

Class 7a



**DISCIPLINING DRESS:
TELLING WOMEN WHAT TO WEAR**

Outline

- How secular society disciplines women
 - Defining the “western kyriarchal family ethic”
 - Identifying its strategies
- How Christianity contributes to the problem
 - Four problematic theological discourses about love
- Tertullian on disciplining dress
 - Background
 - Identifying his disciplining strategies

**HOW SECULAR SOCIETY
DISCIPLINES WOMEN**

How Secular Society Disciplines Women Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza

- Western kyriarchal family ethic

Kyriarchy is the interconnected, interacting, and multiplicative systems of domination and submission, within which a person oppressed in one context might be privileged in another.

It elaborates the concept of patriarchy, recognizing that multiple factors influence one's position of power (economic status, race, etc.).

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- Western kyriarchal family ethic

Such systems of domination "discipline" subordinate others.

[Disciplining] practices fashion the docile, subjected, and made-up body as the ideal body of "femininity."

They also serve to reinforce, sustain, and legitimate domestic and sexual violence.

Such bodily discipline ..., however, is not "forced" upon women. Rather it is perceived to be "freely chosen" for the sake of beauty and love, or to be endured because of fate and family honor.

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- Four-fold strategy of disciplining gendered bodies

1. Prescribes the perfect shape of the body.
2. Controls bodily movement.
3. Dictates the decoration of the body.
4. Eroticizes female submission and masculine domination.

HOW CHRISTIANITY CONTRIBUTES TO THE PROBLEM

How Christianity Contributes to the Problem Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza

- Christianity emphasizes love: of self, neighbor, enemy
- But ESF identifies four problematic features about love
 1. Texts like the household codes prescribe that love is enacted as domination and submission.
 2. Submission is required by the myth of Eve's sinfulness, which had to be remedied by Christ.
 3. Suffering and victimization are theologized as necessary and redemptive (women are saved by pain and submission; their pain has its model in Christ).
 4. Teachings on forgiveness/love of enemy lead women to remain in abusive situations.

TERTULLIAN ON DISCIPLINING DRESS

Tertullian

Background

- Date: early 200s
- Location: Carthage, in North Africa
- Background

Christianity is growing in influence in the Roman Empire and attracting women from all social ranks (as well as men). Tertullian is uncomfortable with the women from higher social classes, and uses this treatise to indicate that their behavior as Christians should be different from their behavior as pagans.

Tertullian on Disciplining Dress

Which Strategies Does He Use?

Secular Disciplining

1. Prescribes the perfect shape of the body.
2. Controls bodily movement.
3. Dictates the decoration of the body.
4. Eroticizes female submission and masculine domination.

Theological Disciplining

1. Love is enacted as domination and submission.
2. Submission is required by Eve's sinfulness.
3. Suffering and domination are necessary and redemptive.
4. Teachings on forgiveness/love lead women to remain in abusive relationships.
