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## The Difference in the System of the Self: A Philosophical Contribution to the Gender Approach

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### Introduction

The place given to the difference between the sexes is a 'blind spot' in the teaching of philosophy, as it is in the history of ideas in general. Philosophical language is the language most strongly marked by the masculine. The 'major writers' or the 'major systems' are studied, but no attention is paid to the positions they have taken on questions concerning this matter. With many philosophers, an unquestioned hiatus is left between reflections on man in general and any reflection on the sexual division concerning the place and role of women, and also their cognitive, moral and aesthetic capacities. The power that men have over them is explained in terms of a balance of force (physical force) that is inherent in nature, which the making of laws may organize and regulate, or even change, but never abolish. This involves the belief that since the beginnings of mankind, men have had the biological privilege of regarding themselves as the only sovereign subjects. For Françoise Héritier, "There is little doubt that masculine physical superiority and above all the burden women have to bear, and their forced immobilization and weakening during the greater part of their life, have been the basic causes of the origins of humanity' (Héritier 1978:387). In other words, the dualism of the sexes is based on the reality of the body. Later on, ideologies took over this original dichotomy and extended it to every part of life and to every distinct aspect of knowledge.

There are thus two main aspects in the relationship between women and knowledge, the first a socio-historical one, which studies the mechanisms by which women were kept away from knowledge or from certain areas of knowledge, or were only admitted to them as simple executants or disseminators, but never as creators. The second aspect concerns the use made of this knowledge. Does an examination of scientific knowledge from the parameter of sexuation transform one's understanding of it? This approach has certainly been fruitful in the field of human sciences, since these sciences have human reality as a whole as their object, and because dealing with this by making a distinction between men and women and by analysing their relationships can throw fresh light on the subject matter. As Collin tells us:

It is a decisive step to start considering a society, whether a traditional one or a Western one, by asking oneself about the place particular individuals occupy in it, by studying the structure of the family in the same way, including that form of the family modestly described as 'one parent,' or by introducing this parameter into the statistics. Philosophy, history, sociology, and even economics can be enriched or even transformed by this (Collin 1992:19).

In a well-known schema that is inscribed in psychoanalytical thought, masculine knowledge can have affinities with detachment, cutting off or with separation, while feminine knowledge has affinities with the global. Men can thus isolate one element of reality, project it away from themselves, and then devote themselves to it, while forgetting or ignoring whatever is connected with it. Women on the other hand do not consider detachment to be anything but a passing moment. 'In this perspective, which can be called holistic, there is no hiatus between knowledge and thought, any more than there is between thought and love' (Collin 1992:21).

The invisibility or occultation of women in public activities demonstrates the privilege enjoyed by the masculine actor and his historically central position. In a more specific way, it can be noted how economic theories have generally nothing to say on how social relations affect economic development. There is nothing surprising in this, since conventional economics is poorly equipped to deal with the most fundamental questions about development. It is little better equipped to explain social relations between men and women. It represents more of an obstacle to any analysis of these relations than an instrument for carrying it out.

This is why feminist thinking, which is accustomed to endless deconstruction and reconstruction, can use gender as an analytical tool. Let us briefly recall that gender (*genre* in French) appears to be one of the last of the hermeneutical concepts introduced by Western feminism (Collin 1992).<sup>1</sup> It was not invented by us. We can find the inspiration for it in anthropological, sociological or cultural studies of literature, particularly Anglo-Saxon literature, which is devoted to relations between

the different roles and functions of men and women in our societies. This mediation was particularly introduced by American feminists in the 1980s and taken up a little later by feminists in France and Quebec.<sup>2</sup> If we start off from the point of view that gender is not simply the biological fact of being a man or a woman, then we can envisage it as 'a social construct, a way of being in the world, a way of being educated, a way too of being perceived, which conditions the way we are and the way we act' (Gebara 1999:94). In other terms, the concept of gender, over and above the biological reality of two sexes, encompasses the whole business of being and acting in the world, of creating relationships, and thus marking differences, and of claiming rights, of emphasising potentialities, and of making policy.

The mediation of gender as an instrument or tool gives us a better understanding of the place of woman in the economy. Without making this mediation an absolute, it does provide us with an important tool for understanding the complexity of human relations from a different point of view. It provides us, therefore, with a tool that can transform social relations in both the public and domestic areas of our life. Its usefulness lies in its providing a new way of looking at social realities and in its relevance for dealing with any situations characterized by inequalities, whether these are due to sex, race or to age.

The gender approach enables us to discern the special position of women in the economy and to make a link between this and social dynamics. This leads us to the possibility of understanding 'something' more certain about the 'fate' of women. The gender concept shows us that not only is the masculine the norm in language and science, but that an understanding of the economy or of trade, and of the forms put forward to understand them, is based on masculine models. We have here a bit of 'globalization' of knowledge and of power as it exists in a patriarchal world, whose ill effects on the history of women and indeed of all humanity call for denunciation. If we are against totalitarian approaches, we cannot set up a single key that explains everything. We always have to keep the dialectic of relations between men and women, since human life is carried on by continual interaction between the two sexes.

We have to accept that gender is an abstract concept. It can sometimes be a source of confusion, since it does not only signify woman, it also refers to man. The fact of using the two terms interchangeably is a conceptual error. The term gender is used for discerning sexual roles. It defines the values and attitudes which a community or a society regards as appropriate for one or the other sex. It follows, therefore, from a process of socialization in which different roles are given to men and women at the level of production or distribution of responsibilities. Despite the similarities that exist among different feminist currents of thought, it has to be emphasized that there has never been complete agreement on understanding the role of the difference and the power of the difference.

Discussions based on opposition between men and women have not indeed helped us to make much progress at the theoretical level. Difference of gender is, however, one difference among many. There are differences between men and women, between men and men, and between women and women. And these differences are counter-pointed by the differences of age, culture, religion and many others.

Even if it is accepted that a headlong rush towards globalization, to which the 'single' neo-liberal thinking is propelling us, is a basically masculine way of looking at things, the concept of gender, particularly when it is applied to the economy, is essentially a critical way of looking at the organization of society. It makes us question things at every level, personal or global. The onset of globalization provides an opportunity for our gender approach. It is in this sense that Yvonne Gebara says:

Today more than ever, the challenges that call on us to rethink epistemology are presented to us by the increasing mix between cultures, the globalization one can call it of cultures, which is imposed on us by the globalization of the economy, through the means of communication and, more particularly, by the awakening of conscience among women, who are looking to be accepted as complete historical subjects (Gebara 1999:107).

When one introduces the mediation of gender into the economy, it is necessary to adopt a different way of looking at social relationships. To think of human beings in a different way seems to be an absolutely necessary challenge for today. We need to develop relations that are more just and to build a widespread solidarity throughout the world, in order to construct a world system that is ethically sustainable. It is against such a background, which can disturb us and can invite us to change our traditional guiding principles, that we are embarking on this lengthy questioning process.

Our first line of consideration concerns the conceptual evolution of approaches on women, in order to show the 'blindness' of philosophical, sociological and economic conceptualizations of women. This will enable us to challenge and interrogate them through the gender approach.

Gender in questions of economic theory forms the second line of our work. A question with an (S) is to be understood in two ways. First as a questioning of the economy, and then as a tool for analysis and reflection. The gender approach<sup>3</sup> goes on from this enquiry to rethink what could provide humanity with new reasons for life, belief and hope.

We have attempted to limit the very wide and complicated field of 'globalization, gender and trade' to the following questions: Why do people want what they do want, and how do rational beings, who concern themselves with their personal interests, look for what they want? What is the sexual dimension of

the traditional definitions of such concepts as welfare, choice, wealth and exchange? We shall attempt in this way to understand and to explain the complexity and even the disorder of any process of change and of any form of accelerated mutation, intensified by unbridled liberalism and irresistible globalization.

### Conceptual Evolution of Approaches to Gender

#### ***A long Tradition of Inequality: The Metaphysics of the Sexes***

The metaphysics of the sexes, which one can also call essentialism, affirms that there is an essential or natural difference between men and women and it defines their respective specificities. How was the question of women and the difference between the sexes first considered and how has it changed its basis in philosophical schemes up to the present time? Its exclusion goes back to the beginnings of philosophy with Anaxagoras, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas. Because of their nature, women were also deemed incapable of progress. Several philosophers, selected for the clear way they express themselves on this question, tried to demonstrate this point: Pufendorf, Locke and Kant. If they could not completely eliminate the feminine principle, they all tried to devalue it in one way or another.

#### ***The Equality of Women Connected with the Future of Men***

For Anaxagoras, the determination of the sex came from the father. The concepts which Plato and Aristotle (Aristotle 1961) used to describe the world already reflected with equal clearness 'the laws of physics, the equality of citizens, and the inferiority of women, children and slaves.' Their claim to universal validity already expressed the balance of forces that existed in the agora.

In the *Meno*, we see how ironic Socrates was over the idea, put forward by one of the group, that there were virtues proper to each sex, since virtues came from the soul and the soul had no sex. On the other hand, in the *Timaeus*, a certain inferiority in the feminine powers of reasoning is suggested, compared with masculine powers of reasoning. Thus those who look for procreation of the body turn to women, while those who look for wisdom look to the procreation of the spirit and turn to men. One can see, appearing at various points, the Platonic doctrine of affirmations, according to which women had a tendency that leads them to lower activities or they had the same qualities as men, but to a less pronounced degree. One could imagine that this involved natural faults: the law was made to contain them and to reveal feminine ability basically equal to that of men.

In going through the various dialogues, one can see that any egalitarian statements that are founded on a supposed identity and that minimize anything that could dispute this are often challenged. Equality derives from identity and an identity based on the masculine model relegates to the shade any feminine characteristics,

while keeping in view those of men chosen as models. In the *Timaeus*, Plato argues that men, who in their first life 'were cowardly and who passed their time in injustice, would be changed into women in their second life,' (Plato 1984, T II:521) implying that to be a woman was a punishment of fate. The equality of women seems linked to their becoming men. While putting forward the principle of equality of men and women, Plato spoils it by his statement that 'However, woman is in every way inferior to man' (Plato 1984:VII, 454).

In the *Republic*, where the distinction between public and private is abolished, children being brought up in common, women are called to undertake the same public duties as men.

Music and gymnastics have been given to men. It follows that this double discipline should be provided to women also, and as for war, it is necessary that they should be enrolled under the same conditions (Plato 1984:I, 1021-1028).

So, the same capacities of the soul are present in both men and women. Both deserve the same education. However, nowhere is it envisaged that women should decide things for themselves, any more than their general subordination to men is questioned.

On the theme of the generation and the determination of sex, Aristotle worked out one of the finest explanatory models: a complete, justified and fully reasoned philosophical model. The question asked was: Who is superior? The earth which receives the seed, or the seed which fertilizes the earth? Several answers were given, including a purely genetic one by Aristotle, which we shall examine.

### **The Genetic Difference: The Hypothesis of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas**

Two main lines of questioning emerge from Aristotle's thinking: if the distinction between form and matter characterized not only human beings but also everything that existed in the cosmos, how could this be applied to the distinction between the sexes? Further, if all human beings shared the same form and were similar from a metaphysical point of view, how could females be regarded as a monstrous deviation from the perfect human being?

In a long exposition, Aristotle, unlike his predecessors, showed how he regarded this essential difference as one of quality between hot and cold, which implied and justified the anatomical difference between the organs.

Some claim that this difference has always existed, in seeds, for example. Anaxagoras and other naturalists argued that the sperm came from the male, while the female provided the place. The male came from the right, the

female from the left, just as males in the uterus are on the right and females on the left. Others, like Empedocles, argued that the difference was determined in the womb. According to him, the seeds that penetrated into a warm uterus became males but females in a cold uterus. The cause of this heat or cold he attributed to the menstrual flow and depended on whether it was colder or warmer or old or more recent. Democritus stated that the differentiation of the male from the female took place inside the mother, but that it was not the warmth or the cold that made a male or a female, it was rather the predominance of the sperm from one of the parents, this sperm coming from the parts that characterized the female and the male (Aristotle 1963:136-146).

The movement was what came from the man and characterized his genetic and individual potency. The matter was what came from femininity. On principle, there had to be a prime mover, whether the activity was carried out within itself or in another being. For Aristotle, therefore, the 'congenital weakness' of the woman 'touched the soul itself,' and she had neither the faculty of 'deliberating' nor that of 'deciding' (Aristotle 1963:I, 1260a). Man and woman were also unequal in procreation: it was the male that transmitted humanity, bearer of the divine principle, the woman only brought the matter (Aristotle:I, 1, 421a). The active principle of life was the male seed; the woman was only a passive receptacle.

Apart from the fact that the principle of matter introduced corruption<sup>4</sup> and death into the universe, it was also the cause of deformity. The maternal responsibility for deformity is put very clearly. Deformity correctly defined applied to the case where what had been engendered was not of the same species as the progenitor. A simple lack of resemblance was enough to define a monster in a general sense. 'The first deviation of a genetic kind was the birth of a female instead of a male' (Aristotle 1963:Book IV, 2). Aristotle argued in vain that the monster that was the female was necessary to maintain the difference between the sexes; the woman was still presented as a failure of humanity.

Females are by their nature feebler and more cold, and one has to regard their nature as a natural deformity. It is also a monstrosity when a male child resembles his mother (Aristotle 1963:Book IV, 6, 775a).

Thomas Aquinas later borrowed from Aristotle the idea that men and women were opposed in the same way as form and matter. He was prolix on the difference between the sexes. His originality came from his attempt to adapt Aristotle's teaching and make it compatible with that of the Church Fathers. His rehabilitation of nature and reason gave his theology a particularly open and 'liberal' character. It is precisely because he tried to rehabilitate human reason that the fact that woman did not have any produced such serious consequences. Thomas Aquinas distinguished between the subjection of the slave and that of the woman. The

first was simply the consequence of sin, and if the second was natural, it was because order would have been lacking to the multitude of humans, if some had not been governed by others who were wiser. It was precisely because of this kind of subjection that, in nature, woman was in submission to man, since by nature, man was more greatly provided with discernment and reason. All this was written with a political and social vision, which posterity developed further.

### **Invisibility and Over-exposure in Social Institutions from Hobbes to Rousseau**

Forged in the seventeenth century by the theoreticians of the natural law, the idea of the social pact was very widespread in the eighteenth century. The theory of the social contract, in its classical form of a pact of submission, held sway. It had almost become part of received wisdom. Locke and Rousseau gave it a new meaning. We know, however, that this idea had a very different meaning with Hobbes and with Pufendorf. In one way, you could study all the political philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries from their theories of the social compact. However, this is not in itself the subject of our enquiry.

Nevertheless, it seems important to us to show how these differing concepts of the social contract were in the last analysis based on different views of women. One can thus understand Hobbes, Pufendorf, Locke and Rousseau in a unified way. Their approach is the same: they ask the question about the place of women in the social pact.

### **Equality in the State of Nature and Domination in the Political State**

Hobbes considered that in the state of nature, women were equal to men, since between the two sexes, there was no difference of power or foresight that could determine this right, *without war*. No doubt, Hobbes was not much concerned with the freedom of women. The force of his subversive comment lies elsewhere: he wanted to establish that domination, any kind of domination, was of political origin, contractual, voluntary, and emerging from consent. He envisaged therefore equality in the state of nature and domination in the political state. This leads us to consider women in this sphere.

The point of departure for Hobbes's major work, *Leviathan* (Hobbes 1999), published in 1651, is that man, a bodily individual, is ruled by the strength of his passions. The approach by which he puts into man's natural state the obligation to 'choose' subjection is meant to be completely logical and scientific. In the state of nature, human animals are machines ruled by an impulse towards accomplishing their desires. Their only relationship is that which brings them into conflict with those who want the same thing. Hence, the need for a voluntary act, by which these individuals/wolves who are nevertheless provided with the power of reason,

can create a *second nature*, a *single* expression of will, and give up *definitively* their freedom and their *natural rights*, in order to benefit from the all-powerful monster, Leviathan, who is at one and the same time machine and 'artificial man', and who 'by the terror he inspires', unites them and protects them (in spite of themselves) against the ravages of that other biblical monster, the Behemoth of civil war.

In keeping with the scientific knowledge of his time, Hobbes did not deny that man was the 'principal agent of his generation'. However, he insisted that God had given him woman as a 'helpmate', but one who naturally possessed the same ability to kill. And who, as well, enjoyed the exclusive privilege of knowing who the child's father was. If power flowed from the act of generation, it would be the mother who would naturally possess it.

From which it follows that, by the same right, a child is under the immediate domination of whoever is the first to have control over it. But the child who is just born is in the power of its mother, before it finds itself in anyone's else's power, so that the mother can bring it up or expose it, as seems best to her, without being responsible to anyone (Hobbes 1996:157).

Hobbes seems here to follow the logic: the father can only have power over the child, if the mother agrees to give it to him. It is not the act of generation, but consent that creates domination. He also seems to concede that the family, just like the state or any other human association, is based on a contract, an act freely consented, by which individuals submit voluntarily to a power that is one and indivisible, as is underlined in the following lengthy extract:

Domination is acquired in two ways: in begetting or by subjugating. The right of domination that flows from generation is that which a parent has over his children; one thus speaks of parental authority. This right does not derive from the act of generation, in the sense that it might appertain to the parent to dominate his child, from the sole fact that he has procreated it. It derives from the consent of the child, explicit or manifested by sufficient proofs. Indeed as for what concerns the act of generation, as God has given man an auxiliary, there are always two parents, who are equally so, one and the other. Domination over the child should therefore belong equally to both of them, which is not possible, because no one can be made subject to two masters. Doubtless, some have attributed domination to the father alone, alleging the superiority of the masculine sex, but this is a false reasoning. Indeed, there does not always exist between the man and the woman a distinction in force or foresight, which the law could determine without conflict. This case is dealt with by the civil law; and in most cases (not always, however), the verdict is in favour of the father, because in most cases, Republics have been founded by fathers and not by the mothers of families (Hobbes 1999:208-209).

In exposing so radically the artificial and conventional nature of all political domination, Hobbes broke with the earlier metaphysical naturalists. Nevertheless paradoxically, in thus claiming to make absolutism more firmly based, he weakened it. Whoever speaks of convention speaks of instability: whatever man does, he can undo. Concerning women, Hobbes did not succeed in fully assuming his break with naturalism. Abandoning here the logical hypothesis and replacing it with an historical hypothesis, he rewrote in the nature of things an institution that was manifestly incompatible with the hypothesis of one nature for men/mushrooms. There remains therefore a lasting doubt over the validity of his construct of human nature and political artifice. If families were, as he insisted, 'little kingdoms', already existing in the state of nature, there would be individuals who would be naturally subject to 'little sovereigns'. Furthermore, if these little sovereigns had created the artifice of the Republic, this would not have been the voluntary product of free and equal individuals, but would have been composed *already* of organic pre-political groups.

As a consequence of this, if the demonstration of the artificial and conventional character of power for women left room for custom, for the state of fact, or for the natural order of things, this must be because they had not voluntarily participated in the creation of the state. The argument turns against Hobbes, because if women are not, unlike men, the true authors of Leviathan, why should they be under any obligation to obey it? Pufendorf and Locke provide some enlightenment on this question through the pact of subjection.

### **The Pact of Subjection: From Political Rights to Domestic Rights**

Pufendorf saw a double contract in the origin of the setting up of the state: first of union than of submission. Men united themselves by a first convention for the sake of mutual defence. However, this pact of union did not guarantee peace. Man did not, indeed, have a natural inclination that was sufficiently strong to bring him spontaneously to 'will' a political society. So one had to imagine that a second convention was made, to complete the work of the first, a convention of submission, a pact of subjection. By insisting on the 'reciprocity' of the contract, Pufendorf tried to establish the 'moral' nature of legal and political relations. Leading on from this, the contract infused itself everywhere, taking over not only political and international law, but also domestic law. This arises from the equivocal nature of the idea of the contract of submission, which has a tendency to legitimize authority and the privileged few. In addition, this second contract derived its obligatory character from the fact of the divine will. So consecrated, the contract acquired all its absolutist consequences and in particular forbade any possibility of a right of resistance.

That is why one can find traces of this ambiguity or even of the incoherence of his ideas in the status accorded to women by Pufendorf. He did indeed call in question the divine or natural bases for marital authority and insisted on the contractual nature of marriage. The control of man over man, as a moral reality, could not exist without some positive human act. However, no woman was obliged to obey her husband before agreeing to submit herself to her husband's will. Pufendorf basically proceeded here as he did for the state. He subtly made a natural order of reality acceptable by means of consent and then gave it its own legal basis. He did not claim that a feminine 'nature' existed, in distinction to that of man's, but introduced other considerations than that of the rights of individuals: the finality of marriage, the good order of society, patriarchal traditions, according to which it was the woman who entered into the family of the man, and not the other way round. In short, in the light of these considerations, the woman could only wish to be dominated by the man.

To base the distinction between private and public, which Locke introduced, on the natural subjection of women, sets out as we shall see, the perimeter within which the freedom of women as political subjects was to be contained.

### **General Superiority of Every Man over Every Woman**

A place of private liberty for the proprietor-head of the family, the domestic area became for the woman the place where she was deprived of that first liberty, which consisted of property, and which Locke made the 'beginning and end of every republic'. It thus 'deprived' women of the ownership of their bodies and of the fruits of their labour, which were at their husband's disposal. It also deprived them of the right to 'leave their fortune to whomsoever it pleased them', and thus of the authority, which this power to transmit goods as a legacy, would have given them. Locke certainly did not specify the exclusion of women from politics, as Machiavelli had done. However, by relying on nature to provide a base for conjugal authority, he affirmed the general superiority of *every* man over *every* woman, both within and outside the family. His distinction between private and public removed from women not only the autonomy necessary for any active participation in political life, but also the 'reasons' for which men had agreed to the institution of political society. As they belonged neither to the category of independent proprietors nor to that of workers who could 'freely' sell their labour, they enjoyed neither the necessary freedom nor the 'reasons' to sign that contract on which was based the obedience of the majority of the masculine population to the civil laws. Inferior by nature, but still authorized to do business, women became, through the 'inconsistency' of this theory of Locke's, an anomaly in the modern political community. By implying the superiority of 'all' men, the basis on which Locke founded conjugal authority implied the subjection of 'all'

women, even those who were not married. In this case, who should the spinsters and widows obey? Doubtless not every single man, unless all the men could agree to give them the same instructions. In view of his enormous influence, one can see how damaging the consequences of his misogyny were.

**'In Anything that is not Sex, Woman is the Same as Man'<sup>5</sup>**

In this dictum is contained all the ambiguity of Rousseau. For many years, his work has been the subject of interpretations both passionate and contradictory. There is no room here to discuss this diversity of view. Let us simply retain the point that at the origin of his most disturbing questionings, one finds the complex and disconcerting status that Rousseau gives to nature. Looking into the sources of inequality among men, he asks us brazenly to 'forget all the facts'. Man is free just as the animals are, apart from the slight difference that nature programmes every action of an animal, while man does things 'as a free agent'.

In brief, no external necessity can influence the choices and wishes of a man, whose senses perfect themselves by the exercise of reason. It is, therefore, 'only an accidental collection of outside causes' that can make him evil as well as civilized. A set of accidents and contingencies can lead to corruption, competition and inequality. In the face of such unhappy circumstances, men choose to organise their security and to protect their property.

Because nature speaks more clearly about women, it would be absurd, according to Rousseau, not to let her speak and to contradict her by educating girls just like boys. From the point of view of her sex, a woman is a woman, but for the rest, she belongs, just like man, to the human race. In other words, a woman is more a '*true*' woman:

The male is only a male at certain moments, but the female is female all her life or at least through all her youth. Everything keeps on reminding her of her sex, and so that she can fulfil her role, she has to have the constitution that goes with it (Rousseau 1966:470).

In short, the enclosing of women in the Rousseau family formed a part of the effort to reconcile the individualism of natural law with the values of the community, liberty and individual autonomy with the solidarity and reciprocity that are necessary for life in society. This is why,

Woman has more wit and man greater genius; women observe, and men reason: from this conjunction results the clearest enlightenment and the most complete science that the human spirit is capable of acquiring by its own efforts, the most certain knowledge in one word of oneself and of others that can be obtained by our species. And see how art can constantly improve the instrument given us by nature (Rousseau 1966:466).

So when Rousseau tries to define the ideal couple, Emile and Sophie, he deliberately 'makes' the woman the complement of the man. Having described Emile at length as an active, impetuous, strong, courageous and intelligent creature, the philosopher gives the portrait of a wife who is passive, timid, weak and submissive:

Made specially to please a man, Sophie was brought up to be a coquette, not very intelligent and happy to play secondary roles... Such is her nature, not to have been created for her own sake, but in order to be dominated by a man... is what she wants... to yield to him and even put up with him when he is unjust (Rousseau 1966 V:693-731).

In other words, a woman and a man are made for each other, but their mutual dependence is not an equal one:

Men depend on women because they want to; women depend on men both because they want to and because they need to; we can more easily exist without them than they can without us. For them to have what is necessary to them, and for them to be satisfied, we have to give it to them, we have to want to give it to them, and we have to regard them as worthy of being given it; they are dependent on our feelings, on how much we value their worth, of what we make of their charms and their virtues (Rousseau 1966 V:731).

To prepare her, therefore, for her 'vocation' as wife and mother, it is necessary to *give* her a soft character, to *make* her practise restraint, and to make her *learn* that 'dependency is a state that is natural to women' (Rousseau 1966 V:731).

With the help of a table we have summarized the views of men and women on each other. When one looks carefully at these stereotypes (Rocheblave-Spenle 1964), one is struck by the eternal opposites marked with the *plus* or the *minus* sign.

**Table 1:** Social Stereotypes by Sex

Masculine Stereotypes	Feminine Stereotypes
<b>Emotional Stability</b>	
Decisive, firm, poised, calm.	Capricious, hysterical, sensible, fearful, childish, frivolous.
<b>Control Mechanisms</b>	
Disciplined, methodical, organized, rigid, grasp of organization, discreet, frank.	Talkative, incoherent, stylized, secretive, thoughtless, cunning.
<b>Autonomy, Dependence</b>	
Patriotic, risk-taking, independent.	Need to confide in someone, need to please, coquette, submissive.
<b>Domination, Self-assertiveness</b>	
Need for power, need for fame. Ambition, taste for command, domination, self-sufficient, sure of himself, need of push, need for assertion.	Weak.
<b>Aggressiveness</b>	
Combative, cynical, taste for fighting.	Cunning.
<b>Level of Activity</b>	
Impetuous.	Passive.
<b>Acquisitiveness</b>	
Egoist, materialistic.	Curious.
<b>Intellectual Qualities, Creativeness</b>	
Creator, lucid, objective, keen on theories. Aptitude for science, mathematics. Sceptical, reasoner.	Intuitive.
<b>Affective Orientation, Sexuality</b>	
Obscene.	Caressing, sympathetic, soft, modest, keen on dressing, need to have children, need for love.

It seems important to us to take account of the stereotypes we use. It appears from the table that in the difference between the genders, there is something of biology, and much that is cultural. Thus, the woman is brought up to be seductive and pleasing to the other; the man to dominate, to intervene, to act and be himself. The feminine or masculine personality is defined by the values and behaviour of the gender to which they belong. Traits of personality that are not innate but acquired are attributed to women. All human beings, from the moment of their birth, undergo an endless cultural apprenticeship on how to behave that is in keeping with their cultural condition. The boy is brought up as an autonomous person and the girl as a function of the other, and her love and desire is built up by emphasizing her dependence. She is not to talk or to ask, but to weep, implore, dissemble or keep quiet. She does not gain much self-assurance, and in the last resort, her preoccupation is limited to wanting to please others. In short, women are made to be wives.

A brief review of the theories about social institutions leads us to the conclusion that women are made invisible in two ways: as social actresses, and even as human beings, and as a group that is socially constructed. This is the correlative of their over-exposure as beings supposed to be more natural than men. This construct of the inequality that exists between men and women reflects the different way they are treated in society. The domination of the head of the family, for example, is one of the most problematical points of the classical theory of natural law. The idea of a natural difference or even of a disparity between the sexes, more or less explicitly interpreted in the sense of hierarchy, is sustained or considered as part of the evidence, even if specific qualities are recognized as existing in women. What is in the theories of economists?

### **From the Economy of Sex to the Sex of the Economy**

The history of ideas demonstrates that the different traditional categories (nobility, bourgeoisie, clergy, etc.) no longer correspond with the new view that society takes of itself. The assumption of wealth encourages us to consider social organization with new categories. For the physiocrats, indeed, the nation was reduced to three new classes of citizen: the productive class, the owner class and the sterile class. The productive class was made up of cultivators, farmers, and agricultural workers. The owner class included the sovereign, the landowners and those who benefited from the tax (dime).<sup>6</sup> The sterile class was made up of artisans, manufacturers, traders and more generally all the citizens who were engaged in work other than agriculture.

The same approach is to be found in Smith. It is the economic categories of people that define the social classes. For him, however, agriculture is not the only source of wealth. He divided the annual product of the nation into three parts: rent from land, profit from capital and wages from work. This product thus

provided income of three different kinds: there were those who lived from rent, those who lived from wages, and those who lived from profits. It is these three kinds of income that defined social classes. To provide an economic base for sociology implied regarding society as mobile. Smith introduced three modifications to what the physiocrats had put forward, and these had important consequences:

1. First of all, he rejected their analysis of the sources of wealth; for him, the land was simply one source of wealth among others.
2. He then worked out a kind of sociological dialectic. There was a separation of social classes at the point of production, but a unity of classes at the point of consumption.
3. Smith took over from the physiocrats the distinction between productive and unproductive. However, he gave it a new meaning. He did not put it within the sphere of wealth, but as a line of separation between the state and civil society.

John Stuart Mill, the famous political economist and liberal feminist of the 19th century, was a dominant figure of philosophy and economics. He argued that the doctrine of free trade had a basis as solid as the basis for the principle of individual liberty. From this flowed the need to dissociate the legitimacy of the liberty of the individual from that of economic liberty. He thought of the fulfilment of the individual in a perspective of the development of civil society. The development of the individual, which was a necessary condition for social development, depended on the freedom for each individual to cultivate his faculties to the highest possible degree. The analysis of the subjection of women as one of the main obstacles to the progress of mankind had its roots in this liberalism.

This economic description of society implied a profound sociological transformation. Such a reversal of traditional analysis, which I have sketched too briefly and schematically, was so far-reaching that I cannot claim to cover it satisfactorily in so few pages. The questions it raises are highly complex. Is there room for woman in this reversal? Without claiming to compose a treatise on economic sciences, let us see how these theories have contributed to the economy of sex in economic knowledge.

## **The Economy of Sex in Economic Theories**

### ***The Object of Economic Knowledge***

#### ***Material Resources***

Adam Smith's work, *The Wealth of Nations*, suggests a first definition of the object of economic knowledge. Why should there not be a science of wealth, as there is a science of light, of the stars or of vegetables? The difficulty is in knowing what

wealth is. Material goods, first of all, but also the services needed for existence or for welfare. We can already see that wealth is what satisfies a need, and this act of satisfaction defines utility, which is a key word in the language of economics. However, while a length or a weight has an objective reality, there is no such thing as utility alone, something that has an absolute value. The idea of wealth is a relative and subjective one. It is not sufficient to constitute a science. A woman's practical needs, for example, are often linked to difficult living conditions and to a lack of resources.

### ***Exchange***

The concept of the market changed its meaning with Adam Smith. It was no longer simply a particular place where goods were exchanged. Society as a whole became the market. It was not just a way of allocating resources through a free determination of prices: it was a mechanism for social organization, more than a mechanism for economic regulation. The market, for Smith, was a political and sociological concept, and it was from this that it derived an economic dimension. In effect, he conceived of relations between men being like the relations between goods, in the sense that the nation was defined as a system of needs. He considered the economy to be the basis of society and the market to be what made the social order work. Even if reciprocal benevolence between men did not exist, the social bond was not broken because of this. It continued to be maintained for 'economic' reasons. Adam Smith wrote about this:

Society can thus exist among men, as it exists among merchants, by a sentiment as to its utility, without any bond of sympathy: although no man is tied to another by duty or by the bonds of gratitude, society can still be sustained, by the help of an interested exchange of mutual services, to which are assigned an agreed value (Smith 1776:97).

However, goods and services have no intrinsic value in themselves; their value only arises when they are traded. What is economic is precisely what is capable of being traded. An economic act only shows itself as such when there is a movement or transfer of goods between persons. It is essentially social in character. And because the simplest transfer requires the presence of two people, the economic act is a dichotomized act. There has to be a hand that gives and a hand that receives, an entry and a departure, a debit and a credit. It follows from this that an act that does not involve payment is not one that forms part of the science of economics, although it is possible that an act that is free today may give rise, sooner or later, to some return.

In short, relations between persons are regarded in the same light as relations between the value of goods that are traded. The economic tie that links people as producers of goods for the market is regarded as the real pillar that holds society

together. Society exists because everyone says, 'Give me what I need, and I will give you what you need yourself' (Smith, cited in Rosanvallon 1979:69). The result of an exchange expresses itself as a price, that is to say a relationship between the quantities that are transferred from one person to another, which this price expresses either in goods (a relative price, the price of rice in terms of groundnuts, for example) or in money (an absolute price, the price of rice expressed in terms of Francs).

In our social order, women are 'products' that are used or traded by men. Their status is that of 'goods'. This status obeys the laws of the market, a market that has its own logic, connected to the logic of a system of exclusion and oppression by one group for the benefit of another group. How can this object of use and of trade claim a right to speak, and more generally, to participate in trade? What is the concept of the feminine body? We believe that this specific situation of oppression may give women the possibility of working out a 'critique of political economy', since they are in an external position as regards the laws of the market, while at the same time being included in it as being 'goods' themselves. One can see that the science of trade comes down to being a science of prices. Everything that can be expressed in terms of price is an economic good. However, to know how to calculate the price, we have to get to the bottom of the problem. A third line of research indicates itself.

### ***The Choices***

A significant idea exists at the birth of the economic problem: that of limitation or disequilibrium. Man carries inside himself a need for the infinite, and he is constantly confronted with the finite nature of creation. This antithesis expresses itself first of all in the idea of *scarcity*. Needs appear to be endless, but the means of satisfying them are limited. It can also happen that the means are sufficient, or sometimes even excessive. Another idea then makes its appearance, that of disequilibrium. Goods are not necessarily present where they are needed or when they are needed. If they are lacking, they have to be produced, or if there are too many of them, their number has to be reduced. It is necessary to speed up or to slow down their arrival. The economic act then seems to be above all an act of adjustment. If the notion of *adjustment* encapsulates the essence of economics, and if in the final analysis, economics is the science of adjustment, then economics should ensure both the knowledge of the adjustment and the way to realize it, knowledge and realization being always linked together in mutual support. In any case, to adopt an economic attitude is to know how to make choices, and first of all, to choose which end to pursue in preference to another. Once you have chosen the end, you have then to decide the best way to achieve it out of all the possible ways. It may be possible to list all the ends in order of preference, but if the ways of achieving them are limited and capable of being diverted to other

applications, and if, finally, the time available for the realization is also limited, your behaviour takes the form of a choice. This is the essential economic act. However to whose benefit should one apply the principle that ‘the end justifies the means’?

Looked at more closely, one can see that conventional economics regards everyone’s norms and standards as given, and it never considers the question why people want what they want and how rational beings, who look after their own personal interests, look for what they want. Economics then concentrates on individuals and underestimates the role of collective action. Lastly, it concentrates on the value of production for the market and of productive work. Here, the distinction between productive work and non-productive work can help us to situate the place of the woman in the transformation of traditional presentations of hierarchies and social utility.

To quote Adam Smith:

The work of several of the most respectable classes of society, such as that of domestic servants, produces no value. The monarch, for example, as well as all the other civil and military authorities who serve under him, all the army and the fleet, they are all non-productive workers. They are servants of the state, and they are maintained with part of the annual production of others. The work they do, However honourable, However useful, However necessary it may be, produces nothing which can then be used to buy a similar quantity of services. Some of the more frivolous professions can be placed in the same category, such as actors, comedians, musicians, singers, ballet dancers, etc (Smith 1776:414).

One can deduce that government officials, soldiers, priests and judges are to be considered, economically, to be the parasites of others. Women are, once again, concealed in all this. We have to wait for John Stuart Mill, known for being not only the great philosopher of British liberalism, but also the only important philosopher of liberalism to have made the subjection of women a constitutive part of his philosophical work.

### **‘Subjection’: The Real Manifesto of Women’s Rights**

John Stuart Mill was very soon convinced that the idea of equality between the sexes was a well-founded one. In the light of this, he published *The Subjection of Women* in 1869, a veritable manifesto of women’s rights. The subjection of women was not solely the result of their exclusion from public life; it was rooted in the family and the power relationships that were exercised there, which harmed the deepest part of women’s individuality, by depriving them of financial autonomy, because everything they possessed belonged to their husbands.

Mill indeed argues that women should be free to choose whatever career they find suitable, without being obliged to marry in order to meet their needs. Equal access to education and to paid work should ensure their financial autonomy, transform the marriage of necessity into one of choice, something that might also contribute to solving the problem of overpopulation. However, if they chose marriage, women should accept the division of labour, which 'according to established custom, expects the man to earn a living and the woman to organize domestic expenditure' (Mill 1992:94-98).

It seems to us that we need to emphasize the failure to take 'gender' into account and therefore also the power relationships between the genders, since this demonstrates particularly well the rudimentary nature of the orthodox economic approach. This perspective calls for a change of outlook. It is not a matter of 'Add the women and stir', or in other words, simply extending the field of analysis to women, without asking oneself about the sexually charged dimension of the traditional definitions of such concepts as welfare, trade and economic choices. By now taking up a position, not on the basis of a contest (as a preliminary to any construction), but on that of a positive orientation, might not gender provide a revolutionary leaven that could create a civilisation based on solidarity, not a mere termite heap, but a community freely consented to by responsible people? This is the object of feminist economics.

### **The Sex of the Economy**

Faced with the question of what women have brought or what they could bring to the economy, it is interesting to turn the question round and ask what is it that economic activity has brought to women, and what have they found in it for themselves? Put another way, is there a specific contribution that women could make to the economy? Better still, if women were in control, would the ethics and policies of the economy – the choice of priorities, for example – remain the same?

### **Currents of Thought in Women's Movements**

The existence of inequality and social injustice determines the main orientations of the demands made by feminist movements across the world. There have been various efforts made, either by women alone or with the help of men, to organize themselves, in order to demand the principle of equality and justice for all. The same determination to make women the subjects and not the objects of the language of politics; the same social and political demands for equality. It is against the background of these analogies that the differences from earlier attempts can be noted. A difference of economic analysis: on the one hand, the criterion of financial independence is used to mark not only the social autonomy of the female worker, but also the autonomy, as a family, of a salaried individual; on the

other, the status itself of women's work is considered to be part of the totality, where domestic work is not separated from social work, or where the reproductive function is not separated from the system of production.

Feminism can be defined as the movement of ideas and actions that aims to produce actions and renewable knowledge, which can both contribute to the elimination of the androcentric perception, which still dominates the humanities, and at the same time, define new relationships between men and women. Closer examination enables us to identify three main currents that have marked women's movements.

### ***Radical Feminism***

In this current, the primary division between the classes lies in the biological difference connected with reproduction. It does not see how nature could serve as an explanation of the inferiority of women and argues that this has arisen more from the oppressive system of relationships of the patriarchal system. It has as its aim the abolition of these relationships. It proposes, therefore, to redefine social relationships outside any biological constraints.

### ***Egalitarian or Reformist feminism***

This relates inequality to the models of socialization based on sex, which reduce women to a situation of inferiority. It calls for a more egalitarian situation between men and women by means of reforms to improve the social, economic and legal status of women. It excludes from its strategy any break with the established order.

### ***The Feminist-Marxist Approach***

In the economics of Karl Marx, the analysis of what was produced for sale and for profit out of paid labour showed that this surpassed the profits that capital and the family could obtain from the non-traded domestic production of women. This is why Karl Marx and Engels did not regard the emancipation of women as a consequence of the emancipation of the proletariat. Associating moral criticism with a scientific analysis of injustice, exploitation and class domination in capitalist-industrialist society, they launched a universal appeal (beyond cultural, national or religious frontiers) for the abolition of this domination.

The interest of the works of Marx and Engels lies less in their analysis of the situation of women in modern society than in the conceptual and political tools they provide for feminist analyses of society. A great number of feminist currents of thought have closely followed their thinking, but at the same time subjected it to criticism. If 'socialist' feminists, in general, have largely subordinated the emancipation of women to the emancipation of the proletariat, the emphasis laid by women's liberation movements on self-organization and self-emancipation has often been inspired by this philosophy of *praxis*, in which changes of

circumstances confront the transformation of consciences. While the Marxist analysis of the oppression of women has been the subject of systematic criticism, the Marxist method has often provided the theoretical and political tools for such criticism. Because the dominant and dominated groups in the concept of class do not exist independently of the relationship of domination that produces them, this theoretical framework has allowed men and women to be regarded, as Christine Delphy remarks, as two antagonistic groups that are socially constructed in a hierarchical and interdependent fashion (Delphy 1998:28).

The Feminist-Marxist approach is based, therefore, on exploitation and oppression. It is the absence of women from the relationships of production and their economic dependence, which is the cause of their exploitation. To that must be added the patriarchy, or the supremacy of men over women as groups. The Feminist-Marxist approaches accept that the two levels of oppression lie next to each other and interact together. From the economic point of view, the gender approach shows up the complex interaction among the social, economic, political and ideological aspects, rather than finding the determining factor in every case in the economic elements. Hence its interest.

### **The Gender Approach: A Tool of Scientific Analysis**

One can talk of a science when there is a clearly identified object, with methods and tools. The economy, considered as an 'exact' science should be quantitative rather than normative, objective and with a higher status. It is true that it promotes itself with an ambitious, modernist and masculine image. Every discussion panel on television, for example, has to include an economist; every government advisory committee, whatever subject it is concerned with, has to include an economist, and every newspaper or periodical of general interest has in every issue one or two interviews with an economist. In short, the most striking factor in the promotion of economics as an 'exact' and masculine science, hostile to any feminine angle, lies in its character as a fortress protecting the neoclassical paradigm.<sup>7</sup> Economic theory, in its dominant form, is synonymous with liberal market ideology.

The gender approach, for its part, fixes an objective for the relations between men and women, a theoretical framework based on the theory of roles and needs, which has its instruments of measurement. The concept of gender brings an important epistemological contribution to the progress of scientific knowledge. The contribution of gender analysis is made at two main levels:

1. At the level of the demonstration of constructed character, as distinct from the natural character of the categories of men and women
2. At the level of the taking into account of political and conflictual relationships, that is to say of power relationships.

The scientific value of the analytical tool of gender is above all its relevance to any situation of inequality, whether this is connected with sex, race or age. Gender analysis enables renewed and integrated knowledge to be produced, which is capable of contributing to the elimination of the androcentric perspective, one that is always dominant in the humanities, and to the definition of new relationships between men and women.

### **Gender: A Concept and a New Approach to the Economy**

The concept of gender is based on the fact that differences, roles and positions between men and women derive from a social and cultural construct that has a foundation which is basically inegalitarian. As a consequence of this, an approach to socialization based on the balance of relations between men and women should lead to the construction of a society that is more just and more equitable. The gender approach is based on the principles of equity, equality and social justice. In the economic field, it enables women to be taken out of their isolation and away from the relationships which they encounter that are always defined by men. If the great campaigns of feminism have today become legitimate, it is far from certain that the 'liberation of women' describes a movement that is over (perhaps happily so, since if you talk of an animal that is 'over', it means one that is of no more use.) Feminists seek to establish a concept of society, of citizenship and of politics, in the sense of participation in the life of the city, which is no longer based on the predominance of anyone (men in this case). In other words, it involves rethinking humanity, the relationships that we have with the other.

In this way, the feeling is becoming increasingly widespread that the problems of effectively promoting women require solutions that involve the responsibility and the future of all humanity as a whole. It is accepted, both in the countries of the north and in those of the south, that there can be no sustainable development<sup>8</sup> without the involvement of women or without taking into account the role, the position and the contribution of women to the process of creating added value and wealth. An approach to the gender concept places us in a position to make a realistic analysis not only of personnel processes, but also of global social and economic processes. It is in this way that we can observe the emergence of feminist economics.

Several theories underlie the movements of action or of reflection concerning women. In the field of development, for example, the different conceptual frameworks are translated into programmes for women. There are two main currents of thought that call for our attention. These are IWD (Integration of Women in Development), which has been influenced by liberal ways of approach, and GAD (Gender and Development), which is characterized by socio-Marxist ways of approach.

## **Gender in Strategies for Women's Self-insertion**

### ***The Integration of Women in Development and Liberal Thought***

The integration of women in development appeared at the beginning of the 1970s, when it replaced the assistance programmes of the 1950s – 1970s, whose results had been far from satisfactory. Its objective was to eliminate discrimination and to improve the feminine condition, that is to say, it concentrated on practical needs. This approach was derived from liberal thinking and fitted into the perspectives of traditional theories of modernization. It held that inequalities between the sexes would fade away by themselves, when women became full economic partners. It was used in the framework of policies for economic growth and increased effectiveness, with the purpose of enabling poor women to increase their productivity by income-generating projects and of ensuring that development would be more effective and profitable, thanks to the economic contribution by women.

The practical needs of women, however, tend to be immediate and short term ones. They are specific to particular women, or they are linked to daily requirements: food, housing, income, children's health, etc. These problems are readily identifiable by women and can be met in precise ways. Because of their disadvantaged social status, the uplift of women had to be carried out by changing their social conditions. The meeting of practical needs could improve women's living conditions, but did not in general change their traditional roles and relationships.

The welfare that was achieved in this way did not call into question the subordination of women. It sought to help the most vulnerable groups, in which women found themselves, by giving priority to production. It created a damaging dependence. And so, while relativising the biological determinants of inequalities between the sexes, the logic of IWD was based on a certain social determinism. It called for a more egalitarian situation between men and women, by means of reforms to improve the social, economic and legal conditions of women. Nevertheless, it excluded any break with the established order from its strategy. In general, the IWD approach regarded women as beneficiaries and not as actors of development, and thus reinforced their passivity and dependence. Such an approach was not one of an alternative, and did not criticise the structures of oppression that led to sexist ideologies and of inegalitarian laws and customs. Hence the change of perspective through GAD.

### ***The Gender and Development Approach and Marxist Thought***

In the 1980s, there was some questioning relating to the IWD projects, which although they improved women's social conditions, did not change their basic social position. It was in this context, that the gender perspective began to emerge

as an alternative. It had a wider vision. The theoretical base came from Marxist feminism, and laid emphasis on the productive sector at the expense of the reproductive aspects of women's work and life. This approach established a link between the relationships of production and reproduction and took all the angles of women's life into account. Unlike other theoretical frameworks, its object was not women as such, but rather the social realities that shaped the perspectives and attributed the responsibilities and the specific expectations of women or of men. It introduced the perspective of the sex-specific analysis, which enabled the differences and the constraints that affect women and men in their relationships with production to be taken into account. The gender analysis did not have woman as its object as such, but rather the social realities that shaped the perspectives and attributed the responsibilities and the specific expectations of women or of men.

It should be noted that in giving more weight to the oppression of classes than to any other form of oppression, the GAD approach is at fault through reductionism. It seems to subordinate the liberation of women to the suppression of the class war. A comparative table<sup>9</sup> helps us to understand the different approaches.

**Table 2:** The Different Approaches in Gender and Development

Integration of Women in Development (IWD)	Gender and Development (GAD)
1. The approach An approach that regards women as being the problem	A development approach
2. The focus of interest Women	Relation between men and women
3. The problem The exclusion of women (who represent half the potential resources of production) from the development process	The unequal relations of power (rich and poor, men and women) which prevent equitable development as well as the full participation by women
4. The objective A more efficient and effective form of development	Equitable and sustainable development, where men and women take decisions
5. The solution Integrate women into existing form of development	Increase the power of the least advantaged and of women. Transform unequal relationships
6. Strategies Projects for women Women's shares Integrated projects Increase women's productivity Increase the capacity of women to carry out the tasks traditionally linked with their role	Identify/consider the practical needs that have been decided by women and men, with a view to improving their condition At the same time, handle the strategic interests of women Confront the strategic interests of the poor by means of development based on gender.

None of this experience allows us, as far as I can see, to create an alternative strategy that could open the way to an ethically sustainable development. Economic reforms, whether carried out at the micro, meso or macro level, are stamped with masculine prejudices, which perpetuate the relative disadvantages of women. The feminist economy restores the visibility of the already existing links between gender and economics. It depends more on a specific theme, which is the role of women. It demonstrates that interdependence between gender and economics derives from the triangle:

1. Human relations,
2. Ways of considering gender, and
3. Economic realities.

This triangle may be obscured in everyday economic life, but women still have to live out its reality throughout their lives. From the point of view of gender, the daily round, for example, is important. The daily round is everyday life. The daily round is the struggle to stay alive, to survive for another day, to look for work, to prepare food, to wash the children and to wash the clothes, to exchange expressions of love, to find an immediate meaning for life. The daily round is the domestic world, the world of short term relationships, more direct relationships, which can sometimes affect bigger relationships. The daily round for women is introduced into universal science, to remind it of what is concrete and what is needed for life and for survival. The daily round is the routine and the habits of everyday life. The daily round consists of our personal histories, our feelings in the face of events that happen, our reactions to the different questions that arise from the news of what is happening around us.

## Conclusion

Our research on women has shown how influential the concepts and definitions can be that we use about perceptions of social relations. The history of mankind seems to turn on questions of human freedom and of the control of production and of reproduction. These issues manifest themselves in struggles for power between nations, races and social classes; but the domination of women by men remains a constant factor, whether it concerns society, race or nation. Men have made use of their power, either in the form of violence or of a social contract, in order to control the work of other men. This has led them to use this power in order to impose limits on women. Even if the difference between the sexes is a natural one, the situation imposed on women is not a natural one. It is cultural and ideological. The Universalist philosophers 'calmly' opened a breach in the coherence of their system by excluding women, even though they were human beings, from their own definition of humanity.

Consideration of the relations between men and women has passed through some critical periods, each one of which corresponds with the pre-eminence of a particular theoretical model. Starting from a one-dimensional model, rooted in the biological dimension, researchers worked out 'two-dimensional' or 'multi-dimensional' models, to take account of the increasingly complex category of gender and its components. The re-appropriation of the feminine identity passes through a sort of injunction to otherness, to face the risk of a blurring of the difference between the sexes – or of their neutralization under the sign of the masculine. Rousseau seems to allow them to think at the same time of both femininity and equality. However, if no one else has better described the conditions of equality, it should not be forgotten that he did not include women in this. No one else did more than he did to make sexual difference the necessary condition for love, and no one laid more emphasis on the mission of maternal education. No one else vaunted femininity more, but he still enclosed it in the sweet kingdom of the woman in her home. In seeking for what 'is woman', might one not risk losing the famous 'remainder', in Rousseau's arbitrary vagueness?

If one has to indicate schematically the ground we have covered, one could say that the metaphysics of sex, on which the inferiority of women was based, has been progressively replaced by an apology for the feminine, which now concerns both sexes. This change can be discerned in a whole range of different fields - in philosophy, in social and political theory, in logic or in feminism. In most fields, it helps to develop a critical outlook towards the whole, to whatever is limited, to logocentrism, to mastery, for the benefit of what is 'not everything', of the infinite, of dispersal, of the limitless. Certainly, it is not possible to challenge the order of everything – the phallic order, the metaphysical order – but this order is 'not everything'. One can see here a loss in the value of 'modernity', in terms of mastery of the Subject, which can be compared to a loss in the value of 'virility'. We must now begin with individuals and their nature, in order to think and resolve the problems of social institutions. It is in this change that we may find some possible conditions for a better economy.

The wandering star of the major international financial institutions now turns around the economic, in a permanent search for profit. There is an imbalance between the social and the economic. The current model is devoted to the promotion of tools and means and not to people. Is there not some risk of our losing what remains of what is most precious to us, which is our own identity and our diversified socio-cultural values?

Autonomy is in the process of emerging in the political order. Decisive combats in the fields of life and of culture are now being fought in its name. Autonomy also has an economic dimension, which now needs pursuing. The concept of autonomy is indeed a decisive instrument for the criticism of economic ideology, for which the equal implies the commensurable, the human.

## Notes

1. Theories about gender were developed towards the end of the 20th century. They are to be found in many works published by Francophone feminists, but above all by Anglo-Saxon feminists, particularly by North American ones. We quote here from the works of the Belgian philosopher, Françoise Collin, particularly 'Praxis de la différence – Notes sur le tragique du sujet', in *Cahiers du GRIF*, No. 46, Spring 1992, Paris, Cité d'Angoulême 75001. See also Julia Kristeva, *Histoires d'amour*, Paris, Denöel, 1983 and Luce Irigaray, *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un*, Paris, Editions de Minuit, 1977.
2. Mathieu Nicole, *Identité sexuelle/sexuée/de sexe: trois modes de conceptualization du rapport entre sexe et genre dans l'anatomie politique. Catégorizations et idéologies du sexe*, Paris, Côté-Femmes, 1991; 'Etudes féministes et anthropologiques', in *Dictionnaire de l'Ethnologie et de l'Anthropologie*, Paris, PUF, 1992; Bissiliat Jeanne, *Relations de genre, Genre et développement*, Paris, Orstom, 1992 ; CEDEAC and 'Relais Femmes, Qu'est-ce que le Féminisme?' Montreal, 1997.
3. One talks of the gender approach to define the scientific method that takes into account the social relations of sex in the analysis and transformation of social realities.
4. Understood in the sense of decomposition or rotting.
5. J. J. Rousseau, *Emile ou de l'Education*, 1966, Livre V, Flammarion. p. 465
6. It is known that, for the physiocrats, the sovereign was regarded as the owner of all the land in the kingdom. This was what justified the fact that he could levy tax.
7. The neoclassical economists carry forward the classical ideas: the market economy, free competition, little or no state intervention, economic liberalism, the neutrality of the currency, etc. In addition, equilibrium is general, that is to say simultaneous in every market. Their reasoning at the microeconomic level is based on the behaviour of agents who meet each other in the market. These agents are assumed to be rational and seeking to maximise their utility or their profit. Markets are supposed to be in a state of pure and perfect competition. Overall, the neoclassical theory is a theory of relative prices and of the allocation of resources that are regarded, by definition, as scarce.
8. Sustainable development appears as a new form of human development, which concerns the global environment and the fundamental ecological balances that control both land and sea areas of the world. The ultimate objective is to be able respond to present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to respond to their needs. In short, it is a form of development that responds to the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to respond to theirs.
9. Taken from: Another type of development. A practical guide to relations between men and women in development. CCCI, CI Match, AQOCI Ottawa, 1991.

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