists who said, in the words of one of them, that the “feminine principle of cooperation must be brought into the entire social machinery.”<sup>15</sup> Women, according to him, were the “true socialists,” needed everywhere with men on an equal basis to check the male bent toward “acquisitive selfishness” and “centrifugal competition.” Bellamy agreed with feminists that female and male culture must be joined into an egalitarian harmony. And, like them, he invested domestic culture with a theoretical clarity by drawing on Comtian positivism and social science, or on what one reformer called the “feminine” side of political economy, much as middle-class men had earlier used the theories of Locke and Hobbes to make respectable and lucid, and to reify, the values of the competitive marketplace.

Nationalism tied the plea for equality between the sexes and individual autonomy to the cooperative tradition, with its roots in female domestic culture. At the same time, however, that feminists seized upon this side of Nationalism, they also pinned their hopes on the other side, which highlighted the role of a centralized, bureaucratic, managerial, and regimented state in creating equal conditions for all. Emphasis on consumption and leisure was new for most feminists, but they had for years argued that independence for women might come through the establishment of bureaucratic institutions where women would find positions on an equal basis with men.<sup>16</sup> Often less impressed by the dangers of dependence, they had become accustomed to appealing to the state as the swiftest means of achieving a feminist revolution.

Here again, Nationalism systematically elaborated an already realized feminist pattern. It was not only the only movement to do so, although it was surely the most radical. Progressivism, which inherited much of the Nationalist legacy, would reinforce this feminist dependence on state power. So would many women's organizations, some inspired by Progressive ideas, such as the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, the YWCA, the Woman's Trade Union League, the women's consumer groups, the woman's club movement—all groups that

<sup>15</sup> Lucinda Chandler, *Woman's Tribune*, June 7, 1980.

<sup>16</sup> On formation of feminist ideology in the 1870s and '80s, see William Leach, *True Love and Perfect Union: The Feminist Reform of Sex and Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1980).

went beyond their male counterparts in supporting major institutional reforms. More often than comparable male groups, they relied directly on the state to remove the inequities and inefficiencies of the social order, a practice that would persist so long as these organizations retained a loyalty to the feminist movement.

Feminists, then, had good reasons for becoming Nationalists. The question remains, however, whether they made the right choice in linking feminism, committed to individual autonomy and democratic female values, to the particular state socialism espoused by Bellamy. The answer has two sides, one affirmative, the other negative. Certain that a humane society must free, not inhibit, individuals, feminists wisely endorsed Bellamy's efforts to liberate men and women from a dreadful phase in capitalist history, with its sordid indifference to human misery, its erratic cycles, its worship of money as the only measure of human worth, and its oppressive system of wages. It was consistent with their democratic beliefs for feminists to defend the principle that everybody, on the grounds of their value as human beings rather than on grounds of wealth, should be entitled to the best medical care, the best education, the best political justice, and to a minimal, just standard of income.

In other ways, however, Nationalism struck at the democratic core of feminism and tended to transform women and men into dependent, not independent, human beings. Bellamy sought to replace older patriarchal forms of authority and order, seriously weakened by competitive capitalism and democracy, with more benevolent, paternalist forms. Resting on a bedrock of industrial technocracy, he hoped these forms would yield greater affluence and more individual liberty. Feminists shared the same faith in technocratic methods, the same hope that a cooperative society would free women from domestic constraints. The results, though, were deeply troubling and often antidemocratic.

Public life under Nationalism, its work and politics, is sexually egalitarian and cooperative, but it is nonetheless undemocratic. Bellamy and his feminist supporters took for granted that most work, performed by a relatively permanent pool of male and female industrial workers, must be disciplined and controlled to sustain high levels of productive growth. To be sure, Bellamy equalized incomes and required everybody to enter industrial service for three years. But he allowed only a small number of men and women "gifted" with special aptitudes to escape the armies. The rest toil on for the duration, stationed at their posts, to produce for the others. In this world, it is not money but professional training that brings with it undemocratic prerequisites. It is regrettable that some feminists, understandably eager to join the professional class and generally unable to obtain power through individual productive enterprise, saw no dangers in this undemocratic conception of work, a conception that must have given others pause for wonder, calling into question as it did the value of individual productive labor at the very moment feminists were extolling its virtues for women.

Bellamy's intention to increase popular participation in public life notwithstanding, Nationalism discouraged the emergence of an engaged citizenry or of any free political activity whatsoever. Bellamy refused the franchise to industrial workers. He argued it would disrupt "discipline and control" and induce workers to elect their generals—people who might serve the interests of their own workers and not of the "whole nation"—to political office. Bellamy gave the suffrage to retired workers and to such reliable and "objective" professionals as doctors, teachers, and artists. He eliminated political parties and interest groups. He dissolved the jury system, greatly cut back the size of the national legislature, and raised judges to a position of supreme power. Bellamy considered the state to be akin to an administrative agency, staffed by a carefully elected cadre of managerial drones, men and women with the expert knowledge to run things neatly, upon whom the rest of the people are utterly dependent. Such an aversion to ordinary political life, which feminists appeared to share, again had ironic consequences, for even while feminists were struggling to win the vote for women, some of them were supporting a technocratic system that promised drastically to shrink the size of the political domain.

Bellamy contended that these draconian measures in work and politics amounted to necessities if the state were to produce enough goods and services for the well-being and security of both sexes. To put it another way: people lost autonomy in the public sphere only to reap great rewards in the private world of consumption and leisure. As far as women were concerned, all the technological means and professional expertise of the society would be employed by the state to make them as independent as men in the private sphere. At least Bellamy, and the many feminists friendly to Nationalism, hoped this would happen. Certainly, fundamental feminist changes were called for, given the social and economic conditions under which most women lived in the late nineteenth century. But the implications of Nationalism suggest a different outcome from the one Nationalists expected, and one as antithetical to feminist goals of autonomy and democracy in the private life as in the public.

Bellamy's centralized, technocratic state does not free women and men so much as render them more pliant and dependent, more vulnerable to manipulation by the state. Nationalism does make people more secure and does satisfy their material needs, but only by conditioning them so that the memory of freedom and independence has been lost.

Feminists eagerly followed Bellamy when he made technology the tutelary servant of private life. Indeed, this was an age when every reformer glimpsed in technology and science the panacea for all social ills, the answer to poverty, the alternative to religion, which most reformers believed had come to bolster the status quo, relinquishing whatever chances it may have had to direct social change. Yet in freeing women from the burdens of child rearing, cooking, house-

work, and whatever remained of household production, Bellamy left them fully dependent on the technology, professional expertise, and mass-production facilities of the state. The only place he set aside for most women and men (an elite core of professional and managerial women and men were always the important exceptions) was in leisure, and here he could imagine no better, more self-determining, activity than material consumption. Again we encounter another irony for feminists, who took to Nationalism out of hopes it would deprivatize women. In Bellamy's state most men and women return to a greatly impoverished private sphere (the absence of poverty notwithstanding), potentially more deferential to the administrative organs of the state.

The same logic obtains when we consider Bellamy's excessive distrust of passion, intimacy, conflict, and struggle. Bellamy himself feared passionate involvement with women and the encumbrances of family life, echoing what had often been a female fear of intimacy and passion, which not only threatened women with unwanted pregnancies, but also left them more dependent on men in unequal relations of submission and dominance. As Bellamy's biographer makes plain, he wanted to safeguard his own separateness. At twenty-five he partly explained this fear by disparaging the duties imposed on men by traditional marriage and traditional womanhood. "It is the misfortune of women," he wrote in his notebook, "that they are bound up with conservative ideas and the preservation of the status quo. Hence, a man must hate them when he rebels. Then it is that love is a chain."<sup>17</sup>

The Nationalist state is the ultimate guarantor of sexual independence, freeing women and men from the waste of supposedly crippling conflicts and the dangers of romantic intimacy. In one sense Bellamy made men and women independent by imposing egalitarian integration; in another, he merely segregated the sexes from each other in a new form, loosening the ties of personal loyalty and obligation that might protect them from the incursions of state authority. Paradoxically and unintentionally, Bellamy combined the worst features of capitalist individualism—which continually undermined all relationships of love and friendship—with dependence on state power.

Finally, we come to the most dangerous bias in Bellamy's thinking, the one that places him most squarely at the center of the liberal, technocratic tradition. Bellamy wanted the state, through a pervasive application of science and technology, to relieve people entirely from the "disease of memory." Memory, he believed, would have no place under Nationalism, because the state would eliminate all scarcity and inequality, encouraging everyone to "live in the present and for the future." On the face of it, Bellamy's view of memory seems to mark a man

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in Morgan, *Edward Bellamy*, p. 84. Bellamy married his foster sister, a remarkably appropriate choice. For him the sister-brother relationship became the model for the perfect marriage.

anxious to save people from the distress of "inconvenient recollections" in order to make them free. In effect, however, he looked upon remembering, as he did upon all human imperfection, with a pity and regret verging on condescension. According to him, most people remembered matters that served no useful purpose and divided them from others: they clung to outdated cultural traditions, to religious prejudice, and to resentments engendered by past betrayals. Under the benevolent and expert supervision of the state, however, these memories would disappear; people would become rational, homogeneous, efficient, and productive.

This approach to memory struck the last blow at individual autonomy. In Bellamy's state, immigrant Americans and back-country farmers divest themselves of their richest memories, the very things that might strengthen their resolve to resist exploitation and the irrational use of power. Native American women, too, are cut off from their older traditions. By socializing what was left of domestic production and promising to socialize reproduction, Bellamy and other Nationalists abandoned female domestic culture, long an underlying current in feminist ideology. They integrated the feminine sense of solidarity, often democratic, particularistic, and adversarial, into a homogeneous community potentially incapable of critically reflecting on itself.

Well-meaning and dedicated feminists who joined the Nationalist movement were probably unaware that Nationalism could lead to such results, but it is nonetheless disconcerting to find them in Nationalist ranks. It must be said that not all feminist leaders, who often disagreed among themselves, chose this route to female emancipation. Some anarchist women, notably Emma Goldman, stood against the tide of state intervention. Several feminists, still conservative in their religious views, unwilling to adhere completely to a rational feminist line, found nothing appealing in Bellamy's secular perspective or in his rational hedonism, nor did they wish to see the home so thoroughly shorn of its functions.

Other, more complex, feminists, such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Matilda Joslyn Gage, two of the greatest feminists of the nineteenth century and magnificent champions of freedom, often fought against the centralization of state power, especially when it appeared to reflect the interests of traditional, patriarchal religious groups. Gage declared before the most vehemently antichurch organization ever to appear in America, the National Women's Liberal Union—which had Nationalists among its members—that "the centralization of power, whether in the church or in the state, must be continually opposed."<sup>18</sup> Convinced of the antifeminist character of evangelical religion, these women threw their energies against a contemporary upsurge of religious forces that sought to use the

<sup>18</sup> *Woman's Tribune*, March 8, 1890. Clara Foltz and Frances Ellen Burr were among the Nationalists enrolled in this union.

state to crush moral freedom and reverse feminist gains.

Yet all of these feminists had faith in technology to erase "wearying toil," and all of them turned to the state when it suited their purposes. An anarchist like Victoria Woodhull could say, invoking the technocratic state, "that what we must come to in the end is the scientific organization of society, under the leadership of and devoted allegiance to the best thought in the world consecrated to the highest uses. Politics, in the ordinary, or vulgar sense of the term, will give way to social science."<sup>19</sup> Conservative feminists were quite happy to see the state enforce eugenics laws, regulate sexual behavior in repressive ways, restrict immigration, and banish intemperance. Stanton and Gage advocated that the federal government institute a mix of reforms—a uniform divorce law, compulsory education, suffrage and equal rights, and a eugenics law. Gage, only a few years before she exhorted women to oppose centralization, said that "persons at all acquainted with the growth of government know that power again and again has been centralized in the United States to secure larger freedom."<sup>20</sup>

Feminists have and will probably continue to rely on the state. It is not indictment of some of them that they thought the advancement of individual freedom might be served by the state. Socialism and freedom do not have to be incompatible. As the feminist–Nationalist relationship illustrates, the problem resides less in the legitimacy of such reliance on the state than in how deep dependence should go and for what ends. It resides in how much women and men must forfeit of their private lives, of the rich variety of private thought and expression, to gain the fruits of material comfort and security. And it resides in the extent to which women and men should exchange organizing their own resistance to exploitation and inequities in schools, factories, professional institutions, and domestic life for direct appeals to state power—a practice that has, as often as not, resulted in complacency and indifference on the part of exploited groups and in the reinforcement of undemocratic political patterns.

Today the awareness of the dangers to individual freedom posed by state power has been greatly sharpened for feminists as they confront a managerial, corporate elite in control of political life and a reactionary, conservative community eager to place its hands on the agency of the state. By resisting full force these threats to freedom, feminists may learn, perhaps better than their predecessors, how to use the state to secure independence for both sexes and to widen the scope for a genuine democratic politics in all areas of American society.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in Leach, *True Love*, pp. 294–95.

<sup>20</sup> *Ballot Box*, January 1880.