

Gendering the digital body: women and computers

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Abstract As we live in a culture where “everything can be commodified, measured and calculated and can be put in the competitive market for sale, detached from its roots and purpose,” there is need to redefine our humanness in terms of the changing nature of science, technology, and their deeper impact on human life. More than anything else, it is Information Technology that now has tremendous influence on all spheres of our life, and in a sense, IT has become the destiny of our life. And this is where the real trauma lies. On the one hand, our being in the cyberspace opens up new and exciting horizons before us; on the other hand, we ourselves are changed and transformed in the process. The virtual world transforms human users to a problem-solver technocrat. The speed at which Information Technology is changing the way that youth around the world are socializing, playing, and researching, it is the common practice now for a 15-year old to go home and update their MySpace page, followed by playing online games, or looking up the new trendy YouTube video. These forms of technology are often the topic of adolescent conversations as YouTube, blogs, e-magazines, Face book, MySpace, iPhones, and iPods dominate the commercial and social networking market. Some researchers refer to

this phenomenon as ubiquitous technology drawing attention to the fact that ubiquitous technology acknowledges the speedy adoption of day-to-day use of technology as a global phenomenon. In this background, this article aims at revisiting the question, “What is to be human in the era of Ubiquitous Technology?” From a feminist perspective, one can still redefine the boundaries between femininity and masculinity in the context of IT and its impact on our lifestyle and thought style. While examining the ways in which our definitions of “woman” and “man” are shifting in this new communication environment, Elizabeth Lane Lawley observes that we cannot fix a single center from which the experiences of women with computer and communication systems can be viewed and that such fixity would only serve to deepen inequities rather than exposing and removing them. She finally submits, “It is possible to use new theoretical perspectives on the shifting boundaries of gender definitions to rethink a previously deterministic view of the effect of new technologies on society, and particularly the effect of those technologies on women. While the gradual absence of the subject from the field of Artificial Intelligence leads to the invisibility of feminine care along with social and relational nature of man, some feminists dismiss the biological sex distinction on such issues and encourage females to ‘imitate man’ and to become more aggressive, assertive and dominating” (Lawley 1993). What are the possible impacts of this new technology on the so-called feminine traits of our human nature? How far our definitions of “woman” and “man” are shifting in this new communication environment? This is what this article seeks to explore.

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