Right now we are living in a male universe. The male defines the terms of our existence, the limits of our growth. He decides what is REALLY REAL and what is only the product of some malfunctioning, perverted fancy or perhaps "penis envy". He interprets the world to us and tries to see that we don't get at it directly. He has done everything necessary to undermine our individuality and contaminate us with his TRUTHS. The process is begun in infancy and childhood when we are completely dependent for our lives on other people and therefore in a position of extreme vulnerability. Our education is effected by physical abuse or the threat of it, or in ways which imply that noncompliance will result in exclusion from the human race. This education, beginning at birth, is not merely a husk surrounding a core of individuality. We cannot just peel off the lies and distortions and discover beneath a full-blown feminist or a fully formed person. Rather, it has determined to a great extent our individuality as it is now. Not only is our education defective but it is also insufficient for complete development. Our bodies are deprived of muscular development, our minds unused to self-discipline, our curiosity squelched and our creative spirit allowed to atrophy. In short, we are abandoned to humiliating dependency and eternal childhood.

THE FEMINISTS wants to function as a means of overcoming these distortions. The lot system, in assigning all tasks by chance (the tedious as well as the creative ones) requires each woman, with the help of the other members of the group, to overcome the deficiencies and distortions of her education, and to acquire some proficiency in every kind of revolutionary activity (speaking, writing, theorizing, organizing, and planning action). Since there are no leaders or officers, nor are these considered desirable as they involve exploitation, it is necessary that all members develop equally and to the extent that leadership in other groups would require. The group itself and the rules laid down by its members acts as a spur to each member - to learn, to create, to accept responsibility, to make one exertion more, to overcome oneself repeatedly and as a way of life.

Beyond the development of individual women, THE FEMINISTS was created to affect a revolution. We want to change the world. The amount of self-discipline and disinterestedness necessary to create a stable organization through which to operate requires total commitment of individual members. Those who are so jealous of their "freedom" that they are forever hoarding it, that they never use it, cannot be part of such a group. Such unconditional freedom - the freedom to follow whims, to react according to the state of one's digestion - is merely the tyranny of complete subjectivism, the dictatorship of one's physiology and not human freedom at all. It is the freedom to conduct oneself purposelessly. True freedom is the will to self-responsibility. It involves the overcoming of chaotic impulses not submission to them. A revo-
lutionary must be capable of giving herself over to an idea, of subordinating immediate needs and desires to the work to be done, of making a freely arrived at decision and sticking to it.

The commitment necessary must be stronger than the male's resistance. The male has had a protracted reign of power. He is thoroughly established and well organized. Although somewhat moribund, his institutions grind on automatically. To challenge his power requires a double thrust: First, with an idea, a new truth, a counter-reality which is the content of our revolution. Second, with the organization capable of effecting change. The male power complex is stable and complete. Through his institutions he governs every aspect of life. He has reduced human beings to predictable behavior patterns. Outside these institutions human life is unpredictable. We want to remedy this essential unpredictability without resorting to the method of males, without reducing people to ciphers. The only solution is the making and keeping of promises among individuals which clears a space in the future for individual development and guarantees an enclave in the enemy world in which power can be effective. That is, promises secure a certain future, and create a space clear of male intrusion.* Rules are these promises among members arrived at by free discussion and confirmed by the majority in the interest of future revolution.

There has been an objection that rules are an imposition, that direction and values must come from "within". But what can this "within" mean? A person can reason as to what end is to be sought, decide on the means necessary to achieve it and overcome inhibitions or reluctance to carry out those means, to take the steps leading to that end. But this "within" does not seem to apply to intellectual assent but rather to a "feeling" about how things ought to go - that a person must be emotionally prepared in order to accept the means to an end.

THE FEMINISTS do not ask people to be emotionally prepared. We ask that people do more than they think they can, than they feel from within. If one intellectually agrees with our purpose, one must assent to the necessity of some consistent means of carrying out this purpose. The group is the instrument through which we hope to achieve a new society. To be effective it must be continuous. It cannot wait on the feelings of individual members which are infinitely changeable. Rules create a continuity for the group, a standard of commitment that can be counted on at all times. The rules can be changed but this change must occur in the context of group discussion based on reason in which the purpose of the group is well understood and taken into account in every new judgment.

Another objection has been raised which is a variation of the previous one. It goes like this: that self-responsibility.

* For more on promises as a solution to unpredictability, see THE HUMAN CONDITION--Hannah Arendt pp.219-223
needs no rules and that we must cultivate this self-responsibility in our members, putting up with instability until this is achieved. But a person is a materiality; there is no dichotomy within, without. When a person feels submissive to God, let's say, he kneels as he prays, not merely to show his submission, but, by that very posture he develops and nurtures his submissiveness. Likewise, self-responsibility is not a quality which is developed psychically without material expression. A person who wishes to be responsible will discover, or, if necessary, create a situation which evokes the need for responsibility. If one chooses associates who make no demands, it is because one demands little of oneself, is aimless. We choose our associates and in doing so choose the direction this association will encourage. An artist, for instance, might choose friends who make few demands on her for conventional morality, but will seek out those whose standards in art are very high and exacting. A person lacks self-responsibility if she is unwilling to make herself responsible to others with whom she agrees in an important purpose. The whole existential problem is concerned with putting things "out there", that inner feelings are insignificant unless they are expressed, materialized, made effective.

Finally, there is an objection based on extreme individualism, that each person must be concerned with her own self-expression and that somehow if everyone does what's best for themselves at any particular moment it will all work out in the end. But the need for rules derives from the observable fact that "human beings often violate the happiness of others"* and that "therefore it is necessary that they have laws, i.e., conditions directing their mutual actions toward the preservation of both the particular and general good".

The rules set up and the penalties attached to breaking them are not imposed on the group, but are decided upon by the majority of members. Further they are necessitated by the purpose of the group—revolution; they are an attempt to eliminate exploitation among individual members. The rules are an acknowledgement of our own frailties and limitations and those which inhere in the human situation and are therefore a means of overcoming their limitations.

Pamela Kearon

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* IDEAS ON THE ORGANIZATION OF A SOCIETY—N. I. Turgenev, a member of The Decembrists.