

Something about Feminism(s)

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Abstract

There is an undeniable relation between sex and gender although overwhelming material of social structures and experiences could cover and diminish it. The contemporary divided epistemology of various sciences, related more or less with the issue of feminine, feminism and femininity, are based on a bogus and deficient concept of person. Their representation on this concept occults the non-generic tri-unity (between its biological, social and ideal sides) – of the human person, and hence the womanhood and manhood, femininity and masculinity, can't find their proper places and are dismissed. Woman's natural reality manifests itself through feminism at the level of social reality and is revealed through femininity at the level of cultural reality. These three aspects could be noticed throughout the history of humanity, women's situation being intrinsically related to their position towards the natural world, society and the intelligibility. Each epoch had its own way of manifesting and perceiving them. The non-generic tri-unity representation on human sheds a different light on the understanding of the phenomenon. New meanings are to be grasped in order to understand the dialectical unity present among its three aspects, starting from the real difference between women and men, by re-balancing such relations at a social level through feminism and re-thinking their echoes and ideatic foundation, in femininity.

Keywords: *feminism, femininity, human person, non-generic tri-unity, social evolution, humanism, ideology.*

As it is the case with other perspectives on human reality which have become (in addition) “isms”, what we today call feminism plays host to an elaborated system of manifestations which cover different aspects of the social system and human being. Although closely connected or, better said, inseparable in reality, these aspects which form the complexly dynamical and heterogeneous environment in which the human being is created and growing, must be

dissociated to understand the human reality and through this more general frame of the human being the complexity of what is called feminism. The non-generic unity of the human can shed a different light on the understanding of the phenomenon. *Woman's* natural reality manifests itself through *feminism* at the level of social reality and is revealed through *femininity* at the level of cultural reality¹. This model is based on the idea that what is called human being is in a fact a permanently recalibrated balance between three components from different ontological natures: bio-physical, social, and cultural one. All of them have their own structure and law of development and what we call human reality is just a fragile *compositum* of these. That means the human being is living simultaneously on three different ontological levels and because of this there arises the entire problem related to its study and to its understanding encountered in every unilaterally approaches. This is one of the main reasons of controversies about what human being is in general and gender studies in particular and especially the major cause of mutual misunderstanding of different standpoints. This article will try to sketch the framework for an integral approach.

The reality of feminist social phenomenon is ontologically grounded in the very existence of *women*. This is the main reason for not trying to understand it together with, for different reasons, similar phenomena, because we risk overlooking it. Although on a social level the discriminatory treatment was applied for both women and homosexuals for their sexuality, and the fact that the both views are intersecting in many points and sustain each other, the reasons for this is different. If the basis of the former was some sexual-gender cultural misconceptions, for the latter the discriminatory persecution lies in a narrow and, at the same time, different sexual-sexuality understandings.² If the former arise from the very (biological) nature of the woman, the latter are related with already social influenced personal choice behavior. The former is a natural biological

¹ What culture is and how it could be differentiated from other social aspects is a complex and debated issue. This article will consider culture something like Popper's "third world", which interacts and is in the core of any reality where the humans are implied but is different from its social manifestation, technologies (see John Tomlinson, *Globalization and Culture*, Polity Press & Blackwell Publisher, 1999), and so on.

² The reason these two phenomena are treated together is not just a "cultural mistake". All these three elements find themselves in "dialectical" dynamic interrelations. The social reality of sexual movements (feminist and queer) creates the common perspective of their cause while the contemporary emergence of these ideas shapes and contributes to the materialization of the former.

given; the latter already supposes the social elements in its structure.³ This claim seems to say the opposite to Simone de Beauvoire general accepted thesis “we are not born women (or men), we become women (or men)”, but only in appearance. Because the body reality, its physiology, already suppose some “natural pattern” participating, together with the social forces, on the building of the future of a specific human being. (The cultural information could sustain or act oppositely, as well). But if we don’t fall for extreme sociologic theories which allege the human being is only what the social forces make it, and accept the three-complex natural, social and cultural forces role in this nurturing, we will not only avoid the destructive rationalistic disembodiment of modern era, but also restore the lost human-nature nexus. There is an undeniable relation between sex and gender⁴ although overwhelming material of social structures and experiences could cover and diminish it. The scientists have already gathered a large collection of evidence that some psychological sex differences are biologically grounded (sex hormones, for example, have major organizational and triggering effects on the human brain). The anatomical facts foster the social gender relations in a more important degree than physical similarities could cover them, because of the biological necessity of reproduction. But, this does not mean the dualistic structure of gender domination should forever perpetuate, as Jeanne Flax wants to suggest.⁵ Women are not condemned to be forever the symbol of the body (and consequently the men symbol of the mind) just because of their different biological function.

This view over the gender relation was maintained by the *sociobiology*, *evolutionary biology* or *psychology* that share the same *biological essentialism’s* supposition: the belief that sexual difference is inherent in women’s and men’s biological constitution, and so “massively underestimate the contribution of culture and history to this interaction.”⁶ Nowadays, more and more biologists have

³ Of course someone who follows only the contemporary fashion paradigm (every way to understand the things, including the inanimate things, is a social construct) could object that this “natural biological” reality of the woman contains already a social element, but we must take care not to mistaken the way things are for the way they are given (although it is possible to not be able to see them how they really are).

⁴ See, for example, Mary Daly *Gyn/Ecology. The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*, The Women’s Press, London, 1979, p. 31.

⁵ Jeanne Flax, “Postmodernism and Gender Relations in feminist Theory,” in *Feminism/Postmodernism*, ed. Linda Nicholson, Routledge, New York, 1990, p. 82.

⁶ Sandra Lipsitz Bem, *The Lenses of Gender: Transforming the Debate on Sexual Inequality*, Yale University Press, 1993, p. 22.

already recognized the power of social systems. “Our behavior is caused neither by biology nor by culture, because we are a product of both.”⁷

The overlapping between these two phenomenon was naturally possible for two main reasons: on a social level because of the persecution and the discriminatory treatment of homosexuals and on an understanding level because, the difference between sex (sexual behavior) and gender (biological body pattern) was blurred by the modern transformation of sexuality (and the body has always been the sexuality domain): plastic sexuality.⁸

The changes in intimate relations such as instability of marriage, prevalence of divorce and remarriage, separation between sexuality and reproduction which entails the fertility decline and freedom from heterosexuality, women’s and homosexuals’ struggles for sexual freedom, and the growth in the number of step and blended-families or headed by women, and other “alternative life styles” or household arrangements reshape the peoples attitude and understanding about sexuality. The more “democratic” and “desirable alternatives” replaced the “old-fashioned” ones: “plastic sexuality” replaced sexuality harnessed to reproduction, “confluent love”, love based on addictive or co-dependent relationships and the “pure relationship” substitute the rights and obligations of traditional marriage, as Giddens claims. The changes in the “social realities” reshape themselves the biological base of sexuality. Its claim is partially correct because is underlain by the “plastic sexuality” thesis, in the larger frame of the postmodern hypothesis of the self that is creating itself and by itself using its very own narratives. But although the discourse becomes constitutive part of the social reality depicted by it and the self is continuously creating by itself, this does not mean it can create itself in *any manner* it wants, especially because it has no control over the circumstances and the material (bio-physical, social and ideatic which affected its own creation). As Marx noticed, human beings could make their history (and in extension, their own history of the self, which, in fact is what the self is), but they do not make it under conditions of their own choosing. We author our own destiny, but never fulfill our visions because we are cultural beings caught in the middle of forces that exceed us at the same time they foster us. So, if the self is a ceaselessly fluctuating process, forever in a state of becoming we are following Lacan and negate the Cartesian certitude because “our sense of subjectivity, our sense of what it means to be human, is necessarily troubled, as one cannot step outside of oneself

⁷ R. Hinde, “A biologist looks at anthropology,” *Man* (now *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*) 26, 1991, p. 604.

⁸ The meaning and political significance was always close related.

or one's time and state with an unquestioning sense of certainty «I am that.» To this effect, (...): «I think where I am not, therefore I am where I do not think.»⁹; or accept the weak version “I think somewhere therefore I think where I am” that means my thinking will never be pure think because I will never be *only* thinking. The ontological presuppositions are encapsulated in the language from the beginning. The self-consciousness is initially neither abstract nor plastic (and maybe never in totality).

Plastic sexuality emerged from the separation of sexuality from procreation and, as any individual attribute, is a part of its changing definition of the self. That means it is something that individuals can change, develop, or project at the same time with its changing self, which has broken the bounds of traditional institutional expectations. “At a more personal level, however, the term «gay» brought an ever-wider reference to sexuality as to a quality or property of the self. The person «has» its own sexuality, gay or of other nature, which can be perceived and developed reflexively. Thus, sexuality goes into a state of free floating; at the same time in which «gay» is something you can «be» and can «find out to be», sexuality opens itself to more objects.”¹⁰

As the transcendental view teaches us, what we think is not what it is but just what we could think about what it is. Thus, the “plastic sexuality” is our own mode of conceiving it and is not the sexuality in itself. The distance between what we think about something and what it is remains and it is a mistake to overlap them arbitrarily. The result could be only a perpetual unhappy consciousness because of this discrepancy between what it is and what we consider it to be. Moreover, the triumph of individualism and pursuit of self-centered aims to the detriment of responsibility towards one's children, spouse, parents, and the community has affected men and women in different manners. Men become single, while women become single mothers.¹¹ The fight against what we are is lost from the beginning.

Secondly, on a social level, this reality of women is manifested in the form of feminism. Like any other social ideation-process this is an “-ism”. For any social *status quo* an “-ism” means two complementary things – an ideology and a utopia. Usually, the studies on this issue consider these two forms of social

⁹ Peter Hobbs, “The Image Before Me”, *Invisible Culture - An Electronic Journal for Visual Culture*, Issue 7: Casting Doubt, 2004, http://www.rochester.edu/in_visible_culture/Issue_7/hobbs/.

¹⁰ Anthony Giddens, *Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love, and Eroticism in Modern Societies* (Transformarea intimității), Antet Publ. House, Bucharest, 2000, p. 18.

¹¹ Barbara Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men. American Dreams of the Flight from Commitment*, Anchor Books, New York, 1983, p. 199.

imagery only in their totalitarian form, but every social group develops different forms more or less noticeably and could be characterized by its own ideology and utopia. Equally they are necessary both for maintaining their identity and developing their potential social being.

This becomes obvious if we surpass the Mannheim view over ideology and utopia. The main problem in understanding their place and role in society is the social misconception about them. Most people on most occasions (we could say always) are on the grip of ideological and utopian distortions.¹² These natural tendencies of defending the *status quo* and contesting it are described as dire distortions of reality. But, distorted experience is not equivalent to total error or nonsense. It is just the historically form of people understanding using values and knowledge from partial and particular positions.

On the most general level, every period in history was characterized by ideas, which, even if transcending the existing order, in the sense they are pure ideas and not just depiction or reflection of social reality, they shape, and form the social *weltanschauung* of that Age. "In the course of history, man has occupied himself more frequently with objects transcending his scope of existence than with those immanent in his existence and, despite this, actual and concrete forms of social life have been built upon the basis of such «ideological» states of mind which were incongruent with reality."¹³ They are the ideology of that epoch. Simultaneously, part of these ideas could have crystallized in a system of understanding, a possible alternative *Weltanschauung* tends to shatter, either partially or wholly, the order of things prevailing at the time. "Every age allows to arise (in differently located social groups) those ideas and values in which are contained in condensed form the unrealized and the unfulfilled tendencies which represent the needs of each age. These intellectual elements then become the explosive material for bursting the limits of the existing order. The existing order gives birth to utopias which in turn break the bonds of the existing order, leaving it free to develop in the direction of the next order of existence."¹⁴ They form the utopia of this epoch. The ideology is the one which gives stability and coherence for any existent social system or group, while the utopia is the one which challenges it to change and develop. Usually, within the social dynamics the ideology characterizes the dominant group, while the utopian the dominated

¹² Vincent Geoghegan, "Ideology and Utopia", *Journal of Political Ideologies*, Vol. 9, No. 2, June 2004, pp. 123-138.

¹³ Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia. An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*, Lund Humphries, London · Bradford, 1954, p. 173.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 179.

one/ones. “What in a given case appears as utopian, and what as ideological, is dependent, essentially, on the stage and degree of reality to which one applies this standard. It is clear that those social strata which represent the prevailing social and intellectual order will experience as reality that structure of relationships of which they are the bearers, while the groups driven into opposition to the present order will be oriented towards the first stirrings of the social order for which they are striving and which is being realized through them.”¹⁵ In parallel both ideological and utopian elements underlie any political social phenomenon whichever is a movement of rising social strata or the preservation of the social establishment. *Any social group* distinguishes through its own ideology (identity of its being) and utopia (its desired being). The attempt to distinguish what is utopian and what ideological in contemporary conjunctions is extremely difficult, because of their dialectical interplay and their functions¹⁶: the distortion – dissimulation function (identified by Marx): any ideology produces an overturned image of reality¹⁷; legitimacy – the particular ideology of a group has this propriety to legitimate its existent power relations; and, the third deeper function which, in fact, underlays the first two – integration function. It is the ground of the maintaining, actualization and even structuring the specific identity of that collectivity.

Unlike ideology, the utopia questions over the very reason of the reality. If the ideology is defending the *status quo*, the utopia is “the expression of all potentialities of a group which are repressed by the existent order.”¹⁸ Unlike ideology, utopia questions the very reason of being of reality. If ideology is the one defending the existing *status quo*, utopia is the contention. While ideology integrates, utopia does exactly the opposite, if ideology legitimates (the existing) authority, utopia doubts each and every possibility of power manifestation, and if ideology reinforces real life through dissimulation and lie, utopia leads to the loss of the very reality in favor of perfectionist schemes.¹⁹

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 176.

¹⁶ Paul Ricoeur, *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics, II*, Humanitas, Bucharest, 1995, pp. 274-286.

¹⁷ Overturned doesn't mean wrong while there is and could not be a “true”, accurate imagine of reality. This first level of ideology is contradictory since it admits the existence, in an absolute manner, of social *praxis*, a kind of “real life of the people” previous to human conscious and its representations “a reflection of this life in their imagination”. It is not possible for real life to produce any imagine at all, let alone an overturned one. The action in itself it is infiltrated more or less by the imaginarieness from the beginning

¹⁸ Paul Ricoeur, *op. cit.*, p. 282.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 282-285.

Any social group of any nature would be having its own ideology and utopia within the frame of the meta-ideologies and meta-utopias that history recognizes as such. The “microphysics of the power” is stronger and lasts more than its form at the macro levels, and at the same time the power is intimately related with knowledge. It seems that an ideology, unless some catastrophic phenomena happen, is not changed by any of the utopias which blossom within it, until it exhausts all its possibilities and becomes ossified, unable to incorporate and fostering those in its proper way. So, the main problem of any political consistent movement, – any “-ism” – is the attitude of the dominant group, because it does not adopt, in all cases, an open hostile attitude towards these orientations. Because “they have always aimed to control those situational transcendent ideas and interests which cannot be realized within the bounds of the present order, and thereby to render them socially impotent, so that such ideas would be confined to a world beyond history and society, where they could not affect the *status quo*”.²⁰ Or, they make them appropriate to the present ideology of social stage, reshape and integrate them “organically” and harmoniously into the world-view characteristic of the period, hence canceling their revolutionary possibilities.

That means feminism, as social movement, is watched by two different dangers that threaten the manifested goal. As any situational transcendent ideas that aim to break the bonds of the existing order it is regarded as utopia from the dominant group. So from outside feminism as a whole must defeat the dominant ideology. From inside, because there is no totally homogenous social group, it must go beyond the conflict between the inner ideologies and the utopias of the sub-groups, which simultaneously share other common identity marks with the feminine identity. On the one hand, the main ideology of feminism is weakened by the interaction between diverse types of ideologies, shared by women (many women consider more important their appurtenance to other official recognize “prestigious” class marked by race, profession, wealth or political status²¹, on the other hand by the specific of its own goal, it is changed in the achievable social utopia.

The overwhelming nowadays-social reality, prevails over the others sides of human being, and obliterates the present understanding of what it really is. The necessity of “surviving” in the social environments becomes more important for the modern individual than its life in natural one. Thus, it sacrifices the nature and

²⁰ Karl Mannheim, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

²¹ See, for example, Bell Hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, South End Press, 2000.

the transcendent for the social comfort. The social turns into the foundation and guides any perspective of the understanding of the human world. So, the social values and goals subdue the others. The feminist movements are gripped in this matrix, too, when it is limited, under the dominant paradigm, to the achievement of political equality.²² “Why must feminists substitute for the glorious hierarchical vision of blessedness a ramshackle and incoherent ideal that flattens all human beings to a single level---a faceless, colorless, sexless wasteland where rule and submission are regarded as a curse, where the roles of men and women are treated like machine parts that are interchangeable, replaceable, and adjustable, and where fulfillment is a matter of pure politics, things like equality and rights?”²³ This state of affairs constrains the human being to one of its multiple facets and so mutilates the whole of the human person. These will become clearer in the following.

The present time is characterized by an unprecedented increasing of social environmental effects over human being. It is itself deeply and intrinsically sociological. It is associated with the socializing of the natural world – progressive replacement of structures and events that were external parameters of the human activity with social level organized processes. Not only the social life in itself, but also what usually was seen as “natural” (and, as we will see, cultural) becomes dominated by socially structured systems.²⁴ Because of this, the entire evolution of human sciences begins to overlook or diminish the importance of non-social nature in human construction, the balance between the human reality and its environment and over-emphasizes the human-social axis-point. Consequently the epistemological autonomy of nature, language, and culture was enfolded by the “anthropological sleep”, mainly in its form of sociologism.²⁵ This approach fails to give a complete explanation about the human being because it does not comprise an explanation about life and culture. And if we regard the human being as merely a *blank paper* on which infinitely diverse meanings can be (only socially)

²² It doesn't matter if it is conceived as equality or difference as long as it is limited on political achievement - as Mary Wollstonecraft, Simone de Beauvoir, or Juliette Mitchel imagined it.

²³ Elisabeth Elliot, “The Essence of Femininity. A Personal Perspective,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood. A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, eds. John Piper and Wayne Grudem, Crossway Books Wheaton, Illinois, <http://www.leaderu.com/orgs/cbmw/rbmw/>, 14 July 2002.

²⁴ Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991.

²⁵ See Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, cap. 10. I. “The Three faces of knowledge,” Vintage Books Edition, New York, 1994.

inscribed,²⁶ and also as a culturally informed organism which is constructing itself in large measure, we fall for the famous vicious sociocentric circle in which ultimately all that can explain the dynamism of culture is culture itself.²⁷

In this paper culture is not seen in the broader anthropological sense, but only as structure of ideas, qualitatively different from physical structures – nature – or interpersonal structure – societies, like Popper’s “third world”²⁸. From the positivist (scientific) standpoint culture as such is almost nothing because it couldn’t be touched, controlled, subjected to repeatable experiments and so on.²⁹ “Culture is thus a complex illusion: it is never permanent, never finally accomplished, because its meanings have to be affirmed and reaffirmed in the lives of individuals. It has no objective reality because it cannot be encompassed by a single mind; its constituents have only a partial existence in the mind of any individual, and many understandings of each fragment of culture may pass through that individual’s mind during his or her lifetime.”³⁰ But nevertheless it has the most concrete effects. It is a very strange illusion, which can be discovered at the basis of any human action or creation. The culture is the third ontological-environment, which underpins the human being, and its role is as important as the others’ two: the social and biological parts.

The discussion about the Femininity Category (or Idea) is very difficult nowadays, quite because of this overpowering “sociological hermeneutics” that

²⁶ M. Midgley, *Beast and man: the roots of human nature* (rev. edn), Routledge, London, 1995, pp. 3-4.

²⁷ P. Boyer, *The naturalness of religious ideas: a cognitive theory of religion*, Berkeley/Los Angeles, Univ. of California Press, 1994, p. 296.

²⁸ Which is not necessary limited to scientific knowledge but contains the arts, ethics, so-called practical pursuits and all forms of practice and institutions as well, which form what might be called the cultural inheritance. “By «world 3» I mean the world of the products of the human mind. Although I include works of art in world 3 and also ethical values and social institutions (and this, one might say, societies), I shall confine myself largely to the world of scientific libraries, to books, to scientific problems, and to theories, including mistaken theories.” Karl R. Popper, “Indeterminism is not Enough”, *Encounter*, 40(4), 20-26, 1973.

²⁹ This is so, because of the modern western (especially, Anglo-Saxon paradigm) way of understanding the reality. In this pattern the reality is confounded with the actuality, the contemporary usage of English “reality” has, indeed this meaning “actually being the case”. The reality has a modal meaning and not a qualitative one. So, the culture is real (has reality), above all, because it makes the things to be what they are and determines their what – content, while, which is totally different from the reality of the social and physical/biological realm which have actual reality, actuality, they are because they are conspicuous and sensitive manifesting.

³⁰ A. F. Robertson, “The development of meaning: ontology and culture”, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 2, 1996.

tends to reduce every part of human culture to its “primary” social origin. “In politics, in big business, in higher education, feminism is frequently discussed. But femininity? Never. Perhaps it should not surprise us that secular higher education has long since discarded the image of femininity as utterly irrelevant to anything that really matters.”³¹ Your social appurtenance is more important and explains better than you what you are intended, and ultimately what you effectively could say. This over-subjectivization of ideas-realms, its harnessed to individual, the personalization of language acts are the direct effects of contemporary “anthropological sleep”. This is a reiteration, or better, the ultimate accomplishment of ancient Socrates’ act of bringing philosophy from heavens to earth. The realm of true culture is reduced, by the sleepwalkers’ humanity, to a sum-total of ideas from our subjective minds (the second world, in Popper’s terms) or communities (if we consider some exaggerate consequences conclusions arise from standpoint knowledge epistemology³²).

The individualism and anthropologism infiltrated the entire modern *episteme* (conceived triadically by Foucault³³). The well-established modern paradigm is infused and threatened by this phenomenon: “For the slightest deviation from these rigorously defined planes sends thought tumbling over into the domain occupied by the human sciences: hence the danger of «psychologism», of «sociologism», – of what we might term, in a word, «anthropologism» – which becomes a threat as soon as the relations of thought to formalization are not reflected upon correctly, for example, or as soon as the modes of being of life, labour, and language are incorrectly analyzed. «Anthropologization» is the great internal threat to knowledge in our day.”³⁴ This particular (major) stream within the human sciences

³¹ E. Elliot, *op. cit.*

³² Although the social position(s) of the knower influence the knowledge social world and, therefore, its understanding of that world will be a particular one, that not means it have to be partial or wrong. It is hard to understand what they mean through that Archimedian perspective outside of one’s socially constituted standpoint. The consequence of General Theory of Relativity wasn’t that (laws of) Physics depends on observer’s location, but this not means it is subjective. And, even though, some constants (cultural, in the case of social sciences?) remain for orienting the comprehension of the phenomena. Alternative, different, not means wrong or limited. It is an interesting issue to see if these concurrent “discovers” in natural and social sciences are related with the human race growth.

³³ The three dimensions are: the mathematical and physical (deductive) sciences, the life sciences - linguistic, biology and economy -, and the philosophy.

³⁴ M. Foucault, *op. cit.*, p. 348. As I already said, these considerations not regard the general developmental human sciences process, but just a trend inside them, a trend encouraged by their “cloudy distribution” within the three-dimensional space of modern episteme.

are infiltrated within the other sciences and deflect them towards human's subjectivity while it is pretending to reveal and denounce their ideological origin. If the entire western philosophy is just a footnote to Plato's work, it is a very heavy one, for sure, one who succeeds to bring beyond the sky World of pure Ideas on the quite real earth.³⁵ But for human beings, at least as they are and not as they want or ought to be, the ideatic-oriented view, is their way of being. For this reason, even the critics of this blamable essentialism – allege that dichotomous gender differences that are transcultural and transhistorical – come to an end in the same way. “Feminist standpoint theory, which is highly attuned to reification committed by mainstream sociologists, cannot avoid reifying the genders. While Smith and Collins explicitly recognize considerable variation among women (and presumably men) in their experiences and consciousness, their own logics, and many times wording, make it clear that they assume that there are overarching, gender-specific standpoints; they could not otherwise talk about a «masculine» form of discourse. In addition, Collins explicitly cites such feminist theorists as Carol Gilligan³⁶ and Nancy Chodorow³⁷, who argue that the genders are fundamentally different in their moral reasoning and capacities for/commitments to interpersonal relationships.”³⁸ Although there is some attempt to avoid this sort of thinking³⁹, precisely because is thinking it cannot be circumvented. This is the case, for example, with the various categories of differences employed by many feminist theorists, especially “patriarchy,” “exploitation,” and “oppression”.⁴⁰

³⁵ This is close related with the general trend of contemporary western society loss of belief in transcendent and no palpable realities because of ever increasing faith spending in the quotidian day to day realities (complex technological products with unknown working machinery, the hidden mechanisms of economic system which assure the products presence in markets, the general trust in as a more generalized trust in abstract systems development. See Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1991, p. 80.

³⁶ C. Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*, Harvard Univ. Press, Cambridge, MA, 1982.

³⁷ N. Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*, Univ. Calif. Press, Berkeley, CA, 1978, also N. Chodorow, “Family structure and feminine personality”, 1974, <http://www.soc.washington.edu/users/brines/chodorow.pdf>

³⁸ Janet Saltzman Chafetz, “Feminist theory and sociology: underutilized contributions for mainstream theory”, *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 23, 1997.

³⁹ J. Lorber, R. Coser, A. Rossi, N. Chodorow, “On the reproduction of mothering: a methodological debate,” *Signs* 6, 1981; Rose Laub Coser, “Reflections on feminist theory”, in *Feminism and Sociological Theory*, ed. R. Wallace, Newbury Park, CA, Sage, 1989; Cynthia Fuchs Epstein, *Deceptive Distinctions: Sex, Gender, and the Social Order*, Yale Univ. Press, New Haven, 1988.

⁴⁰ Even with the postmodern meta-concepts like “trace”, “presence”, “difference”, “pharmakon” as so on (*peace* Derrida).

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This *earthization* of the cultural level, especially within anthropology, “succeeded to deconstruct” the entire third world meaning of femininity and masculinity and *demystify* their mundane origin. The explanation is extremely simple: women become identify with the nature and domesticity because of their reproductive functions (birth and lactation, and gender division of labor, both at household and social level. Contrasting men was mostly identified with the culture and public sphere. In consequences, the entire western philosophy is seen as “men business”, as their way to handle with the (psychoanalytical?) gender relation. It is responsible and ought to be blamed for its matricide, its idiosyncrasy about feminine. “Unfortunately entailed in the traditional philosophers’ disavowal of «the mother,» entailed in their philosophical matricide, is their own undoing. In western metaphysics, which Martin Heidegger observed to be synonymous with Platonism, woman *qua* mother is unformed matter. She is emotional and hence mercurial and chaotic. As a body not properly restrained by reason, she is helpless to both her emotional nature as well as to her undisciplined body. To oppose themselves to her, men set a higher ideal for themselves: a rationally restrained body. Kelly Oliver characterizes masculinity as disembodied rationality. Male authority derives from their habituated immunity to the chaos of their bodies and emotions. Men tame nature through the exercise of reason. Men retreat from the material world into a more manageable world of pure forms.”⁴¹ In the same time it is both is exclusive and monopolistic. “The «subject of philosophy» is narcissistic, closed to the encounter with the Other, while the Other (woman) has not yet acceded to subjectivity”⁴², because the philosophy is the continuously thinking of the sameness.

The rejections of the Other, the Different, no matter in which form it is made – rejection of the other view or overbid of a particular side of human person –, entails the losing of a part of what is and could be, the human being. Moreover, this “invidious comparison”⁴³ widespread in the modern society find in the gender relation a suitable place for re-actualize, over and over again, in daily life and intercourse. Nevertheless, “we cannot ask ourselves whether «woman» is superior or inferior to «man,» any more than we can ask ourselves whether water is

⁴¹ Jennifer L. Hansen, “Our «Salvation»: Women’s Intervention in Philosophy,” *Journal for the Psychoanalysis of Culture & Society*, Vol. 5, 2000.

⁴² Margaret Whitford, *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine*, Routledge, London, 1990, p. 33.

⁴³ Term used by Marcelo Dascal to describe our tendency to think that we/the subjects are the representatives of Reason, of Science, of Progress; whereas “they”/ the others are poor “primitives” or dangerous “barbarians”.

superior or inferior to fire. Thus the standard of measurement for either of the sexes can be provided not by the opposite sex, but only by the «idea» of the same sex.”⁴⁴ The very act of compare and valorize is rooted and guided within and from our ideas, and for this reason, we could say with Jeann-Marie Benoist, that nature-culture opposition remains “the very matrix of Western metaphysics.”⁴⁵

But how could be create and strengthened a place for women specific, how could be defeated the men’s ideas world? If the symbolic is men creation, and it is imposed necessary from the beginning and foster the future person, either man or woman, how it could be avoid this monopole of the patriarchic view? *If* we follow the psychoanalysis, the role of the symbolic is to protect us from psychosis and this entails a strict denial body pleasures. The most important moment in building our identity is when sexual division is produced within society: the moment of the castration complex. Then the free heterogeneously identity of the child conscious falls under the control of the law of patriarchy, the divisions of “the law”. Then the two sexes are psychologically created. “In Lacanian thinking this is called the moment of the symbolic. The symbolic is the point of organization, the point where sexuality is constructed as meaning, where what was heterogeneous, what was not symbolized, becomes organized, becomes created round these two poles, masculine and not-masculine: feminine.”⁴⁶ Mitchell’s ideas about novel narrative become more relevant if we transfer them within the postmodern conception of self-identity as ceaselessly narrative. The relation between the two stages in child development to sexuality, the understanding of the ontogeny of the self, is trapped in a dichotomy: either the pre-oedipal stage has its own structure, a polyphonic one (although is almost impossible to comprehend because we are under the censorship of the law), or it is just the other face of the same law, being provided by the symbolic law itself. “The question to me has a political dimension to it. If you think that the heterogeneous pre-Oedipal polyvalent world is a separate structure in its own right, then the law is disruptable, the carnival can be held on the church steps. But if this is not the case, if the carnival and the church do not exist independently of each other, the pre-Oedipal and the Oedipal are not separate, discrete states -- if, instead, the Oedipal with the castration complex is what defines the pre-Oedipal, then the only way you can challenge the church, challenge

⁴⁴ Julius Evola, *The Metaphysics of Sex* (Metafizica sexului), Humanitas, Bucharest, 1994, p. 73.

⁴⁵ Jeann-Marie Benoist, “Classicism revisited: human nature and structure in Levi-Strauss and Chomsky,” in *The limits of human nature*, ed. J. Benthall, Allen Lane, London, 1973, p. 20.

⁴⁶ Juliet Mitchell, “Femininity, narrative and psychoanalysis,” in *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*, eds. David Lodge and Nigel Wood, Pearson Education, 2000, p. 389.

both the Oedipal and its pre-Oedipal, is from within an *alternative symbolic universe*.”⁴⁷

But when we are talking about “alternative symbolic universe”⁴⁸ we are talking about a realm with a high level of autonomy. My question is, why, if our approaches to nature-culture relation lead us, sooner or later, in the same point, the presence of a distinct third world reality, why obstinately trying to negate it in the name of such tricky ideal of individual freedom? Absolute freedom of thought is a contradiction of terms. The absolute freedom of choosing our own condition of what and how will be is a myth. We are not free ourselves from cultural forces because we are, in part, these forces. The paradox becomes visible when we are trying to think what is happening with us within this hypothetical process of alternative self-fostering: what we are becoming and what we are in this process of becoming?

The most powerful blame brought for the mode of conceiving femininity was that “men were those who created what is called femininity. This is nothing but a phantom projection of the woman. It was easier for them, using this femininity idea, to occupy, invade, pose and lobotomize women, like nobody’s territory.”⁴⁹ The femininity is just a derivative concept constructed from men’s perspectives and as an accessory to this central concept of masculinity. For understanding and setting up the real concept of femininity, it is necessary to deconstruct the masculinity. But if “it is not masculinity *per se* which is valorized in our culture but the masculine male”⁵⁰

This so valorized “democratic right”⁵¹ of any idea to be true, which facilitates the rise of marginal voices to be heard, has, in the same time, unexpected contrary results. It leads in the same time with the strengthened “weak voices” to their contempt, quite far from its “democratic” principle embodied in it. A feminine epistemology, from a postmodern perspective, seems to be

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 390.

⁴⁸ I wonder if it isn’t better to speak about a poly-verse, a poly-verse which now is covered by the dominant paradigm and we cannot see it such.

⁴⁹ Mihaela Miroiu, *Gândul umbrei. Abordări feministe în filosofia contemporană (The Thought of the Shadow. Feminist Approaches in Contemporary Philosophy)*, Alternative Publ. House, Bucharest, 1995, p. 107.

⁵⁰ Moira Gatens, “A Critique of the Sex/Gender Distinction,” in *A Reader in Feminist Knowledge*, ed. Sneja Gunew, Routledge, London, 1991, p. 152.

⁵¹ We could notice the manner in which the reality from the world of ideas is conceived in the same way as the social reality. This proves, once again, the close (dialectical, organic?) relation between these environments. Not only the ideas fostered the social relations realm, but, on its turn, it was shaped and influenced by the latter.

“ultimately self-destructive because it reifies the Enlightenment epistemology that it seeks to overcome.”⁵² Devaluation is in the core of the postmodern thought, and any effort made for evaluate the feminine is useless, no matter how hard the feminisms are trying to do this. Moreover, if notion of “sexuality” is just a modern category of self-understanding, as Foucault suggested, and it “has no essence”, than theorists cannot consider “its repression or its liberation.”⁵³

We must stay aware to not confound the conventional and artificial status of the person as it was brought by the modern thought: a pure political, “civilized”, juridical or/and economic reality with the real one. As the Right was sacrificed on the altar of Legality, the Righteousness for Justice, the Ethics for Deontology, so the Human was submitted to Person (as Citizen). “For years I have watched with growing dismay, even anguish, what has been happening in our society, in our educational system, in our churches, in our homes, and on the deepest level of personality, as a result of a movement called feminism, a movement that gives a great deal of consideration to something called personhood but very little to womanhood, and hardly a nod to femininity. Words like *manhood* and *masculinity* have been expunged from our vocabulary, and we have been told in no uncertain terms that we ought to forget about such things, which amount to nothing more than biology, and concentrate on what it means to be “persons.”⁵⁴ Within this false concept of person, brought by the increasing social system, and not the real one – the non-generic unity (between its biological, social and ideal sides) – of the human person, the womanhood and manhood, femininity and masculinity, can’t find their proper places and are dismissed.

These three scrutinized aspects existed and manifested themselves throughout the history of humanity, women’s situation being intrinsically related to their position towards the natural world, society and the intelligibility. Each epoch had its own way of manifesting and perceiving them. Nowadays there are new meanings to be grasped in order to understand the dialectical unity present among its three aspects, starting from the real difference between women and men, by re-balancing such relations at a social level through feminism and re-thinking their echoes and ideatic foundation, in femininity.

⁵² Susan J. Hekman, *Gender and Knowledge: Elements of a Postmodern Feminism*, Northeastern University Press, Boston, 1990, pp. 5-6.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, p. 71.

⁵⁴ E. Elliot, *op. cit.*

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